#### A publication from the Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board (KSHRAB), April 2000.

# Blueprint

Kansas Historical Records: A Blueprint for Saving Our Heritage























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ABOVE: Abraham and Aganetha (Klassen) Groening family in front of their adobe house in the Mennonite village of Gnadenau, Marion County. (Photo courtesy of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas)

RIGHT: Windmill in a Kansas pasture.



## What Are Historical Records?

Historical records are created every day by government offices, organizations, religious institutions, businesses and individuals.

Examples of historical records are letters, photographs, computer files, minutes, financial and legal documents, reports, ledgers and other types of written or visual materials that people create and that describe their lives and activities. Many records are created by individuals and include diaries, letters, family photographs, scrapbooks and financial documents. Maps, photographs and postcards help us visualize how our communities have developed. Community organizations generate membership records, minutes of meetings, information on programs and activities, and financial records. Government entities produce records that docu-

ment the services and programs financed by taxpayers and fees, and include cities, counties, school districts, water districts and courts that impact people's lives. Business records describe the economic life of a community. Today some records are produced and maintained only in electronic format on a computer. Special procedures and precautions are necessary to preserve them.

It is important to preserve historical records, because they enable us to understand our heritage and its meaning for our lives. Access to government records protects the rights of Kansas citizens. These records are necessary for government accountability. The records of individuals, organizations and businesses tell the stories of our communities. These are the stories











FAR LEFT: Pages from Samuel J.
Reader's 1864 autobiography with
watercolor illustrations. Reader's artwork provides visual images from
an era when photography was not
readily available. The autobiography
describes his experiences while
serving in the 2nd Kansas militia.
LEFT: Women campaigning for their
right to vote, Lawrence, (ca. 1912).
In addition to documenting this
important crusade for women's
rights, this photograph also documents clothing styles of the era.

TOP LEFT: Dwight D. Eisenhower, center front, and friends, camping on the Smoky Hill River. (ca. 1907) Typical family photos increase in historical significance if the persons pictured gain regional or national prominence. (Photo courtesy of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library TOP RIGHT: Records need to be stored properly to ensure their preservation. Collapsing boxes damage often irreplaceable papers Unidentified location. ABOVE: Certificates of Naturalization are among the valuable documents found in county courthouses. This type of record, along with other local government records, contains infor-

mation of interest to genealogists.

of our ancestors and ourselves. They tell us where we have been, and, through better understanding of the past, we often make better choices about the future. Historical records are key to our identity as a people and a society.

Kansans possess great pride in their history, and tens of thousands of Kansans visit historic sites and participate in historical celebrations every year. We have a strong sense of identity and a vested interest in saving historical records, but the task is daunting and requires a cooperative and concerted effort. It is a tragedy when historical records are lost, because the information contained in the records is often irreplaceable. This plan outlines steps Kansans should take to preserve their heritage.

"This plan offers a blueprint for building stronger programs to save and provide access to the bistorical records of our state."

### The State of Our Records





#### What is KSHRAB?

Historical records should be a permanent resource for future generations of Kansans, but these records of our families, communities and government entities are at risk. Serious gaps in the documentation of many events already exist. Computers are increasingly used to create and store documents and these electronic records present new preservation challenges.

Kansas has over six hundred historical societies, archives, museums, genealogical societies and libraries working to collect and preserve historical records. Many more records are kept by individuals, organizations, government offices and businesses. All of these entities need help with this task. Many of them are under-funded and under-staffed.

Recent surveys of Kansas institutions holding historical records reveal numerous and serious needs. Many institutions list improved storage conditions as the top priority. Often records are stored in basements, attics and closets without adequate shelving and acid-free boxes. These facilities lack the temperature and humidity controls necessary to ensure long-term survival of the materials. The vast majority of repositories would like to prepare additional inventories, indexes or other finding aids, so patrons can locate materials more easily, but time and money are extremely limited. Kansas institutions have dedicated staff, often supplemented by a strong corps of volunteers, but many staff and volunteers lack basic training in archival practices. The majority of the institutions charged with preserving our heritage have less than one thousand dollars per year to devote to historical records.

The survival of historical records in Kansas is threatened. Those charged with preserving the records need more training, staffing and funding. No state funding is available for the local institutions charged with the responsibility of preserving our historical records, and federal grant funds are beyond the reach of many institutions. Local resources for historical records are also extremely limited.

This plan offers a blueprint for building stronger programs to save and provide access to the historical records of our state. The Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board prepared the plan with assistance from archivists, librarians, genealogists, government officials, historians and many others who completed surveys outlining their needs or who participated in task forces discussing what should be done to address these needs. This document is the result of the collaboration of a large number of citizens, and such cooperation must be nurtured and expanded in order for the documentation of our heritage to survive.

Above: Endangered government records at an unidentified location. Storage of records in a properly controlled environment contributes to their long-term preservation.



Top: Immigrants having lunch next to their covered wagon, Greenwood County, (ca. 1900).

ABOVE: Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe diesel powered streamliner, the Super Chief, traveling through Kansas.

BELOW: Boeing Airplane Company, Wichita division, (ca. 1960). Photographs of factory interiors provide



The Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board (KSHRAB) is the central advisory body for historical records planning and for projects developed and carried out within Kansas under the auspices of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Established by Congress in 1934, NHPRC encourages efforts by private organizations and government to preserve and make available for use documentary sources relating to the history of the United States. The responsibilities of KSHRAB include undertaking and sustaining statewide strategic planning relating to historical records in the state, promoting and publicizing the NHPRC program, and soliciting and reviewing grant proposals to be carried out within the state with NHPRC funding. The activities of the board also may include developing and submitting grant applications to address statewide historical records issues and needs; promoting and planning programs to raise public awareness of historical records values, conditions, and concerns; and fostering and supporting cooperative networks and programs dealing with historical records.

KSHRAB consists of nine public members, who are appointed by the Governor and have recognized experience in the use or administration of records, and three ex officio members, the Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, and State Archivist from the staff of the Kansas State Historical Society. The Historical Society also provides staffing and administrative support for the board in carrying out its mission.

#### **Planning**



NHPRC encourages states to identify and plan for the needs of their historical records. Kansas and most other states completed needs assessments in the 1980s. Another round of planning sponsored and funded by NHPRC began in the mid-1990s, and KSHRAB took advantage of this support to initiate a strategic planning process. Board members held two planning retreats on June 18 - 19, 1998, and September 30 - October 1, 1998.

With guidance from a planning consultant, Marilyn Foster Kirk, the board used the first retreat to develop mission and vision statements, to identify stakeholders and values, and to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The board also drafted general goals and objectives.

The second retreat used the data gathered from two surveys of institutions holding historical records in Kansas to select the top areas of need for detailed planning. In 1996 Kansas was among twenty-one states participating in a survey of historical records repositories. Kansas received responses from ninety-three institutions, nearly a one-third response rate. A similar survey, sent to local governments, added another two hundred eighty-six responses to the data available. Vicki Walch, the consultant who coordinated the repository survey at the national level, led the review of the Kansas data at the second retreat.

KSHRAB identified three top priorities for further planning, based on the survey data and discussions at the retreats: 1) local government records, 2) education and technical assistance and 3) public awareness.

It identified task forces comprised of historical records stakeholders to explore each of these areas and to develop strategies for addressing the needs revealed by the surveys. Each task force met several times in 1999. This document is largely the result of their efforts. Detailed herein is a series of proposed projects and potential partnerships to meet the challenge of preserving our documentary heritage. The proposed actions are ambitious, and broad support will be necessary to achieve our goals.





TOP LEFT: Students in a physics lab at Washburn University, Topeka, late 1940s.

ABOVE: Dancers at the annual Mexican Fiesta to support Our Lady of Guadalupe School, Topeka.

LEFT: Mamie Williams, a Topeka teacher, poses with her elementary school students.

- A) To enhance awareness of and appreciation for records with historical value.
- B) To implement programs to improve the management and usage of records with historical value.
- C) To increase financial support for programs and institutions responsible for records with bistorical value.
- D) To improve the effectiveness and visibility of the KSHRAB.

KSHRAB identified a series of groups who are involved in preserving and using historical records:

#### Records repositories

- Kansas State Historical Society (State Archives)
- local historical societies and museums
- public libraries
- colleges and universities
- local governments
- genealogical societies
- civic, social, and other non-profit organizations
- religious organizations
- museums
- businesses

#### Users of records

- genealogists
- bistorians (amateur and professional)
- students
- teachers
- government officials
- journalists
- lawyers
- historic building researchers
- film makers
- and many others

The mission of KSHRAB is to provide education, support and resources, in a responsive, ethical and professional manner, to those organizations that create and preserve records of enduring historical value and to their staffs, their patrons, and, ultimately, the public.

The board's vision is that future generations will have low cost and unconstrained access to original historic records that preserve our heritage and traditions. We achieve this vision by:

- 1) Developing multiple funding sources
- 2) Creating active constituencies
- 3) Providing well funded regrant programs
- 4) Deploying high quality statewide educational programs through partnerships and consortiums.

## Saving Our Heritage

This plan represents the culmination of a twelve-month planning process under the direction of the Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board. Supported by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the board members reviewed surveys of those charged with saving the historical records of Kansas and analyzed and prioritized the needs which the surveys identified. The board created three task forces to develop strategies or activities to meet these needs. The topics of the task forces were:

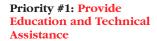
- 1. Provide education and technical assistance.
- 2. Increase advocacy and create awareness.
- 3. Preserve local government records.



Rationale: Over one thousand institutions in Kansas keep historical records. They include historical societies and museums, archives and manuscript repositories, genealogical societies, public libraries, government offices. and many other institutions. Many of these entities do not have staff trained in the care and management of historical records. These individuals, when surveyed about their needs, expressed an interest in opportunities for both basic and continuing education and for technical assistance from experts in the field.

Goal: Improve the education and training of individuals with responsibility for historical records.









#### **Proposed Activity:**

Develop a series of workshops in the areas of appraisal, documentation, arrangement, access, advocacy, management, technology, preservation needs and disaster planning. Both basic and advanced training should be available. The workshops should be videotaped and made available to those unable to attend the initial workshops. Portions of the videotape should be filmed live during the workshops and include audience interaction, while other parts might be staged in a studio.

Goal: Improve access to technical and professional resources for individuals with responsibility for historical records.

#### **Proposed Activities:**

Develop a series of technical leaflets on archival practices. The leaflets should be printed and available on the KSHRAB web site.

Possible topics for the leaflets include:

FAR LEFT: Herding cattle on a Dodge

City street, from Frank Leslie's Illustrated, July 27, 1878. BELOW LEFT: Oil field in west central RIGHT AND BELOW: Natural disasters can destroy historical records; flood waters in Kansas City, Kansas, 1951 and a dust storm near Hugoton in

Stevens County, 1935.

- Development of archives
- Computerization and archives
- Appraisal/collection development
- Preservation/conservation methods
- Guidelines for records storage and environmental conditions
- · Technological advancements and digitization of records
- Cataloging and indexing archival records
- · Copyright law
- Disaster preparedness
- · Records retention and disposition schedules
- · Promoting archival collections
- Finding funding
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- · Archival supplies
- What to save (to give to the public)
- Reference and access
- Security

- Establish a self-sustaining mentoring program that would match experienced archivists/records managers willing to share their knowledge with individuals and organizations needing technical assistance. The mentoring program would serve as a model for other states.
- 1. Establish a standing KSHRAB mentoring committee to oversee implementation of the program and to monitor it after it has been established.
- **2.** Conduct a mentor training program (perhaps with grant funding) that would provide basic archival and records management instruction to individuals employed by geographically dispersed county historical societies, museums, local government and public libraries, in exchange for a commitment to serve as mentors to other Kansas records custodians.
- a. The KSHRAB mentoring committee would recruit and/or screen applicants for the mentoring training program.
- **b.** The Kansas Museums Association, Kansas Library Association, Kansas Association of Counties, and other organizations could assist in identifying potential mentors.
- **3.** Pair the trained mentors with individuals responsible for documentary resources who need technical advice and assistance.

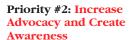
- a. The KSHRAB mentoring committee would develop an application process for institutions interested in receiving assistance from a mentor.
- **b.** The Kansas Museums Association, Kansas Library Association, Kansas Association of Counties, and other organizations could assist in identifying potential mentees.
- 4. Provide funding (as part of the mentoring program grant) to support on-site mentoring for twelve to eighteen months (two or three site visits).
- **a.** A formal agreement would be made between each mentor and mentee and their employing institutions specifying the responsibilities of each party, the number of site visits, the nature and frequency of remote consulting services, and other issues as appropriate.
- **5.** Develop a means to encourage mentors and mentees to maintain their relationship after the grant period. The mentor-mentee agreement should include language addressing the nature and frequency of follow-up consulting after the initial mentoring period. The mentees could become mentors after receiving additional training. This could enable the program to sustain itself as an ongoing cycle.

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BeLow: Pawnee family inside their tepee. Photos such as this provide information on tepee interiors and clothing styles.

RIGHT: Horse drawn Header and Binder, for harvesting wheat, (ca. 1915).

BELOW RIGHT: Harvesting wheat with a self-propelled John Deere combine, 1957. Photos such as these two depicting wheat harvests help document technological change.

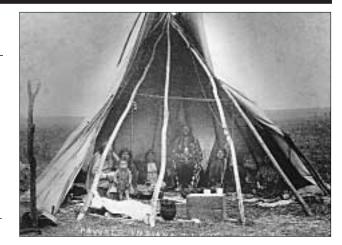


Rationale: People are not aware of the many uses of historical records or of the numerous institutions that create records which may be of use to them. Better funding, improved storage space, more training for staff, and all of the other factors that will assist in saving and making our documentary heritage available to future generations are dependent on individuals understanding the value of the records. The public must urge policy makers and funders to support the institutions that are responsible for maintaining historical records. Otherwise the risk of losing records is great.

Goal: Increase advocacy and create public awareness of the value and uses of historical records.

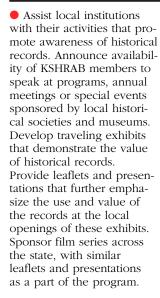
#### **Proposed Activities:**

- Develop numerous instruments that create public awareness of historical records.
- 1. Distribute leaflets that describe the value and uses of historical records and what they can do to assist with the preservation of the records to the general public, the media, public officials and other interest groups. Special leaflets should be developed for each interest group.



- **2.** Promote Archives Week as a statewide event with unified theme, posters and brochures. Develop workshops for the general public during Archives Week.
- **3.** Develop and expand web sites of the repositories that house historical records, both to indicate the value of the records and to promote and expand access to those records. Increase the information of this nature on the KSHRAB web site.
- Create a coordinated statewide media campaign to promote the use and value of historical records.
- 1. Identify and contact newspaper writers across Kansas who may be interested in historical records issues, based on their previous writings. Include the editors of the largest newspapers in Kansas. Invite them to a special one day media informational retreat

- on the subject, including a dinner and prominent speaker. Legislators and other funders, including corporate sponsors, could also be invited to this event. Explore other options for informing the media, such as regional meetings or special programs at professional meetings (eg: Kansas Press Association).
- **2.** Continue the campaign with follow-up mailings to a special media mailing list. Keep these individuals informed with regular mailings related to historical records issues.
- **3.** Contact Washburn University Public Television Station KTWU's program *Sunflower Journeys* with a proposal for filming a future segment on the issue of records preservation in Kansas. Other stations also produce features on local public service needs, and should be contacted.



- Write a script for a series of radio and television public service announcements (PSAs) and find a corporate sponsor and/or a media sponsor to underwrite production costs and facilitate distribution. Send the PSAs to radio and television stations throughout the state, with a series to run over a twelve month period.
- Some of the leaflets, news releases and public service announcements should include the unfortunate, real-life examples of destruction and loss of historical records. These stories should include graphic illustrations and descriptions.
- Develop awards that recognize the efforts and achievements of groups and individuals in saving historical records.

- 1. Many Kansas high schools ask students to participate in public service activities and they record service hours on transcripts. Contact schools and publicize opportunities to volunteer at local historical institutions and government offices. Recognize students and schools participating in the program at the annual meeting of the Kansas State Historical Society.
- 2. Additional awards could be developed for individuals and institutions who have made notable progress in preserving the records in their community. Cite model programs and hold them up as examples. This program could also recognize the many volunteers who assist local historical organizations.
- Establish a speakers' bureau staffed by KSHRAB members, Kansas State Historical Society staff, and volunteers from other institutions to generate support for and understanding of the importance of historical records and their preservation through prepared programs.
- 1. The speakers would be available to specialized audiences such as records creators, records keepers and records users, as well as to the community at large.
- **2.** Send invitations to use the speakers' bureau to

statewide organizations such as:

- Kansas Association of Counties
- League of Kansas Municipalities
- Kansas County Clerks and Elections Officials Association
- Kansas Register of Deeds Association
- Kansas County and District Attorneys Association
- Kansas Association of District Court Clerks and Administrators
- Kansas Bar Association
- Kansas Bar Association
   Kansas Department of Corrections
- Kansas District Judges Association
- Kansas District Magistrate Judges Association
- Kansas Court Reporters
   Association
- and others.

- **3.** Local civic groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions could also be encouraged to use the speakers' bureau.
- Encourage the use of historical records in schools.
- 1. Develop a "traveling trunk" with curriculum that demonstrates the use and value of historical records. Replicas of documents and photographs should be included. Students could receive instruction on genealogical research and involve their family in research and interviews about their family history.
- **2.** Encourage teachers to use primary documents in their curriculum. Provide teachers with sample lessons illustrating the use of documents.



BELOW LEFT: Pigeon feces on a local government record volume that was stored in a courthouse attic.

RIGHT: Fire destroyed the Morton
County Courthouse in January, 1950.
According to the Morton County
Record, "a heap of ashes is all that remains of the building that housed the development and progress of Morton County since there has been a Morton County."

a Morton County."

Below Right: The Morton County
Record newspaper article reported,
"The falling building badly damaged
records in the offices and vaults of
the Recorder of Deeds and the
County Clerk's Office. The recovered
documents were housed in the
County Jail and were protected
overnight by volunteer guards."
(Morton County Courtbouse photos
courtesy of Lois Hall, Elkbart, Kansas)



#### Conclusion



#### Priority #3: Save Local Government Records

Rationale: Local governments create important historical records in the process of carrying out their mandated activities. These records protect the rights of Kansas citizens. Preserving government records is an essential part of government accountability. Surveys indicated that government records were among the most endangered in the state.

Goal: Develop partnerships and coordinate efforts among professional associations, repositories, record custodians, and user groups to facilitate sound records management and preservation practices.

#### Proposed Activities:

- Explore options for obtaining a consensus on funding local records programs.
- **1.** Personally lobby local public officials.
- **2.** Provide programs at professional meetings.
- **3.** Provide speakers for Archives and Records Management Week activities.
- Provide training and support for persons working with local government records.
- 1. Sponsor regional workshops that would provide technical assistance on archival and records management basics. Special emphasis should be placed on the rewards of creating and maintaining self-sufficient programs in each county.
- 2. Provide on-site assistance from field archivists to counties committed to implementing a records management program through a regrant process. If granted, a field archivist would provide hands-on assistance in establishing the program and advice on how to maintain it.
- **3.** Explore the feasibility and determine the funding needs of setting up two regional field offices in the central or western part of

the state to enable the field archivist to respond quickly when needed by the archivists working in these areas.

#### Goal: Provide resources, educational materials and training opportunities to record custodians.

- Hold regional technical and educational workshops that would cover archival and records management basics, with an emphasis on beginning or maintaining self-sufficient programs in each county.
- Integrate volunteers into local records preservation programs, including training opportunities.
- Encourage paid internships and other opportunities that provide hands-on experiences for those needing training in the management of historical records. Internships also will provide additional staff resources to local governments.

Goal: Encourage local governments to institutionalize sound records management and preservation practices into their daily operations.

Have Kansas State
 Historical Society local
 records archivists and
 experienced records custo dians hold informational
 meetings for newly elected
 officials.

- Provide information packets for newly elected officials. The packets should include:
- 1) Welcome letter from KSHRAB describing the packet and why it was sent
- 2) Outline of assistance provided by KSHRAB and other groups
- 3) Laws related to records management
- 4) Blank or sample forms (i.e. inventory forms)
- 5) Bibliography of other resource materials (including Internet links)
- 6) List of vendors (perhaps catalogs) of archival supplies
- 7) Technical leaflets or fact sheets
- Present statewide awards for best program, most improved program, etc.
   Invite local officials to accept awards.
- Encourage membership in professional organizations and attendance at specialized training opportunities.
- Encourage the formation of local networks of record custodians for mutual support and training.

KSHRAB will work with stakeholder groups in further developing the priorities and activities outlined in this plan. Grant and/or regrant proposals will be submitted to NHPRC to fund proposed activities, and other funding sources and partnerships will also be sought.

A broad-based and concerted effort will be required to preserve the historical records of Kansas for future generations. Numerous individuals and institutions have been involved in this task for many years. KSHRAB anticipates that this plan and the resulting programs will increase awareness of the records needs of the state and will foster additional funding, training and partnerships necessary to address those needs.



"A broad-based and concerted effort will be required to preserve the historical records of Kansas for future generations."



## What You Can Do



The repositories responsible for preserving and maintaining access to our historical records are largely under-staffed and under-funded. The records of Kansas families, businesses, institutions and government are at risk. This plan outlines a series of activities for building stronger programs to save our records. The Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board encourages Kansans to work together to address the serious needs identified in this plan.

- Volunteer at your local public library or historical society.
- Remind your church, civic club or other organizations to which you belong of the importance of their records. Suggest they seek assistance in preserving them
- Contact elected officials and request better funding for historical records needs.
- Encourage your local newspaper to write articles using historical records that describe important developments in the history of your community.
- Ask local school teachers to use historical records in teaching local history.
- Notify your local public or academic library or historical society if you learn of the records that may be endangered of an individual, family, business, or other entity.

- Help distribute leaflets about the value of historical records.
- Invite an archivist to speak to a local organization about the importance of historical records.
  - Arrange for an exhibit, using historical records or illustrating the importance of historical records, to be displayed locally.
  - Attend a workshop on techniques for saving historical records.

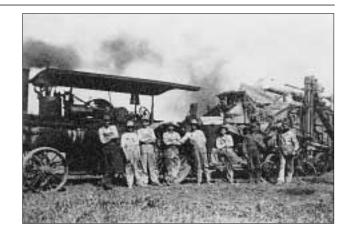
To obtain more information about resources and the board's current activities, contact the Historical Records Coordinator for Kansas at 785-272-8681 ext. 201 or visit the KSHRAB web site at http://www.kshs.org/kshrab/kshrab1.htm

LEFT: Railroad section crew near Ottawa.

ABOVE: Women quilting, 1961.

#### Acknowledgments

Hundreds of individuals and institutions participated in the preparation of this report by completing surveys and assessing the needs of the historical records of their communities. The members of the task forces that prepared the plan and the members of KSHRAB who guided the process deserve special thanks.



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ABOVE: Steam powered threshing rig, (ca. 1905). (Photo courtesy of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas)



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