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Contents

Articles

Creative Nonfiction

Book Review Essay

Book Reviews

"Stamping Out Segregation in Kansas"

Jim Crow Practices and the Postwar Black Freedom Struggle

BRENT M. S. CAMPNEY

Abstract: This study examines Jim Crow practices and the Black Freedom Struggle in Kansas between 1945 and 1960, focusing at the state level. It proceeds in three sections. First, it examines Jim Crow in housing, employment, schools, public accommodations, and sundown towns. Second, it addresses the enforcement of these practices through mob violence and, to a greater degree, police violence. Third, it investigates the activism of Black Kansans who were, irrespective of age, gender, or class, determined to destroy Jim Crow through public protests, legal strategies, and physical self-defense, even if they represented considerable ideological, methodological, and strategic diversity. The study is based primarily on extensive research in regional and local newspapers, in public and university archives, and in oral histories with contemporary Black activists. Because of the limited time period involved, it utilizes a topical approach overall but, within this framework, addresses change over time. Before proceeding, the study briefly examines the long history of racism against Blacks and Black resistance to it in Kansas before 1945.

Keywords: civil rights movement, discrimination, mob violence, police violence, sundown towns

"Kansas does not have jim crow laws," declared the *Kansas City Plaindealer*, a leading Black newspaper, in 1955, but it practiced "the jim crow pattern" so effectively that white officials and commentators in southern states had begun to wonder how their counterparts in Kansas could "get away with violating the civil rights of Negroes without jim crow laws?"[1] However, its Black residents understood well that the most striking aspect of Jim Crow in Kansas was its pervasiveness despite its general illegality. White Kansans enforced these practices because they assumed an inherent right to do so and because those responsible for the enforcement of the law had neither the ideological disposition nor the necessary courage required to do so.[2]

Historians have produced several studies focused on the Jim Crow practices that prevailed in Kansas in the postwar years, and on the Black responses to them. They tend to focus on those practices and responses in Topeka, and especially on those involved in the 1954 United States Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board*; in Wichita, and specifically on those involved in the 1958 desegregation of the lunch counter by teenaged activists at a Dockum Drug Store, ultimately leading to the desegregation of all Dockum and Rexall Drug Stores in Kansas; and particularly on those associated with the desegregation of facilities at the University of Kansas and in Lawrence from the 1940s to the 1970s. This study broadens the focus on the racist practices deployed by whites and the responses employed by Blacks not only in Kansas City,

Topeka, Wichita, and Lawrence, but also in many smaller jurisdictions.[3]

The study proceeds in three sections. First, it examines Jim Crow practices in housing, employment, schools, public accommodations, and sundown towns in Kansas from 1945 to 1960. Second, it addresses the enforcement of these practices through mob violence and, to a greater degree, police violence in the defense of the status quo. Third, it investigates the activism of Black Kansans who were, irrespective of their age, gender, or class, determined to destroy Jim Crow through public protests, legal strategies, and physical self-defense, even if they represented considerable ideological, methodological, and strategic diversity. The study is based primarily on extensive research in regional and local newspapers, in public and university archives, and in oral histories with contemporary Black activists. Because of the limited time period involved, it utilizes a topical approach overall but, within this framework, addresses change over time. Before proceeding, the study briefly examines the long history of racism against Blacks and Black resistance to it in Kansas before 1945.

The Jim Crow practices prevailing in Kansas at the end of World War II were the results of the formalization of discrimination around the turn of the twentieth century when, amid a frenzy of lynchings, riots, and police killings, whites pushed Blacks to the margins, segregating them in distinctive areas, excluding them from many occupations, denying their children quality educations, and banning or segregating their access to public accommodations and entertainment. In an unknown number of municipalities, these practices included the establishment of sundown towns and counties, jurisdictions in which whites barred all or nearly all Blacks from residing. With growing intensity in the early decades of the twentieth century, these Jim Crow practices were reinforced, making them even more burdensome for Blacks.[4]

On the eve of American involvement as a belligerent in World War II, Black Kansans faced stifling discrimination backed by repressive violence. In April 1941, for example, a white Junction City policeman killed a uniformed Black soldier, R. K. Halestarck, supposedly in self-defense.[5] After Black residents appealed to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to investigate, it alleged the "great possibility that it was an unjustifiable shooting."[6] At every step thereafter, whites stonewalled these investigators. The military at adjacent Fort Riley made it impossible even to confirm the name of the deceased, and the city coroner refused to provide a report, insisting that the shooting was justifiable and a formal inquiry unnecessary.[7]

After the US entered the war in December 1941, Blacks hinged their critique of Jim Crow increasingly on the gap between their reality at home and the country's stated humanitarian war aims abroad. One of them denounced the situation in Hutchinson, a city with three defense plants in which the "negroes are denied their rights as American citizens. We have our sons in the Army and Navy giving their lives for our country, we are buying bonds and stamps with 10% of our wages and complying with all regulations 100% and yet we are decried and Jim Crowed to only porter and maid jobs in these different plants."[8]

As oppressive as was Jim Crow by the end of World War II, white Kansans feared that it might falter in the wake of the global struggle against German, Italian, and Japanese fascism. They recognized that the Black Kansans who had sacrificed for their country would accel-

erate their demands for the same freedoms which they had fought to defend overseas; that they could repurpose the antifascist rhetoric deployed abroad and use it to undermine the racist practices and policies at home; and that political and business leaders at the national level would harness these efforts to burnish the reputation of the US internationally as a bastion of freedom amid the nascent Cold War.[9] Given their fears, white Kansans attempted to reinforce Jim Crow and halt any erosion of their power. Black observers noted the hardening boundaries in 1945. Based on the proliferation of signs advising Blacks of their second-class status and "reports . . . that conditions are getting worse," the *Plaindealer* concluded in October 1945 that racist practices were expanding in severity and scope.[10]

Throughout decades of repression, Black Kansans fought doggedly, challenging their oppressors, fighting racist assailants in the streets, protecting their neighborhoods from vigilantes, or defending jailhouses from lynch mobs. With the development of a Black middle class and the establishment of Black newspapers and civil rights organizations in the largest cities, they cobbled together in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a professional civil rights movement to challenge Jim Crow. Although they used armed self-defense when necessary, they relied increasingly after World War I on institutionalized resistance expressed through the Black press, public demonstrations, and courts of law.[11]

Because they were largely informal, and violated antidiscrimination laws on the state books, Jim Crow practices varied from place to place, making them a confusing hodgepodge of restrictions. Whites might, for instance, exclude blacks altogether from movie theaters in one city but admit them in another, provided that they sat in the segregated sections. Similarly, whites might accept Black patrons in the segregated section of a restaurant in one location but exclude them altogether or offer only to-go orders in another. The *Emporia Weekly Gazette* recognized this variability. "In several Kansas towns the public schools are segregated, and while this is not the case in Emporia, this town need not pat itself on the back because it is 'so kind to the Negroes,'" especially since it was "well known to everyone who cares to know about such things that no white collar job is open to any Emporia Negro."[12]

In the metropolises of Kansas City, Topeka, and Wichita, in the large city of Salina, and in many of the midsized and small cities across the state, whites prohibited Blacks from white neighborhoods—usually by informal means. Within these all-white neighborhoods, whites organized themselves along class lines. However, they relegated Blacks of all classes into rundown areas, often near railroads or factories. Consequently, Blacks had "great difficulty finding decent rentals, buying decent houses, getting loans, or living in pleasant neighborhoods."[13]

In sundown towns, Blacks were absent or lived in such small numbers that residential segregation was unnecessary. Writing of Neodesha in 1951, an unidentified observer declared that "unless things changed recently, no Negro was ever permitted by Neodeshans to resi[d]e there." He indicated too that the nearby villages of Altoona, Benedict, Fall River, and New Albany were all sundown.[14] In a 1968 letter to US Representative Robert J. Dole, Eva M. Brown of Wilson recalled that for decades "many of our Kansas towns had ordinances saying a Negro could not stay over night [*sic*]." Brown had a novel (if paternalistic and, for the Black subjects, dangerous) idea for integrating

sundown towns. Noting the ongoing flight of residents of all races from smalltown Kansas, Brown lamented that "we have empty houses in *so many* small towns where these people [Blacks] could live." In her view, it "would be a big patriotic gesture for all such towns to take one or two negro households into [their] vacant houses and find out what it is like to live with people of a different race."[15] While local white newspapers bragged of sundown practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reports by civil rights activists and letters from private citizens in the postwar period suggested that these practices continued in many places.

In 1951 the Kansas Commission against Discrimination (KCAD) reported that many employers either did not hire Blacks or hired them only for low-wage and low-prestige jobs. Even the Kansas State Employment Service abided advertisements that specified the need for white or Black employees.[16] Based on testimony, complaints, and questionnaires, the report concluded that many Blacks remained trapped in poorly paid jobs that offered little opportunity for advancement.[17] Furthermore, employers avoided hiring Blacks in positions that required direct contact with white customers. For that reason, a representative of a bakery justified his company's decision to exclude Black employees from its delivery route.[18] Similarly, white unions expressed little interest in enlisting Blacks. One representative claimed that his union did not officially bar Black membership but admitted that it could identify no Black members for at least fifteen years.[19] In its summary of the 105 unions in the state for which it had data, the KCAD confirmed that nearly half could not claim a single Black member even though they had no explicit policy against Black membership.[20]

Black women were well represented in domestic service but faced high barriers in the attainment of professional employment. In 1954 the Shawnee County Welfare Department in Topeka blocked Edwyna G. Dones from securing a position as a social worker despite her exemplary work record there as a secretary, her degree in sociology from Fisk University, and her high scores on the Kansas civil service examination. After the department hired several white applicants, Dones protested. However, it dismissed her concerns, arguing that "a county has the right to specify 'Negro' or 'white' just as it does 'male' or 'female'—that this was the civil service ruling and that possibly the committee would consider it in the future."[21] After an investigation, an aide told Governor F. L. Hall that he had checked into her background and found that she was "highly regarded" by her mostly white neighbors and was no "trouble maker."[22] Nonetheless, as late as the spring of 1955, Dones was still seeking her preferred position.[23] Despite such evidence, whites consistently minimized the effects of employment discrimination on Blacks. Amid a debate over a state fair employment practices bill in 1951, a group representing businesses lobbied against it. One of its members claimed that he did not know a single Kansas employer who discriminated, a claim that brought laughter from the Black observers in the room.[24]

Under Kansas law, whites could claim a *legal* right to discriminate in only one area—schools—and even there, that right was narrowly defined: "Segregation was permitted only in elementary schools, and then only in cities of the 'first class'—cities with more than fifteen thousand residents."[25] Accordingly, with the exception of elementary schools in a limited number of cities, whites should have integrated every school in the state. Instead, they enforced

racist practices as they saw fit in schools at all levels. In 1951 the *Plaindealer* described matters in White Church, where thirty-one Black children endured grossly inferior and segregated school facilities, including classrooms, water fountains, and cafeteria services.[26] In at least nine school districts, reported the *Manhattan Mercury*, whites still enforced discrimination in schools until 1953.[27]

Sensing that the US Supreme Court would strike down *Plessy v. Ferguson*, some officials preempted the inevitable. Paul E. Wilson, the assistant attorney general of Kansas, telegraphed this message when he insisted in November of 1953 that the state had fought its case on constitutional principle rather than racial prejudice.[28] Similarly, the Topeka school board announced school integration at the end of 1953, months before the Supreme Court announced its May 1954 decision.[29] Certainly, some officials, concerned about the national and international reputation of their state, recognized that they would have to abolish their Jim Crow practices lest Kansas become strongly associated in the national mind with the states of the South, which were constantly under attack by the northern press for their Jim Crow laws. They certainly recognized this after the 1954 ruling in *Brown*, which portrayed Kansas in a negative public light at a national level.[30] However, whites in some districts resisted integration well beyond 1954. On September 21, 1956, the *Ottawa Herald* reported that white school board members in Bonner Springs still refused to admit Black children to the elementary schools.[31] They maintained their intransigence until December 1957 when the Kansas Supreme Court ordered that the officials desegregate Bonner Springs schools by the start of the 1958–1959 fall semester.[32]

Public accommodations were areas of stinging discrimination, as Black Kansans documented at length. In 1950 Chester I. Lewis Jr., later a prominent Wichita and national activist, wrote to the *Hutchinson News-Herald* after being expelled from an eatery, skewering the hypocrisy of white Kansans who gloried in presenting themselves as racial liberals. "When local 'statesmen' stick their chests out and boast about Hutchinson being the most progressive city in Kansas, I've wondered how these 'statesmen' have managed to reconcile the existing Jim Crow set up in Hutchinson with their avowed scruples of good will and fairness to all."[33]

Whites across Kansas barred Blacks from municipal swimming pools, fearful that these facilities would be contaminated by supposedly unclean Black swimmers and that interracial sexuality might be encouraged by the presence of largely naked bodies. A white official in Wichita expressed an opinion more honest than most for the continued discrimination at pools when he admitted that many whites were unalterably opposed to interracial swimming.[34] Consequently, Black children drowned in the rivers and waterholes to which they had been relegated. In 1952 a journalist wrote that "sometime [*sic*] ago a Negro boy was drowned while swimming in a hole just outside Parsons. Many residents there said morally the city of Parsons was responsible because if the lad could have availed himself of swimming in the city pool he would probably be alive today." Activists utilized the death of this youth as a source of motivation in recruiting support for their demand for the integration of the Parsons pool in the early 1950s.[35]

In Herington, whites denied Blacks the use of the municipal pool and were incensed by vocal Black dissatisfaction. When Blacks persisted in their demands, officials offered

to let them use "another swimming pool, especially for them, on the airport grounds," reported the *Council Grove Republican* in 1952. "Both pools were built with city funds." In several towns where pool discrimination fights flared, the authorities argued that nominally municipal pools were rented from private entities, thereby making the exclusion of Blacks legal. In Herington, the whites responded to protest by arguing that "the pool is leased to the Lions club for the use of its members and their guests and is not a public pool."[36] As historians have documented, white municipal officials and business owners successfully used this strategy to prevent an integrated pool in Lawrence throughout much of the 1960s.[37] Parsons appears to have been a city that paid for and operated separate pools, closing the Black one in 1943 and operating only the all-white pool thereafter.[38]

Medical facilities too were structured by Jim Crow practices. Joanne Hurst, raised in Lawrence in the 1940s and 1950s, later recalled her experience of childbirth. In labor, she found herself wheeled on a bed into the hallway at city hospital. "It wasn't that rooms were unavailable. But she was told that 'the "black" rooms on the obstetric floor were all filled and so it's the hall for you, young lady.'"[39] In an affirmation that Hurst's experiences were widely shared by Black women, Toni Morrison included a similar scene in *The Bluest Eye*, utilizing a character named Pauline Breedlove who suffered dehumanization in an Ohio hospital. After tenderly examining several white women and chatting with them, a white doctor and a team of medical students stopped before her bed. "When he got to me he said now these here women you don't have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses. The young ones smiled a little. They looked at my stomach and between my legs. They never said nothing to me."[40]

Because of the continuing resistance of white business and civic leaders, the Kansas legislature in 1959 passed a stronger public accommodations law that banned discrimination in places of entertainment or amusement. At that point, some proprietors had little alternative but to end Jim Crow or face prosecution.[41] However, those who owned businesses not explicitly covered by the legislation persisted. In 1960 a University of Kansas student reported that he had been denied entry to a Lawrence bowling alley. When county attorney Wes Norwood visited the owner, the latter claimed that the law did not apply to him. Norwood responded that "the words 'any place of entertainment or amusement' could be interpreted as including bowling-alleys."[42] Norwood predicted a rapid decline in the number of incidents in eateries because the law clearly applied there and he vowed to prosecute those who would claim an exemption "because their establishments are not specifically named."[43] Although Jim Crow remained entrenched in 1960, Black activists and reform-minded whites were beginning to dismantle it, as suggested by the 1959 law and Norwood's remarks. Driven by their own sometimes overlapping concerns, these intertwined groups would continue their work into the 1960s, the twilight years of Jim Crow.[44]

White Kansans always understood that their practices were secure only as long as there were mechanisms to enforce them. Accordingly, they turned to mob violence near the end of the Civil War to keep blacks in line. In the early twentieth century, they shifted this responsibility increasingly to police departments which cloaked anti-Black intimidation in the guise of law and order.[45] Immediately after World War

II, whites accelerated their shift from mob to police violence because lynching was losing whatever legitimacy it still possessed, racist violence was becoming ever more identified with the US South, and the ideological struggle with the Soviet Union was transitioning into the Cold War—a war in which Soviet propaganda relentlessly critiqued American Jim Crow. In this environment, white Kansans, like their counterparts elsewhere in the Midwest, tried to distance themselves from any association with racism which, they insisted, was effectively unique to a South that they depicted without nuance as a backwater.

Compared to the white population, the Black one was relatively small almost everywhere in the state, accounting for only 3.8 percent of the population (73,158 of 1,905,299) in 1950 and 4.2 percent (91,445 of 2,178,611) in 1960.[46] As a result, the former could normally use the threat of violence successfully to deter black protest. A white park director in Wichita provided evidence to that effect when he stated during the pool protests and the accompanying lawsuit against the city in 1953 that in his experience the "whites are the ones likely to start trouble."[47]

Not infrequently, white Kansans did "start trouble." In 1946 a posse composed of two dozen white men from Morris and Dickinson Counties pursued an unarmed fugitive named Jack Shears, accused of theft. When one of them approached a thicket where Shears had hidden, Shears jumped up and ran, prompting another vigilante to open fire with a shotgun. Because Shears survived his wounds to the neck and shoulder, officers jailed him in Herington. The shooter escaped legal jeopardy because his white companions—including some law enforcement members—refused to reveal his identify. The *Council Grove Republican* titled its story "Buckshot from Posse Stops Fleeing Negro."[48]

Whites started trouble in Osawatomie in 1947 after George Miller allegedly killed the police chief during an attempted arrest. A posse of white residents captured the Black fugitive and started to lynch him before lawmen hustled Miller away. Although the passive voice obfuscated just what had transpired, the *Miami Republican* reported that "in some way a rope had been tied around one of Miller's legs and he was being dragged."[49] After the officers wrested Miller from his captors, they took him to Paola, and then, with loud threats of mob violence there, onward to Lawrence.[50] Whites in Osawatomie clamored for vengeance for days, and when officers eventually brought Miller to Paola for a hearing, they sent eight state highway patrolman in six cars to protect him.[51]

In the state's major metropolises, whites expressed their anti-Black animus as well. In 1945 Robey Strader, a white resident of Kansas City, wrote to Governor Schoeppel to predict a "'race-war'" because, as he saw it, Black Kansans had become "so overbearing [that] white folks can stand it no longer." Strader told Schoeppel that it was his "duty" as governor to ensure that "these negroes . . . keep their place."[52] As this essay and other scholarship has shown, many whites in Kansas City, Topeka, and Wichita opposed the freedom struggle, confined Blacks in segregated areas, fought pool integration with gusto, and maintained police forces renowned for their anti-Black brutality.

As they had for decades, white men harassed Black women with few consequences. Given the low esteem placed by whites on their victims, Black newspapers rather than white ones were more likely to record such incidents. In 1945 a white man groped a Black woman on

a Kansas City streetcar, actions that provoked only laughter from many of the white passengers and the operator. White Kansans laughed when a white man groped a Black woman, grumbled the *Plaindealer*, but they hollered "'LYNCH' when a Negro man does the same to a white woman."[53]

Because police officers worked for forces accountable to and protective of influential whites, they enjoyed considerable leeway to abuse Blacks. In 1946 Marshal William Sullivan killed Harold Payne, accused of stealing a car in St. Marys. Payne resisted arrest, claimed the marshal, prompting him to shoot Payne in the leg—and three times in the back. The marshal left Payne to die about 200 feet from the site of their confrontation. A man who resided nearby painted a haunting image; pistol shots awakened him and later he "heard what he thought was the moaning of an animal." Four hours after the shooting, the marshal and the sheriff retrieved Payne's body. In these situations, local white newspapers customarily impugned the character of the victim and elevated that of the officer. The *St. Marys Star* did so as well, describing Payne as a "Negro and a 3-timer in penal institutions of the state," and Sullivan as "an overseas veteran of World War I and the police officer here eleven years."[54]

Officers were notorious in Kansas City, where in 1947 several of them arrested nineteen-year-old Adolph Brooks and, before he was released for lack of evidence, beat him with fists and a blackjack. Brooks pressed charges, alleging that the sheriff had warned him prior to the beating to "'get right with Jesus.'"[55] In 1954 a Black man named Arthur Hervey allegedly killed a white officer in Kansas City. During the manhunt for him, white officers surrounded a taxi cab in which four Black men were seated (none of whom were Hervey or connected to his alleged crime). At their command, three of the Black men alighted from the vehicle; the fourth, Willie Guess, first set down a water jug. "Deputy Robert Connell said he thought Guess was reaching for a weapon. He fired a shot from the hip with his revolver, the bullet striking Guess between the eyes."[56] Other officers subsequently shot and killed Hervey elsewhere. Following the Guess killing and despite his undisputed innocence, a coroner's jury decided that it could assign no blame in his shooting, thereby reaffirming that Blacks could expect no justice from the city's white authorities and its residents.[57]

In Hoisington in 1958–1959, the criminal justice system demonstrated its role in the enforcement of Jim Crow practices. Patricia Holder, a Black employee at a tavern on the outskirts of that sundown town, stabbed a white customer named Ren Capps. At trial, she "testified that Capps used obscene and abusive language to her and, when she refused his improper advances, struck her." When he advanced upon her a second time, she stabbed him. Despite the likelihood that Holder killed Capps in self-defense, officials pursued her and an all-male jury found her guilty of third-degree manslaughter. The jurors could have found her guilty of a lesser offense but they avowedly wanted her to serve time.[58] Denying her appeal for parole, the judge sentenced Holder to the maximum sentence of one to three years in jail. As an officer hustled her to the county jail, Holder expressed her disappointment in the verdict: "but it's God's will and it'll have to be this way."[59]

Black Kansans responded to injustices with spirited resistance and sometimes successful results. "In our planning for post-war days," declared the *Plaindealer*, "we must not overlook safeguarding our rights in Kansas." They could

not permit conditions to worsen and they had to press for an "end to the vicious practice of segregation."[60] Recognizing that Jim Crow was reascendant, an NAACP leader announced in November 1945 that "a crusade would be launched at once to fight the mounting post-war discrimination in Kansas."[61] A decade later, the state NAACP remained engaged in "an all-out program to wipe out jim crowism and segregation," adopting for the theme of its 1955 state conference "Stamping Out Segregation in Kansas."[62]

With the decline of mob violence, Blacks had less cause to organize for their physical self-defense than they had earlier. However, they occasionally had to defend themselves, as when soldiers in a disciplinary barracks repelled their white counterparts at Fort Leavenworth in 1947. "The white prisoners objected to eating in the same mess hall with the Negroes," reported the *Atchison Daily Globe*. "The smoldering trouble broke out into a night-long riot last night." The 250 Black prisoners held their own against 500 whites but could not overcome the craven acquiescence of the officials to the demands of the white prisoners. "The commanding officer told the men over the address system that white and negro inmates had been segregated at breakfast this morning and this practice would be continued."[63] As whites had feared, however, Blacks did gain leverage after the war by comparing Jim Crow practices in Kansas to those deployed in the fascist countries against whom the country's servicemen had recently fought. Reporting that Blacks were picketing the Jim Crow seating practices at a Kansas City auditorium, the *Plaindealer* likened white Kansans to the ruling party in wartime Germany and declared, "We must defeat the nazi practice!"[64]

Under the auspices of the NAACP, Black Kansans in 1948 filed suit against Johnson County School District No. 90 for operating a dual school system in violation of state law. In *Webb v. School District No. 90*, the Kansas Supreme Court agreed with the plaintiffs and in 1949 ordered the Merriam schools desegregated.[65] Building on *Webb*, NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall decided that "the peculiarity of the Kansas law, which did not mandate segregation but provided school boards only with the discretionary power to establish a dual school system, presented 'an excellent opportunity to break down once and for all segregation.'"[66] His team pursued its case in Topeka, demanding the desegregation of the public elementary and middle schools in the state capital. When the US District Court found in favor of the school board in 1951, Marshall's team appealed to the US Supreme Court in what would become the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*, which overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* after nearly sixty years of "separate but equal" education.[67]

Black Kansans unleashed other legal challenges as well. In the Kansas City community of Argentine during the war, employees of the Santa Fe Railroad filed suit against their union, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, for discrimination. They alleged that according to the bylaws of their organization, Black workers were permitted only to be members of separate all-Black lodges and that the white members were purporting to represent the interests of the Blacks whom they had barred from attending meetings of the local lodge, from voting in the election of its officers and representatives, or from exercising any role in the negotiations with the company. In June 1946 the plaintiffs won their case in the Kansas Supreme Court, which found that the labor unions could not establish discriminatory rules when they purported to act as bargaining agents for Black

workers. Blacks hailed the opinion as a major victory "toward establishing real freedom and putting democracy to work."[68]

Frequently, Black groups and organizations utilized protests to advance their goals. In 1945, for instance, workmen quit their jobs in Bonner Springs. A foreman at a worksite told a bricklayer named Hughes H. Green that the white workers there "didn't wish to work with [him] strictly and solely on the grounds that [he] was a Negro." When Green argued, the white man asked him to "be a good sport." Before departing, Green addressed a group of unskilled Black workers and told them that such exclusion was not aimed at him as an individual but at "my whole race as a group." Green was persuasive, because eleven of the thirteen workers "left with [Green] as a protest against such gross discrimination."[69]

In what would become *Webb*, Blacks mobilized in Merriam in 1948–1949 by withdrawing their children from school and hiring two private Black teachers. Six months into the boycott, they persevered despite the burden of paying and lodging the teachers.[70] Similarly, young activists successfully targeted public swimming pools in the early 1950s. They would seek admittance at local facilities and then, when denied, would initiate legal proceedings.[71] In Parsons, Warren H. Morton, the activist denied access there, requested that the court compel the desegregation of this public facility on the grounds that Black taxpayers had helped to fund its construction.[72] In 1955 the Kansas Supreme Court did just that.[73]

While the sit-in at the Dockum Drug Store in Wichita in 1958 has become increasingly well known in the popular history of the civil rights movement, Blacks held similar protests elsewhere. In June 1960 members of the local NAACP led a sit-in at DeAngelo's Italian Restaurant in Kansas City. After the activists entered the restaurant and occupied tables, the proprietor approached and, rather implausibly, told them that there was no cook on duty. Unwilling to be bluffed, they replied that they would wait until he returned. In turn, the proprietor closed the restaurant and asked the protesters to leave.[74] Several weeks later, another plaintiff, realtor Donald D. Sewing, pressed charges against the same proprietor, swearing that he and three other Black diners had been refused service.[75] On August 5 a Kansas City jury rendered a verdict of not guilty against Anthony DeAngelo, the owner of the restaurant, in the suit by Sewing.[76] On August 26 the *Kansas City Star* reported that four Black women, members of the Kansas City, Kansas, branch of the NAACP, had begun picketing DeAngelo's with signs.[77]

In October 1960 Blacks again picketed Jim Crow eateries in Kansas City, timing their protest to coincide with a visit by the Republican presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon. As the vice president spoke to white supporters, "citizens of Kansas City and members of the NAACP were just around the corner picketing for freedom and first class citizenship." In this case, they picketed a restaurant that, despite holding a city license, had "continuously refused to serve Negroes and has placed a buzzer on the full plate glass front door which must be rung for admittance." Although the protestors failed to attract the attention of Nixon, "These young people have vowed to continue indefinitely their struggle for true first class citizenship, regardless of the hours consumed walking or any other price which may be required of them to pay."[78]

Black Kansas men made up the most visible leadership, occupying positions of authority, for instance, in the highest echelons of the

local and state chapters of the NAACP, as the editors of the *Plaindealer* and *Negro Star*, or as attorneys in civil rights suits. One of the most influential leaders was the aforementioned Chester I. Lewis Jr., an attorney and NAACP leader in Wichita. The son of Chester I. Lewis Sr., a letter-carrier and editor of the *Hutchinson Blade*, and Ila "Edna" Anderson Lewis, a master's-degreed teacher, Lewis grew up in a family that valued education and activism. Raised in Hutchinson, a town with a small Black population, Lewis attended integrated schools and endured fully the sweltering racism that prevailed in central Kansas. A graduate of the University of Kansas and the holder of a law degree from its law school, he addressed the state NAACP convention in 1953 when just twenty-three years old. That year, Lewis and his wife, Jacqueline—also a KU graduate—moved to Wichita where he opened a law practice.[79]

There, Lewis and John E. Pyles, co-chairs of the local NAACP Legal Redress Committee, sued Wichita for refusing to admit Blacks to the municipal swimming pool, a facility far superior to the small, overcrowded, and decidedly unequal swimming pool at the de facto Black park. A year later, the *Wichita Eagle*—a white newspaper and no fan of integration—published the result: "Segregation Banned at All of Wichita's Swimmin' Pools."[80] By 1958, Lewis, now president of the Wichita NAACP, worked with the students who led the sit-in at the Dockum Drug Store, forcing the company to change its policy. When the national NAACP ordered Lewis and the activists to abort their direct-action plan in lieu of litigation, the local branch "decided, on Chester Lewis's advice, to defy national's directive and support the youths."[81]

Another key figure was representative William H. Towers of Kansas City, described in 1947 as being in his fifth consecutive term as a legislator and as the only Black representative in the state legislature. As such, he fought both for the 12,000 Black residents in his district and for all those scattered across the state. At war's end, Towers proposed an amendment to advance civil rights and a bill to improve fairer practices in employment, both of which failed to gain the required support from his colleagues. Towers, declared the *Plaindealer*, opposed any form of discrimination and would do all in his power to end it. "Just think of it! Representative Towers is a high class gentleman, celebrated attorney-at-law with the Doctor's degree, deputy city attorney of Kansas City, a taxpayer, a Christian," and "one of the most outstanding members of Kansas' law making body. But in spite of all he is and represents, he dare not stick his head in a cafe or theater in our Capital city."[82]

While Black men at the state level provided most of the visible and public leadership, Black women did much of the unheralded work involved in organizing and financing local efforts. Of the fifteen NAACP officers in Independence in 1945, for example, fully ten were women.[83] Women demonstrated their leadership by the number of letters written by them to the national office and by their work in building local branches in towns with impoverished and miniscule black populations. In 1948 Edith Porter remarked on the work of a female member of the Abilene branch, Ilabell Bell, who had almost single-handedly built the chapter. The indefatigable Bell was "our membership chair + a good one. She has been in every home (colored) in Abilene + worried some so much they joined to get rid of her," Porter joked. "I say that to let you know we have a good woman on the job."[84]

During the school boycott in Merriam,

Black women were among the leaders who led the fundraising needed for the payment of the salary and the board for the two local Black teachers hired by a community with very limited means. Some of the women took to "baking cupcakes and selling them at fifty cents a dozen. Others have been collecting old newspapers and clothing and selling them, turning the receipts from such activity over to the common fund for the purpose of continuing their children's education."[85] In 1960 NAACP organizer Carmen Turner led the group that initiated the protest in Kansas City during Vice President Nixon's visit. When the proprietor ordered them to leave, Turner refused, declaring that they "were doing nothing wrong and saw no reason why they should have to leave."[86]

In Wichita, teenaged girls led the 1958 sit-in at Dockum Drug Store. The NAACP youth leaders involved—male and female alike—agreed that women rather than men should initiate the encounter. Dressed in their best clothes, the women entered the fountain, "politely sat down," asked for service, and awaited a response. When employees closed the facility rather than serve them, the protesters refused to leave. By using their gendered strategy, the teenagers wagered that the whites would respond with less alarm and potential ferocity. "We thought maybe if we had the young men, it would look too aggressive," recalled Lequetta Diggs. However, the women had arranged to contact the men if the situation deteriorated. Diggs added that the sit-in was "very well planned for a bunch of young people."[87]

To freedom struggle groups and in letters to state officials, women chronicled their experiences. In 1948 a Black woman from Salina told the NAACP that "she had been refused dining service in the Terminal Bus Depot in Manhattan when she was a bus passenger."[88] After its formation in 1950, women shared their experiences with the Kansas Commission against Employment Discrimination. Mayzelma Wallace reported that she had visited the State Employment Service in Lawrence and had told the representative that she sought sales or office work, but not domestic service. "He told me that he had openings for sales clerks at the Woolworth, Kress, and Montgomery Ward stores. When I asked him about the rates of pay he said that they did not pay very much." After consulting the paperwork, "[he] added, 'I haven't any place I can send you now. These stores have indicated a color preference.'"[89]

After Edwyna G. Dones was repeatedly denied a job as a social worker by Shawnee County, despite her qualifications and her high scores on the civil examination, she raised her concerns with the Kansas Anti-Discrimination Commission and Governor Fred Hall. In her May 1955 letter to Hall, she wrote that

> I am deeply concerned with and interested in bringing the facts of this ugly situation to light, and I feel that since nearly two years have elapsed without any consideration on the part of the county department, every effort should be made to see that justice is done and that no qualified person, no matter what his racial or religious background may be, should have to go up against a stone wall as I have had to do, and see people with less education and fewer qualifications be hired for a job of this nature.

She expressed hope that his government would rid "Kansas of this evasive, but unmistake-able [*sic*] line which places bigotry and discrimination above justice, fair play and human rights." In a memorable line, she added, "I am not a martyr."[90]

Black women's groups promoted the freedom struggle in various ways. In 1947 the Kansas Association of Colored Women held a state conference on "Building Unity and Peace Through Understanding." The conference included a mass meeting to debate social issues, featuring an address by the distinguished women's rights and freedom struggle champion Irene McCoy Gaines, the reading of reports on local organizing activities, and a talent night and reception.[91] In 1953 the Wyandotte County Association of Colored Women held a Negro History Week which addressed "a series of questions on Negro youth, what it hoped to attain, and why Negro History week should be expanded." During that week, the group focused its program on lectures, musical exhibitions, and the promotion of local Black political candidates.[92]

Black Kansans held a wide range of views on all issues, including and especially the postwar freedom struggle. Some, and particularly those who came of age after the war, sensed the possibilities for challenging entrenched white power at that time. Others, fearful of the potential repercussions and tempered by longer experience, advocated the adoption of a more cautious path. Most, however, supported the aims of the struggle. Reminiscing about her work as an activist in Wichita, Lequetta Diggs recalled widespread support but conceded that her parents' generation often counseled her and her friends about the potential responses to their actions by vengeful whites. Her father was especially concerned. "'They can do anything to you guys,'" she remembered him saying. "'They can hang you. They can shoot you. They can put you in jail and I just don't want that to happen to you.'" Nevertheless, she recalled that her parents, admiring her courage, eventually relented. "What my parents made me promise to do is that I would call them if anything happened. If anything starts to happen, call us and we'll . . . be there."[93] Ronald Walters had similar memories. He recalled that "some of the parents didn't want the young people" to participate in the sit-in, "but as people got to know what we were doing, the pride developed in what we were doing."[94] Arlene Ruffin recalled that her father was "a little bit hesitant" because he recognized that "there was possible danger there."[95]

Given the history of racism against Blacks by white Kansans over nearly a century, it is only fair to the parents and grandparents of the 1950s to say that the straight-ahead activism proposed by their children and grandchildren *would* have been crushed in the early decades of the twentieth century when the US was less concerned about its international image. The parents and grandparents, in other words, were not wrong about what would have happened, when they were young, if they had marched or held a sit-in to protest discrimination; they were wrong only about what the changed circumstances of the 1940s and '50s would permit their children and grandchildren to demand in a world where powerful white people, for the first time, had an incentive to prevent anti-Black violence to safeguard economic growth and the positive image of America during the Cold War. However, having never experienced the even more constricted world in which their parents and grandparents had grown to adulthood, the Black youths who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s could genuinely (but falsely) believe that they were the first generation with the courage to fight Jim Crow.

Speaking in 1967, a young Wichita activist named Robert L. Mitchell epitomized both the determination of his generation to stamp out Jim Crow and the tendency to forget the

brittleness and the defensiveness of white supremacy during the postwar period compared to its swaggering aggressiveness during the early twentieth century. Mitchell scoffed at what he wrongly imagined were the generations of Black cowards who had allowed themselves to be disrespected because they had lacked the moral fortitude and physical courage to stand up. "'We are not afraid,'" Mitchell told some white reporters. "'Our adults were and are scared to death. They've been scratching their heads and shuffling their feet so long whining and grinning, that the recent tension has frightened them as much as it has frightened you. Our so-called responsible Negro leaders had tried hard but have produced nothing.'"[96] Mitchell's belittling assessment would surely have come as a surprise to the armed Blacks in Wichita who repeatedly faced down lynch mobs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, or who fought fiercely for the rights of Black children to first-class education in the early twentieth century.[97]

The fact that young Blacks in the 1940s and 1950s felt that they *could* openly organize against racist injustice when their parents and grandparents *could not* have done so underscores the extraordinary new opportunities offered to Blacks by World War II and then the Cold War—opportunities which mitigated the open racism and racist violence that undermined the American image and burnished the Soviet one in the geopolitical competition for allies in the largely nonwhite so-called Third World. The children of the postwar world were not braver than their parents and grandparents (many of whom had fought in the two world wars); instead, they were struggling bravely in a period that offered them moral authority, more and more varied political allies, and more national and international audiences than Black Americans had ever before enjoyed. As a consequence, white supremacists lacked the agency that they had always enjoyed in abundance before, despite their continuing efforts to marginalize and oppress Blacks.

In addition to those who were afraid of violent pushback, the *Plaindealer* declared that there were some "who are inconsistent when it comes to certain principles and ideals." Just as white populations fractured along various lines, so too did Black ones like some "of our race [who] . . . speak with crooked tongues to the masses and count the money with ease at the selling-off time."[98] Although these Blacks signified a wide variety of fears and motivations, they often bore the label Uncle Tom, a slur connoting willing if not enthusiastic accommodation. According to the *Plaindealer*, many Blacks regarded "the UNCLE TOM" as the single "most dangerous" enemy because he possessed Black insider information desired by ill-intentioned whites.[99]

Many whites did not want to know any "Negro with brains and intelligence" and, in the view of the *Plaindealer*, they slandered the "Negro who speaks out for the rights of his race" and dubbed him a communist. The newspaper denounced "the weakling" Uncle Tom who, it jested, *liked* "to be kicked about and [who] agrees to everything."[100] In its report on a picket line at a segregated auditorium in Kansas City in 1946 and 1947, the *Plaindealer* highlighted the actions of some Blacks who refused to honor it, and the satisfaction of those whites who "were very much encouraged when some of the leading school teachers and professional Negroes ignored the picket lines Christmas night and accepted the jim crow seats."[101]

Often, those Blacks who appeared to their detractors to be opposed to the collective good

were reflecting their more personal interests as part of the small Black middle class; they were not usually reflecting real opposition to the overarching goals of the freedom struggle per se. In the metropolises where racial segregation and larger Black populations created small and heavily Black enclaves, members of this middle class understood that the dismantling of Jim Crow could mean a decline in their own wealth, prestige, and power. An NAACP official explained that "'the wealthier Negroes . . . prefer the segregated system because it means more business and jobs for them, so they think. The teachers in particular are fearful of losing their jobs if they have to compete with white teachers. They dominate the NAACP [here].'"[102]

Black teachers actually had cause for concern in the late 1940s and early 1950s as court cases like *Webb* and *Brown* eroded their job security. "Negro Teachers in Kansas Face Unemployment, if Jimcrow Ends," screamed the *Plaindealer* in 1953. Writing of the growing certainty that *Brown* would outlaw discrimination, the newspaper feared that integration would initiate a "purge" of Black teachers so that the white ones would dominate the remaining jobs. In fact, it referenced a report indicating "that the purge has started," and showing that a survey of the larger cities in Kansas where segregation remained had identified "a mass unannounced weeding-out of Negro teachers." Citing the report, the *Plaindealer* explained that the school officials in those cities freely admitted that "the biggest problem is 'what to do with the Negro teachers.'" Superintendents in various cities indicated that no mass firings had taken place "'but the boards have anticipated the end of segregation for several years by filling all vacancies with white teachers.'"[103] In a January 1954 story in the *Manhattan Mercury-Chronicle*, reporter Elon Torrence wrote that the intensive residential segregation in big cities like Kansas City and Wichita would protect the jobs of Black educators but that "it would appear that Negro teachers . . . would lose their jobs in the smaller places."[104]

Although Black Kansans organized chiefly in response to their grievances over injustices in their own state, they were deeply influenced by events elsewhere in the country, and especially in the Deep South. The *Plaindealer*, for instance, provided extensive coverage of events such as the Emmett Till lynching and the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and 1956. Editor James A. Hamlett Jr. wrote in his December 30, 1955, column "Week-End Chats" that "four months after the lynching of 14-year-old Emmett L. Till and three months after the complete exoneration of all those involved, reverberations are still being felt." Among those reverberations, he added that "justice-loving people are shocked and ashamed and even in Mississippi many people realize the tragedy of the incident."[105] Black Kansans revealed this when a racist zealot in Mississippi assassinated NAACP leader Medgar Evers on June 12, 1963. Illustrating the degree to which Black Kansans were watching these events in Mississippi, the *Leavenworth Times* reported on June 16 that the incident had led to the scheduling of "sympathy demonstrations" in "both Wichita and Topeka Sunday for the killing earlier this week."[106]

Teen activists from Wichita who had participated in the Dockum protest of 1958 remembered in 2007–2008 how Black newspapers and magazines beamed an increasingly nationalized freedom struggle into their private lives during their youth. "In most of the black homes, we got magazines like 'Jet' magazine and 'Ebony' magazine," remembered Arlene Ruffin. "Emmett Till made the national news, but in most black homes, I think you had

access to those, that kind of literature and they made a big point of doing pictorial stories of it so that you could visually see the horrible things that were going on, people being hung and that kind of thing." Not everyone did or could subscribe, but these periodicals circulated widely, as Joan Williams added. "The young boy being killed in Mississippi on how they did him and the pictures and if you . . . didn't have the funds to receive 'Jet,' the neighbor had it and her cousin had it and they passed this little book around so everybody got to see this." While many stories in *Jet* and *Ebony* focused on states like Mississippi and Alabama, Kansans saw their own lower-profile oppression mirrored in the more widely publicized oppression of Blacks in the Deep South. "Right here in our own backyard, there were things that were happening as well, and those are the things that we knew we could do something about."[107]

In addition to responding to events in the South, Black Kansans took lessons from developments on the West Coast. Wichita activist Robert Newby moved to California after high school, and his experiences there influenced him deeply, as did those events drifting into his consciousness by newspaper and television reports from the Deep South. "When I moved to LA, I saw an altogether different role for black people to play," he explained. One of his friends, a woman, served as a telephone operator, an occupation off limits to Black women in Kansas at the time. "And then I guess the Montgomery bus boycott would have happened the first of December of that year, I believe so, I was aware . . . and we talked about things I mean, of course . . . the killing of Emmitt [*sic*] Till was just so incredible, I mean to see that and, of course, in LA there was a lot of talk about it."[108] The Wichita activist Carol Hahn recalled that the sit-in used at Dockum had originated in the Golden State. She had met with members of a California group that was developing a method they referred to "as sitting-in." Excited about the technique, Hahn and the Wichita youth council pursued it. "Because in Kansas, we did not have what was called 'Jim Crow' laws and so this would be an example of how to exercise our rights as citizens to be served without violating any laws that were on the state's statu[t]es. So this is the technique we decided to use."[109]

Although Black Kansans almost universally decried the high-profile de jure racism of the Deep South and took inspiration from the activism there, some worried that the Southern-centric focus of the national media minimized the ability of activists to effect changes to the unwritten practices enforced in places like Kansas. "Already, too much time has been spent dealing with the Montgomery situation [the bus boycott] and other far off situations," grumbled a reader of the *Plaindealer* in 1957. The Southern story was critically important, he averred, but Kansas City had its own issues that never attracted much attention: "There are certain patterns being formed that bear ear marks of Hitlerism," and "now is time to get busy and save Kansas City, Kansas Negroes from being the tail end of the national civil rights and integration program."[110]

Black activists utilized the common institutions of their lives to advance the freedom struggle. They used churches to provide for the spiritual sustenance of its members, outreach and engagement with the community, and the organization of protest. In Wichita, they foregrounded the place of the church in building the movement. Rosie Hughes, who had worked at New Hope Baptist Church, said that, when a position

opened within the NAACP to be a sponsor and advisor to the NAACP Youth Council, "[they asked] me if I would consider working with that group, too."[111] Former Wichita activist Dr. Robert Newby recalled that his church, St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal, "was a pretty progressive church, and very supportive of anti-discrimination struggles and things of that nature."[112] Ron Walters, the president of the NAACP Youth Council in 1958, also recalled that they had recruited "from the churches and really . . . all of the larger churches, because the larger churches had a larger number of young people. At one point I was the head of the BYPU at Saint Paul. This is a Methodist church and so I had a national network of young people there."[113]

However, most of these activists remembered that, while churches were central to their lives and therefore central to their activism, they served principally as safe places where activists could meet and organize rather than as institutions that actually led social change in their own right. Joan Williams remembered that a number of city church leaders were involved in the movement—a fact borne out by the frequent references to the activism of ministers in the pages of the *Plaindealer*—but they did not make statements on the matter "from the floor or from the pulpit." Arlene Ruffin agreed that there may have been "some individual ministers . . . involved," but that it was not a church-driven movement, "you know as . . . you think of Ebenezer Baptist Church [a church in Atlanta, Georgia, associated with Martin Luther King Jr.] or something like that."[114]

In Black schools, teachers had an opportunity to invest their students with the self-worth that they did not often receive from society at large. Lequetta Diggs remembered that the teachers in her elementary school were the best she ever knew because "they were determined that we were going to learn."[115] Arlene Ruffin and Joan Williams remembered that their elementary school was "just very, very special" and that "all those teachers were really, really compassionate."[116] Black children came to appreciate these teachers all the more when they left their segregated elementary schools and entered integrated middle and high schools. "Once we started junior high school," Diggs recalled, "the feeling that was communicated to us is that we probably wouldn't succeed anyway so there was not too much of a need to devote the time and that attention that we, that we should have rightfully deserved. So you didn't go to school expecting, after a while, that your teachers were going to be in your corner."[117]

Black activists also co-opted social and civic organizations in their freedom struggle. Recalled Lequetta Glass Diggs, many people "were involved in the Lodge. They were . . . the Kansas Association of Colored Women and Girls, which was a branch of the National Association of Colored Women and Girls, [which] had a great number of clubs."[118] Newby elaborated on the network of religious and civic organizations that sustained his family and nourished the roots of his activism. "The Masons, the Shriners, all these black organizations were about black uplift. They were all about struggling on behalf of improving the condition of black people. Even though you would not consider them to be civil rights organizations as such, they had this social and civic responsibility, so I was sort of educated along those lines in that regard." His parents were active in the St. Paul AME Church, where his father was a trustee and his mother a member of the choir. "Between the church and the Masons, that was the social life of my parents."[119]

Most important perhaps was the family, and as suggested by the discussion around social and civic organizations, parents inculcated into their children the courage and determination to fight for their rights. "My mother was very involved in the NAACP on the national level, and she brought into our home and into the community national leaders who introduced us to different techniques that were being tossed around by other branches," recalled Carol Hahn.[120] Drawing upon their experiences growing up in the early twentieth century, parents offered lessons for survival. Arlene Ruffin remembered her father saying, "'Just work really, really hard, because if you get an 'A,' if you earn an 'A,' you may get a 'B,' and he had me really kind of programed that things could be a little bit different" in her integrated high school, "and maybe not as fair" as they were at her all-Black elementary school. On another occasion, her father said that "'if whatever it is requires you to smile, you smile bigger and better than anybody.'" Even then, "'you still may not get exactly what you've earned.'" Her father's generation "had resigned [itself] to the fact, there is unfairness and we can't change it. . . . [O]ur parents taught us that you just have to work harder and things still may not be fair."[121] Speaking of the freedom struggle in the South, Joan Williams remembered that her family regularly discussed it. "All black families talked about [it]."[122]

This study evaluates the Jim Crow practices that infected every aspect of the social order in the early postwar period, practices that represented a dispiriting conflict between the illegality of Jim Crow practices and their unmistakable reign in Kansas. While white Kansans largely eschewed the laws that enforced racism in the South, they embraced the practices that achieved a similar result. As Black Kansans well understood, white ones loved the self-proclaimed history of racial liberalism in their state but never reconciled that history with their own often racist actions.

At the same time, white residents and law-enforcement officials alike reinforced Jim Crow practices with the use of violence. Racist mobs continued to assault Black people and, as exemplified by the posse shooting near Herington, to threaten the lynching of alleged wrongdoers, even though the age of the mob had largely passed. Similarly, police officers assumed an increasingly prominent role in maintaining the Jim Crow practices through violence, as the Guess shooting in the metropolis of Kansas City or the Payne shooting in the village of St. Marys demonstrated. Historians need to investigate more carefully the role of police killings in maintaining a racist social order in both the past and the present, and their relationship to the decline of lynching.[123]

This work analyzes the vigorous and wide-ranging freedom struggle activism pursued by Black Kansans "to wipe out jim crowism." They formed state and local chapters of organizations like the NAACP to fight for justice, and they used newspapers, legal challenges, and protests to challenge Jim Crow schools, swimming pools, parks, and restaurants, as exemplified in places like Herington, Parsons, and Wichita. Although Black men like Chester I. Lewis Jr. and William H. Towers garnered more contemporaneous attention because of their public roles in this movement, Black women often took the lead in organizing, fundraising, and protesting. As groups or as individuals, women like the protesters in Merriam or Edwyna G. Dones in Topeka fought exhaustingly long battles against entrenched power in the cause of justice. Black Kansans broadly supported the aims of the freedom struggle but

they clashed occasionally when the interests of one group—usually the small middle class sometimes denounced as Uncle Toms and typified here by teachers—conflicted with those of other groups, including the dominant Black working class and the professional civil rights activists, both of whom saw only liberation in the destruction of Jim Crow. They also clashed with each other generationally, as young Black Kansans, like Blacks across the country, regarded themselves as brave and self-actualized in contrast to their cowardly and cringing parents and grandparents. In fact, because they were born and raised in such different domestic and geopolitical moments, young and old simply found it difficult to speak to one another about their historical experiences or their differing understandings in the fight against Jim Crow practices.

With its analysis of the interviews with the NAACP Youth activists in the 2007–2008 interviews, this study offers noteworthy insights into the interior world of one segregated Black community—Wichita—and particularly into the roles of churches, schools, civic organizations, and families in promoting freedom struggle activism. Unlike the archival material, these oral histories offer a wealth of often tender insights into the intergenerational dynamics between the teenagers of the 1950s and their parents, the relationships between these teenagers and their ministers, teachers, organizers, friends, and schoolmates, and the interior life of a middle-class Black Wichita worldview. These oral histories also suggest the importance of external forces—the impact of regional and national Black newspapers and magazines, the murder of Emmett Till, or the Montgomery Bus Boycott—in spurring Black Kansans to action in their own milieu. However, they also show how the national media story focused on a singular Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South sometimes choked off their ability to tell their own stories of oppression in a Midwest state that did not fit neatly into this national story of de jure racism. On a final and related note, these oral histories provide vivid illustrations of the way that freedom struggle activism resulted from the movement of ideas, images, and people, as stories of racism and activism in the South inspired (or inhibited) similar activism in Kansas, and as interactions between Black teenagers in Kansas and California produced strategies and methods successfully deployed at Dockum Drug Store in Wichita in 1958.

In addition, this study makes two contributions to the historiography. First, academic and popular interest in the postwar freedom struggle in Kansas has long been nearly synonymous with Topeka and the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, albeit more narrowly focused on the local factors that precipitated that monumental national case. In fact, this outsized interest in *Brown* (and therefore Topeka) has meant that this one well-known instance of segregation and civil rights activism has in effect come to represent the popular (and much of the scholarly) understanding of the freedom struggle in Kansas more generally. Although studies in Wichita and Lawrence have been undertaken, this one demonstrates that Jim Crow and its attendant violence and Black resistance were not confined to this handful of cities, even if the historiography has been. Instead, it shows that Jim Crow existed everywhere in the state, even if it varied significantly from place to place, depending on population size to a substantial degree.[124] Like this work, other scholars working in this vein must continue to look beyond *Brown*.

Second, in a recent collection the historians Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck challenge the historiographical assumption that emerged in the late 1960s and posited that "the 'seeds' of the civil rights movement" were "sown in the World War II years." Focused on the long civil rights movement and the breadth and scope of Black activism before World War II, the editors and the essays concluded that a "closer inspection shows that evidence of a widespread mobilization of the civil rights struggle during the war years is thinner than it may initially appear."[125] Recent research on Kansas and the Midwest generally supports their contention of a long civil rights movement from the end of the American Civil War through World War II and beyond. However, while a Black freedom struggle certainly predated World War II, this essay demonstrates that the fears of white Kansans over renewed Black activism and their appreciation of the new rhetorical weapons provided by the struggle against fascism did lead to a retrenchment of white racism in the immediate postwar years and to an expansion in the severity and scope of the Jim Crow practices.

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Notes

1. "The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People vs. Jim Crowism in Kansas," *Plaindealer* (Kansas City), September 9, 1955, 7.

2. See, in particular, "Report of the Kansas Interracial Workshop," 1949, f. "Manhattan Kan[sas] Organization, Civil Rights Commission," Box 3, Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy (hereafter LLPD), Kenneth Spencer Research Library (hereafter KSRL), University of Kansas, Lawrence. On the 1874 Kansas state law prohibiting some forms of discrimination and a statute passed during the Great Depression prohibiting racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination in employment in municipal and state employment, see Gretchen Cassel Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954–72* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 17–19, 43–44.

3. On Topeka, see, for example, Charise Cheney, "Blacks on *Brown*: Intra-Community Debates Over School Desegregation in Topeka, Kanas, 1941–1955," *Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 481–500. On Wichita, see Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*. On Lawrence, see Rusty L. Monhollon, *"This Is America?" The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Kristine M. McCusker, "'The Forgotten Years' of America's Civil Rights Movement: Wartime Protests at the University of Kansas, 1939–1945," *Kansas History* (Spring 1994): 26–37. For discussions ranging outside these foci, see Rachel Devlin, *A Girl Stands at the Door: The Generation of Young Women who Desegregated America's Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); and Timothy D. Rives, "The Ku Klux Klan in Kansas City, 1921–1930" (MA thesis, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS), December 1995.

4. Brent M. S. Campney, *This Is Not Dixie: Racist Violence in Kansas, 1861–1927* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), passim. For additional Kansas lynchings not identified in *This Is Not Dixie*, see Brent M. S. Campney, "'The Veneer of Civilization Washed Off': Anti-Black Posse-Lynchings in the Twentieth-Century Rural Midwest," *Indiana Magazine of History* 119 (March 2023): 1–26.

5. "Fort Riley Negro Shot by Policeman," *Manhattan Mercury*, April 2, 1941, 1. See also "Policeman Shoots Colored Man," *Junction City Union*, April 10, 1941, 1.

6. "Kansas Police Kills Soldier in Brawl Near Ft. Riley," *Plaindealer*, April 25, 1941, 1.

7. "Kansas Police Kills Soldier." This article documents that the NAACP branch investigating the killing was based in Kansas City, Kansas.

8. George E. Van Hook to NAACP [New York], January 21, 1943, [p. 1] "Kansas NAACP Branch Office Files, Hutchinson to Kansas City, c. 1940–1955," microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society (hereafter KSHS).

9. On these issues, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Tameka Bradley Hobbs, *Democracy Abroad, Lynching at Home* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2015).

10. James A. Hamlett Jr., "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, October 5, 1945, 1. See also A. L. Foster to Manager, March 9, 1945, in Governor Records, Andrew F. Schoeppel Administration, Box 27-12-08-03, f. 5 "Race Relations, 1942–46," KSHS, Topeka (hereafter Schoeppel Papers). Although outside the purview of this essay, Mexican Americans also reported a sharp backlash as white Kansans attempted to deflate any hope that they too would escape discrimination. In September 1945, Francisco Moralez, a World War II veteran, wrote to Governor Andrew Frank Schoeppel to apprise him of conditions in Lyons, where Mexican Americans enjoyed goodwill during the war—and a sudden chill thereafter. Wrote Moralez: "Three times prior to my discharge I entered the Coronado Inn, my wife and I, and was cheerfully served and was most welcomed and one week later after receiving my medical discharge from the Army, I entered the same restaurant and was completely ignored and was told to get out." Francisco Moralez to Andrew Frank Schoeppel, September 7, 1945, [p. 1], Schoeppel Papers. See also F. N. Maestas to Frank Carlson, September 28, 1949, [pp. 1, 2], in Governor Records, Frank Carlson Administration, Box 27-14-01-02, f. 2, KSHS (hereafter Carlson Papers); and Carlos V. Guzman to Frank Carlson, July 5, 1950, [p. 1], in Carlson Papers.

11. Campney, *This Is Not Dixie*, passim.

12. "A Plea for Negroes," *Emporia Weekly Gazette*, June 30, 1949, 2.

13. "A former Negro basketball star," [undated], in f. "Civil Rights, Housing," Box 3, LLPD.

14. Unknown author, "the highest character," in Elmer Rusco Papers, f. "Inserts from Page 20 Kansas Commission Against Discrimination," KSRL.

15. Eva M. Brown to Robert Dole, April 30, 1968, [pp. 1–2], folder 2, Box 48, "Civil Rights (1 of 3) 1966–1968," Robert J. Dole House of Representatives Papers, 1960–1969, Robert and Elizabeth Dole Archive and Special Collections, University of Kansas.

16. "Report of the Kansas Commission against Discrimination in Employment," March 1951, p. 3, in f. "Pamphlets—Anti-Discrimination Laws and Policies from Various Sources, 1961–64," Box 6, LLPD.

17. "Report of the Kansas Commission," 6.

18. "Report of the Kansas Commission," 11.

19. "Report of the Kansas Commission," 4.

20. "Report of the Kansas Commission," 7.

21. Cited in "Resume of Mrs. Edwyna G. Dones' Complaint," [p. 2], in Governor Fred L. Hall Papers, f. "Race Relations, 1955–1956," KSHS (hereafter Hall Papers).

22. "Memo," in Hall Papers.

23. "Resume of Mrs. Edwyna G. Dones' Complaint," p. 4, in Hall Papers.

24. John McCormally, "Fire Rekindled Under FEPC Bill," *Hutchinson News-Herald*, March 21, 1951, 14.

25. Devlin, *A Girl Stands at the Door*, 151.

26. "Local NAACP to Crack Down Bethel, Kansas School Jim Crow," *Plaindealer*, December 21, 1951, 1.

27. "Segregation to End in Topeka Schools," *Manhattan Mercury*, November 29, 1953, 2. The account in the *Mercury* did not list the nine affected districts. In all likelihood, there were more than nine districts practicing forms of educational Jim Crow.

28. "Segregation to End in Topeka Schools."

29. "End Segregation at Topeka Schools," *Salina Journal*, November 29, 1953, 5. See also, on same page, "May Be On Way Out in Salina."

30. Brent M. S. Campney, "'Hold the Line': The Defense of Jim Crow in Lawrence, Kansas, 1945–1961," *Kansas History* 33 (Spring 2010): 37. For an excellent example of the white state press attempting to distance Kansas from the Deep South and its de jure racism, see "No Riots in Kansas," *Atchison Daily Globe*, October 17, 1954, 6A.

31. "Court Orders Bonner Springs Schools to End Segregation," *Ottawa Herald*, September 21, 1956, 1.

32. "No Segregation," *Manhattan Mercury*, December 9, 1957, 5.

33. Chester I. Lewis Jr., "Hypocrisy," *Hutchinson News-Herald*, April 17, 1950, 4. On Chester I. Lewis Jr., see Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, passim.

34. "A Wichita for Wichitans," *Wichita Post Observer*, July 17, 1953, 2.

35. "Parsons NAACP Files Suit," *Plaindealer*, August 1, 1952, 1. For a similar drowning in Lawrence, see Rusty L. Monhollon, "Taking the Plunge: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Desegregation in Lawrence, Kansas, 1960," *Kansas History* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 138, 140.

36. "Herington Problem to Supreme Court," *Council Grove Republican*, August 18, 1952, 3. See also "Pool Segregation to Court Test," *Iola Register*, August 12, 1952, 6; and "Herington Pool Fight," *Kansas City* (Missouri) *Times*, August 16, 1952, 10.

37. Monhollon, "Taking the Plunge," passim.

38. On the situations in Parsons, see "A Separate Pool Fight," *Kansas City* (Missouri) *Star*, August 12, 1952, 10.

39. William M. Tuttle Jr., "Separate But Not Equal: African Americans and the 100-year Struggle for Equality in Lawrence and at the University of Kansas, 1850s–1960," in *Embattled Lawrence: Conflict and Community* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, Division of Continuing Education, 2001), 149.

40. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Plume, 2005), 124–25.

41. In a noteworthy incident in Kansas City, DeAngelo's Restaurant, after a months-long battle with NAACP activists who sat-in and picketed its policies, chose to move to a private-club format rather than integrate. See "Pickets Back Marching at a Restaurant," *Kansas City Star*, August 25, 1960, 3. One of the owners told the *Star* that "the restaurant would continue business as a private club. Membership cards bearing the name 'DeAngelo's Club' must be shown by prospective customers."

42. All quoted material in this paragraph is from "The Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy," [1960], p. 2, in f. "Papers, History, Etc.," Box 1, LLPD.

43. "Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy," 2–3.

44. See Brent M. S. Campney, "'A White-and-Negro Environment Which Is Seldom Spotlighted': The Twilight of Jim Crow in the Postwar Urban Midwest," *Pacific Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (2021): 84–118.

45. Campney, *This Is Not Dixie*, passim.

46. According to the 1950 and 1960 US Censuses.

47. "NAACP Attacks Bias at Pool," *Wichita Post Observer*, July 17, 1953, 8.

48. "Get Their Man at RH Siding," *Council Grove Republican*, August 8, 1946, 1.

49. On this event, see "Police Chief Slain Monday," *Osawatomie Graphic-News*, February 6, 1947, 1, 12; "Sheriff Returns Miller to Jail in Miami County," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, February 5, 1947, 1; "Kans. Pres. of NAACP Branches Sees Need of Civil Rights," *Plaindealer*, October 1, 1948, 1. For the quote on the dragging, see "Negro Killer Is in Jail Without Bond," *Miami Republican* (Paola, KS), February 7, 1947, 1. The posse in Osawatomie may have been as small as 75 and as large as 400 members. See above and also "Officer Is Killed," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, February 3, 1947, 1.

50. "Osawatomie Negro Held Here after Police Chief Killing," *Lawrence Outlook*, February 6, 1947, 1.

51. See "Kans. Pres. of NAACP Branches Sees Need of Civil Rights"; "State Patrol Comes for Hearing of Killer," *Miami Republican*, February 14, 1947, 1; "Sheriff Returns Miller to Jail in Miami County," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, February 5, 1947, 1; "March 1 is Miller's Day in Court," *Miami Republican*, February 21, 1947, 1; "Negro Killer Pleads Guilty; Is Continued," *Miami Republican*, March 7, 1947, 1; "Leavenworth Kansas," March 21, 1948, in "Kansas NAACP Branch Files: Kansas City to Winfield, c. 1940–1955," microfilm, KSHS.

52. Robey Strader to Andrew Frank Schoeppel, September 4, 1945, Schoeppel Papers.

53. Hamlett, "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, March 2, 1945, 1. For an example of continued sexual violence against Black women decades later, see Ken Stephens, "Two Women File Suit Over Raid at Topeka Club," *Wichita Eagle*, September 11, 1979, 3C.

54. "Marshal's Gun Kills Car Thief," *St. Marys Star*, May 9, 1946, 1.

55. "Release Youth Arrested in Murder Case," *Plaindealer*, October 31, 1947, 1.

56. "3 Shot to Death in Kansas City," *Salina Journal*, August 30, 1954, 9.

57. "No Blame in Shooting," *Kansas City Times*, August 31, 1954, 11.

58. Eve Kimibrell, "Mrs. Holder Is Found Guilty

of Third Degree Manslaughter," *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, May 20, 1959, 1. See also "Delay Murder Charges Against Mrs. Holder," *Hoisington Dispatch*, December 25, 1958, 1; "Patricia Holder Will Face Murder Trial," *Hoisington Dispatch*, March 5, 1959, 1; "Mrs. Holder Convicted," *Hoisington Dispatch*, May 21, 1959, 1; "37-Year-Old Negro Woman Held in S. Hoisington Slaying," *Great Bend Sunday Tribune*, December 21, 1958, 1; "Prosecuting Evidence Ends in Murder Case," *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, May 19, 1959, 1.

59. Patricia Holder cited in "Mrs. Holder Is Sentenced Today," *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, May 28, 1959, 2. Hoisington was a longstanding sundown town, which forced the small Black population to live south of the railroad tracks. See Campney, *This Is Not Dixie*, 78–79, 132, 148; Campney, "'A White-and-Negro Environment,'" 89, 107–8.

60. Hamlett, "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, October 5, 1945, 1.

61. "Post-War Discrimination Mounts in Kansas," *Plaindealer*, November 16, 1945, 1.

62. Cited in "The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People vs. Jim Crowism in Kansas," *Plaindealer*, September 9, 1955, 7.

63. Al Dopking, "Subdue GI Prisoners in Leavenworth Riot," *Atchison Daily Globe*, May 3, 1947, 1. See also "Prison Back to Normal," *Iola Register*, May 5, 1947, 1.

64. "The NAACP Picket on 'Carmen Jones,'" *Plaindealer*, January 3, 1947, 11. Black Americans had also gained leverage during the war, focusing on a Double-V campaign—victory over fascist Germany, Italy, and Japan abroad and victory over anti-Black racism at home.

65. Rosenblum, "Unlocking the Schoolhouse Doors," 51. See also "NAACP is Victor in Kansas School Fight," *Negro Star* (Wichita), June 24, 1949, 1.

66. Rosenblum, "Unlocking the Schoolhouse Doors," 51–52.

67. Rosenblum, "Unlocking," 53.

68. "Kansas Supreme Court Says 'No Discrimination' in Labor Unions," *Plaindealer*, June 14, 1946, 1.

69. "Jimcro Strikes," *Plaindealer*, May 11, 1945, 1.

70. "Negro Children on School Strike," March 10, 1949, in f. "Correspondence, 1948–1949," Box 1, LLPD.

71. See, for example, "Herington Problem to Supreme Court," *Council Grove Republican*, August 18, 1952, 3.

72. "Pool Segregation to Court Test," *Iola Register*, August 12, 1952, 6. See also "Herington Appeal in Swim Pool Case," *Atchison Daily Globe*, August 15, 1952, 2.

73. On the Parsons decision, see "Court Rules Parsons' Pool Open to Negroes," *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, July 7, 1955, 5. For a pool segregation struggle in 1957, see "Fort Scott Ordered to Open Pool to Negroes," *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1957, Section A, p. 2.

74. "Wife of Cafe Man Clear in Race Case," *Kansas City Times*, September 2, 1960, 33.

75. "Café Bars Negroes, Warrant Charges," *Kansas City Times*, June 22, 1960, 3.

76. "Jury Upholds Right to Refuse Service," *Kansas City Times*, August 5, 1960, 7.

77. "Pickets Back Marching at a Restaurant," *Kansas City Star*, August 25, 1960, 3.

78. "Nixon Visits as Negroes Picket," *Kansas Sentinel* (Topeka), October 15, 1960, 1.

79. Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, 38–39.

80. Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, 39.

81. Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, 5. On August 11, 1958, the Dockum chain of drugstores agreed to desegregate the location in Wichita and all other drugstores owned by its parent company. See Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, 9.

82. "Representative Towers," *Plaindealer*, January 17, 1947, 11.

83. "The Independence Branch of the NAACP," December 6, 1945, Branch File, Independence, Kansas, 1943–55, microfilm, KSHS.

84. Edith Porter to Lucille Black, January 12, 1948, in Kansas NAACP Branch Office Files, microfilm, KSHS. Porter's letter identifies the woman in question only as "Mrs. Herbert Bell." In all likelihood, this was Ilabell Bell, who, as of the 1940 census, was forty-seven years old and had a sixty-one-year-old husband, Herbert, and an unmarried twenty-two-year-old son named Herbert Jr. She listed her state of origin as Texas. See Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population Schedule, Abilene, Kansas, May 21, 1940, Sheet No. 22A.

85. "Negro Children on School Strike," March 10, 1949, in f. "Correspondence, 1948–1949," Box 1, LLPD.

86. "Wife of Cafe Man Clear in Race Case," *Kansas City Times*, September 2, 1960, 33.

87. Interview, Rosie E. Hughes and Lequetta Glass Diggs, November 20, 2007, all quoted passages on p. 18 and 19, Wichita, KS, MS 2020–04 Box 1, FF 4, Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Collection of Dockum Drug Store Sit-In Oral Histories, 2006–2008, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives (hereafter WSUL). For a recent article on the Wichita sit-in, see Kate Torgovnick May, "The Brave, Forgotten Lunch Counter Sit-In that Helped Change America," *Washington Post*, February 6, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/02/06/wichita-lunch-counter-sit-in-dockum/ (accessed on July 12, 2022). The Wichita State University interviews used here were conducted in 2007–2008, several years after the publication of *Dissent in Wichita*, and were therefore not included in Eick's excellent study.

88. "Leavenworth Kansas," March 21, 1948, in "Kansas NAACP Branch Files: Kansas City to Winfield, c. 1940–1955," microfilm, KSHS.

89. Mayzelma Wallace to Commission against Employment Discrimination, November 12, 1950, f. "Discrimination in Lawrence," Box 3, LLPD, KSRL.

90. Edwyna G. Dones to Fred Hall, May 13, 1955, in Governor Records, Fred L. Hall Administration, Box 27-15-6-3, f. 1 "Race Relations, 1955–1956."

91. "State Association of Colored Women Close Meeting Here," *Plaindealer*, June 20, 1947, 1.

92. "Club Women Hold Negro History Week Program," *Plaindealer*, March 6, 1953, 3.

93. Interview, Hughes and Diggs, November 20, 2007, p. 20, WSUL.

94. Interview, Dr. Ronald Walters, January 25, 2008, p. 1, College Park, MD, WSUL.

95. Interview, Arlene Harris Ruffin and Joan S. Williams, December 27, 2007, p. 10, Wichita, KS, WSUL.

96. "Reasons Cited for Animosity in Wichita," *Parsons Sun*, August 8, 1967, 4.

97. Campney, *This Is Not Dixie*. See Appendix 1, "Incidents of Racist Violence in Kansas, 1861–1927," 220–38.

98. Hamlett, "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, September 26, 1947, 1.

99. Hamlett, "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, October 10, 1958, 1.

100. Hamlett, "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, June 29, 1945, 2.

101. "The NAACP Picket on 'Carmen Jones,'" *Plaindealer*, January 3, 1947, 11.

102. All quotes are from Devlin, *Girl Stands at the Door*, 123.

103. "Negro Teachers in Kansas Face Unemployment, If Jimcrow Ends," *Plaindealer*, April 10, 1953, 1. See also "Topeka Plans Dismissal of Six Negro Teachers," *Leavenworth Times*, April 7, 1953, 1.

104. Elon Torrence, "End of Segregation Threat to Jobs of Negro Teachers," *Manhattan Mercury-Chronicle*, January 14, 1954, 2. On freedom struggle activism in postwar Los Angeles, see Josh Sides, *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

105. Hamlett, "Week-End Chats," *Plaindealer*, December 30, 1955, 1.

106. "Integration Efforts Pushed in Kansas Less Turbulence," *Leavenworth Times*, June 16, 1963, 6.

107. All these quotes are from interview, Ruffin and Williams, December 27, 2007, pp. 14–15, WSUL.

108. Interview, Dr. Robert Newby, January 25, 2008, pp. 10, 11, Wichita, KS, WSUL.

109. Interview, Dr. Ronald Walters and Carol Parks Hahn, August 8, 2008, p. 1, College Park, MD, WSUL.

110. "Letters from Our Readers," *Plaindealer*, June 21, 1957, 7.

111. Interview, Hughes and Diggs, November 20, 2007, p. 4, WSUL.

112. Interview, Newby, January 25, 2008, p. 16, WSUL.

113. Interview, Walters, January 25, 2008, p. 2, WSUL.

114. Both quoted passages are from interview, Ruffin and Williams, December 27, 2007, p. 35 (Williams) and p. 36 (Ruffin), WSUL.

115. Interview, Hughes and Diggs, November 20, 2007, p. 8, WSUL.

116. Interview, Ruffin and Williams, December 27, 2007, "just very, very," p. 1 (Ruffin), "all those teachers," p. 2 (Williams), WSUL.

117. Interview, Hughes and Diggs, November 20, 2007, pp. 8–9, WSUL.

118. Interview, Hughes and Diggs, November 20, 2007, p. 6, WSUL.

119. Interview, Newby, January 25, 2008, pp. 9, 10, WSUL.

120. Interview, Walters and Hahn, August 8, 2008, p. 1, WSUL.

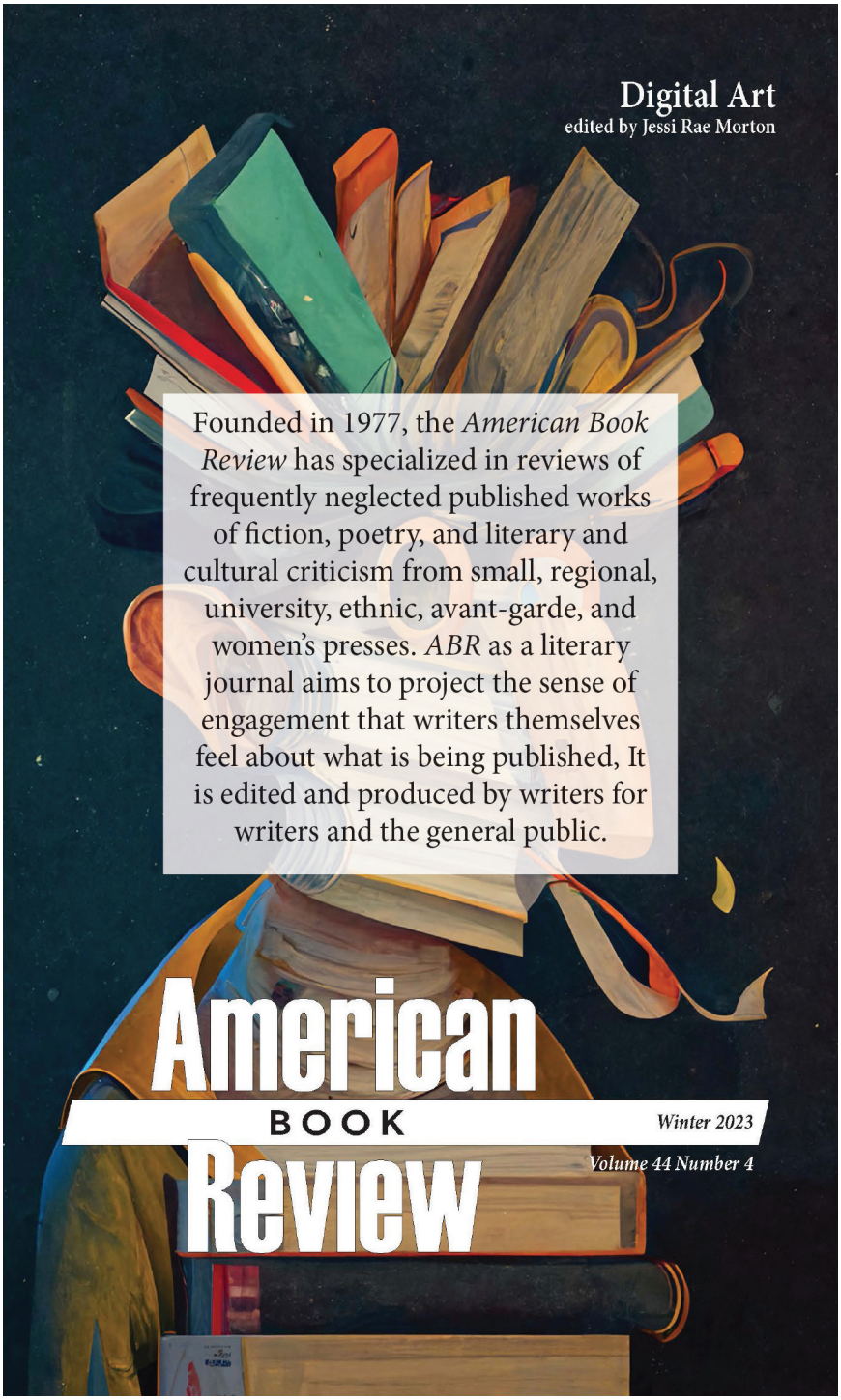
121. Interview, Ruffin and Williams, December 27, 2007, "'Just work really,'" p. 2, "if whatever it is," p. 17, "had resigned," p. 18, WSUL.

122. Interview, Ruffin and Williams, December 27, 2007, p. 15, WSUL.

123. In particular, historians might examine the largely uninvestigated rash of police brutality in Wichita from the mid-1970s through 1980 (and a riot between officers and young Black protesters in 1980), and the killing of a Black man by white officers in Coffeyville in 1980, an event followed by a campaign of intimidation against the Black community. On Wichita, see, for example, Tom McVey, "NAACP Plans Another March to Protest Rejection of Complaints," *Wichita Eagle*, August 25, 1977, 6D; "Board Proposed to Study Charges against Police," *Wichita Beacon*, January 2, 1979, 14B; Reg Fontenot and Bill Hirschman, "Black Perspective," *Wichita Eagle*, June 25, 1979, 1; Ken Stephens, "Slain Youth's Mother Sues Officer, City Over Shooting," *Wichita Beacon*, September 10, 1979, 8C; Mark Cowing, "Police Internal Affairs Unit Still Probing Shooting Death of Man," *Wichita Eagle*, July 12, 1979, 1C; Julie Charlip, "Arrest Sets Off Melee in Northeast Wichita," *Wichita Eagle*, April 23, 1980, 1. On Coffeyville, see, for instance, See Robert Leger, "Police Cleared in Fatal Shooting," *Coffeyville Journal*, January 6, 1980, 1; Jack Huttig, "Blacks Want Shooting Investigation Re-Opened," *Coffeyville Journal*, January 7, 1980, 1; Jack Huttig, "NAACP Anticipates Violent Response," *Coffeyville Journal*, January 18, 1980, 1; "FBI Agent Examines Allegations," *Coffeyville Journal*, January 17, 1980, 1; Jack Huttig, "NAACP Wants Cop Fired," *Coffeyville Journal*, January 10, 1980, 1; "Alexander Criticizes Adams' Promotion," *Coffeyville Journal*, January 25, 1980, 1.

124. Outstanding Topeka-focused studies include Mary L. Dudziak, "The Limits of Good Faith: Desegregation in Topeka, Kansas, 1950–1956," *Law and History Review* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 351–91; and Cheney, "Blacks on *Brown*."

125. Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4, 5.



Black Homesteading in Southern New Mexico

An Undertold Story

RICHARD V. ADKISSON

Abstract: The role of African Americans in the homesteading movement is an emerging topic in US history. This article explores an episode of African American homesteading near Las Cruces, New Mexico, from the late 1920s through the 1930s. In this period, at least twenty-six African American families successfully homesteaded some 23,000 acres of desert land, largely under the Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916. Local knowledge about this homesteading episode exists but is limited and is somewhat overshadowed by other Black homesteading and community-building episodes in the region. The purpose here is to document the episode to bring it into the historical record and provide a foundation for others who might be interested in exploring the topic further.

Keywords: African Americans, Black landownership, Blacks, Las Cruces, Stock-Raising Homestead Act, US land policy, western United States

New Mexico has long been labeled a tricultural state, recognizing the presence of Hispanics, Anglos, and Native Americans. This view has been challenged by other groups whose presence and contributions to New Mexican life have been overlooked, for example, African and Asian Americans. The tricultural label also understates the cultural diversity within the three dominant groups. In recent years, both academics and community groups have pushed to broaden the focus and reframe the state as multicultural rather than tricultural.[1]

In this spirit, this article focuses on an undertold story of African American life in southern New Mexico in which at least twenty-six African American families[2] succeeded at the daunting challenge of homesteading in the New Mexican desert. Among other things, their success demonstrates their determination to claim their place and ascend in a society that dehumanized them, stole their labor, denied them their rights, and systematically limited their opportunities, including the opportunity to own land. "In the face of ongoing discrimination, Black Americans have cultivated deep affirmative ties to the land. In addition to being an instrument of social exclusion, land also serves as a material and symbolic asset in building shared identity and ethos."[3]

Discrimination in landownership leaves an unfortunate legacy in the United States. Wealth and income are unequally distributed among subgroups of the US population, and the wealth gap between white and Black families is especially wide and growing.[4] There is also a

growing economic divide within the Black population. While many individuals succeed, many are left behind. The wealth gap is of particular importance to generational progress. Shapiro, Meschede, and Osoro find the drivers of the wealth gap to be years of homeownership, household income, unemployment, college education, and financial support/inheritance.[5] Jointly, these five factors explain two-thirds of the variation in family wealth. Home (real property) ownership explains 27 percent of the gap, more than any other factor. Relatedly, financial support and/or inheritance explains another 5 percent of the gap. The importance of real property among Black families is notable. Gates found that fifteen of twenty successful African Americans he studied had ancestors who managed to achieve real property ownership by 1920.[6]

In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States federal government created opportunities for individuals to gain ownership of lands from the public domain. In at least two cases, briefly discussed below, a specific intent was to assist recently freed enslaved people (Freedmen) in gaining access to land. While opportunities were open, at least in law, to African Americans, other factors constrained them from taking full advantage of the opportunities. One opportunity that led to some success was the Homestead Act of 1862 and its successors.

The homesteading story is an important piece of American history. Though the Black homesteading story is emerging, it is woefully undertold. A promising vehicle for changing this is the Black Homesteader Project at the University of Nebraska's Center for Great Plains Studies, partially funded by the National Park Service and in collaboration with Nicodemus National Historic Site and the Homestead National Historical Park.[7]

The primary purpose of this article is to use publicly available information to document the extent of Black homesteading in the East Mesa area near Las Cruces, New Mexico, primarily in the 1930s. There is some local knowledge of this story, but its extent is understated in local accounts. The hope is that documenting this story will move the East Mesa story into the growing body of knowledge regarding the role of Blacks in New Mexico (and beyond). A secondary purpose is to encourage descendants of the homesteaders and others with related knowledge to flesh out the East Mesa story with more personalized accounts and perhaps to contribute to the Black Homesteader Project.

Background: The Public Domain and Land Grants to Individuals

From the earliest days of post-Columbian North American history, the availability of land, its use, and its distribution have been significant factors in American history. Shortly after the American Revolution, the new federal government began to accrue public lands and manage them to meet immediate needs and for future national expansion. Land was acquired by purchase, treaty, conquest, and cessions from the original states or from other nations (see Fig. 1). By the time of the Civil War, over 1.4 million acres had come into the public domain. In 1867 the purchase of Alaska brought the total to over 1.8 million acres, representing over 75 percent of the total area of the United States, excluding current territories and possessions.[8] Appropriate management and disposal of this land was, and continues to be, an important and controversial concern of the federal government. Note that in this context,

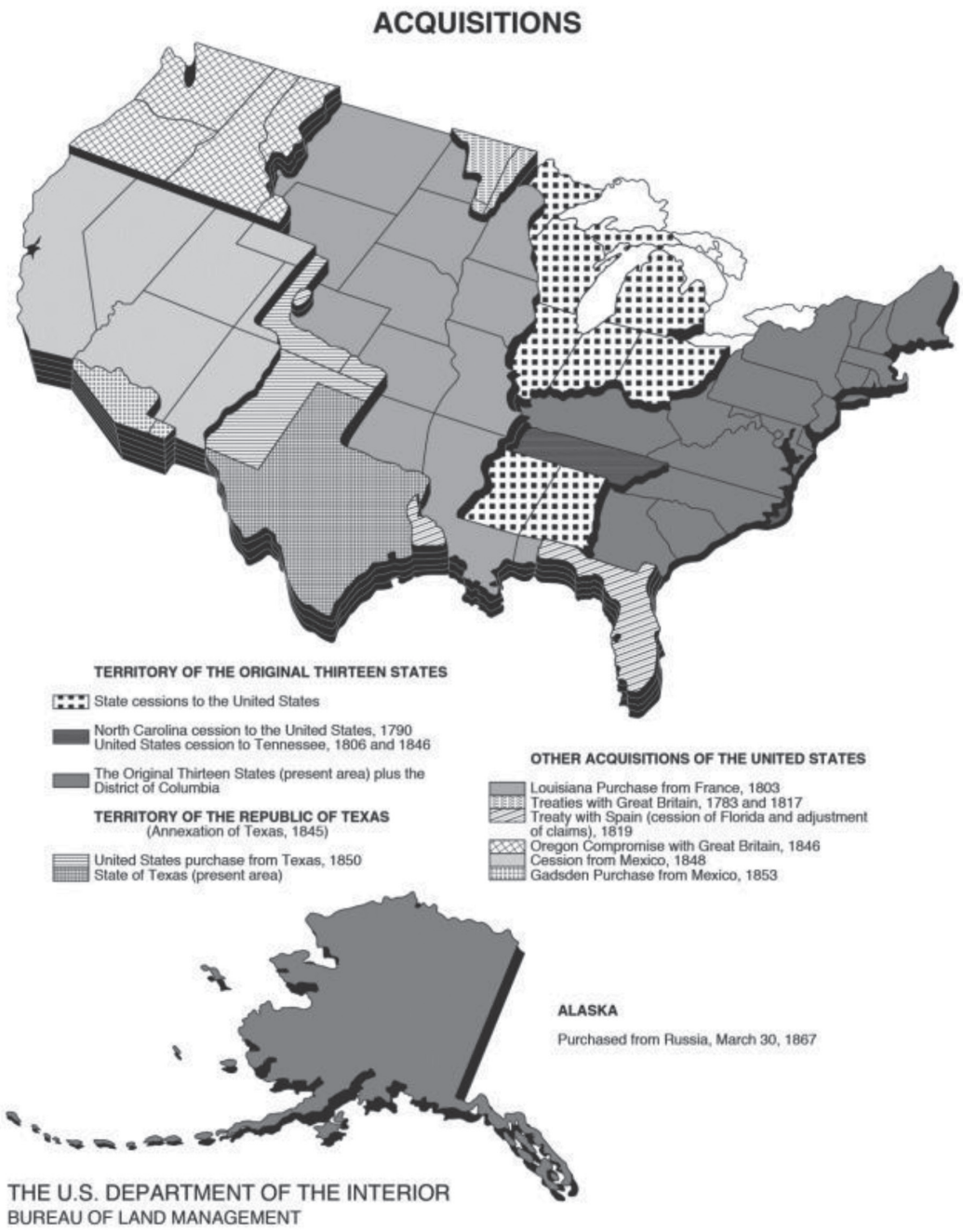


Fig. 1. Acquisition of the public domain, 1790–1867. Source: US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *Public Land Statistics, 2018*, map on p. 3, https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/PublicLandStatistics2018.pdf (accessed October 26, 2022).

"to dispose" has a meaning beyond "relinquish ownership." Rather, it reflects the goal of exploiting the public lands for "the common benefit of all the states in the United States."[9] Over time, much of the land was privatized through sales and grants. Other lands were reserved for various purposes, including land reserved for Native Americans, parks and monuments, conservation, resource reserves, and so on. Some was ceded to new states, sold to pay government debts, or used to promote development and settlement, to reward veterans, and to fund public education, among other things.[10] As of 2020, the federal government still owned about 640 million acres, approximately 28 percent of the nation's total land area,[11] the bulk of which lies in the arid and mountainous western states and Alaska.

The abundance of land discussed above was met by a growing population hungry to possess it. Early conquistadores and others looking for abundant treasure—gold and silver—were disappointed even if land was abundant.[12] Later immigrants from Europe, who left behind social systems where landownership was the key to wealth and status, and out of reach of many, saw things differently. The opportunity to own land was as enticing as gold or silver. Many European settlers adopted the view that landownership was, or should be, a right granted to those willing to toil, working the land, or to those who spilled their blood in conquest.[13] Land was important to non-Europeans as well. Hinson argues that many Africans transported to the Americas had agricultural backgrounds and skills that were applied working the land of their owners.[14] Though even free African Americans were largely prevented from owning land, this background drove African Americans "to eventually acquire the American view of land ownership as pivotal to personhood, independence, and community."[15] This view would reveal itself after emancipation, through the Reconstruction era, and beyond. The seeds of manifest destiny were sown long before the term was coined in the mid-nineteenth century.[16]

Prior to emancipation, African American landownership was difficult. Emancipation did not bring immediate relief:

> Even though free people of color were able to purchase real property in the South, their numbers were few and many states erected barriers that either prohibited land ownership by African Americans or imposed strict limitations on their ability to purchase real property. In the absence of de jure restrictions, there were de facto impediments that came in the form of violence against African Americans who either made land purchases or attempted to make such purchases and the outright refusal by Whites to sell land to them.[17]

Although many forces worked against Black landownership, the US federal government made at least two attempts at land distribution that would ostensibly expand the opportunities of emancipated African Americans to acquire land. One was a series of acts that authorized the federal government to confiscate the property of Confederates, and shortly thereafter, to create the Freedman's Bureau to "provide loyal freedmen and refugees such tracts of land within the Confederate States that was abandoned or acquired by confiscation, sale, or any other means by the United States Government."[18] This allowed freedmen to lease up to forty acres for a period of three years and implied that purchase would be possible after three years. This is the foundation of the oft-

mentioned "forty acres and a mule" promise. No mule was directly promised; however, some settlers were able to borrow surplus military mules and use them to work their plots. Some land was leased to Blacks, but unfortunately, only a fraction of a percentage of available lands ever came under the control of the Freedman's Bureau. Under pressure from former slaveholders and their sympathizers, most of the confiscated land was restored to its original owners by President Andrew Johnson.[19] A second attempt was part of the homesteading movement.

When homesteading is discussed, it is often only the 1862 act, in its earliest form, that is mentioned. In fact, the rules of homesteading evolved as conditions changed. The first major change came during the early Reconstruction era. Later came adjustments in response to the aridity of western lands and in response to mining, timber, grazing, environmental, and other interests.[20] The homesteading idea had been considered much earlier, but southern planters and others were opposed to homesteading because it threatened the plantation system, which relied heavily on the availability of Black labor. There were also broader concerns about upsetting the existing social order. It was only after the secession of the Confederate States that the Homestead Act could pass. The excerpt below summarizes the original Homestead Act.

> The Homestead Act, enacted during the Civil War in 1862, provided that any adult citizen, or intended citizen, who had never borne arms against the US government could claim 160 acres of surveyed government land. Claimants were required to live on and "improve" their plot by cultivating the land. After five years on the land, the original filer was entitled to the property, free and clear, except for a small registration fee. Title could also be acquired after only a six-month residency and trivial improvements, provided the claimant paid the government $1.25 per acre. After the Civil War, Union soldiers could deduct the time they had served from the residency requirements.[21]

Only regions with unappropriated public lands available were directly impacted by the act. Before the act was repealed in 1976 (1986 for Alaska) homesteads were claimed in thirty of the current states. In percentage terms, Nebraska and North Dakota were the most-homesteaded states. Homesteads represented approximately 45 percent of the total land in these states. Homesteads represented over 30 percent of the land area in South Dakota, Montana, Oklahoma, and Colorado. Other states had substantial percentages as well. In New Mexico, about 25 percent of the state's area was homesteaded.[22]

The Homestead Act placed no racial constraints on participation. However, even after emancipation, serious economic and social constraints prevented formerly enslaved people from taking full and immediate advantage of homesteading opportunities. The dire economic straits of the Freedmen meant that, for many, signing sharecropping and annual labor contracts was necessary. This constrained their mobility and subjected them to continued exploitation. Illiteracy and lack of capital were problems as well. Those who could muster the freedom and capital to attempt homesteading still faced social resistance in the form of race-based legal obstacles, violence, or threats of violence.[23] Additionally, it was not until the 1866 Civil Rights Act was passed and the Fourteenth

Amendment to the Constitution was ratified (1868) that the question of whether Blacks were citizens was officially settled. Homesteading was a challenge for anyone. Still, Blacks were clearly disadvantaged in the first years of the homesteading era. In response, the Homestead Act requirements were modified with the intent to lower the barriers to homesteading faced by emancipated Blacks and poor southern Whites.

The Southern Homestead Act of 1866 was a Reconstruction-inspired step in the evolution of homesteading policy.[24] It applied to the states of Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. After years of enslavement, most potential African American homesteaders could not meet even the minimal requirements of the original Homestead Act. Neither could many poor whites. Even with "free" land, significant work and capital resources were required to make the land a farm. The 1866 act initially restricted claims to a maximum of eighty acres, expanded to 160 two years later, reduced the fee to prove a claim from ten dollars to five, prohibited preemption sales, and explicitly prohibited discrimination by race or color. Former confederates were restricted from homesteading in the 1862 law but were allowed to homestead under the 1866 Act, beginning six months after the law's implementation. This delay was intended to allow freedpeople under annual labor contracts to fulfill their obligations without giving others a time advantage in claiming homesteads. Ostensibly, those not under contract or other constraints would have a six-month head start.[25] The results were mixed and varied by state.

Most of the good land had been previously claimed, the remaining lands were often forested or swampy, and the institutional structure required to identify and distribute the land was underdeveloped. When rations were provided to assist struggling southern-act homesteaders, fraud and corruption neutralized the effort. Many potential homesteaders could still not afford the fees, even after they were reduced.[26] There is evidence that Blacks who did homestead were more likely to be successful than were poor white homesteaders, especially if they homesteaded locally,[27] but overall, the Southern Homestead Act was a bust. Edwards sums it up in this way.

> Unfortunately, [southern Blacks] were opposed by the relentlessly aggressive whites who were intent on keeping Blacks on plantations and working the fields. And given Blacks' lack of resources to migrate, the fate of the Black population and of the South generally would mainly be determined on the plantations, not on the South's public lands newly opened to Black (and White) homesteading. *Ultimately, homesteading in the South would be a sideshow* [emphasis added].[28]

Given the large number of Blacks in the South, the Southern Homestead Act seems mostly a failure, although approximately 6,000 Black homesteaders were successful in gaining lands through the act.[29]

After being enslaved and mistreated for centuries, Blacks had high hopes for their lives after emancipation. Unfortunately, hopes were dashed by the failures of Reconstruction and the continued belligerence of southern whites. Many ultimately left the South. Much has been written about the Great Migration of Blacks from the South, circa 1910–1970.[30] This phenomenon certainly had many historical, sociological, economic, and personal consequences. The Great Migration is typically associated with Black migration to northern and midwestern urban areas, though that was not a perfect association.[31] Some Black migration from the South began decades earlier. Beyond those who

successfully escaped bondage, Black migrants after emancipation were moving west to work as cowboys, serve as soldiers, homestead, build communities, and generally to seek freedom and opportunity.[32]

> Between 1870 and 1910, while the total black population more than doubled, the mountain states of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada increased by thirteenfold; the black population in the Pacific states of Washington, Oregon, and California increased five times. By 1910 there were almost a million black people living in Texas, Oklahoma, the mountain and Pacific states. Of course Texas, with 690,000 blacks, and Oklahoma with 137,600 blacks, accounted for most of the total. . . . [T]hey came seeking that opportunity the West had always promised.[33]

Although the Southern Homestead Act was a relative failure, Blacks made significant efforts at homesteading elsewhere and enjoyed some success. Because no information on race or color is recorded in homesteading records, coming up with estimates of Black homesteaders is difficult. Edwards, Friefeld, and Eckstrom estimate that some 3,400 Blacks successfully claimed homesteads in the Great Plains plus Oklahoma.[34] They estimate 1,845 Black claimants in the eight Great Plains states (414,553 acres) and another 1,560 claimants in Oklahoma (232,492 acres). Including family members, they estimate that at least 14,642 Black people lived on successful homesteads in the Great Plains, including Oklahoma. Note that this only includes successful homesteaders. As among all homesteaders, there was likely a similar number of claimants who tried but failed to meet the homesteading requirements for one reason or another. These numbers may seem small when compared to the "failed" Southern Homestead Act's approximately 6,000 successful Black homesteaders; however, when one considers the relatively sparse distribution of African Americans in the Great Plains, the numbers are impressive.

Black Homesteading Communities in the Great Plains

In considering the experience of homesteaders in the Great Plains, it is important to understand the geographic circumstances and the evolution of homesteading policy. The ninety-eighth meridian represents an American frontier of sorts, a transition zone between the more humid east and the more arid west.[35] This is important because, as homesteaders moved farther west, 160 acres was no longer sufficient to support a farming family. To keep homesteaders interested, the allowed acreage was increased first by the Timber Culture Act of 1873, then by the Kinkaid Amendment of 1904, the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, and the Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916. The timber and enlarged homestead changes increased possible homestead size to 320 acres. The Kinkaid and stock-raising changes allowed up to 640 acres to be claimed.[36] The Stock-Raising Act applied only to lands that were chiefly valuable for grazing and raising forage crops, lacked merchantable timber, and could not be irrigated from any known source. It also reduced the residency requirements to three years. The mineral rights on stock-raising homesteads were reserved by the government.[37] All the homesteading sites discussed herein are either very near the ninety-eighth meridian or well to its west.

Not all episodes of Black homesteading have been documented. However, Friefeld, Eckstrom, and Edwards have explored the his-

Table 1. Overview of six Black homesteader colonies in the Great Plains.

Place	*Number of Black homesteaders receiving patents*	*Number of acres homesteaded*	*Approximate years of community*	*Formal or informal foundation*
Nicodemus, Kansas	88	13,350	1877–present; decline began after 1888	Formal
Dearfield, Colorado	37	6,720	1910–1924	Formal
Empire, Wyoming	10	2,741	1911–1920	Informal
Sully County, South Dakota	29	5,170	1882–1930s	Informal
DeWitty, Nebraska	56	29,402	1907–1936	Informal
Blackdom, New Mexico	49	9,625	1903–mid-1920s	Formal

Source: Jacob K. Friefeld, Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom, and Richard Edwards, "African American Homesteader 'Colonies' in the Settling of the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2019): 11–37.

torical record and identified six known Black homesteader colonies in the Great Plains.[38] These are listed in Table 1 along with a bit of information about each place. "Formal," in the rightmost column, indicates that the colony was initially organized as a for-profit enterprise and promoters actively recruited settlers. "Informal" indicates that no central organization was evident, although leading families may have played important roles. Of these, only Nicodemus, Kansas, remains and is now a National Historic Site operated by the National Park Service.[39]

Black homesteaders faced the same challenges as any homesteader, such as boom and bust cycles, bad weather, and so on. Likewise, living in remote areas, homesteading communities needed to create (or recreate) their own versions of cultural and civic life, building and operating schools and churches, developing supporting businesses, gaining a post office, and hopefully attracting the railroad. Black homesteaders faced additional challenges. Although they typically didn't face the violent oppression associated with the South, racism followed them west. Also, according to Friefeld, Eckstrom, and Edwards, white and Black homesteaders were differently motivated.[40] For most white homesteaders, "success was defined as building farms and communities that would *persist* over succeeding generations."[41]

> For many Black homesteaders, their farms were seen as a *transitional* phase, carrying them from the horrors of slavery and Reconstruction to some better future in which their descendants' lives were better but not necessarily tied to a family farm. Their "success" was thus not in whether future generations continued farming, but rather whether the homesteading generation equipped future generations with the life skills and education they would need to succeed in the wider world.[42]

This observation seems to match the case discussed below.

Black Homesteading in Southern New Mexico: Prelude

The East Mesa homesteaders followed two previous episodes of Black homesteading

and community building in southern New Mexico, Blackdom and Vado. The history of the Blackdom community in New Mexico is well documented elsewhere and will only be briefly discussed here. Beside the Friefeld, Eckstrom, and Edwards article and the description provided on the National Park Service Black Homesteading website,[43] Timothy E. Nelson wrote his PhD dissertation on Blackdom, maintains the website "Afro-Frontierism" that discusses Blackdom, and actively works to expand and promote knowledge of the history of African Americans in the West.[44] Austin Miller also completed a master's thesis on Blackdom's history.[45] Important for the present purposes is the fact that Blackdom was no accident. It was incorporated in 1903 by a small group of investors operating as the Blackdom Townsite Company, recruited residents and homesteaders, built a school and other buildings to serve the community, had a post office, and created businesses and farms. Beyond the townsite, by 1929 Blackdom residents had filed sixty-four successful homestead patents for a total of 13,056 acres.

Facing scant rainfall, dry wells, and low post–World War I crop prices, farmers, Black or otherwise, faced severe conditions. This led to an eventual decline in Blackdom's population.[46] Meanwhile, many Blackdom residents had pooled their mineral rights, formed the Blackdom Oil Company, and negotiated oil leases that provided profits for years to come. The capital Blackdom residents accumulated through farming, business, landownership, and leasing mineral rights provided a stake for them to continue their quest for better lives. As Timothy E. Nelson wrote, "Essentially, Blackdom served its purpose, not as a refuge, but an investment vehicle from which the residents/investors withdrew their profits after a maturation period."[47] Blackdom residents scattered, moving to Roswell, NM, Doña Ana County, NM, Bernalillo County, NM, and elsewhere. A remnant of the Blackdom group, led by Francis Boyer, moved west to the Rio Grande Valley in southern New Mexico and began building a new Black settlement at Vado, in south-central Doña Ana County.[48]

The Vado settlement was less reliant on homesteading than was Blackdom. Still, between 1929 and 1942, eight Black homesteaders, including three of the children of Blackdom founders Francis and Ella Boyer, received homestead patents on a total of 1,080 acres in the Vado area. Farming was still important. Francis Boyer purchased land for resale and became a land agent, encouraging other families to settle in the area. Seeing Mr. Boyer's success, white landowners in the region conspired to limit the sales of land to plots no larger than ten acres. Still, Francis Boyer is credited with the introduction of cotton farming to the area and the settlement of forty to sixty Black families in Vado.[49]

The 1940 US Census lists 196 Black-headed households in Doña Ana County. Of these, thirty-two showed their home as Vado, and a similar number lived in other small communities in the Vado vicinity. Today, Vado is a predominantly Hispanic community, but the Blackdom-Boyer legacy is still evident. Among other things, there are two churches built during the Boyer period still in use, a schoolhouse that now serves as a community center, and street signs bearing the Boyer name. Like Blackdom, the National Park Service has recognized the African American presence in Vado.[50]

Black Homesteading in Southern New Mexico: Las Cruces East Mesa

The Blackdom and Vado stories are important and deserve continued development and

telling. Another important, if less known, bit of southern New Mexico history is that of Black homesteading on the East Mesa, near Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The Place

The East Mesa lies at about 4,350 feet above sea level, and about 450 feet above the Rio Grande Valley to its west. It sits to the north-northeast of Las Cruces, NM, bordered on the west by the Doña Ana Mountains and to the east by the Organ Mountains. To appreciate local conditions, we should note that just to the west of the Doña Ana Mountains is the southern end of a portion of the Spanish royal road (*Camino Real*) known as the *Jornada del Muerto* (Journey of the Dead). The land is arid. Desert scrub covers the land. Rainfall is scarce, perhaps eight inches per year on average and variable from year to year. Though the Rio Grande Valley has long been a farming region, even referred to as an oasis in the desert,[51] the land on the East Mesa clearly fits the criteria for the 1916 Stock-Raising Homestead Act, being chiefly valuable for grazing and raising forage crops. Even growing forage crops in the area would be extremely difficult without irrigation.

Compared to the original homestead allocations of 160 acres, the Stock-Raising Homestead Act provision of up to 640 acres may seem generous. Yet, given limited rainfall and other geographic and geological conditions, 640 acres on the East Mesa was far too small to provide a family's living by stock raising. In 1878 John Wesley Powell had recommended pasture homestead allocations of 2,560 acres. Experienced ranchers suggested the need for some 10,000 acres for an efficient grazing operation.[52] Still, the lure of landownership was strong, and homesteaders entered claims. Of

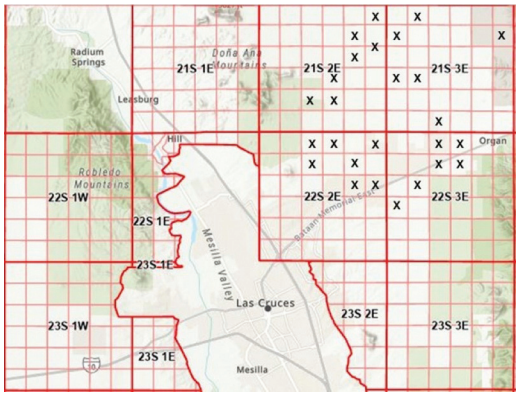


Fig. 2. Location of Black homesteads on the East Mesa. Each × indicates an approximate location. Source: ArcGIS PLSS Map Viewer, modified by author. https://www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=019dd6f39fda4d3b811abfab0878b63b.

the twenty-six Black homesteaders documented to have successfully homesteaded on the East Mesa, twenty-two received patents under the Stock-Raising Act's provisions, which granted patentees surface rights but reserved mineral rights to the US government. The other four homesteaders receive patents under the Enlarged Homestead Act. Figure 2 shows the approximate location of the homesteads relative to Las Cruces, New Mexico.

The People

New Mexico experienced a surge of Black immigration between 1910 and 1920. Besides the push of Jim Crow and Black codes in the South, new opportunities working for railroads and related industries had opened up around this time. Others worked as farmers or servants, or they established businesses in Las Cruces and the region. The surge of Black migration into Las Cruces and Doña Ana County continued after 1920, into the peak East Mesa homesteading years.[53] Unlike the Blackdom case, it is not

obvious that all the homesteaders arrived in the area with the intent to homestead. In an oral history, Grover Pettes, son of a homesteading family, recalls that someone from Santa Fe arranged with his father to meet with local Black men, told them of homesteading opportunities, showed them available land, and encouraged them to explore the opportunities for homesteading.[54] Several members of the local Black population took up the challenge of East Mesa homesteading. To perfect their claims, entrants needed to invest the equivalent of $1.25 per acre in improvements and live on the claim, at least seasonally, for three years.[55] Without mineral rights or reliable and affordable access to water, and little or no access to bank loans, most Black homesteaders on the East Mesa had to rely on outside sources of income to develop and prove up their claims.[56]

A local history mentions fifteen Black homesteading families in the area.[57] With some leeway in spelling, fourteen of these can be tied to public records of homestead patents and to census records. Further investigation reveals this to be an undercount. During the 1930s and early 1940s, at least twenty-six Black homesteaders received patents on a total of 14,494 acres, nearly 23 square miles, of East Mesa land in four adjacent townships[58] (see Table 2). Thus, Blacks eventually owned approximately 16 percent of the four townships. With three nearby exceptions, the homesteads were clustered in a seventy-two-square-mile rectangular area where Blacks owned about one-third of the land. Given that not all homesteaders met with success, anywhere, it is likely that many others entered homestead claims but were unable to prove up their claims.

All but three of the East Mesa homesteaders were born post-emancipation. Most were born in the post-Exoduster (1879) era when many formerly enslaved people moved to the Great Plains, especially Kansas, to homestead. None were born in New Mexico. Twelve were born in Texas, four in Alabama, three in Oklahoma, with the rest coming from Georgia, Louisiana, Mexico, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia. For many of the homesteaders, Organ, New Mexico, was their address during their proving-up period. Organ is a small community, once an active mining town, northeast of Las Cruces.[59] In 1930 twelve of the Black homesteaders were listed in the census with Organ addresses. In 1940 eight Black homesteaders had Organ addresses, five carried over from 1930, plus three newly listed in 1940. Other homesteaders likely called Organ home in the intercensal periods. Many other Black families were listed in the Las Cruces and Organ censuses, suggesting that there were other Black homesteaders who tried homesteading but did not prove up their claims, ran businesses, or worked in other jobs. In all, the pattern suggests that a main goal for many homesteaders was to achieve landownership rather than become lifelong ranchers or farmers.

Stories specific to the homesteading experience reside in the lore of the homesteading families, but the following snippets provide a few examples of the diverse homesteaders associated with the East Mesa.[60]

Whaley H. Gilmore was born in Texas, in about 1881, to parents born in Arkansas. In 1900 he was a servant in the household of Samuel and Elizabeth Worthington in Dallas, Texas. In 1910 he was working as a coachman for Ralph and Edith Long in El Paso, Texas. Later in 1910 he married Juanita Chancell. The couple had two children. By 1920, they were divorced, though all remained in El Paso. The 1920 census shows Mr. Gilmore working as a laborer in a railroad roundhouse. He doesn't

appear in the 1930 census, but the 1940 census shows him still working at the railroad, now as a machinist's helper. The 1940 census records that he also lived in El Paso in 1935. As he successfully patented 640 acres of East Mesa land (Sec. 19, T.21S, R.2E, New Mexico Prime Meridian), he must have moved to the Las Cruces area, at least part-time, somewhere in the 1930s. County records do not clearly show what happened to the land after the patent was issued. As of 2022, the land is owned by the US government and is part of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.[61] Mr. Gilmore died in El Paso in 1961.

The path of the oldest East Mesa Black homesteader is less clear. The 1930 census clearly lists James D. Moore as an eighty-two-year-old physician, boarding in the home of Ida Ford on Lucero Avenue in Las Cruces. He only appears in New Mexico census records in 1930. He died in the area on June 14, 1937. His homestead patent date is May 11, 1938, so he clearly fulfilled the homesteading requirements before his death. The patent for 641.61 acres (Sec. 1, T.22S, R.2E, New Mexico Prime Meridian) was issued to "the heirs or devisees of James D. Moore." In the 1980s several individual owners, possibly heirs, transferred ownership to a trust. More than three-quarters of the land currently serves as the Amber Mesa Subdivision.[62]

One of the homesteading families with a notable legacy in the region is the Jasper and Clara Belle (Drisdale) Williams family. Mr. Williams was born in 1883 in Norfolk County, Virginia, the son of farmers. Mrs. Williams was born in Fayette County, Texas, in 1885. By 1920, the couple was married, caring for two young sons, and running a drug store in El Paso, Texas. Another son would be born a few years later. Their drug store burned in 1924, around the same time a school for Black children was being opened in Vado, New Mexico. Mrs. Williams was offered a teaching job in Vado; she had previously earned a teaching certificate. Eventually her husband would join her in the teaching profession. It was an unfortunate time of school segregation in southern New Mexico.[63] The couple was crucial in providing high-quality education to Black children during this time.

The Williams family moved to Las Cruces where they eventually built a new home, taught, and homesteaded as well. They received a patent for a section of East Mesa land (Sec. 3, T.22S, R.2E, New Mexico Prime Meridian) on July 17, 1936. In 1937, at age fifty-one, Mrs. Williams became the first Black student to graduate from New Mexico State University. Though she thrived academically, she was not well treated as a student. Later, New Mexico State recognized the error of its ways and honored the couple by naming a campus street (Williams Avenue) in honor of the family, apologizing for past actions, naming the English building after Mrs. Williams, and conferring an honorary doctorate on her in 1980. She received many other community and professional honors as well.[64] The family had such an impact on the town and its people that the house they built at 722 North Mesquite is on the New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties.[65] Although Mr. Williams died in 1946 and Mrs. Williams moved to Omaha and then Chicago to be with her sons, the family owned the home for forty-one years, from 1933 to 1974. Mrs. Williams passed away in Chicago in 1994 at age 108. In 2022 Williams family members still own approximately one-half of the original homestead.[66] As of 2022, the land is open, although residential development is moving toward the area.

Table 2. Documented Black East Mesa homesteaders.

Last name	*First name*	*Accession no.*	*Patent date*	*Acres*	*Type*
Strait	Vernella J.	1046935	6/8/1931	640	Stock raising
Parker	Ellis Felix	1050709	10/19/1931	640	Stock raising
Gomez	Carrie	1052419	12/21/1931	636.98	Stock raising
Strait	Earlie Lee (orphans of)	1061027	1/24/1933	320	Stock raising
Washington	Edward W.	1063893	5/5/1933	653.82	Stock raising
Smith	Eva	1064417	5/23/1933	587.31	Stock raising
Dailey	Paris K. O.	1076120	6/6/1935	640	Stock raising
Grundy	Sherman	1077249	8/6/1935	320	Enlarged
Holsome	George	1078463	9/24/1935	320	Stock raising
Pettes	Robert A	1081454	2/25/1936	640	Stock raising
Williams	Jasper B.	1085081	7/17/1936	634.03	Stock raising
Sweat	John	1089309	4/1/1937	640	Stock raising
Edwards	Marshall	1089361	4/7/1937	646.16	Stock raising
Hibler	Lou Ella (widow of Cortez)	1091041	6/28/1937	640	Stock raising
Powers	Thurston W.	1093947	11/23/1937	640	Stock raising
Hester	John	1094623	12/15/1937	317.98	Enlarged
Owens	Henry	1094624	12/15/1937	318.28	Enlarged
Washington	William	1095032	1/17/1938	640	Stock raising
Caraway	Buddy	1095185	1/20/1938	600	Stock raising
Coleman	Henry	1095226	1/20/1938	320	Enlarged
Moore	James D. (heirs)	1097001	5/11/1938	641.61	Stock raising
Jones	Will	1100841	1/11/1939	581.41	Stock raising
Stuart	Edward	1103893	7/22/1939	636.76	Stock raising
Anthony	Mary B. (widow of William T.)	1106666	2/1/1940	640	Stock raising
Gilmore	Whaley	1107171	3/6/1940	640	Stock raising
Olden	James Jesse	1111187	4/26/1941	560	Stock raising

Sources: US Census Population Schedules, 1920, 1930, 1940; Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records.

On February 26, 1936, Robert Anderson and Ella (Combs) Pettes received a patent for 640 acres on the East Mesa (Sec. 11, T.21S, R.2E, New Mexico Prime Meridian). Mr. Pettes was born in 1886. Mrs. Pettes was born in 1889. Both were born in Texas. They were married in 1906. In 1910 they were living in Lamar, Texas, with Mr. Pettes shown as a farmer working on his own account and Mrs. Pettes shown working as a laborer on the home farm. At that time, they had three children. By 1920, the family, now with seven children, lived in McIntosh County, Oklahoma, with Mr. Pettes working as a farmer. By 1930, the family was in Doña Ana County, with an Organ, New Mexico, address, at work proving up their homestead. According to son

Grover Pettes, neither Texas nor Oklahoma provided the opportunities or safety Mr. and Mrs. Pettes desired for their family. The family left Oklahoma intending to reach California but decided instead to stay in Las Cruces.[67]

Mr. Pettes was eventually able to buy additional land near Highway 70. In the 1960s, with family cooperation, he successfully drilled a water well to irrigate some of his farmland. Later, with the help of his son Grover and other family members, they started the Mesa Development Center, developed the water resources into a local commercial water system, and developed some of the land for residential use. The City of Las Cruces purchased the water company in 2016.[68] Descendants of Robert and Ella Pettes still own much of the original homestead and Mesa Development property.[69] Many descendants still live in the area. Mrs. Pettes died in 1970 and Mr. Pettes in 1974. Both are buried, along with a few other East Mesa homesteaders, in Community Cemetery in Las Cruces, a cemetery the Pettes family helped to establish.

The Legacy

Public stories of life on Black homesteads on the East Mesa are just coming to light. A recent interactive mobile high-tech exhibit, "Facing the Rising Sun: The Journey of African American Homesteaders in New Mexico," has been produced and exhibited in Albuquerque. This exhibit covers homesteading in the whole state but with significant attention paid to the East Mesa homesteading community. Two of the six families featured in the exhibit are the East Mesa homesteading families of Jasper Williams and Robert Pettes. Other family stories are still emerging and, hopefully, families will continue to tell their stories. Rita Podrell,[70] the driving force behind the exhibit, emphasizes the importance of the homesteaders in resisting the encroachment of Jim Crow–type policies and actions, school segregation for example, into New Mexico. Not that New Mexico was a haven of equality and justice.

Nationally, Black success was being met with jealousy and often violent reactions, an extreme example being the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Lynchings of Black men and women were openly carried out with few if any consequences for their executioners. The second Ku Klux Klan was growing, expanding its geographic reach and message of hate for Blacks, Jews, Catholics, Hispanics, and immigrants. Racial segregation, enforced especially in the South, was nearly as bad in other regions of the country. The racist film *Birth of a Nation* was being widely and openly presented.[71] Locally, some businesses practiced racial segregation, and beginning in the 1920s Black children were sent to segregated schools, partially in response to migrants from the South who had brought Black servants with them. Opportunities for professional employment were limited, and some employment and housing were offered to "Anglos only." Similarly, racial bias was evident in entertainments, fraternal organizations, newspapers, and the like. The Ku Klux Klan was established in El Paso, Texas, and attempted (unsuccessfully) to recruit Las Cruces Masons. Although these and similar actions were probably not as worrisome as they were in other regions, there is no doubt that non-Anglos, including local Blacks, faced many undeserved challenges in their day-to-day lives.[72]

In contrast to Blackdom or Vado, the East Mesa community, according to Ms. Podrell, was a community under a community. It existed as a Black community even as it shared its life within the broader community of Las

Cruces and the region. It was (and is) a community of belief, hope, vision, and hard work. Homesteaders, along with other Black residents, worked in the area, owned businesses, started churches and schools, pushed for quality education, built homes, and so on. On the homesteads they provided mutual aid and testified on their neighbors' behalf in the process of proving up their homestead claims. Their vision and legacy lives on in their descendants as well as in the local community.[73]

Until recently, the history of East Mesa Black homesteading had been somewhat shrouded. Residents of the Las Cruces area might be surprised to find that many local landmarks, residential areas, institutions, and businesses sit on land first privately owned by Black homesteaders. The Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park is just one example. The Red-Hawk Golf Club is another. Part of the NASA–White Sands Test Facility lies on a former East Mesa homestead as do many residential subdivisions and businesses. Some of the homestead land is still largely open scrub desert, much as it began, but clearly the Black homesteading movement on the East Mesa was, and continues to be, influential in the local community and beyond. It is an important part of local, state, and American history that is worth telling.

Conclusion

The discussion above points to some tentative conclusions about the East Mesa homesteading experience. First, it seems to have been an informal process. No doubt there were leaders among the homesteaders and the community, but the homesteading movement does not seem to have been premeditated nor organized with the formality of Blackdom. The evidence suggests instead that most homesteaders came to the area for other reasons and pursued homesteading after arrival. Once the opportunity arose, members of the Black community pursued the opportunity with vigor and determination. Few others were bold enough to try homesteading in the challenging East Mesa area.

Second, the goals of most homesteaders seem to have been transitional, as discussed above. Of the four families outlined above, three clearly had long, productive, vibrant lives in region, but it appears that many East Mesa homesteaders fulfilled the minimum homesteading requirements and gained ownership of the land but did not clearly intend to become ranchers or farmers on the East Mesa land. The land, without access to sufficient water, was not well suited to allow this outcome, even if a homesteader hoped to succeed at farming or ranching. This was not unique to the East Mesa experience, as Leshy observes. "[M]any who tried to make it as rancher-homesteaders were doomed to failure, and many of the public lands privatized under the SRHA [Stock Raising Homestead Act] ended up being consolidated into larger ranches or reacquired by the United States in rescue operations."[74] One might say that homesteading on the East Mesa (and elsewhere in the arid regions) was a tough row to hoe.

Finally, although the homesteads were ill suited to productive ranching or agriculture, at least in one-section units, much of the land eventually found economic use. The Mesa Development Center of the Pettes family provides one example. Water was found, developed, and turned into a successful and long-enduring business venture. It set the stage for residential development in the area as well. Several of the former homesteads have been subdivided and exist today as residential or business districts.

Others are currently being developed. In many cases, ownership of the original homesteads remains in the hands of homesteaders' descendants, which suggests pride in their ancestors' accomplishments, pride of landownership, hope for future benefits, and success in the original homesteaders' explicit or implicit intent to equip future generations for broader success.

Public records can provide only broad insights into the history of Black homesteading on the East Mesa. The human stories behind the facts of homesteading are also valuable and interesting. A logical extension of this research would be to seek insights into the human side of the experience. For example, descendants of the homesteaders could choose to share family lore and perhaps photographs with the Black Homesteader Project. Insights into the homesteading experience could also be heightened by further examination of the homestead application documents available from the National Archives. These would list the improvements made to the land by the homesteaders as well as allow one to examine the interrelationships among homesteaders who testified to the veracity of the claims made on the applications of their neighbors. On the physical level, it might be possible for an archeological team to identify, study, document, and perhaps preserve the remnants of homestead improvements.

Black Homesteading deserves its place in the broader history of the Great Plains and the nation. Hopefully, this work will add to the ongoing documentation of Black homesteading, provide a foundation for further research, and perhaps inspire those with personal stories to share them with others.

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A Genuine Granger Song

Reverend Knowles Shaw and "The Farmer Is the Man"

THOMAS D. ISERN

Abstract: "The Farmer Is the Man," a balladic statement of farm fundamentalism that resonated with agrarian movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, originated as a granger ballad in Kansas in 1874. The original text was first published January 7, 1874 in the *Osage Mission Journal*, with a clear author attribution: Knowles Shaw, the well-known revivalist preacher and hymn writer. Its message that "the farmer is the man who feeds them all," with its attendant disparagement of other, lesser occupational classes, was more representative of grassroots grangerism than of Grange leadership. The song is representative not only of the general efflorescence of balladry in the Great Plains during the late nineteenth century but also on the reinterpretation of such literature by scholars such as Louise Pound as folk art rather than anthropological curiosity. During the summer of 2023, youth campers still sang "The Farmer Is the Man" from their official camp songbook.

Keywords: ballads, farm fundamentalism, Farmers Union, folk song, Patrons of Husbandry, Louise Pound

The published songbooks for the North Dakota Farmers Union's annual summer youth camps—which first convened in 1934 near Spiritwood Lake and continue to this day at Lake Tschida—are eclectic. There are the silly summer-camp standards like "God Bless My Underwear"; there are old popular songs like "Jeremiah Was a Bullfrog" that camp managers somehow think might appeal to young folks; and here and there, peeking out like pieces of old farm machinery parked in the shelterbelt, are a few old standards of farm organization and agrarian advocacy on the prairies—like "The Farmer Is the Man." The summer camps were intended not only for recreation but also for education in cooperation, the virtues of farm life, and the place of family farming in the world. Generations of summer campers have sung,

When the farmer comes to town
With his wagon broken down,
Oh, the Farmer is the man who feeds them all.
If you'll only look and see
I think you will agree
That the Farmer is the man who feeds them all.
The Farmer is the man
The Farmer is the man.
Lives on credit til the fall (til the fall).
Then they take him by the hand,
And they lead him from the land,
And the middle man's the one who gets it all.[1]

Farmers Union campers and generations of songsters before them, such as the singers and glee clubs of the People's Party in the 1890s and of the Nonpartisan League (NPL) in the 1910s, were accustomed to voicing their agrarian grievances in song. Populists sang their

contempt for "the railroads and party bosses" via the stanzas of "The Hayseed," composed by Arthur L. Kellogg and first published in 1890.[2] Thirty years later John Carmichael urged NPL members to sing his new ballad that declared, "We will vote no more for lawyers / We will vote no more for crooks."[3] Such songs belabored standard grievances—high railroad rates, high interest rates, the grasping levies of the middlemen—but at their best, they assessed the farmer's place in the world and disclosed deep-seated insecurities. Fervent and poetic they might be, but they retained no memory of this notice in the *Osage Mission Journal*, published in northeast Kansas, 7 January 1874.

> Grange Song.—The song, composed by the Rev. Knowles Shaw was not received in time for publication this week, but will appear in your next issue. It is a genuine granger song, with the true ring, and we predict for it a popular run.

The *Journal* editor was more prescient than he knew. He commenced the dissemination of Reverend Shaw's granger anthem by publishing it on 14 January 1874—seven five-line stanzas plus a six-line chorus:

> Then take him by the hand,
> All ye people of the land;
> Stand by him whatever troubles may befall;
> We may say whate'er we can—
> Yet, the farmer is the man—
> Yes, the farmer is the man that feeds them all.

"The Farmer Is the Man," a stirring declaration of farm fundamentalism (the belief that agriculture is fundamental to society and the economy, and that farming is the most virtuous way of life), has been a recurrent element in the discourse of agrarian activism and farm associations in the Great Plains ever since its appearance in Kansas in 1874 (see Appendix). It holds place as a survival of the remarkable efflorescence of balladry that bespoke the regional culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a time when, as William Allen White, recalling his boyhood environment in Butler County, Kansas, declared, "All the world seemed singing."[4] Moreover, the song's origin as the composed work of the singing evangelist Knowles Shaw situates it squarely within the lines of scholarly interpretation of the balladic culture of the Plains.

The closing decades of the 1800s and early ones of the 1900s witnessed an efflorescence of folk song in the Plains enabled by a convergence of causes and regional conditions. Key was the seemingly instantaneous emergence of communities, urban and rural, and the connection among them with railroad development. The situation of Plains country towns on whatever railroad and at whatever latitude resembled, in its fundamentals, the situation described by geographer John C. Hudson.[5] The economic fundamentals, however, constituted a platform on which remarkably vital community cultures emerged with astonishing rapidity. Moreover, in addition to the micropolitan societies of the Plains country towns, the countryside boasted a mosaic of agricultural communities, notably ethnic immigrant in nature. Immigrants invested most of the farmland and preserved old-country institutions, especially churches, but there also was a network of English speakers who had their own rural outposts: country schoolhouses, while sometimes physically rude, harbored social activities and literary societies. The interactions and percolations of these peoples, so complex as to be almost impossible to capture in a history, may be absorbed as a collateral benefit of deep read-

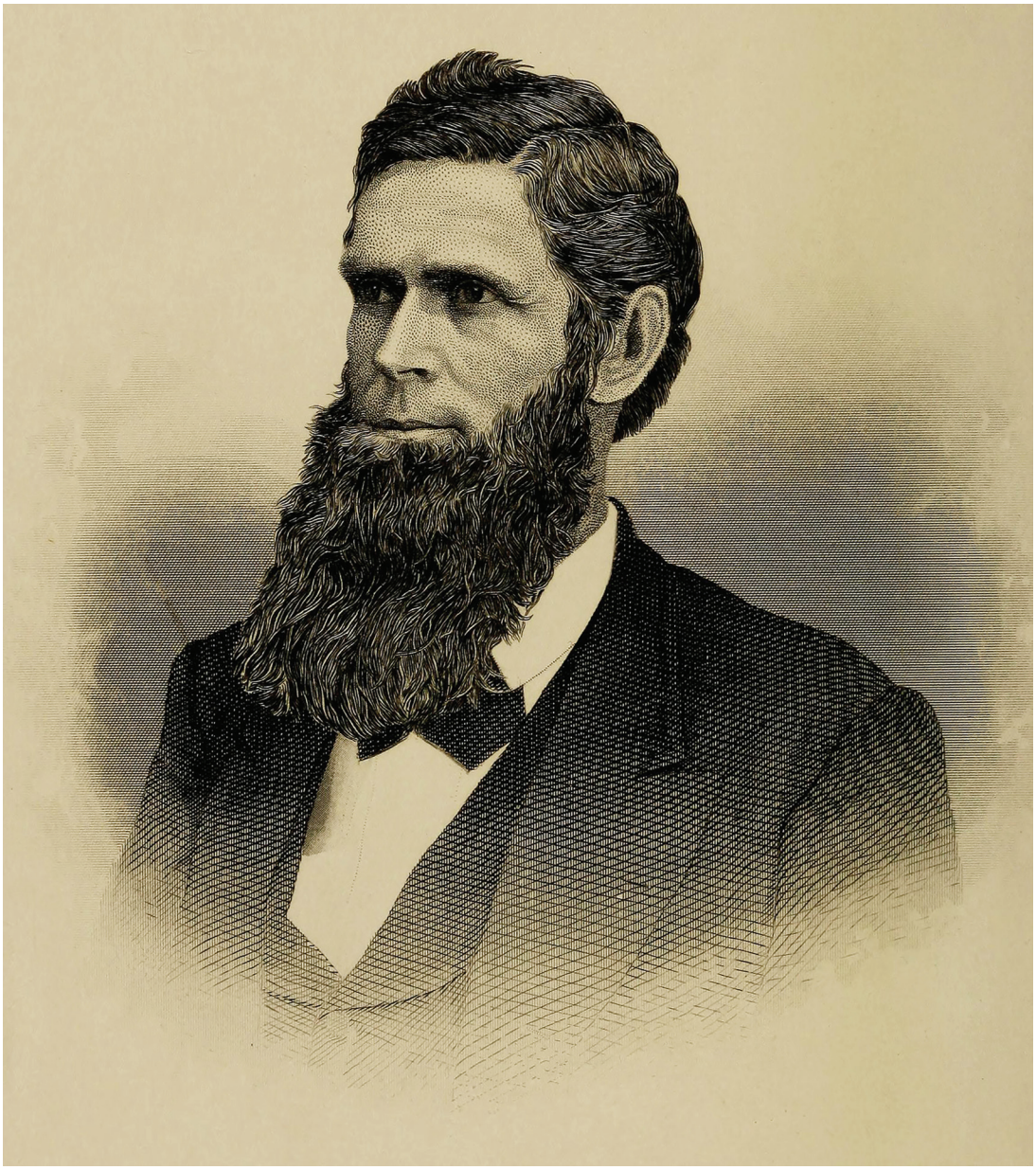

Fig. 1. The Reverend Knowles Shaw, composer of revivalist hymns and of the Granger song "The Farmer Is the Man." Portrait from *Life of Knowles Shaw, the Singing Evangelist* (1879), courtesy Internet Archive. Public domain.

ing in regional newspapers—such as occurs in the search for prairie ballads.[6]

The proliferation of country-town newspapers, which thrived generally on community growth and specifically by publication of homestead notices, was key to the surge in balladry in the Plains. Newspapers needed copy, and thus published every ballad that came their way. What happened at the lodge or the literary meeting did not stay at the lodge or the literary. If a bachelor homesteader sought to impress the schoolteacher with an original ballad, the performance would be reported in the local press. With their network of country correspondents, editors had eyes and ears everywhere. If they failed to get wind of a ballad circulating in the community, someone, likely its author, would bring it into the newspaper office. The practice of newspaper exchange, too, meant that editors had access to the columns of weekly newspapers up and down the railroad line and could lift items freely—including ballads. In lieu of the venerable oral tradition that had been considered by ballad scholars to be the qualifying medium for folk ballads, newspaper publication and the exchange system propelled and compounded ballad dissemination and evolution in the Plains.[7]

There were striking developments to be chronicled in balladry: successive frontiers in every locality, the vagaries of a changing climate, and general agrarian unrest following agricultural settlement. Such developments, and their circumstances, were the stuff of ballads, but the ballads did not just happen. People—people like Knowles Shaw, not events or circumstances—composed and sang ballads. There was a balladic culture abroad on the settlement landscape of the prairies. The public was highly literate and appreciative of local literary efforts. The people patronized literary societies and other organizations and venues wherein balladeers held forth.[8]

The National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, commonly referred to as the Grange, and its adherents, commonly called grangers, were outstanding exponents of the region's culture of balladry, deploying song as an organizational fixture for rallies and celebrations. Founded in 1867 by Oliver Hudson Kelley as a fraternal organization for farm families, as well as a means of improving their social and economic situations, the Grange enjoyed early growth concentrated in Minnesota. Economic privation and environmental challenges during the 1870s spurred spread of the organization across the Midwest and into the settlement landscape of the Great Plains. Grangers engaged in economic cooperation and entered politics on a nonpartisan basis, demanding regulation of grain elevators and the railroads. During the heyday of the Grange, the 1870s, the movement had an evangelical cast. The Grange partook of what historians of the Farmers Alliance and People's Party later would term the "movement culture" of farm folk.[9]

The first local grange in Kansas emerged in Brown County in April 1872. Organizational progress in the state was slow until state master Frederick H. Dumbauld and state secretary George Spurgeon took the field to initiate four hundred granges during the period December 1872 to June 1873. A call for a state meeting in Lawrence on July 30, 1873 resulted in formal organization of a state grange, with local granges in sixty counties.[10]

As the Grange burgeoned in Kansas in the 1870s, it evidenced some tension as to its appropriate posture. When a national Grange lecturer named T. A. Thompson keynoted the state meeting in Lawrence in 1873, he emphasized such words as "association," "harmony,"

"sociability," and "concert of action." "The Grangers were not opposed to railroads and other enterprises," he asserted. "They were not even opposed to middle men, but they were opposed to having too many."[11] No hint here of class-conscious stridency—what cautious grangers termed, with trepidation, "agrarianism." Such measured caution was in line with the "Declaration of Principles" adopted at the national grange meeting earlier in the year, which proposed "to bring producers and consumers, farmers and manufacturers, into the most direct and friendly relations possible."[12]

On the other hand, there was restive anger at the grassroots, which found expression in public screeds and now-forgotten ballads. Common were statements like that of local writer Robert Patterson in the *Marshall County News* of March 28, 1874. "I like to go for the merchants, even in this small place," he declared. "They will cheat us on our grain, and then give us two and one-half pounds of coffee for a dollar. That is downright robbery. . . . Us farmers, without doubt, have been swindled as much, or more, than any other class of people on earth"—and so on, assailing antagonists ranging from implement dealers to fruit tree peddlers. A balladeer from the same town decried "They who despise your honest toil / And on your Sacred Rights would trample."[13] Over in Manhattan, a balladeer named Jotham Winrow vowed, "No longer shall rings and monopolists revel / In luxury wrung from the rough granger's hand."[14]

The year Shaw's ballad emerged, 1874, newspaper reports described the grand Fourth of July celebration at the rural community of Wild Cat, Riley County, Kansas, "gotten up and successfully carried out by the Patrons of Husbandry."[15] "At an early hour in the morning," we read, "carriages and wagons loaded with living freight, and horsemen could be seen passing along our streets" of Manhattan. The celebrants paused at the rural residence of S. D. Houston to form up into a "grand procession" that made its way to Wild Cat following the Manhattan cornet band and sporting the banners of their local granges. The banner of the Bluemont grange bore its motto: "The farmer is the man sir"—a direct reference to Reverend Shaw's anthem. There ensued a day of fervid oratory and joyful singing, as well as toasts (nonalcoholic, of course—this was the Grange!): to "The Dignity of Labor," "Plough Deep," "Hoe Your Own Row," and one more specifically addressed to US senator James Madison Harvey, who was present: "The farmer is the man, sir." And then an unplanned dance party broke out in the grove by the schoolhouse.

Documentation of the further dissemination of Shaw's granger ballad is oddly sparse, given the exchange practices of newspapers, but it must have been extensive and perhaps peculiar to grangers. Editorial notes during the 1870s identified the song as being of interest to the patrons of husbandry, and there was then no more general popular enthusiasm for it. The original publication in the *Osage Mission Journal* of January 14, 1874 bore the legend "Written for the Journal, and dedicated to the Patrons of Husbandry" and appeared under the title "The Farmer Is the Man that Feeds Us All." The author attribution was simply "By Knowles Shaw." The piece was author-dated 1 January, from Thayer, Kansas. On 19 February the *Leavenworth Weekly Times* published a slightly variant text under the abridged title, "The Farmer Feeds Us All." The author attribution was merely "K." at the end, an indication of some familiarity with Reverend Shaw. On the same day the *Times* reported,

> The Granger's song, composed by Rev. Knowles Shaw, which recently appeared in this paper, has been published in sheet music for only Hoffman & Co. [a local music store], and is destined to become popular.

Months later, on October 24, 1874, the *Oswego Independent* published the ballad, as the editor noted, "By Request" (of readers). This is the extent of the early print record; other circulation was informal. Even as the Grange itself faded toward obscurity, it published "The Farmer Is the Man" in its 1891 national songbook, *Grange Melodies*.[16]

The song had been seeded across the Central Plains because it sprouted volunteer when the Farmers Alliance and the People's Party came to the fore of farm activism in the 1890s. In 1890–94, republished texts of Shaw's song appeared, without credit to him, in the Jennings *Alliance Times*, the *Pratt Union* (twice), the Greensburg *Kiowa County Times*, and doubtless other papers not yet digitized. The song had gone feral, running untethered by known authorship—it was a folk song.[17]

The first iteration of the song published in Pratt included a new detail connoting the process of informal transmission and self-conscious revision characteristic of balladry of the place and time: a change in tune. The original melody (judging by the published 1891 version) contained some difficult intervals, and moreover, being original to Reverend Shaw, was not known to potential new singers. Thus the Pratt editor, no doubt reflecting the practice of his locality, added the note: "Air:—'Sod Shanty on the plains,'" indicating the song could be sung to the tune of the known and popular anthem of the homesteading frontier, "Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim."[18]

As the song moved through successive movements and localities, its tune evolved in other ways—generally not by jumping tracks to some other known melody, but rather by smoothing out the intervals and making it easier to sing. This process is obscure, because commonly the sources—mostly newspapers—did not publish melodies, only texts. In the post-frontier era, too, editors, perhaps no longer so desperate for copy, often just referred to the song, without belaboring it. Thus we have texts from Omaha, Nebraska, in 1915, Aurora, Nebraska, in 1916, Kansas City, Kansas, in 1917, and Friend, Nebraska, in 1918.[19] These exhibit considerable evolution of text since 1874, but stanzaic structure is stable, and likely the tune, also. The report from Aurora details a picnic of the Farmers Union that featured "good songs from local singers." Its "grand parade" proceeded with automobiles rather than horses and carriages. The Hillcrest quartet—comprising George Doell, Peter Doell, Jacob Kliver, and Peter Gegier—gave such a rousing rendition of "The Farmer Is the Man" that the crowd demanded it be encored.[20]

Somehow, by mid-twentieth century the tune assumed the more simplified contour by which it is still sung today. A historical feature provided by the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1965 provides a chorus similar to what was given at the outset of this paper, beginning, "The farmer is the man, the farmer is the man"—which cannot be sung to the original tune.[21] This betrays the simplified (and better, in this critic's opinion) tune to which folkies of mid-twentieth century sang it—such as Pete Seeger, recording the song for Folkways Records in 1956.[22] This also is the melody sung by latter-day Farmers Union summer campers.

Although Pete Seeger sometimes gets credit as author, we now know from definite attribution on its first publication in 1874 that the

composer of "The Farmer Is the Man" was, in fact, the singing evangelist, Knowles Shaw. A native of Ohio, Shaw had a hard life as a boy, the narrative of which produced a great conversion story to be deployed in his adult ministry. The story goes that his father died, leaving his young son little with which to support his mother and siblings—except a fiddle. So he took to playing country dances, during one of which, between sets, he renounced the sins of the fiddle and dancing. He became a temperance crusader, commenced preaching the evils of alcohol in local churches, and was so good at it that he transformed into a traveling revivalist.[23]

Moreover, Shaw turned his musical talents to faithful service, composing hymns, many of which were gathered and published as authored collections. His most famous composition was that Protestant standard, "Bringing in the Sheaves"—the verse-chorus structure of which, and elements of its melodic contour, resemble "The Farmer Is the Man." Shaw was himself acclaimed as a resonant and stirring singer. Before a revival meeting, he commonly conducted a singing school, teaching the faithful to sing his songs.

There is no known record of Shaw's direct involvement with the Grange, but its revivalist spirit must have affected him, leading to his dedication of an original composition to the granger cause. There is extensive knowledge of Shaw's career as an evangelist traveling the Midwest—he is the subject of an admiring biography by William Baxter, *Life of Knowles Shaw, the Singing Evangelist*, published in 1879, a year after Shaw was killed in train wreck in Texas—but both the biography and newspaper narratives are rendered less-than-reliable by an excess of piety.[24] The standard sources also completely omit the fact that Shaw spent much of his productive life in Kansas, where he wrote his granger ballad.

The newspapers of Kansas, although silent as to Shaw's connections to the Grange other than his ballad, cover his life there from 1872 to 1875, assiduously. His residence was south of the country community of Tioga, not far from Thayer, in Neosho County, the southeast part of the state. Shaw was located there by February 1872, evidently newly arrived.[25] He traveled frequently to conduct meetings in greater population centers—Topeka, Manhattan, Lawrence, and Leavenworth. A reporter in Topeka noted, "Mr. Shaw is a musician as well as a preacher, and always has a musical rehearsal for half an hour before each service."[26] The *Leavenworth Times* reported on Shaw's "unbounded success in his revival meetings" in early 1874, while a Lawrence paper noted the "religious excitement" around his meetings.[27] In 1878, when Shaw died in a railroad accident near McKinney, Texas, the *Times* of Leavenworth observed that people in Kansas had "pleasant recollections of his revival work."[28] In later years local newspapers sometimes recognized Shaw as the composer of "Bringing in the Sheaves," but never mentioned "The Farmer Is the Man."

News reports might seem to portray a Shaw divergent from popular images of balladeers as rustic singers perched on front porches or gathered around campfires, but any such cognitive dissonance is due to mistaken notions about the very origins of balladry, notions that originated with the most elite literary authorities of the land. The foremost exponent of ballad scholarship in America in the early twentieth century was George Lyman Kittredge of Harvard University.[29] Kittredge and his colleagues, following the intellectual precedents of English scholars, considered the ballad a deceased genre. Its creators, centuries dead,

were assumed to be nameless and tribal. This conception of the origins and status of balladry was an ill fit with what was happening in the Plains, to the consternation of Louise Pound, of the University of Nebraska. She not only had compiled a pioneering collection of Nebraska folk song, but also authored a provocatively revisionist work, *Poetic Origins and the Ballad*. Pound, Nebraska-born, stood up for her home country. She argued that ballads were not anonymous tribal traditions generated by group authorship during the inaccessible past but rather the creations of self-conscious, possibly identifiable, folk artists.[30]

Pound's sense of the ballad, although she was not entirely consistent in its application, is wonderfully congruous with the practice of balladry in the Great Plains in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here, proud folk artists expressed themselves poetically and were delighted when their balladic progeny went out successfully into the world. There was no typical balladeer—the bards of the prairies were schoolteachers, farmers, cowboys, political operatives, hobos, even outlaws—but they were not nameless. With benefit of digitization and optical character recognition, it is now possible to identify them and trace their compositions. Reverend Shaw, a self-taught musician who wrote popular hymns and led popular singing schools, fits the mold described by Pound quite well. "The Farmer Is the Man" is his only known secular composition.

"The Farmer Is the Man" is imbued with Granger sensitivities. It is avowedly democratic and moralistic, abjuring nobles and kings and going on to expose the self-interested corruption of presidents, governors, and legislators, when all the time it is the farmer who feeds them all. Indeed, even at home the farmer finds himself surrounded by calculating speculators, idle professionals (preachers?—perhaps Shaw had more of a sense of humor than is commonly credited!—lawyers, doctors) and mere artisans (tailors and smiths). Worst of all are the "great monopolies," the excesses of which work Shaw into an apocalyptic fervor, with a "day of rec'ning" coming and Granger "armies" taking up the "battle for the right." If we did not know by author credits that Shaw wrote "The Farmer Is the Man," we might deduce simply from the rhetoric that the author is a fervent evangelical.

Shaw's evangelism in this case serves the cause, more broadly, of what would come to be called by agricultural economists and other students of agricultural affairs "farm fundamentalism" or "agricultural fundamentalism." Farm fundamentalism is the bane of hardheaded agricultural economists, who see it as the determination of farmers to behave irrationally, to indulge in sentimental or even chauvinistic beliefs that distort markets.[31] Farm fundamentalism, however, is a consistent thread that runs from the Grange right through a series of agrarian movements in the Plains to the present-day Farmers Union.

In 1962, therefore, the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association convened a panel of scholars to consider the origins and currency of farm fundamentalism in American life and policy. Leading off the panel was none other than Gilbert C. Fite, a farm boy from South Dakota who was carving out a career as America's greatest agricultural historian, but who was known to his friends to harbor no delusions about the pleasures of farm life in the Plains. Fite ably isolates the elements defining farm fundamentalism:

Fig. 2. "I Feed You All!" Lithograph published by American Oleograph Co., Milwaukee, 1875, echoing the Granger farm fundamentalism expressed by Knowles Shaw in "The Farmer Is the Man." Courtesy of the Library of Congress. Public domain.

1. "Agriculture is fundamental to all economic life because man must have food and fiber."
2. "There is a direct connection between the welfare of agriculture and the economic health of the rest of the economy."
3. Most important, "there is something special and unique about the rural way of life. . . . A man on the land is independent and self-reliant. ***Some have even argued that farming is a divine calling where God and man work hand in hand to supply the physical needs of mankind***" [emphasis added].

Fite goes on to identify the Grangers of the 1870s as the most notable nineteenth-century exponents of this aggregation of beliefs.[32]

In the same panel Don F. Hadwiger, a political scientist with expertise in agricultural affairs and a boy from Alva, Oklahoma, questions the current utility of farm fundamen-

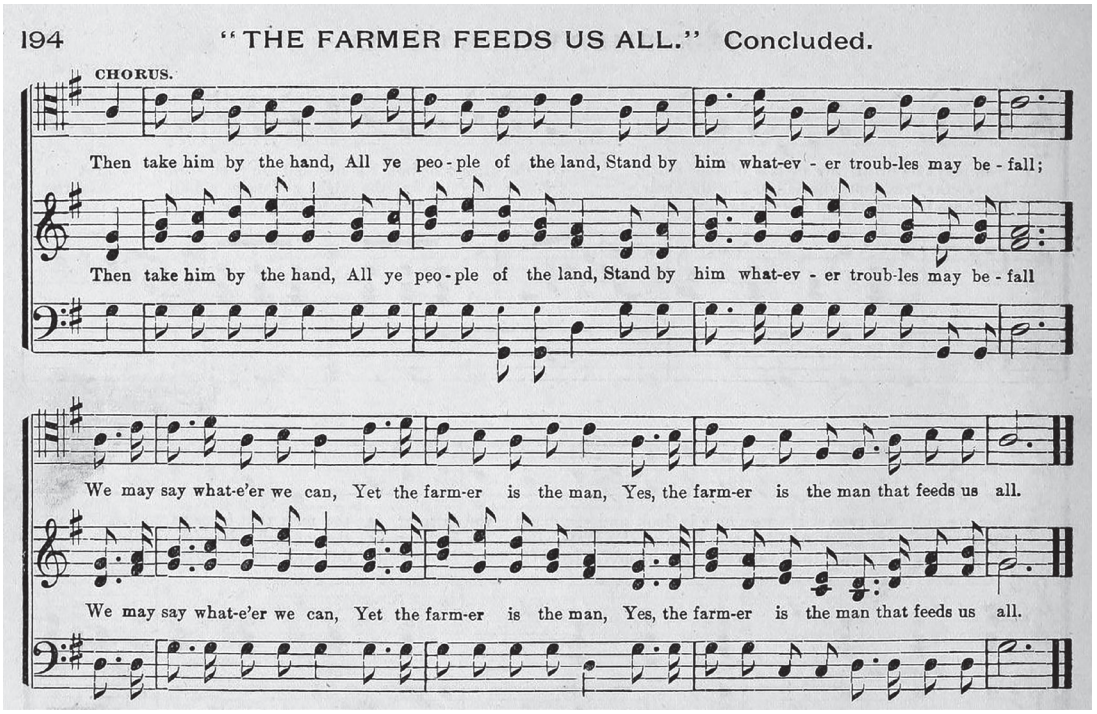

Fig. 3. Chorus of "The Farmer Feeds Us All," a.k.a. "The Farmer Is the Man," as published in *Grange Melodies*, 1891. Courtesy of the Internet Archive. Public domain.

talism and cites, as his first authority, Walter Prescott Webb. Webb, Hadwiger paraphrases him as saying, "felt that most Americans have no illusions about farm life, nor any affection for it. Because so many of us are fugitives from agriculture." Hadwiger goes on to declare, "as a program for industrial countries, true agricultural fundamentalism would amount to thoroughgoing nihilism."[33] It would seem that by mid-twentieth century, there was little intellectual comfort to be found for farm fundamentalists in the style of Knowles Shaw. And yet, every summer his stanzas spring full-throated from the best and brightest of farm youth in the Northern Plains.

"The Farmer Is the Man" is indeed a pristine exhibit of farm fundamentalism, and useful as an example of such, but in the letters of the Great Plains, its significance may be reckoned otherwise. Shaw's ballad is an early flower in what was to become an efflorescent emergence of prairie ballads that would express the mentalité of the settler society, be captured and canonized in part by the song catchers of early twentieth century, and otherwise lie dormant in forgotten newsprint, awaiting rediscovery in the twenty-first century. Moreover, the song's origin as the composed work of the singing evangelist, Knowles Shaw, a self-conscious folk artist, situates it squarely within the lines of scholarly interpretation of the balladic culture of the Plains established by Louise Pound in her revisionist work on balladry. Given the troves of digitized source material now available to

historians, it is now possible to pin down the origins of scores of previously unattributed prairie ballads and present the people of the Great Plains with a greater, better-grounded canon of folk song.

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Notes

1. North Dakota Farmers Union, *Farmers Union Camp Songbook*, 2023. I first learned of the use of "The Farmer Is the Man" in summer camps of the North Dakota Farmers Union in the mid-1990s, when students in my classes informed me they had sung it, and it was in the organizational songbook. The practice continues to this day, as a student has confirmed in 2023. Thanks to Trevor Lewis, Youth Education Specialist, North Dakota Farmers Union, Jamestown, for sending me a PDF file of the summer camp songbook here credited. "The Farmer Is the Man" is selection #3 in the book.

2. A handy source for "The Hayseed" and other Populist ballads is Nebraska Folklore Pamphlet 18 (1938), *Farmer's Alliance Songs of the 1890's*.

3. *Nonpartisan Leader*, 31 May 1920.

4. William Allen White, *A Certain Rich Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 8.

5. John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

6. For an excellent example of a historian attempting to grasp the emergence of local community, see Rex C. Myers, "Homestead on the Range: The Emergence of Community in Eastern Montana, 1900–1925," *Great Plains Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 218–27.

7. The gold standard for ballad scholarship at turn of the twentieth century was the compendium of Francis James Child ballads, the consolidating edition of which (completed by George Lyman Kittredge) was *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904). Conservative conceptions of balladry then emphasized anonymous oral tradition. At this very time, however, the emergence of balladry in the popular press of the Great Plains—now deeply accessible via digitized newspaper collections indexed with optical character recognition—brought forth a new model of balladry as practiced by identified artists and established it by the sheer weight of published evidence.

8. The evidence for this broadly synthetic paragraph is primary and too massive for ready citation here, consisting mainly of the transactions of the newspapers published during the era treated, now accessible digitally, which not only publish the ballads but also reveal the grassroots social context in which they germinated.

9. A handy summary of the history of the Grange in the Plains is Thomas Burnell Colbert, "Grange," in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed. David J. Wishart (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 712–13. The recent standard histories of the Grange are Dennis S. Nordin, *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867–1900* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1973), and Thomas A. Woods, *Knights of the Plow: Oliver H. Kelley and the Origins of the Grange in Republican Ideology* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991). The older, classic study of the Grange by Solon Justus Buck, *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and Its Political, Economic and Social Manifestations, 1870–1880* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), is more in line with the articulation of a movement culture as described by Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

10. "Patrons of Husbandry," in *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History*, vol. 2, ed. Frank W. Blackmar (Chicago: Standard Pub. Co., 1912), https://www.ksgenweb.org/archives/1912/p/patrons_of_husbandry.html; Linda Rothwell, "History of Gardner Grange #68," https://www.grange.org/gardnerks68/.

11. [Lawrence] *Daily Kansas Tribune*, 10 July 1873.

12. "Declaration of Purposes of the National Grange," as reported in the *Pacific Rural Press*, 10 October 1878.

13. *Marshall County News*, 9 May 1874.

14. *Manhattan Nationalist*, 5 February 1875.

15. *Manhattan Beacon*, 8 July 1874.

16. James L. Orr, *Grange Melodies* (Philadelphia: J. A. Wagenseller, 1891), 193–94.

17. *Alliance Times*, 25 April 1890; *Pratt Union*, 1 January 1891, 20 September 1894; *Kiowa County Times*, 28 September 1894.

18. *Pratt Union*, 1 January 1891, 20 September 1894. The author has presented a paper on the homesteader ballad "Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim" at the annual Dakota Conference of Augustana University, 28 April 2023. The Shaw ballad text is singable to the melody as proposed by the *Pratt Union*, but the fit is imperfect.

19. *Omaha Daily News*, 26 January 1915; *Hamilton County Register*, 15 September 1916; *Kansas City Kansan*, 16 June 1917; *Friend Sentinel*, 28 November 1918.

20. *Hamilton County Register*, 15 September 1916.

21. "Out of Old Nebraska: Populist Songs," *Chadron Record*, 14 January 1965—same feature published in numerous Nebraska papers about the same time.

22. "The Farmer Is the Man," Ballad Song Index, http://www.fresnostate.edu/folklore/ballads/San282.html; University of Pittsburgh Libraries, "Voices Across Time: The Farmer Is the Man," https://voices.pitt.edu/TeachersGuide/Unit%205/FarmeristheMan.htm. Listen to Seeger's version here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coj1v8FM2Cs.

23. The biography of Shaw by William Baxter, *Life of Knowles Shaw, the Singing Evangelist* (Cincinnati: Central Book Concern, 1879), is excessively adulatory but provides good biographical background.

24. Baxter, *Life of Knowles Shaw*, is accessible at https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/indiana/knowlesshaw.htm. News coverage of his evangelical career is easily located via the digitized collections, *Chronicling America* and *Newspapers.com*. See also "History of the Restoration Movement: Knowles Shaw, 1834–1878," https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/indiana/shaw.htm; "Knowles Shaw," https://findagrave.com/memorial/9722357/knowles-shaw.

25. *Tioga Herald*, 17 February 1872.

26. *Topeka Daily Commonwealth*, 28 April 1872.

27. *Leavenworth Times*, 7 February 1874; *Western Home Journal*, 19 February 1874.

28. *Leavenworth Weekly Times*, 20 June 1878.

29. For a biography of Kittredge, see Clyde Kenneth Hyder, *George Lyman Kittredge: Teacher and Scholar* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962). Kittredge's papers, including his files on American ballads, are at the Houghton Library, Harvard College. Kittredge took over and completed the ballad compilation largely done by Francis James Child (the famous Child ballads).—Francis James Child, Helen Child Sargent, and George Lyman Kittredge, eds., *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*.

30. Pound, *Folk-Song of Nebraska and the Central West: A Syllabus*, Nebraska Academy of Sciences Publications 9, no. 3 (Lincoln, 1915); Pound, *Poetic Origins of the Ballad* (New York: Macmillan, 1921). For a biography, see Robert Cochran, *Louise Pound: Scholar, Athlete, Feminist Pioneer* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

31. This characterization of how agricultural economists view farm fundamentalism is admittedly based on the author's experience as a farm boy taking graduate work in agricultural economics at a land-grant university. For a kinder, gentler view, see James L. Gulley, *Beliefs and Values in American Farming*, US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, ERS-558 (1974).

32. Gilbert C. Fite, "The Historical Development of Agricultural Fundamentalism in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Farm Economics* 44, no. 5 (December 1962): 1203–11.

33. Don F. Hadwiger, "Farm Fundamentalism: Its Future," *Journal of Farm Economics* 44, no. 5 (December 1962): 1218–31.

Appendix: Original Publication of "The Farmer Is the Man"

Choice Poetry.

Written for the *Journal*, and dedicated to the Patrons of Husbandry.

The Farmer is the Man that Feeds us All.

By Knowles Shaw.

You may talk of all the nobles of the earth;
And of kings who hold the Nation in their thrall;
Yet in this we must agree,
If we only look and see,
That the farmer is the man that feeds us all.

Chorus—
Then take him by the hand,
All ye people of the land;
Stand by *him* whatever troubles may befall;
We may say whate'er we can—
Yet, the farmer is the man—
Yes, the farmer is the man that feeds us all.

There's the President who occupies the chair
Of the Nation, in the mighty Congress hall;
And the members too are great,
Who are sent from every State,
But the farmer is the man that feeds them all.

There are Governors and Legislators too,
Who have pledged themselves to heed the people's call.
Yet they labor nights and days
Their own salaries to raise,
While the farmer is the man that feeds them all.

Then these speculators all about, you know,
And it seems they help each other roll the ball.
As the people they can fleece—
And then take "so much" apiece—
While the farmer is the man that feeds them all.

There's the preacher who can preach his sermon long.
And the lawyer—and the Doctor, servants all;
There's the tailor and the smith.—
And I tell you 'tis no myth—
That the farmer is the man that feeds us all.

Now the day of rec'ning's coming by and by—
Great monopolies are surely doomed to fail;
Then onward to the fight—
Let us battle for the right—
For the farmer is the man that feeds us all.

See! the "Patrons" now are coming to the fight;
And their armies too are not the weak and small;
So God bless them, while we sing,
'Tis the farmer who is king—
For the farmer is the man that feeds us all.

Thayer, Kan., Jan. 1, 1874.

Losing Ty

LORNA MILNE

Look at the gift of being, now . . . And what will our time leave?

—Robert Macfarlane, geophysicist and author

How much evidence needs to be present before something is done? And who gets to decide?

—Sandra Steingraber, biologist and author

On a cool spring day in 1967, our parents away on a trip, we lose our little brother Ty John. I'm not sure why we called Ty by his first two names, likely because Mom did. Sometimes we simply said TJ, a hard and soft sound with a lyrical ring to it. When we were in a hurry, it was simply Ty. At any rate, Ty is missing, and our parents aren't home to lead the search through our eastern Montana town.

None of us four older children remember the babysitter from that weekend. Perhaps it is Mrs. Hehn, who is kind and never spanks us. She also bakes gingerbread cookies, laying them out on racks to cool before helping us decorate them. Our parents rarely go away—once a year at most. And Ty getting lost is no fault of the babysitter. He's a hard child to keep track of.

I look in all our hiding spots in the backyard, then scour the neighborhood. I play with my brothers; I know their haunts.

As time goes on with no sign of him, the search intensifies. Mrs. Hehn asks for help from other adults in the neighborhood. My mother's best friend drives up and questions me: where did I last see Ty? The babysitter calls the police, who stop by in their black car to question us as well. I overhear the babysitter ask the police if she should ring our parents, which makes me think of the river. Two blocks from our house flows the Yellowstone River. Ty loves to fish at the river; however, at age three he's too young to go alone. We are most certainly not allowed to go in the spring, when the banks aren't exposed.

My sister Darcy and I, ages eight and nine, walk down the hill to the river. Standing on the high bank I fear Ty is lost for good. Huge blocks of ice crash and swirl downstream. In 1967 breakup of the Yellowstone was an event. Townspeople congregated along the hilltops to watch the drama of ice-cake collision; our friends who lived close to the river evacuated their homes. The county sheriff woke Dad in the middle of the night if the water crested the railroad embankment behind his farm implement business. We'd hear Dad hurriedly dress and leave to move machinery out of the path of overflow and ice. All this is far from my mind as I peer over the edge looking for a small boy

Fig. 1. Ty, Brenda, and the author in western Alaska, autumn 1982. Author photo.

making his way down the deer path with his fishing pole. The image is impossible, though, as ice wedges litter the hillside and the bank is underwater.

Trudging home with a knot of despair in my gut, I hear cries of relief coming from our backyard. Ty is found! Darcy and I run up the street and through the backyard gate to see him standing by our toy box, the lid propped open. Flushed, Ty repeats, "I breathed through the hole."

I pick him up and scold him, "Didn't you hear us calling?"

To this day, Darcy thinks Ty hid from us in plain sight. I think he crawled into the toy box to hide, then fell asleep. Or he was too young to lift the lid. He is only found when someone hears him call out.

****

Years later, in the days after my brother died, I forgot appointments, walked through a construction zone unawares, ran a red light, forgot the names of good friends. I had little sense of how my day fit together, or how it should. I was, as they say, grief-stricken. Struck by grief.

Sixteen months earlier, when I learned that our fifty-one-year-old brother had colon cancer that had spread to his liver, my first thought was, "I don't want to live in a world where Ty doesn't exist." I wasn't being dramatic—this was the depth of my affection for Ty. And I wasn't alone in this: Ty was beloved. A humble, quiet, witty, observant man who lived nearly his entire life in our eastern Montana town—marrying his high school sweetheart, selling

John Deere machinery to the same families our grandfather served, coaching his children's basketball and softball teams, maintaining the bow range and teaching young bow hunters, sitting on community boards—Ty built broad and deep bonds.

Eight hundred people attended Ty's funeral, filling the sanctuary and basement of the Catholic church, spilling onto the steps and grounds. As our family followed the casket into the sanctuary, I felt bereft by the loss to this community. Ty was simply too dear to lose.

Yet there was something more going on. Something unspoken but as present as the grief. Ty died of colon cancer, one of the many cancers that affected families in this town. In farming areas there is no delineation between town and countryside—the pesticide drift blankets the entire county, and contaminated groundwater drains into area wells and aquifers. There is a sense in these rural towns that there is a higher incidence of children and young adults dying of leukemia; developing brain tumors; women contracting ovarian and breast cancers at younger and younger ages; men with prostate cancer; farmers with blood cancers and neurodegenerative diseases.

Dr. J. Randall Rauh, a family medicine doctor with over fifty years of experience in Miles City, writes in a personal letter, "There is little question that primary care providers in eastern Montana see clusters of unusual malignancies which group in geographic areas. . . . Malignancies of the brain and pancreatic cancer are the ones that seem to jump out." Nonetheless, he notes, "Confirming a statistically significant variation from other areas is nearly impossible due to sparse population density."[1]

When an illness is potentially caused by or in conflict with community practices, the barriers to speaking up can be too strong. Farmers know they're putting themselves and their community at risk of carcinogenic exposure by using harmful pesticides, but they rarely talk about it. They report that they use only the minimum amount of chemical; nevertheless, they're not thinking of becoming organic. How much do we sacrifice to the practice of chemical farming? Whom do we sacrifice?

The first strong memory I have of Ty is his presence in my parents' bedroom, his crib tucked in a corner of their room. Ty was born four years after my other brother, Kyle. We three girls came first. Kyle and I shared a bedroom—his trundle bed sliding under mine during the day so we had room to play—while Brenda and Darcy shared the third bedroom. Ty was a light sleeper so I often heard him in the night. When Ty was four months old, Brenda "brought home the mumps" from Bible school, as if catching a virus was a choice. Soon all of us were sick, including Mom. Mom developed encephalitis and had to spend thirteen days in the Northern Pacific Hospital, which sat directly across the street from our house.

My father worked long hours in the summer. His father, John Milne (our grandpa Jack), bought the John Deere franchise in Glendive in 1941. Our grandpa Jack was one of those rare people who had a long view of things, and, Dad says, always made good decisions. Although Grandpa only had a sixth-grade education, he invested in three businesses in Glendive: the John Deere dealership, a livestock sales yard, and the Coca Cola bottling plant.

All three operations held allure for us as children. On a whim we'd stop by the Coke plant on our bikes, hoping to discover our grandpa, who had a soft spot for us. If we caught him in his office, Grandpa led us to the stockroom and let us choose a pack of candy or gum, a rare treat in a 1960s childhood. Inevitably, we'd

sneak into the bottling center to watch the pop bottles circle round, filling with Nesbitt orange, grape soda, or Barq's root beer. We were teenagers before we drank an eight-ounce bottle of pop without splitting it with a sibling.

The sales yard was where our gray and white Shetland pony boarded during the summer. Grandpa bought Chico for us from his friend in Minnesota. Chico bumped across the Dakotas in an empty livestock truck, and we first greeted him at the sales yard. I remember a Christmas card featuring Chico. We four older children—Mom behind the camera, pregnant with Ty who would be born in late February—sat astride Chico, lined up according to age. I'm squished, barely visible between Brenda and Darcy, and Kyle is perched on Chico's rump. We were warmly dressed, Mom attentive and careful with us. The image harkens back to previous generations who included their horses in formal photographs.

Early spring jaunts to retrieve Chico, fresh from the freedom of a pasture, challenged our limited pony know-how. Brenda and I walked to the sales yard to wrangle with him after Mom reminded us to watch for trains. I liked the fresh manure smell of the sales yard—not so distant from the earthy scent of soil—and the lowing of cattle or bleating of sheep, depending on the day's sale. Brenda and I usually found Chico in his stall. We haltered him, one of us took the reins, and the other crawled on his back. Before Chico would walk, he needed a carrot, the first of many. About halfway home, near the city park, we switched places. The second rider had the added pleasure of riding a horse, albeit a small horse, past their friends' houses as we entered our neighborhood. Children converged, taking turns riding Chico down the streets, through the park, Brenda leading with the reins. In late afternoon Brenda and I reversed our trek, except we both walked because Chico was tired. Our patient father scooped pony droppings off the grass that evening.

Our paternal grandparents lived a half block from us, and Grandpa took his role in our lives seriously. It was he, alongside our parents, who nurtured and instructed us. When we were teenagers Grandpa taught us many things, but I remember most vividly being instructed on how to sweep the shop where the mechanics worked—take short strong strokes—and being counseled on the virtues of working hard and saving money. As a boy Ty thrived under Grandpa's attentions. Ty loved to fish and Dad had time for nothing but work in the summers, so it fell to Mom or Grandpa to take Ty fishing. Occasionally, Grandpa drove Ty to western Montana to fish the streams with Grandpa's friend Rusty. I marvel at my parents letting him go, but Grandpa was an easy man to trust.

One of my favorite stories about our visionary Grandpa is his part in ensuring that Glendive had a good-quality medical facility when the railroad decided to close its hospital in 1965. Seven Northern Pacific hospitals were built at the turn of the century in Washington, Montana, and Minnesota to care for the railroad's employees; Glendive's was built relatively late, in 1913. Grandpa knew Glendive likely wouldn't survive without a hospital, so he organized local businessmen to raise the capital to reorganize and then rebuild as the Glendive Community Hospital. Grandpa died from the ravages of emphysema in that hospital, and Grandma lived her last years in the nursing home that was later attached to it.

In the autumn Dad had a breather from work so he took the boys hunting. Dad's habit was to place his boots in the hallway the evening before in hopes of not waking Mom in the

Fig. 2. Ty Milne with long bow and antelope on the bank of the Yellowstone River. Author photo.

morning. Noting this, Kyle lined his boots up next to Dad's. The fall of his third year, Ty carried his Red Wings to the hallway and placed them beside Kyle's. I vaguely remember someone telling Ty he wasn't old enough to go, and he insisting that he was—Ty's lifelong ability to persevere first manifested in his desire to hunt. Upon finding only his boots remaining the next morning, Ty wailed; we girls and Mom suffered his anguish all day. When the hunters returned, Mom welcomed Dad with "From now on, you take Ty, too."

Ty and I became hunting partners once I passed my driver's test. Or rather, I was the sister who drove him to his hunting spots. After I parked the pickup in a scrubby draw, he and his real comrade, Todd or Fred, hiked off with their guns while I read or explored around camp. Shortly before sunset, I'd start a careful fire to prepare hamburger soup. I used to think I invented hamburger soup: 4-H beef, seasonings, a can of tomatoes, fresh carrots and potatoes. Even now, a bowlful places me in an eastern Montana coulee waiting for the boys.

When I moved to a Yup'ik village in western Alaska to teach after college, Ty visited not once, but twice. The first time, he was in high school and traveled with our parents. A friend took us out in his boat—the most practical way to bird hunt on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta when the waters are open. Ty sat at the bow in my red down parka, his shotgun in hand, adjusting to hitting ducks from a moving object rather than creeping over dikes hoping to surprise them on irrigation canals, like we did back home. When he reappeared in the village two years later, I had my own boat, so I pointed him into the wind and we skimmed down the sloughs hoping to rouse waterfowl around the next bend.

After I moved back to the Lower Forty-Eight—leaving me with an ache for wild places—our roles reversed. Whenever I made a fall stopover in Glendive, I suggested an excursion. By then Dad had given up deer hunting, saying he'd rather see the deer than kill them. And Ty hunted big game with a long bow, sitting all day in a cottonwood like a vision seeker. Kyle and Ty still pursued pheasants, however, and as John Deere dealers they knew which farmer would grant us permission to flush their thickets. Ty would line up a couple of places to hunt and we'd set out on a Saturday. I always felt put right walking the plains with my tall brothers, grounded by their witty comments and gentle teasing. It seemed my brothers knew each other as well as a married couple, since they worked together every day. At Ty's memorial service, Kyle said that only once in thirty years did they argue, and it was over a trifle.

On one particular trip, in 1987, I noticed that several farmsteads were abandoned and asked

my brothers why. They explained that farming had become more expensive with the cost of fertilizers and pesticides and larger equipment. Many farmers had been forced out because of high interest rates and low grain prices, selling their land to their neighbors. I found the absence of these family farms disturbing—a third of my high school class was farm kids. They knew more than the rest of us, I thought as a kid: neat stuff like how to seed a field and drive a grain truck. Where had their families moved? And who would take their place in town?

Our grandpa ran the Milne implement business from 1941 until his retirement in 1961. In those days small farms dotted the countryside, the sales yard held weekly stock sales, soda was locally brewed, and farming was primarily organic. I was well into adulthood before I read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* or Sandra Steingraber's *Living Downstream*, two books of many that document the danger and rashness of heavy chemical use on the landscape. And it would be years more before I understood that we're all—consumers, farmers, and implement dealers included—complicit in the declining health of our rural communities.

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Two major intertwined forces changed the way we grow our food since my grandpa started in the implement business: shifts in farm policy and heavy dependence on synthetic pesticides. Although the farm crisis of the 1970s and '80s turned out to be as complex as it is relevant, the gist is a new farm bill was passed, which altered the way farmers were paid. Instead of setting a baseline price on major crops, farmers were supplemented directly through government farm-program payments. This new farm bill was accompanied by unseasonable weather events, misguided trade decisions, and—as my brothers referenced—a rise in interest rates in 1979 to combat inflation, "throwing heavily indebted farmers into economic crisis," writes Jonathan Coppess, an administrator of the Farm Service Agency.[2]

As a result, some farms failed and the remaining farms absorbed their neighbors' places. For the most part, the small farmer couldn't buy new machinery to keep up, Dad explains. "Once tractors cost $80,000, that farmer couldn't afford it." Now farms are so large they require big machinery and too much capital investment.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, since 1950 the number of farms in the United States has steadily declined from nearly 5.5 million to under 2 million today. Despite there being half as many farms, total cropland devoted to major crops has remained in the 250-million-acre range, while cropland acreage per farm is 2.5 times the level it was in 1950.[3] The remaining farm families are grateful to still be growing food when so many family-owned farms have failed.

The second force is more sinister, yet consistent with big operations. When World War II ended, chemical merchants such as Monsanto (now owned by a German pharmaceutical company, Bayer AG) had large remaining stockpiles that they wanted to profit from, so they decided to market wartime chemicals to farmers. As the biologist Sandra Steingraber notes in *Living Downstream*, these chemicals needed to be seen as safe by farm workers and consumers even though little testing had been done on them. Monsanto's and other agrochemical companies' marketing strategy was successful. Dad recalls pulling up to farms—after pesticides first started being used—and finding the farmer cleaning the nipples on the sprayer by

blowing through them. They had been told the chemicals were safe, so why not?

"Those early rigs were made so that the farmer sat exposed in the middle on an implement with a Volkswagen-sized engine with sprayers off to either side," Dad describes. "It was a death trap."

With the advent of chem-fallow agriculture—in theory an effective way to prevent soil erosion—more and more pesticides were sprayed to kill weeds that had previously been tilled under, according to Jamie Lockman, executive director of the Montana Organic Association. When I pull up a US Geological Survey pesticide-use map, Montana's north-central and northeast corners are dark brown, indicating where most of the 114 pounds per square mile of glyphosate—a widely used synthetic herbicide and one of approximately 550 chemicals to choose from—were spread on agricultural land in 2017. Montana's mottled appearance melds into a heavy brown blotch that bleeds over the Midwest, blanketing Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and shading the Mississippi River to its mouth. Genetically engineered (GE) corn and soybean crops are the big users, responsible for nearly two-thirds of the total 300 million pounds of glyphosate used in the United States in 2017. It is a bleak image.

In 2016 the United States applied a phenomenal amount of pesticide—1.2 billion pounds. It is not uncommon for an eastern Montana farmer to spend $500,000 annually on chemicals, including fertilizers, on 5,000 acres of wheat. Usually, it's estimated to be about $25 to $30 per acre in pesticides and $60 per acre in fertilizer. Conventional farmers of today use their sprayers more than any other implement.

When herbicide products were introduced, botanists warned that the weeds would just outsmart the chemical and become more resistant, which has happened on millions of acres of US farmland and is intensified with the use of GE crops. Lockman says she's hearing from Montana farmers who are interested in transitioning to organic certification to address herbicide-resistant weeds as well as "acid spots that develop with repeated herbicide applications."

Because of pesticide use it's reported that we've lost 60 percent of our insect mass in the United States over the past 100 years. My husband tells of how in the 1950s and '60s their family farm in southern Minnesota was alive with snakes, frogs, jackrabbits, pheasants, fox, raptors, insects, and his favorite, huge spiders. Jon describes for our grandchildren how he ran down the cornrows, sliding to a stop in front of the black and yellow garden spider spinning its web between the stalks. In killing off insects, we're destroying not only the fascinating world we chance upon as children but also the beings that help pollinate our crops, renew the soil, and remove carcasses.

My parents' generation, born in the 1930s and early '40s, are healthier later into life than their children. As Steingraber and Rachel Carson remind us, previous generations weren't exposed to industrial chemicals and farm pesticides in their prenatal periods, infancies, childhood, or teenage years. In *Living Downstream*, Steingraber writes that anyone born between the 1940s until the mid-1980s—when the identity of chemicals released by industry was still considered a trade secret—"will never know with certainty what we were exposed to as children and what carcinogenic risks we have assumed from such exposures."[4]

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its Second National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals in 2003, it confirmed that we all

carry synthetic pesticides in our bodies. The CDC found pesticides and their breakdown products in all the people they tested, in many cases at levels well above officially permitted thresholds established by government health and environmental agencies. The body load is especially high and troublesome among Mexican Americans and children.

A recent study among wild California sea lions documenting widespread urogenital carcinoma—involving 18 to 23 percent of adult animals examined postmortem over the past forty years—is instructive. Dumping of industrial waste DDTs in the 1960s, and subsequent runoff of newer chemical poisons, means these sea lions have a long, as well as recent, history with pollution. The study, published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, found a positive correlation between contaminants in the blubber of the pups and the milk of the mother, meaning that the pups "will start life with a higher exposure before they are even weaned and feeding independently."[5]

Scientific peer-reviewed studies such as the Agricultural Health Study (AHS), a large prospective cohort study that tracked farmers and farm spouses, as well as commercial pesticide applicators and their spouses, link various cancers—including breast, pancreatic, colon, ovarian—to the use and exposure to agricultural chemicals. A valuable and comprehensive study, one of the largest studies of pesticides and cancer, the AHS collected information for twenty-five years, from 1994 to 2017, and included 89,000 adult study subjects living in Iowa and North Carolina, two states that represent different farming practices. As early as 1994, the AHS's authors concluded that it's "evident that the strongest links of exposures and malignancies have been with pesticides."[6]

While the European Union, China, and Brazil—the other three large agricultural producers besides the United States—are banning or phasing out chemicals known to be carcinogenic—such as 2,4-DB, bensulide, chloropicrin, dichlobenil, dicrotophos, EPTC, norflurazon, oxytetracycline, paraquat, phorate, streptomycin, terbufos and tribufos—the process to ban known carcinogens is so onerous in the United States that the chemical companies usually shelf a product for economic reasons before it's outright banned, according to Nathan Donley, a senior scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity. Even licensing a product is suspect: the US Environmental Protection Agency relies on studies by companies who make the product, few of which conduct field studies to confirm what they've documented in their labs.

In the European Union, the burden of proof lies with the pesticide industry to show that their product doesn't cause harm to the environment or humans, rather than with the citizen to protest after harm has been done, Donley writes.[7] Unfortunately, this is not the case in the United States.

When we made an enemy out of a weed and the grasshopper, by extension we did harm to the farming community. By practicing chemical-intensive farming, we do battle with our own bodies and the bodies of our children. We are, after all, an organism—what we do to the earth and its atmosphere, we do to ourselves.

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Our hunting trips grew rare as the years passed, but my brothers and I still had opportunities. During a summer vacation to Glendive in 2010, I overheard Ty say he had drawn a moose tag to hunt north of Yellowstone Park. Ty, who usually spoke slow and steady, sounded excited.

Tentatively, I asked whom he was hunting with. A brother-in-law, he replied. "If you have any extra days, I'd love to meet you," I proposed. When Ty didn't respond, I put it out of my mind. So, when he called me in Helena to say Dave couldn't join him until Sunday, and did I want to check out the place with him, I was gleeful.

On a warm Saturday in early October, I met Ty in Belgrade, then tailed him until we turned east at Storm Castle Creek, a drainage in the Gallatin Range. After parking his trailer in the campground and eating our fill of hamburger soup, we drove to a site to scout for moose. We followed a trail up a mountainside and scrambled onto a promontory from which Ty could scan the valley. Leaning on a boulder to glass for birds—knowing how thorough Ty would be—I startled when he bellowed like a cow moose, the sound so authentic it made me laugh.

"You can't make any noise tomorrow," Ty scolded.

"Of course not," I replied. I knew my role: bird dog when we were young, bear lookout on this outing. Because Ty carried a long bow, he asked me to buy an upland bird tag so I could scare away the grizzlies—if we came crosswise with any—with my shotgun. Ty and I carried bear spray as well.

The light fading, we bushwhacked down the side of the mountain, in a hurry to drive through the remainder of the district. This hunting district was narrow: around ten miles long, seven miles wide, encircled by craggy mountains. Yellowstone Park lay forty miles south. As we crested a pass, two rifle hunters scoped the creek drainage to the west. Ty slowed down to eavesdrop; they had a moose in their sight. We continued down the hillside to the creek crossing, pulling off at a makeshift

Fig. 3. Ty and the author hunting pheasants in eastern Montana, autumn 1988. Author photo.

camp. "We'll get up early," Ty said. "Beat them to this spot."

That night I settled onto a pullout couch while Ty slept behind a partial barrier in the real bed. It was a strange night of waking and falling back to sleep for brief periods, both of us restless. Unable to sleep, Ty rose around 3:30 a.m., signaling an early departure. We ate Ty's homemade granola, then gathered our gear. Twenty minutes later we pulled over at the trailhead, long before the rifle hunters. Around six, half an hour before legal hunting, we creaked open the pickup doors.

"Have your spray?" Ty whispered. I pointed to my belt.

"Put a shell in your chamber," he added. This, I hadn't thought of.

After I set the gun's safety, I shadowed Ty up

the narrow rocky path, half-spooked in country shared with grizzlies. All my adult life I had made noise in bear country, not this watch-where-you-step hunter's stalk. Soon we arrived at a meadow to the right of the trail—how Ty knew the lay of this land befuddled me. Was he relying on his memory of ten years ago? But I shouldn't have been surprised; as children, Ty kept the family ledger in his mind, remembering when Mom promised we'd go to Frosty's for lunch, or where the leftover fireworks from the year before were hidden. His memory served him well as a businessman; the farmers counting on his recall and precision.

"Stay here," Ty whispered. "I'm climbing higher to call." Leaving his backpack with me, he added, "And be quiet." I grinned, knowing he was only half-teasing.

Ty scrambled noiselessly up the hillside, out of sight. I took my bearings: directly below a marshy area sloped to the creek. A month earlier, mosquitoes would have pestered me. I listened for vehicles approaching on the road, but so far it was only the two of us hoping to attract a bull moose. On one of my first weekends as a young teacher in the Yup'ik village, a neighbor brought me a roast of moose after bagging a cow moose up the Johnson River. Having never tasted nor prepared moose, I roasted it in my oil-burning stove as if it was beef. It turned out delicious, dark and tender, and sustained me for days.

I stood in a patch of sun, then laid my gun on a dry mound of grass with the barrel pointed downhill. I heard Ty imitating the female moose in distress. He bellowed, paused, bellowed again. Then, silence. A long silence. Just as I began to wonder if everything was okay, Ty whistled a warning. Something rustled to my right. I turned to look as a big black wolf ran fast down the trail we had walked in on. And another, lighter in color, not as big. I'd seen wolves in the park, but never this close. Uneasy, I reached for my gun just as a third wolf came into view. This one was nearly white and finer-boned, a female. Hearing or sensing me, she stopped and turned for a quick look. Two more wolves sped by after her, taking cues from the leader.

Five wolves hell-bent on getting away from the tall man dressed in camouflage. I was stunned—Ty called in a pack of wolves who thought they'd heard a cow moose in trouble.

As the last wolf left my sight, Ty burst into the clearing as worked up as the wolves. He frantically dug through the pack for his camera. Having unearthed it, Ty lifted his head and met the eyes of the black alpha who had circled round and stood in the brush watching us. By the time I turned, he had vanished.

Ty recounted how he heard an animal running toward him so he drew his bow, expecting a coyote. When the canine—obviously not a coyote—ran full speed out of the brush, Ty lowered his bow, and man and wolf considered one another. Then the wolf detoured right, headed in my direction, thus Ty's whistle, "Look sharp!"

We waited, willing the wolves to reappear. Unlikely, we knew, but to leave this convergence quickly felt irreverent. Wolves are too clever, though, so we packed up after half an hour, intending to keep climbing. The drainage was broad and ringed by high peaks, good country for moose. Ty started out ahead of me, his angular frame still carrying his excitement. I took a step, and as if on signal, the big wolf howled a message right at my back. He crouched only feet away while we two-leggeds had neither seen nor sensed him. The alpha's cry filled the valley, eliciting a response from each direction and altitude: two dozen distinct

calls. The valley rang with nothing short of wolf talk. Ty and I stood in awe.

"Maybe I should carry that gun," Ty suggested, waiting for me to catch up.

"No way. I don't know what to do with that," I said, indicating his bow. "I'm not hunting in this valley," I added.

"There's no moose here anyway," Ty quipped.

We drove back down the road to a trail that headed east, paralleling Storm Castle Creek. We hiked a few miles in, stopping again while Ty called. The day heated into the high 60s, warm for hunting, but any discomfort was eclipsed by our encounter with the wolves. We hiked without talking much; Ty, too, I guessed, was shaping the narrative.

When I headed home later that day, Ty followed to find cell service to check in with Tammy. By the time I pulled into the yard, Darcy had phoned the house and Jon knew all about the wolves.

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Often in the forefront of science in the United States are civil jury trials with battling expert witnesses: one set presenting the industry's side of science, the other presenting the injured parties. When the science on glyphosate is presented to a jury of peers, the injured party is winning. Lagging behind the courtroom is the bureaucracy of science, whether by academia or government.

This makes sense because bureaucratic science works on a broader front, studying communities rather than individuals. Thus, in Montana, statistics show that cancer rates are generally uniform throughout the state, with some peaks in east-central Montana of certain cancers during defined time periods, according to a 2020 analysis of the tumor registry data by Montana's non-infectious surveillance lead epidemiologist Heather Zimmerman. This is not unexpected, given how many rural Montana kids like myself have left their birth communities and moved to larger towns, taking their pesticide exposure with them.

Zimmerman has found, however, a significant increase in the overall cancer incidence when comparing 1990–1994 with later time periods. Summarizing her findings, Zimmerman noted that "this same trend is seen across the whole state and even in national cancer incidence rates."[8]

This is what we know—that more people are getting cancer and certain cancers are linked to environmental contaminants. Even given the complexity of determining absolute cause, we know that a cancer cell is made over a long period of time, through multiple steps, and chemicals play a role, Steingraber noted in a 2010 interview.[9] "Cancer is definitely not a random tragedy," she stressed.

Our rural communities are important, essential to our survival, and we need to start talking about how we can better protect them. Sustainable and ecological approaches to growing food—such as regenerative or organic farming—may be more labor intensive, but the quality of the grain or fruit or vegetable will improve, as will the farming community's health. In Montana, there is a long history of corporate abuse: early on in the smelter city of Anaconda, as well as the mining disasters and miners' consumption in Butte, and more recently, the malignant and nonmalignant respiratory deaths due to asbestos-contaminated vermiculate mining in Libby. Agrochemical companies' hold on our rural communities continues this exploitive tradition.

Although dietary and lifestyle factors may contribute to the development of colorectal cancer, Ty was a cautious man. He didn't

drink or smoke, he ate well, and apart from the stresses of running a business, he lived a fortunate life: grounded in a happy family that he and Tammy created, and passionate about the outdoors. Although my family rarely talks about it, I think Ty's health was made more vulnerable by living in a community heavily reliant on dangerous pesticides.

During our first real conversation after Ty was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer, Ty took a video call from a farmer friend who had recently received a bone marrow transplant for a hematologic malignancy. Ty's friend wanted to show him how well his new enclosed sprayer worked. I looked over Ty's shoulder while the farmer, riding in the cab, filmed the mist leaving the sprayer, coating his seedlings. Ty admired the machinery as the two men made small talk; I knew Ty had a deer stand on his friend's land down along the Yellowstone River.

When their call ended, Ty and I noted the irony: to what extent was this young man's cancer related to the heavy use of pesticides on his and his neighbors' farms? The first tool in the fields each spring was a sprayer; the last in the fall, another sprayer. Deadly bookends.

Like most people, if I were to count my family and friends whose disease had a possible connection to pesticide exposure, the list would be long. In his mid-sixties my dad developed prostate cancer. When he was coming out from under the anesthesia, Dad named all the men in the area he knew who had surgery for prostate cancer. Mom said it was like a mantra, there were so many, and she knew none of it. Among my father's generation, prostate cancer was something only the men talked about.

And the friends, the innumerable friends. Three of the six women in my mother's coffee group—all of whom are from the area—have lost children to cancer in the last five years, including my childhood friend Cindy Kolberg. A friend from college, Carol Schmidt, was diagnosed with breast cancer when our daughters were in primary school together. A scientist and an attorney, Carol told me over lunch a year into her diagnosis, "If one more person suggests that breast cancer is a spiritual journey, I'm going to sock them. I have breast cancer because I grew up on a corn and soybean farm in Illinois, where everyone sprayed—even doctors acknowledge this."

In early May of 2019, I ate lunch with a younger woman, age forty-eight, who had ovarian cancer. Maggie Long was especially open about her cancer, telling people her experience so they could benefit from it. When she mentioned that her brother had an aggressive form of prostate cancer and that her parents could lose two of their three children, I asked her if she grew up on a farm. "No," she said, "but my dad was a crop duster."

Six months later, during Advent, Maggie died of ovarian cancer while I worked on this essay. Beautiful, honest Maggie, daughter of a crop duster.

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Ty couldn't catch a break—he wasn't a candidate for immunotherapy; after nine months he developed an allergy to the initial chemotherapy regime that was helping shrink his tumors; then, the final blow, he developed heart problems from an experimental drug in a Stage 1 trial. On Father's Day of June 2016, Ty looked good, a bit thin, but you wouldn't know he had cancer. Fourth of July week, after suffering from too high a dose of the trial drug, he looked gaunt, white, and weak. He had to drop out of the trial because the doctors were afraid to give him the drug again, and he was too compromised to continue chemotherapy. Ty came

home to Glendive to see his son marry his high school sweetheart, as he and Tammy had thirty years earlier. A week later, he died.

When I returned to Helena after Ty's service, my closest friends and their husbands brought dinner to our house, a meal of solace. Cindy arrived from Bozeman and joined us. We pulled a round green metal table and five chairs up next to our wooden picnic table. After filling our plates in the kitchen, we found room at the tables: the women perched close together on the wooden benches. Cindy and I sat shoulder to shoulder. No one, not even my husband, knows me as well as Cindy did. We played together nearly every day of our childhoods, lived two hours' distance as adults. Cindy watched Ty grow up; we babysat our little brothers together. Having lost a brother years earlier, this pain was familiar to her.

I relate for the women how Ty's service was held in the Catholic church with our Methodist minister in attendance because our church was too small, plus Ty and Tammy raised their children as Catholic. Ty's teenaged nieces on Tammy's side—slender, tall, athletic girls—presented the offertory of gifts, like heralds preparing the way. The first girl bore Ty's longbow and quiver with four arrows; the next, his elk bugle; then his family's basketball; while another conveyed a toy John Deere tractor and his John Deere hat; and, finally, his Methodist Bible. Dressed in a yellow vestment, the monklike Father Francis laid the bow and quiver on Ty's casket before placing the other objects around the nave.

A rooster pheasant crowed at the cemetery as we climbed out of our cars. Our daughter Shauna, Jon, and I stood in the open, enveloped by a fine mist, while our family assembled across from us under a white awning. I was amazed by my parents' strength, shored up by the community they'd lived in for eighty-three years. As the casket was lowered into the ground, Father Francis sang a lament.

It was August 18, 2016. Ty John Milne was fifty-two years old.

My friends listened intently, asking few questions. Cindy sat unusually quiet beside me. Four months earlier, Cindy had learned that she had pancreatic cancer. She knew she didn't have long to live, yet she wouldn't let me acknowledge it. For now, I acquiesced.

In mid-September my folks drove through Helena on their way to meet up with a great-grandson; it would be the last time they drove independently to Helena. All through Ty's illness, Mom had supported and comforted Dad. I had frequently heard my father tell people how fortunate he was to work beside his sons. As Dad aged, Ty often picked him up on the weekend to take him pheasant hunting or to the country to deliver machinery.

The last time Ty was hospitalized, he and I were left alone for a few minutes while Tammy met with the doctor. He looked at me with an expression I couldn't read, his face ashen. Darcy and I had talked about how we wished it was one of us dying, not Ty. We're older, our children are older, we had experienced the joy of grandchildren. I told Ty part of this, drifting off, aware of how futile it must sound to him. Ty shook his head, "No one should have to go through this."

That's the thing about greed—the agrochemical companies choose to ignore what a terrible death cancer is. Cells run amuck. Children die young. Adults leave families behind, miss out on grandchildren, on becoming elders. Elderly parents grieve in their last years. I rarely use the word evil, but this disregard for human health and longevity on the part of pesticide manufacturers *is evil*. How hard can this be, to dispose

of waste safely, stop manufacturing poisonous substances, develop safe alternatives? Wouldn't any good person or conscientious corporate leader want to operate under these guidelines? Most of us are familiar with the studies that report more money doesn't equate to happier lives. Isn't enough, adequate?

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It is late June and the fields are green. Long-billed curlews fly up out of the peas. It has been many years since I've been out this direction, a Mennonite community of successful farmers northwest of Glendive, where I have returned home to visit my folks. Dad wanted to come out to look over a sod hut that he has been reading about in a book of local history. He remembers dropping in on Bernie Storms and his wife with Ty on hunting trips and is eager to show us the dwelling. The Storms lived in their sod home for more than fifty years before moving into town; sod is warm in winter, cool in summer, an ideal prairie dwelling in many ways.

This morning Dad called the farmer—a friend and faithful customer—for permission and directions. I marvel at Dad's bearings as we make our way through gate after gate along paths paralleling fields, ending on a two-track weaving down a gully that is so faint Darcy wonders from the back seat why she didn't stay home. But I'm not worried: having hunted with Dad and my brothers, I know how capable he is, even at eighty-six.

Later we stop to thank Alan, whose land we've driven across. He's delighted to see Dad, says he misses chatting with him when he comes to the implement store. "Stop by and visit the old homestead," Alan invites us. "It's just up the road." We take him up on it—we're curious, plus we've packed a picnic.

After eating our lunch in the shade behind the beautifully restored log house, we stop at their family cemetery. A fresh grave sits farthest from the gate. "Do you know who's buried there?" I ask. Dad says it is Alan's eldest brother, who recently died of cancer. He and Kyle visited him while he was sick, Dad relates.

Not knowing the specifics of the brother's illness, I wonder if his death could be at all related to the hazards of chemically intensive farming. Although the fields in production look beautiful, the land that is resting doesn't look like earth at all. Gray-brown and parched, it appears dead, not a green thing grows on it. Back home, Dad confirms that the fallow acres would have been sprayed in the spring.

When a thunderstorm passes through town that evening, Dad hopes the country we've driven through has "got some rain." Elemental seed, clean rain, healthy soil: surely we can find our way back to these. Our well-being depends on them. As do our rural communities.

Lorna Milne writes from Helena, Montana, where she lives on a small farm with her husband and a soccer-playing, fowl-herding sheepdog named Little Bear. Milne has published essays and short stories in periodicals such as *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, *Boston Globe Magazine*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Walking*, *Orion*, and *Highlights for Children*. Her YA biography, *Evelyn Cameron, Photographer on the Western Prairie*, was released in 2017. Milne is at work on a collection of essays.

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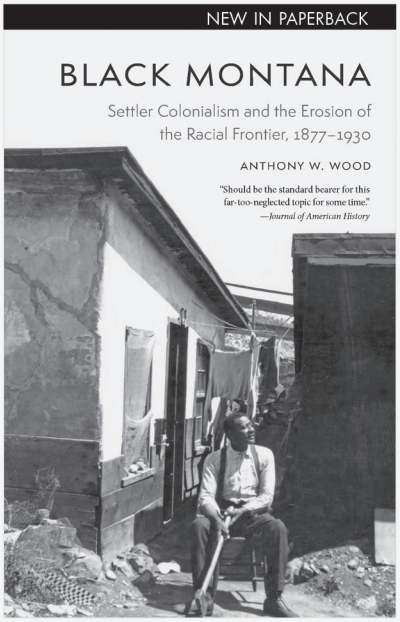

"This is a compelling book worthy of attention not only by scholars of Western and Black histories but by any reader looking for thorough, honest analysis of thecontradictions of race and nation building in U.S. history."—Tobin Miller Shearer, *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*

BLACK MONTANA
Settler Colonialism and the Erosion of the Racial Frontier, 1877–1930
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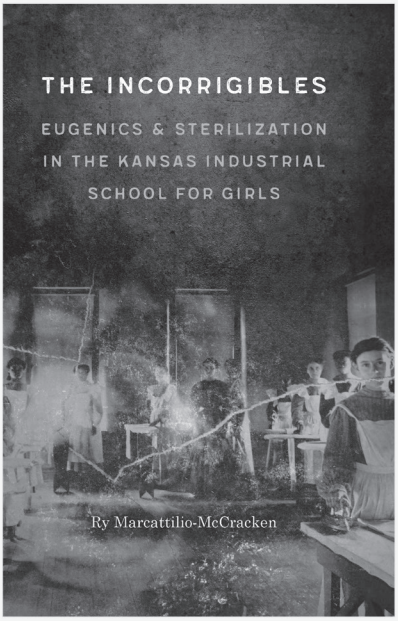

In *The Incorrigibles* Ry Marcattilio-McCracken interrogates the overlooked history of eugenics in Kansas. He argues that eugenics developed alongside Progressive social welfare reforms in public health, criminal deterrence, child welfare, and juvenile delinquency.

THE INCORRIGIBLES
Eugenics and Sterilization in the Kansas Industrial School for Girls
RY MARCATTILIO-MCCRACKEN
$60.00 Hardcover

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS

Prairie Grass and Mesquite

Memoir, Memory, and Coming Out in the Great Plains

CHRISTOPHER J. HOMMERDING

Boys and Oil: Growing Up Gay in a Fractured Land. By Taylor Brorby. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2022. 240 pp. Photographs. $27.95 cloth.

Engine Running: Essays. By Cade Mason. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2022. 178 pp. $22.95 paper.

Most openly queer people have a coming-out story. They range widely from the uplifting, to the mercifully banal, to the utterly gut-wrenching. In fact, most openly queer people have many coming-out stories. In a heteronormative world—where heterosexuality is assumed until proven, shown, or uttered otherwise—coming out is a continuous and unending process of identifying oneself as an "other." Historically, coming out has not always been such a central experience of queer life, at least in the sense that we understand it today. More often, queerness was left largely unspoken or veiled through euphemism or allusion. The process of coming out as we know it today began to solidify with the rise of the gay liberation movement of the 1970s. Drawing inspiration from the feminist movement tenet that the personal is political, the gay liberation movement made it imperative that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals come "out of the closets and into the streets" as an act of defiance and liberation.[1] While the radical roots and goals of the LGBT movement have shifted over the ensuing fifty years, the central emphasis on visibility and coming out as an essential part of queer life has not wavered. The passing years have also not made the process of coming out today any less fraught, emotionally taxing, or complicated, as two recent memoirs show. Taylor Brorby's *Boys and Oil*, and Cade Mason's collection of essays, *Engine Running*, demonstrate that in spades. They also demonstrate the importance of place and even ecology to the experience of coming out, as Brorby and Mason situate their experiences and their work inextricably within their home places of North Dakota and West Texas, respectively.

As the LGBT movement made coming out such a central aspect of queer life, it became an early focus of what developed into the fields of LGBT Studies and Queer Theory. And, perhaps surprisingly, the focus was not always positive or celebratory. For instance, in his explication of the formation of the "modern homosexual" through discourses of medicine and the law, Michel Foucault traced how the practice of confession was drawn from religious contexts and put into the service of modern medicine,

psychology, and criminal prosecution, all of which sought to discover, pathologize, apprehend, heal, and/or reform this personage known, by the late nineteenth century, as the homosexual. For Foucault, coming out was deeply ironic, as he viewed the confession at the heart of the process as a tool not of personal or political liberation but of heteronormative power and control.[2] Similarly, in her exploration of the way that the closet and the coming-out process structure far more than just sexuality, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick posited that, for queer people, coming out presents a double bind where both the confession of sexuality and the withholding of that confession are punishable offences. In this way, one is compelled to be out, but can never be out enough. This double bind, for Sedgwick, punishes queer people for both disclosing and not disclosing their otherness and thus makes the coming-out process always fraught, ambiguous, and fracturing.[3] Other scholars have noted how the coming-out narrative is often overlaid by the spatial narrative of movement from a small town or rural space to the urban center. In this sense, to come out is to move from the countryside to the city. Anthropologist Kath Weston, for example, identified what she called the narrative of the "Great Gay Migration" among interview participants in San Francisco. For these queer individuals, coming out necessitated moving from small towns and rural spaces to the city, although once there, Weston points out, these same individuals often encountered similar barriers to finding and forming queer community in the city as they experienced back home.[4] Queer theorist J. Jack Halberstam pushes Weston's analysis further to develop the concept of metronormativity, which reifies urban and rural spaces as binary opposites for queer individuals. Through a metronormative lens, urban space becomes the space of visibility, community, and liberation while rural and small-town space is positioned "by urban queers as sad and lonely, [a place where] rural queers might be thought of as 'stuck' in a place that they would leave if they only could."[5] All these aspects associated with the process of coming out as LGBTQ are explored in the work of Brorby and Mason. Both texts are extremely confessional in nature but also full of ambiguity, as both authors wrestle with fractured families, religion, the threat of antiqueer violence, and a deep yearning to remember and return to a place that is no longer safe or welcoming, and a family of origin that, for both authors, remains fractured.

In many ways, Brorby's *Boys and Oil* reads much like what has become a traditional coming-out memoir. First and foremost, the text is laid out in a linear and chronologically ordered fashion that follows Brorby from youth into adulthood. An early chapter titled "Roots," for example, explores Brorby's upbringing in and around Center, North Dakota. Brorby spends his youth exploring the prairie, the pothole lakes, and stretches of the Missouri River that surrounded his childhood home. This natural space was often a restorative and reparative space for Brorby, who, like many queer youth, felt ostracized at school for a difference that revealed itself slowly and was resolved, for Brorby, only by leaving Center as soon as possible. That opportunity came in the ensuing chapter, "Sprout," which is also the fulcrum around which much of the book turns. In this chapter, Brorby travels east to Minnesota and to college, where he begins the process of coming out, first, rather uneventfully, to friends and then, disastrously, to his parents—his parents' Christianity effecting a schism that remains unresolved by memoir's

end. Notably, though unanalyzed, Brorby faces far less friction when coming out to older relatives. As Brorby begins the process of coming out to family and friends, and becomes more and more separated from his family and his home in North Dakota, he also experiences two events often found in coming-out narratives. While living in Minneapolis, he attempts and is rescued from suicide and he begins to find queer community. In Brorby's case, community is found through a welcoming church congregation, the blessing of a same-sex union, and the fight for gay marriage.

These turning points, found in various guises in many coming-out narratives, propel Brorby's narrative into the ensuing three chapters, "Shoot," "Blade," and "Inflorescence," which see Brorby finding queer companionship, success as a writer, and a new calling as an environmental activist. But while Brorby finds his footing as a gay man, his story of coming out is not clean and its conclusion leaves many threads unresolved. By the end of the memoir, the rift between himself and his parents remains and, in some ways, has deepened. Likewise, although he travels back and forth between North Dakota and urban centers, he is left at the end of the memoir still feeling cut off from his childhood home, unable to return to it as a home place, and still longing but unable to find a new place—urban, rural, or otherwise—to put down roots. "I yearn for home and yet," he writes, "when licking my finger, testing to see which way the tempest of memories blows, I find I am caught in a whirlwind of emotion that reasserts itself: You have no home here" (325).

Where Brorby's memoir breaks fresher ground is in his incorporation of ecology into the narrative. In doing so, Brorby is making a move that the field of LGBTQ Studies has only recently embarked on.[6] Brorby's chapter titles are the first clue that he wants to make the ecology and environment of North Dakota a crucial part of his memoir. The chapter titles that form the core of Brorby's own story—"Roots," "Sprout," "Shoot," "Blade," "Inflorescence," and "Floret"—are all stages of growth for prairie grasses. Brorby deepens his metaphoric connection with prairie grasses through ecology lessons sprinkled throughout the text. One lesson—that prairie grasses send roots deep into the ground to test whether or not the environment is habitable before bursting aboveground—is repeated and frames the text and Brorby's attempt to find and create a new home for himself. A second lesson suggests that that process might remain only ever partial. The roots of prairie grasses, Brorby tells us, are so deep, dense, and intertwined that removing the grass by pulling often leaves the puller with bloody hands and always leaves part of the root system below ground, "hidden, left behind. It refuses to leave home" (79). Brorby uses the metaphor of prairie grass removed but remaining to not only frame his story of coming out but also put it in the larger environmental and ecological context of North Dakota and its extractive economies.

In form, that context bookends Brorby's story by way of a prologue on the ancient seas that created North Dakota's geology and the megaflora and fauna that has, in just the last century, been hauled from deep within those rocks as coal and oil. Brorby even ends with a short coda on the caprock that, deep beneath the soil, seems to anchor the place of North Dakota, but which is also threatened by the allure of oil that lies below its surface. Brorby grew up in physical proximity and with familial ties to the coal mining that stripped the prairie grasses, roots, and soil from the landscape surrounding his hometown of Center. The oil

boom of the first decades of the twenty-first century, which fractured the caprock of the Bakken formation in order to extract the fossil fuels beneath it, coincided with Brorby's coming out. And although the links between the fracturing of the landscape in search of oil and the fracturing of Brorby's sense of place, family, and self in the process of coming out are occasionally lost within the narrative, Brorby ties them together most clearly at the start of the text when he provocatively states that "The story of North Dakota is then the story of self-destruction. Everything leaves North Dakota and comes back empty" (7).

Decidedly shorter than Brorby's memoir, Mason's essay collection, *Engine Running*, differs from more traditional memoirs in both its form and focus. Rather than a strictly chronological narrative of his life, for instance, Mason's essays are a series of memories, recollections, and forgettings of what, in an adulthood separated from youth in West Texas, is an increasingly amorphous past. As a whole, the essays trace Mason's youth, his sexual awakening and coming out, and the dissolution of his parents' marriage. But chronologically, the essays often overlap, and move back and forth in time. Some essays recall an approximate youth, when Mason is "8, 9, or 10" and growing up in rural West Texas among "endless fields of cotton," pumpjacks, and "mesquite, mesquite, mesquite, with angry branches filling out the landscape like closely scattered piles of skeletal remains" (8, 48). In these essays he remembers traveling rural distances in the car with his mom, reading to his father in the cab of the family tractor, and navigating expectations in the evangelical church. Other essays are set nearer to the present and closely examine those skeletal remains of place, often clouded in a ubiquitous West Texas dust. In these essays, place, for Mason, is less an environmental reality that frames his youth, his coming-out experience, or the experience of his family's dissolution, and more a marker of the distance—temporal, psychological, and cultural—between Mason's past and present.

This distance, and its connection to the rural landscape of West Texas, is marked throughout the essays in a number of ways. Car travel and its connection to memory and forgetting is a frequent theme repeated throughout a number of essays. In "Knowing Me, Knowing You," Mason recalls being a child and measuring distance by CD tracks while riding with his mom, when home was "just four, five ABBA songs from town" (5). In the essay "Generations (Like Surrender)," an older Mason takes a trip with his father and grandfather to tend to a cow and her calf. They are "several miles from town," but by this time Mason is "visiting from what feels far away—the Metroplex" (69). For Mason, the distance is not just geographic, but generational and cultural. He's forgotten the lessons his father has taught him about being a man in rural West Texas. He feels "very far away from them. The men of the family" (71). He recalls not knowing "what to do with my hands, how to stand. When the men chase down the cattle" (76). Riding in the backseat of the truck's cab, Mason ends the essay by peering out of the truck's windows at "rows and rows of budding plants in fields the same shade as my father's hands, his father's," and remarking that "In the rearview's reflection, our old home shrinks to nothing until it's lost inside the dust" (78).

The connections Mason makes between physical distance, memory, and forgetting are perhaps most explicit in the essay "On Roadside Crosses." In this essay, Mason uses one of his 300-mile-long drives from the urban center of Dallas–Fort Worth back to rural Post, Texas,

to explore relationships between the rural Texas landscape and religion and between what he can and can't remember about his childhood in the evangelical church. On this particular drive back home, Mason has chosen to count the number of roadside crosses he passes, ticking them off on a fast-food receipt. He does this, he writes, "To note, in some small way, a distancing" (36). This is a physical distance for Mason, measured not in miles or ABBA songs but in crosses, and also a distance between memory and lived experience. Much of the essay focuses on what he cannot remember about his baptism at "8, 9, or 10," an event that he repeatedly describes as "The day I'm told I should remember" (35). Instead of memories of his baptism, Mason recalls the pressure to feel the holy spirit, to speak in tongues, and to teach his sister to do the same.

While Mason has no clear memory of his Christian baptism, the essay "Baptism" recalls a different sort of rite of passage of belonging. The event occurs after he has come out to his parents, a process that begins when his parents overhear a phone conversation expressing his love for another man. Mason does not explicitly narrate his coming out, but we see its aftermath: his mother reaching "the final state of grief: *Acceptance*" and allowing Mason to bring home a college boyfriend, and the patched hole his father punched in a closet door, "my father's closed-door reply to my coming-out" (102). This specter of antiqueer violence haunts Mason's second baptism, the one he remembers, which occurs at night in the family pool, after his parents and sister have gone to bed and he is alone with his college boyfriend. As the two begin to have sex, Mason cannot help but focus on flanking totems of his parents—one of his mother's decorative crosses and his father's wheelbarrow—that stand menacingly and transform into the figure of a shotgun-wielding man. Mason is shaken from the violent scene, which culminates in the clear blue pool water turning blood red, only by orgasm. He does not share with his boyfriend his vision of antiqueer violence, which he confesses to readers he sees all the time and everywhere.

Mason's essay collection is as much about queerness and coming out in West Texas as it is about his parents' divorce and the difficulties he, his sister, and their parents face as their family of origin dissolves. As Mason struggles to find his own footing as a queer man away from the family's home place, his struggles take place alongside those of his family. Mason brings these struggles together in the final essay in the collection, "In Case You Find Us Unresponsive." The essay largely takes the form of a letter, written to his father in the evening that he and his sister "die" from smoking the joint that they, in their paranoia, think is laced. The letter ends as a litany of apologies—a confession—of a gay, distanced son to his divorced, struggling father. Mason writes, "I'm sorry that I felt—or, that *I feel*—sometimes I want to run away. From you and from our family, and from home, West Texas, God. . . . I'm sorry that I'm not always what you think of as a man. That the shock of my sin came at you like a sudden flash in the dark. . . . I'm sorry that I feel, somehow, responsible for all of this" (167).

Both Brorby's *Boys and Oil* and Mason's *Engine Running* present readers with new ways of thinking about what is now an old process for the LGBTQ community. Both texts center the importance of place and the growing importance of ecology and environment in the process of coming out. Place has always been an important part of coming out, but it may be growing even more important as the fires of

the ongoing culture wars around gender and sexuality continue to be stoked by politicians, religious leaders, and others, and resulting partisan divides not only widen but also become spatialized and pit rural and small-town spaces against the urban. Even within that context, both Brorby and Mason undercut metronormative narratives by showing that queerness can and does exist in rural spaces and small towns, even if the constant specter of violence and lack of acceptance often forces queer individuals to leave their home places. While Brorby's memoir hews to the traditional coming-out narrative, it successfully and fruitfully incorporates new angles on the intersection of that process with ecology and the natural environment. Mason's essay collection takes a more unique form, which may seem challenging to some readers, but the effort is worth it and his language is often stunning. Both books have much to offer a variety of readers interested in queer experiences in the Great Plains.

Christopher J. Hommerding holds a PhD in US history from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and specializes in the histories of gender, sexuality, and built and natural environments.

Notes

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5. J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 36.

6. See, for instance, Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Brue Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Book Reviews

Peculiar Places: A Queer Crip History of White Rural Nonconformity.
By Ryan Lee Cartwright. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. 253 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $30.00 paper.

In *Peculiar Places*, Ryan Lee Cartwright uses "queercrip historical analysis" (6) to tease apart twentieth-century Americans' anti-idyllic depictions of rural people. He episodically explores the intersection of disability, sexuality, ruralness, whiteness, and capitalism across diverse media: from photographs of a retirement home for unmarried lumbermen in northern Minnesota, to the gender presentation of Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Cartwright effectively demonstrates the utility of queercrip analysis for broadening interpretations of texts depicting family, dependency, heteronormativity, disability, and sexuality in the Great Plains.

He begins with Progressive-era eugenics fieldworkers who popularized the anti-idyll as a way for understanding rural America. Their genealogies of institutionalized people looked for queerness in rural areas, identified it with feeblemindedness, and then contrasted queercrip domesticity with eugenicists' own sense of rural virtue rooted in whiteness, capitalism, and heteronormativity.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal most directly with the Great Plains. Cartwright's queercrip analysis of Farm Security Administration photography is a strength. He shows how these photographs of men and women in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Nebraska confirm and challenge New Deal–era understandings of the family that attempted to erase the interdependent relationships of nonnormative family structures. Chapter 3 takes up media depictions regarding the psychology and gender of Ed Gaines, whose 1957 murder trial in Plainfield, Wisconsin, became the basis for the "'psycho-trans' killer" (95) trope. Cartwright takes seriously local understandings of Wisconsin's "dead heart region," contrasting these with popular film's depictions of the region.

Chapter 4 shows how poverty tours of Appalachia, like Lyndon Johnson's 1964 visit with the Fletcher family, whitewashed poverty. Though entertaining, Cartwright's queercrip analysis of *Deliverance* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, two 1970s anti-idyllic horror films, could more clearly reveal how urbanoia films caused rural sexual difference to not be closely associated with the gay rights movement. In chapter 6, Cartwright analyzes two 1990s documentaries—*Brother's Keeper*, about a disabled farmer accused of murder, and *The Brandon Teena Story*, about the murder of a transgender man—to explain the fracture of anti-idyllic depictions amid the rise of identity movement in the 1990s.

Each chapter offers compelling case studies for scholars interested in queercrip analysis, though examples of the Great Plains are limited. Additionally, I was left wondering whether queercrip analysis could be used constructively to build up a synthesized narrative of American history, or if instead it is better suited as a tool for deconstructing sources and perspectives.

Nonetheless, *Peculiar Places* is required reading for scholars working at the intersections of disability, sexuality, and anti-idyllic depictions of rural America.

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Stories from Saddle Mountain: Autobiographies of a Kiowa Family.
By Henrietta Tongkeamha and Raymond Tongkeamha. Edited by Benjamin R. Kracht. With Lisa LaBrada. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022. ix + 163 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, references, index. $40.00 cloth.

Stories from Saddle Mountain, by mother and son Henrietta and Raymond Tongkeamha, is an oral history and geography of Kiowa Country filled with remarkable detail about past events and environments. The book reveals much about the intangible elements that overlay the Slick Hills and Wichita Mountains and that make Saddle Mountain and surrounding areas Kiowa places. Henrietta Tongkeamha's memoir provides detailed accounts of Rainy Mountain School, Boakes Trading Post, family visits to the school, and some of the all-too-common assimilation tactics used to erase Kiowa children's language, culture, and identities. Henrietta's memories of Riverside Indian School outside Anadarko, Oklahoma, reveal a different environment, military-like in organization. Boarding-school stories are extremely important, as forced assimilation would eventually perpetuate the loss of the Kiowa language among many members.

Having spent time in the area, I cannot help but relate to Raymond's memoir describing his many creek adventures. He talked about "big game" hunting as a youth. Now, big game hunting in southwestern Oklahoma involves the imagination—the imagination needed to stalk elephants, tigers, and rhinos. "Big game"" hunting was good mind and body training for going after local species like whitetail deer and, more recently, elk. Raymond's memoir also documents animal species that were once common but now rarely encountered, like horned lizards, mountain boomers, jackrabbits, and different varieties of minnows found in local creeks.

Stories from Saddle Mountain is good reading and an informative source of Kiowa experiences during the assimilation and allotment period, but it is also a unique oral history of the Slick Hills and Wichita Mountains regional flora and fauna. The book compliments already existing oral histories of the Kiowa people, like the Doris Duke Oral History collection held at the University of Oklahoma. It is not a stretch to refer to *Stories from Saddle Mountain* as storyscape text full of life's ups and downs, kinship relations, hard-teasing relatives, and the comfort and safety of a place we Kiowas call our homeland.

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Clock and Compass: How John Byron Plato Gave Farmers a Real Address.
By Mark Monmonier. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2022. ix + 147 pp. Maps, figures, photos, notes. $19.95 paper.

Mark Monmonier has produced a distinctive monograph that is a mix of biography, historical geography, and historical cartography. Monmonier's book provides an engaging view

of the life of a map innovator who sadly did not receive much acclaim or success.

The book begins with a succinct history of transportation from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s in the United States, focused on how transportation innovations affected rural areas. It also outlines how maps, addressing, and wayfinding during that time evolved, with rural homes continuing to be much harder to find than those in cities and towns. Succeeding chapters follow John Byron Plato's life from his birth in Illinois, to his youth and young adulthood at the edge of the Great Plains in Denver, Colorado, to his cattle ranching days in Semper, Colorado. He later moved to Ithaca, New York, then Ohio, and finally Washington, DC.

In the midst of these different homes, Plato showed his talents as an inventor and entrepreneur. While in Denver in the early 1900s, he patented three horse-hitching devices, and he had a business manufacturing the hitches as well. After he moved to Semper, he developed the "Clock System" to assign addresses to farms depending on their distance and cardinal direction from the nearest main town. He patented this system and spent many of the ensuing years promoting the production, sale, and distribution of maps that incorporated the Clock System. That was the case in Colorado, New York, and Ohio. Later, in Washington, DC, he worked for the government on and off for several years but did not find much success or staying power. His later years were spent staying close in Maryland and donating some land for a Girl Scouts camp.

Plato's mapping system (using compass rather than clockface directions) did find a fairly widespread adoption in upstate New York in the late 1930s within rural directories produced and sold by others. Plato's sales efforts only skirted the Great Plains, and more discussion by Monmonier on why the region did not readily use Plato's mapping system would be valuable historical geography.

In summary, Monmonier's ability to pull out details about the life of John Byron Plato is remarkable, and his method of tying Plato's life to maps of the communities and even the lots Plato lived on is a fascinating and welcome approach for someone who recognizes the power of cartography to illustrate history.

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Chief Thunderwater: An Unexpected Indian in Unexpected Places.
By Gerald F. Reid. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. vii + 188 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $34.95 cloth.

In *Chief Thunderwater*, Gerald F. Reid uncovers the life of a man who, in life and in death, was denigrated as "a shadowy imposter," one consigned to "a humorous, tragic, and ultimately inconsequential footnote" (147–48). Through careful deliberation and research, including conversations with the man's descendants, Reid presents a portrait of a performer, an activist, and an organizer—who, it seemed, made friends and enemies on both sides of the United States–Canadian border. The subject is Oghema Niagara (1865–1950), later known as Chief Thunderwater. His parents participated in the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia and spent the next decade working as Indian performers, and their son later worked as a performer, including a stint with Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Thunderwater is a curious figure. Much of his advocacy work was centered either in

Cleveland or across the border as what came to be known as "Thunderwaterism" took hold at Kahnawake. Thunderwater, like other *fin-de-siècle* activists, was either loved or hated, with few opinions in between. He was the subject of several investigations during his lifetime: one that centered on allegations of child abuse (a conspiracy deliberately set up, Reid contends, as a response to Thunderwater's activism), and a subsequent one that hinged on a scheme to sell certificates of "Adoption and Honorary Membership in the Mohawk Tribe." Despite these struggles, Thunderwater continued to advocate for Indigenous issues until his death in 1950.

Given the subject matter, the book could have turned into an uncritical paean to a somewhat mysterious historical figure or a damning indictment of ethnic fraud, a condemnation of a man whose activism made him both a threat and a target. Instead, Reid highlights Thunderwater's creation of the Council of Tribes, an organization loosely modeled after the Society of American Indians. He traces Thunderwater's advocacy work in Canada, particularly amid the rise of what Reid calls modern Haudenosaunee nationalism.

While Cleveland is about as close to the Great Plains as the book gets, the region's influence on Thunderwater—particularly his adoption of the Plains-style headdress and beaded clothing—is clearly evident. I would have appreciated a deeper examination of this component, especially in regard to how Thunderwater positioned himself in the public sphere in the East and the Midwest. Thunderwater's visibility was a carefully crafted piece of his persona, and the adaptation of Plains imagery underscores the complex nature of twentieth-century Indigeneity and advocacy.

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Homeland: Ethnic Mexican Belonging since 1900.
By Aaron E. Sanchez. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. ix + 223 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. $24.95 paper.

Homeland: Ethnic Mexican Belonging since 1900 contains amazing research and is a wonderful book. The writing is accessible in ways that have become more common: less academese and jargon, fewer page-long sentences, and interesting storytelling that moves chronologically and makes it hard to put the book down. *Homeland* contains so much good, concise information I found myself having to be deliberate about underlines, highlighting, and note-taking because I wanted to highlight the entire book! It has all the elements of great history, including race, citizenship, nationalism, class consciousness, gender, personal stories, and larger community effects. It includes world history, demonstrating in great detail how international movements, ideas, and circumstances affected Mexican origin identities. I was especially impressed with the multiple ways in which social/economic class and gender were addressed as major elements of identification and not simply additions.

Homeland documents little-known parts of relatively recent history such as the Mexican American Movement. It is an excellent yet easy-

to-read history of the rise and fall of Mexican Americanism, containing ideas that I have encountered in the past but did not understand. It illustrates the totality of assimilation and "Americanism" that were present. It shows that the identity term "Mexican American" was not just happenstance but a deliberate attempt by middle-class ethnic Mexicans to assimilate to United States middle-class cultural and social norms and join the society as fully accepted "Americans." For example, Sanchez shows how the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was reimagined by Mexican American advocates to make Mexicans into conquerors, stating that the treaty was "not a theft of Mexican lands but a document that established Mexican American citizenship" (106).

Homeland raises issues of identity from many sides, including Mexican Americans, Mexicans, Chicanos, and both the United States and Mexican governments, in addition to numerous and myriad cultural, social, political, and economic players. Research analysis and results are often about what to include and what to leave out. I have read numerous research findings related to Mexican-origin people where issues related to gender are often omitted because there are other "more important" issues. I have seen this even when gender, while not the main topic of research, comes up organically. This book does not ignore gender issues; in fact, it raises numerous gender issues related to both the Mexican American and the Chicano social movements.

This work is surprisingly thorough in delineating efforts and effects of ethnic Mexican individuals and groups and does all that in a terse 171 pages of text. I highly recommend it to those interested in the subject. To those not interested, reading this book will teach you a thing or two.

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Nothing but the Dirt: Stories from an American Farm Town.
By Kate Benz. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2022. 256 pp. Epilogue. $24.95 paper.

Author Kate Benz takes the reader on a yearlong journey in Courtland, a town of 285 people in north-central Kansas. Like many of the small towns that dot the rural Great Plains, Courtland's population has been steadily declining with each new census count. Yet, while the town may be perceived as an empty place to those passing by, Benz finds a community that is full of dedicated residents with several stories to share.

Throughout the book, readers are introduced to a wide range of Courtland's residents, from those who have lived there for their entire lives to those who left for schooling, careers, or other opportunities before moving back to start families and businesses. Benz interviews those who work, shop, and dine at the community's long-standing establishments, including the church, gas station, bank, newspaper, farm supply, and of course the diner where the local farmers meet for coffee nearly every morning. These stories are interwoven with new businesses in town, including an antique store, brewery, and ceramics shop. Benz does an outstanding job of telling Courtland's story from several perspectives, including young and

old, female and male, and from the mayor to the ditchdigger, the banker to the plumber, and the pastor to the broker.

Like much of the rural Great Plains, Courtland's survival depends on using local approaches to solve problems that exist on state, regional, national, and global scales. Linked in each chapter is a discussion of the outside forces that impact the community, including how farmers must adapt to statewide land and water conservation strategies, changes to federal subsidy programs, global tariff wars, and fluctuating domestic and international market prices, as well as local business owners who must compete with their big-city counterparts. Challenges to the small town's endurance are only part of the story; this is a book that explores a community that continues to find ways to diversify and grow.

This book will be of interest to anyone concerned about the vitality of rural communities, especially in the Great Plains, as its pages are full of stories of efforts not only to sustain current populations and livelihoods but also to attract new residents and businesses. It is a testament to all that we can learn from often-overlooked small towns; it is a call to explore the richness of rural America. While Courtland may occupy an empty space in the geographical imagination of a passerby, it is anything but.

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Lives Lived, Lives Imagined: Landscapes of Resilience in the Works of Miriam Toews.
By Sabrina Reed. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2022. viii + 256 pp. Notes, references, index. $27.95 paper.

In *Lives Lived, Lives Imagined: Landscapes of Resilience in the Works of Miriam Toews*, Sabrina Reed engages a deep read of Toews's oeuvre to theorize trauma and resilience. Reed highlights a series of tensions faced by Toews's characters, showcasing trauma within stories of survivors of parental abuse, familial abandonment, religious shunning, and the loss of family members to suicide. Cataloging the ways in which Toews juxtaposes belonging and alienation, escape and entrapment, self-expression and silence, self-(re)discovery and denial, and personal experience within religious dogma, Reed addresses the ambivalence that characterizes trauma survivorship. A major underlying theme of each chapter is the assumption that one or more characters within each of Toews's novels demonstrate *resilience*, a concept that Reed endeavors to unpack throughout the monograph.

In this pursuit, Reed's analysis excels both in breadth and depth, as Reed carefully analyzes decades of Toews's novels while attending to the nuanced relationships between Toews's protagonists and their families, social networks, communities, and inner dialogues. Each chapter advances a blueprint for coping with and overcoming adversity, as Reed guides readers through Toews's narratives which blend autobiographical disclosure with fictional invention. Noting Toews's ambivalent and tumultuous relationship with her own faith, Reed chronicles the ways in which Toews's characters struggle to cope with myriad traumas, including witnessing the suicides of their parents and

siblings, being shunned by their Mennonite community, enduring abuse from extended family members, and living with devastating mental illness. In each chapter, Reed argues that Toews's protagonists endure intense hardships in order to find resilience in the home, in themselves, in escape, in community, or in tradition, and then problematizes the presumptions of safety within each of these physical, mental, and emotional spaces.

Reed's approach brings the lived experience of trauma survivors into a public space that routinely ignores, negates, and downplays their complex and intractable pain. In doing so, she interrupts hegemonic narratives of happiness and suffering. In critiquing the works of Miriam Toews, Sabrina Reed elevates the plight of trauma survivors, paying witness to the pain, alienation, isolation, abandonment, and self-doubt that plague them, advocating for their suffering to be coded as resilience. But is resilience the goal for which we should strive? Is resilience the highest aspiration for trauma survivors? Should we ask survivors to forgive their abusers and maintain the status quo, or could we instead challenge the abusive systems and actors who perpetuate trauma?

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Friday Night Lives: Photos from the Town, the Team, and After.
By Robert Clark. Foreword by Hanif Abdurraqib. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020. 192 pp. Photographs. $45.00 cloth.

The impact of H. G. "Buzz" Bissinger's 1990 masterpiece, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, owes much to its memorable photographs by Robert Clark that put faces to names and made unforgettably visible their pride, hope, joy, and pain. The book's twenty-nine selected images can almost tell the story by themselves, and they give Bissinger's compelling narrative a depth and pathos from which it cannot be separated.

Released for the thirtieth anniversary of the original work, this collection draws from the initial 137 rolls of film Clark shot of the 1988 Permian Panthers' season and adds many newer town and team photographs that he has taken since. Particularly impressive are the series compiled of several of that team's star players, each capped with a photo Clark shot of them later in their lives. These chronologies rewind the stories for viewers already familiar with them, so that the final photos frame the lives we imagined with the realities of living. But even those who do not know these stories will see in them the durable progression of time, the fickleness of fame, and the fading intensity of those wonderful lights.

Consider the final image of Boobie Miles, who quit the team in that immortalized season when his promising trajectory was twisted sideways by a devastating knee injury. He sits in the stands of Ratliff Stadium in 2004, inexplicably surrounded by a crowd of mannequin torsos sitting askew, wearing mostly long-sleeved shirts, their faceless heads with the occasional hat. Boobie's Permian Panthers jacket marks his return to the team, but his serious gaze looks distantly back at something that must remain a might-have-been. The expressionless half-bodies surround him like a ghostly crowd haunting unrealized dreams of stardom. Knowing the tragic arc of Boobie's 1988 season provides a powerful caption for the image, but the photograph speaks to anyone who can un-

derstand loneliness and appreciate irony. Boobie's photo-sequence begins with dejection and anxiety, moves through denial and loss, and arrives at acceptance and introspection. It is a path recognizable to anyone advanced enough in years to recall a former dream that can no longer be realized.

Clark's photography provides an incredibly rich vision of growing up and living in a Texas town that has turned high school football into its soul. And, like all exceptional photography, it has that remarkable characteristic: the more time you spend looking into it, the more of yourself you find.

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Snapshots and Short Notes: Images and Messages of Early Twentieth-Century Photo Postcards.
By Kenneth Wilson. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2020. 304 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. $45.00 cloth.

Kenneth Wilson's *Snapshots and Short Notes: Images and Messages of Early Twentieth-Century Photo Postcards* provides an excellent account of postcards: the different types of cards, the intent behind many, and how they can be used today for research. The project begins by noting that the "golden age" of picture postcards was the early 1900s, when they provided fast, effective communication. Many were, and are, photographs with personal messages that provide eyewitness accounts to history. Wilson notes that they "revolutionized personal communication in the same dramatic fashion that the Internet and social media have transformed messaging today" (6). In addition to discussing how technology played a critical role in advancing the postcard craze, Wilson mentions different postcard styles, with examples of each, and shares how they were produced. In chapter 10, for instance, he states that one card, titled "Indina Boy" (which should be "Indian Boy"), has hand-colored feathers in the boy's headdress.

> Coloring of real photo postcards was more common in Europe, and it was a laborious process, done one card at a time by hand. Indina Boy's photograph may have been developed, printed, and colored by a family member or friend. (157)

The book is divided into twenty chapters, each with postcards that discuss a particular topic—from political campaigns to military conflicts, to natural disasters and train wrecks. The images are nicely displayed, and each is fully developed to help readers appreciate how revolutionary postcards were in the early 1900s. In chapter 2, for instance, Wilson notes that at the 1912 Boston Electric Show, more than two hundred exhibitors demonstrated the use and value of the technology. Postcards were used to *visually* bring the exhibit to light. Another example is found in chapter 13 with the postcard titled "Love from Brown Eyes." The image is of three young ladies posing on a stack of pine logs at a sawmill. Wilson writes that the

> area surrounding Bastrop [Texas] is home to a forest of loblolly pines known as the Lost Pines Forest that were possibly separated from a much larger forest in East Texas by the last Ice Age. In the mid-1800s, the population of Bastrop County was over 10,000 people; the pine forest supplied lo-

cals with good, straight timber and a number of local sawmills were kept busy milling lumber. (185)

Even though the book is not entirely devoted to the Great Plains, there are several connections throughout the work. The author notes in chapter 16 that "disaster" postcards—for instance, chronicling drought and dust storms—were quite popular in the early 1900s. Chapter 17 provides another Great Plains connection, with a nice example of a postcard titled "Red Cross Quilt." At first glance, the image might not appear that interesting, and the Great Plains story is hidden. Wilson explains its importance and writes that the quilt is from Sidney, Nebraska (1917), and was raffled off to support troops.

Postcards declined in popularity after World War II, yet they are still widely available. Wilson states that they are found in abundance in the Library of Congress and other major libraries, in smaller libraries and local historical societies, as well as on now-popular internet sites like eBay. Wherever they are found, postcards provide near-limitless research opportunities. Here, Wilson uses them as a foundation and then develops the images along with other primary sources—census records, genealogy records, military draft documents, and newspaper accounts—which serve as examples for academics and scholars from diverse disciplines to follow.

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Never Caught Twice: Horse Stealing in Western Nebraska, 1850–1890.
By Matthew S. Luckett. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. ix + 329 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. $65.00 cloth.

"Western Nebraska," writes Matthew S. Luckett, "was a horse thief's paradise" (66). In his *Never Caught Twice: Horse Stealing in Western Nebraska, 1850–1890*, Luckett offers fresh insight into an understudied but fascinating region and topic. *Never Caught Twice* locates the theft of horses within the shifting natural, political, social, and legal terrain of western Nebraska over the span of four decades. The result is an analysis that conceptualizes horse stealing not merely as a statutory crime, but as a complex destabilizing force that impacted individuals, communities, and nations across the Great Plains.

White settlers, United States soldiers, and Plains Indians all seized horses for different reasons and felt the destabilizing effects of horse theft in different ways. Still, Luckett argues, "the phenomenon frequently spurred historical action, reaction, and change, ranging from massacres and murders to subtler shifts in the evolving relationship between civilians and the state" (278). As such, the history of horse seizure by both Indigenous and white people should not be separated, even as the meanings and consequences associated with it varied. The author underscores this complexity throughout, deploying an array of archival source material including ranching and legal records, newspaper accounts, and correspondence. The work advances in a narrative fashion. Chapter 3, for instance, explores the relationship between horse stealing and the Great Sioux War, while chapter 6 covers both western Nebraskan

vigilantism and modern cultural depictions of horse thieves.

While *Never Caught Twice* is thoroughly researched and convincingly argued, broader contextualization would have augmented the argument in certain areas. The author's assertion, for instance, that "Nebraska's vigilante tradition is firmly rooted in its settlers' encounters with Plains Indian raiding parties" (234) overlooks the flurry of Nebraskan vigilante activity sparked in the 1850s by property rights violations concerning land claims. Luckett does briefly allude to this violence in his discussion of the Cass County vigilantes, and he even quotes one vigilante's daughter who equated claim jumping with horse theft, but he does not develop the point further (257). A more protracted discussion on the topic would have been beneficial, especially given the work's important contribution to the scholarly understanding of the relationship between collective violence and property in the Great Plains.

Throughout *Never Caught Twice*, Luckett makes the persuasive argument that horse theft was anything but simple. The work successfully demonstrates that a deeper understanding of the complexities of horse stealing within western Nebraska contributes to a more complete history of both the Great Plains and American West. *Never Caught Twice* constitutes a compelling contribution to the literature and will be useful to readers interested in Native American history, property, crime, vigilantism, or the nineteenth-century Great Plains.

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