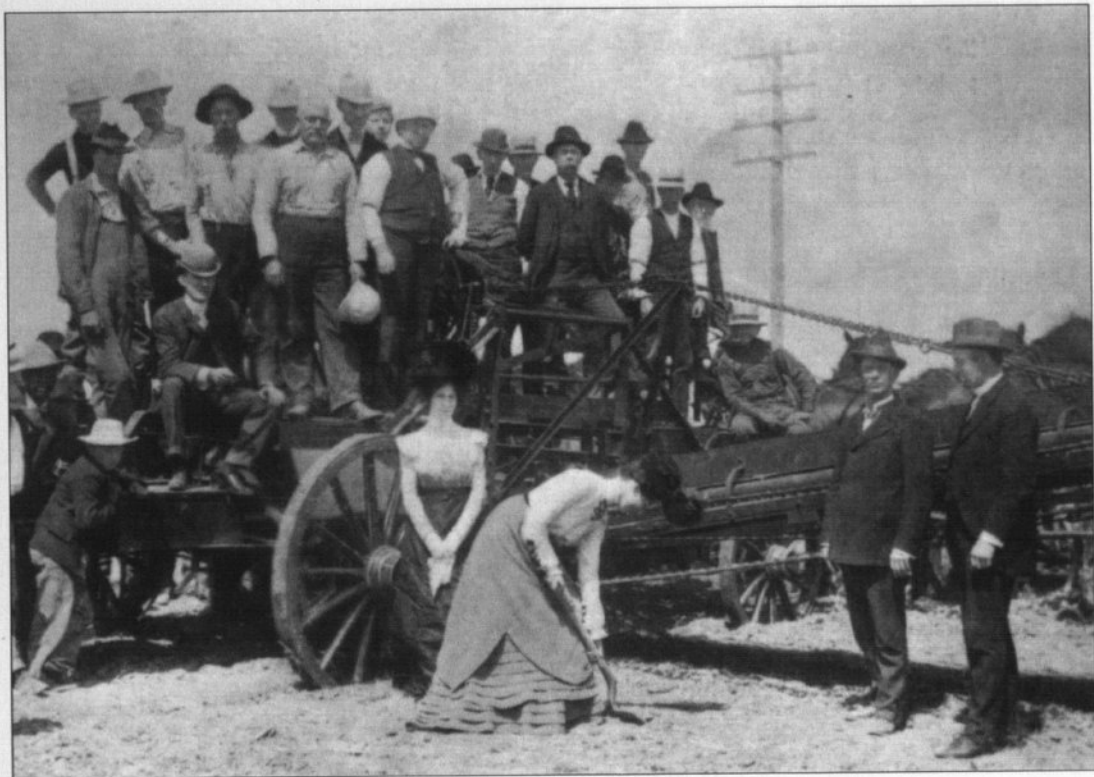


KANSAS HISTORY

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Ground-breaking ceremony, the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway, near Emporia, May 27, 1901.

It is hard to imagine in an age when thousands of miles of iron rails are being removed and rights-of-way vacated for hiking and biking trails that just a century ago railroad expansion was the order of the day in Kansas. By 1901 the state reportedly contained nearly nine thousand miles of main and fifteen hundred miles of side track, and towns were still competing for additional service. The arrival of a new railroad elicited much excitement and perhaps even ceremony, and it might be heralded as the beginning of "a new era" for the community.

Originally intended to connect Kansas City to the Gulf of California and beyond, the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway created quite a stir when it broke ground near Emporia on May 27, 1901. May Madden, the daughter of a local attorney and the winner of "the most popular girl" contest, turned the first shovelful of dirt in a groundbreaking ceremony observed by an estimated four hundred people. Some watched from atop the big grader that was to do much of the real work of building the grade for the Orient's track. "This is a great day for Emporia," proclaimed William Allen White, town boomer par excellence and editor of the Emporia Gazette. "This day should and surely will mark the beginning of a new era in the town's growth. Hereafter there will be a new Emporia, a live Emporia, an Emporia where all pull together for the good of the

town. This town must have 20,000 people in its limits by 1910. That is easy to accomplish, if every man in town gets this idea in his head and acts on it: The good of all is the good of one, and the good of one is bad when it is not for the good of all. The golden rule is a practical working town building proposition."

Despite White's clarion call, Emporia's population remained relatively constant over the succeeding decades—it was the state's tenth largest city, population ninety-five hundred in 1901, and the twelfth largest in 1931, when it had thirteen thousand inhabitants. And the Kansas portion of the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway fared even less well. Its track ran south from Wichita to the Texas border by mid-January 1908, but the Orient's Kansas City to Wichita, via Emporia, stretch never opened. In the early spring of 1912 the Orient entered into its first receivership and struggled under a succession of new owners for the next fifteen years, finally becoming part of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe system. Thus, the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway never became one of "the great commercial arteries of the nation" or "one of the great factors in opening up commerce with our new island possessions and with the Oriental nations," as predicted by editor White. But that optimism must not have seemed misplaced at the dawn of "America's Century."

KANSAS HISTORY

VIRGIL W. DEAN
Editor

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COVER: Lincoln at Independence Hall by J. L. G. Ferris shows the president in 1861 raising the flag that bears the thirty-fourth star, honoring Kansas as the newest state. An article on Lincoln and U.S. senator James H. Lane begins on page 186. BACK COVER: A ca. 1881 flyer for the Dunlap Academy, which is the subject of an article by Philip R. Beard, beginning on page 200.

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p. 174



p. 200-201



p. 224

KANSAS SETTLERS ON THE
OSAGE DIMINISHED RESERVE:
A STUDY OF LAURA INGALLS
WILDER'S *LITTLE HOUSE ON
THE PRAIRIE*
by Penny T. Linsenmayer 168

LANE AND LINCOLN:
A MYSTERIOUS CONNECTION
by Craig Miner 186

THE KANSAS COLORED
LITERARY AND BUSINESS
ACADEMY: A WHITE EFFORT
AT AFRICAN AMERICAN
EDUCATION IN LATE-NINE-
TEENTH-CENTURY KANSAS
by Philip R. Beard 200

RETHINKING THE PAST,
REIMAGINING THE FUTURE
Review Essay: Series Introduction
by Rita G. Napier 218

REVIEWS 248

BOOK NOTES 250

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