

# KANSAS HISTORY

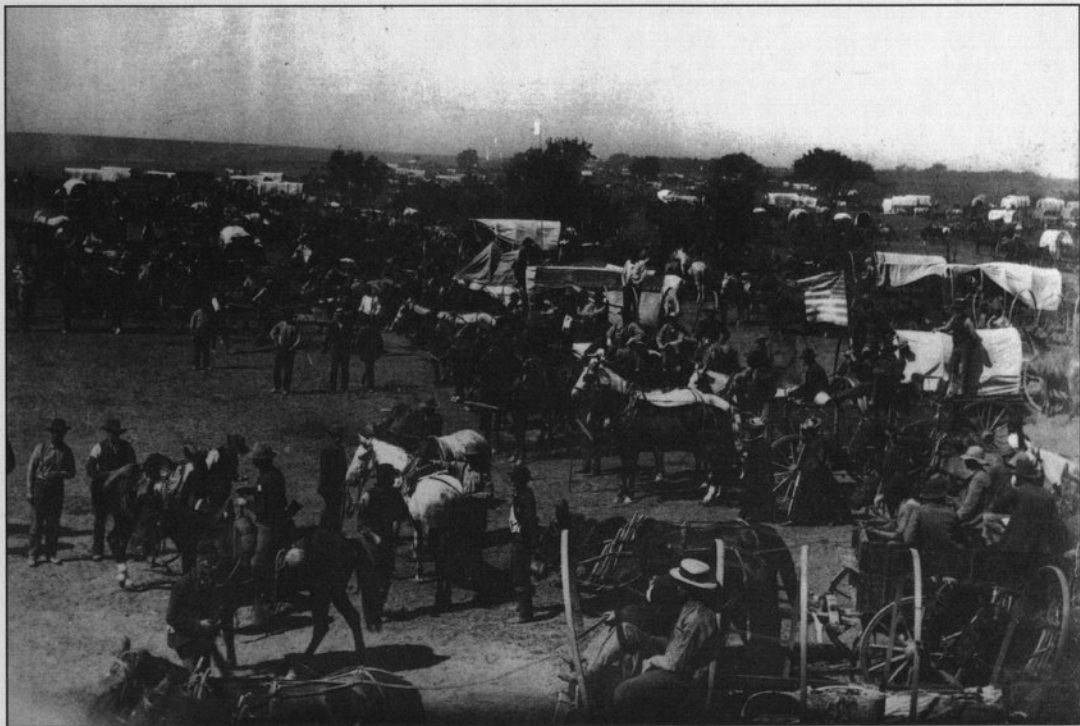
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## Centennial Highlights

### The Cherokee Strip Run



"Strippers" toe the mark awaiting the starter's carbine, Arkansas City, Kansas, September 16, 1893.

Millions of people from around the world enjoyed the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago during the summer of 1893, while others suffered the effects of drought and depression. Some also were made apprehensive by the prospect that America's vast "frontier" was now closed—a proposition announced by the superintendent of the U.S. census in 1890 and analyzed in July of 1893 by historian Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." In part, at least, these factors explain the reasons tens of thousands of Kansans, as well as people from throughout the U.S. and the world, ran for the "Strip" at high noon on September 16, 1893.

The strip was the Cherokee Strip or Outlet—a belt of land, originally granted to the Cherokees as an outlet to their hunting grounds farther west, 58 miles wide and 150 miles long, containing six million acres and lying just south of the Kansas border. When the appointed time arrived, one hundred thousand land-hungry homeseekers and speculators rushed to stake their claims; thirty thousand "strippers" started their race at Arkansas City, the rest set out from additional registration points along the southern border of Kansas and in Oklahoma Territory.

The run took about two hours, with people "going Stripward" on horseback, in wagons, on foot, and aboard railroad cars. When it was over, the New York Times lamented the "disgraceful and calamitous

way in which this "last remnant of the public domain" was "thrown open to settlement." Harper's Weekly called it "The Oklahoma Scramble." "To get possession of this land in the new Territory of Oklahoma there was the most disgraceful and disorderly scramble that has ever occurred in the distribution of public lands."

Arkansas City profited from its role as a supply center for nearly one-third of the scramblers, but Caldwell lost so many inhabitants that it was forced to call a special election. Three of its city councilmen had "removed from the state of Kansas and from said city." And, on the day before the run, the Harper Sentinel speculated: "After Saturday, September 16, and when we get time to take the census of Harper county to find how many have left for the Strip, we may, if we deem it best, issue a proclamation opening up this deserted country to settlement, and lay down the terms under which Harper county 'Strippers' may return."

Individuals, like towns and counties, fared differently. Many made their claims and stayed on to make prosperous farms. Others returned to Kansas, or from whence they came, unable to file successfully or simply "sick of the land they had so long coveted; for instead of finding a garden of Eden," observed the Anthony Bulletin, "they found a rough and uncultivated prairie that will only bloom after years of hard and unceasing toil."



# KANSAS HISTORY

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Cover: Detail from the  
Historical Mural of Rawlins  
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Wendelin (photo by Marion  
Ball) featuring Ella and  
August Blume, early pioneers  
of Rawlins County. Ella  
Blume's journals are the sub-  
ject of this issue's "The Diary  
as Historical Puzzle." Back  
cover: The Battle of Wilson's  
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