

Kansas and the Civil War

As Americans commemorate the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War in 2011, Kansans have the opportunity to reflect on the state's role in the conflict. KHC asked **Jonathan Earle**, professor of History at the University of Kansas and presenter of the John Brown's Raid and the Election of Abraham Lincoln Speakers Bureau topic, and **Brian Craig Miller**, professor of History at Emporia State University and presenter of the Kansas and the Civil War in American History and Memory Speakers Bureau topic, to share their thoughts on Kansas and the Civil War.

"The issues that would be decided by the Civil War first reared their heads in Kansas and pitted anti-slavery and pro-slavery sides against one another using violence," shared Jonathan Earle when asked about how Bleeding Kansas fit in with the Civil War. Yet, those years between 1854 and 1861, Earle stated, "were not the start of the Civil War."



Jonathan Earle



Brian Craig Miller

Brian Craig Miller agreed. "The Civil War started over questions of union and secession and ended over questions about slavery and freedom. The battles in Kansas started and ended over questions about slavery."

Once Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, "the tumultuous era known as Bleeding Kansas faded from the landscape," Miller stated. But Kansans joined the fight in droves. Miller estimated that "nearly 8,500 Kansas men marched off to war and never returned, which emerged as the highest mortality rate of any Union state."

Some of the fighting that took place along the Kansas-Missouri border had to do with lingering tensions from the Bleeding Kansas era. "The fighting was vastly different from Eastern battles," commented Earle. "Fighting along the Kansas-Missouri border included guerilla raids, kidnappings, and civilian deaths occurring on both sides. Quantrill's Raid on Lawrence on August 21, 1863, the Battle of Baxter Springs in October of 1863, and the October 1864 Battles of Mine Creek and Marais des Cygnes were extensions of the continuous guerilla warfare that began in 1856 and continued through end of the Civil War in 1865."

In response to the war's end, "communities across Kansas constructed monuments to all who served, including the only monument to black Union soldiers west of the Mississippi River, in Kansas City, Kansas," said Miller. "As our nation commemorates the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, it is time for Kansas to unearth the wealth of Civil War memories in our own backyards."

33 Kansas counties are named for Civil War soldiers. Russell County is named for Avra P. Russell, a captain in the 2nd Kansas Cavalry. Russell died in December 1862 from wounds received at the Battle of Prairie Grove in Arkansas.

Photo courtesy of the Kansas Historical Society



KHC grants are available for communities to research their own Civil War stories. Research projects, museum exhibitions, and other projects are eligible. Visit www.kansashumanities.org or contact Edana McSweeney, Director of Programs, at edana@kansashumanities.org or 785/357-0359.

Shared Border, Shared Stories

The First regiment Kansas Colored Volunteers...have been in a fight, shed their own and rebel blood, and came off victorious.

-The New York Times, November 8, 1862

Established as a “daring experiment,” the First Kansas Colored Volunteers — a Civil War African-American infantry regiment — first saw battle in 1862.

Outside of Butler in Bates County, Missouri, approximately 100 miles southeast of Leavenworth, Kansas, the First Kansas Colored Volunteers encountered several hundred Confederate soldiers encamped near a place known as Island Mound. Some of the soldiers — men recruited by Kansan James Lane — were formerly enslaved in Missouri, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma). They became the first black Northern troops to engage in combat in the Civil War. They also became the first to die in action.

“Skirmish at Island Mound” is one of ten topics available in the *Shared Stories of the Civil War* reader’s theater project. *Shared Stories* features historical letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and other primary source material compiled into short scripts. The scripts explore events — the Shared Stories — that occurred in Kansas and Missouri during the Civil War.

Shared Stories of the Civil War is a partnership between the Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area and the Kansas Humanities Council.



Plan a *Shared Stories of the Civil War* event in your community. Visit www.kansashumanities.org to download scripts and instructions for hosting an event. Podcasts are also available.

This article was featured in a recent KHC e-newsletter. If you like what you see, sign up at www.kansashumanities.org to receive future editions of KHC E-News.



First Kansas Colored Volunteers regimental flag.

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The Kansas Humanities Council promotes the understanding of the history, traditions, and ideas that shape our lives and strengthen our communities.

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Kansas at the Movies

The *Wizard of Oz* may be the most famous Kansas film, but there is much more to Kansas' cinematic history than tornadoes and Dorothy Gale's farm. A number of movies have been made about Kansas, and many have filmed on location in the state, including *Picnic* in 1955. In 1939, Dodge City hosted a star-studded premiere of the film *Dodge City*, complete with personal appearances from Hollywood stars Errol Flynn, Humphrey Bogart, Olivia de Havilland, and Ann Sheridan.

In commemoration of 150 years of Kansas statehood, the McPherson Opera House, in the central Kansas town of McPherson, hosted *Kansas at the Movies*, a ten-week series featuring films made in or about Kansas. The series, supported by a KHC grant, kicked off in March with a screening of *The Wizard of Oz*, followed by weekly screenings of *Dodge City*, *Seven Angry Men*, *Picnic*, *Carnival of Souls*, *In Cold Blood*, *The Gypsy Moths*, *The Learning Tree*, *Kansas*, and *Kansas City*. Discussions, led by Eric Monder and guest speakers Bill Shaffer, Bruce Kahler, and Kevin Willmott, engaged the audience with themes explored in the films. The series concluded on May 19.

John Holecek, executive director of the McPherson Opera House, shared the success of the *Picnic* screening on April 7, when over 250 people filled the seats of the historic theater. "In the audience were four people involved with the actual production of *Picnic* who told their stories...All in all, a truly magical night, and the Kansas Humanities Council made it possible."

March 17: THE WIZARD OF OZ (1939)
March 24: DODGE CITY (1939)
March 31: SEVEN ANGRY MEN (1955)
April 7: PICNIC (1955)
April 14: CARNIVAL OF SOULS (1962)
April 21: IN COLD BLOOD (1967)
April 28: THE GYPSY MOTHS (1969)
May 5: THE LEARNING TREE (1969)
May 12: KANSAS (1988)
May 19: KANSAS CITY (1996)

Celebrate our State's 150th birthday with
"Kansas at the Movies,"
10 films either made in or about Kansas.
Rare supplemental material. Q & A.
Host: Eric Monder
Guest Speakers: Bruce Kahler, Bill Shaffer, Kevin Willmott

McPherson Opera House presents...
Kansas at the movies
FREE ADMISSION! Info at www.mcphersonoperahouse.org
or call 620-241-1952 • Ticket Office at 219 S. Main
All Movies start at 7 p.m.



Photo courtesy of the Kansas Historical Society.

Grants in support of film discussion series are available. For more information visit www.kansashumanities.org or contact Edana McSweeney, Director of Programs, at edana@kansashumanities.org or 785/357-0359.

Kansas native Gordon Parks directs the 1969 film, *The Learning Tree*. Although filmed in Hollywood, the movie is set in 1920s Kansas.

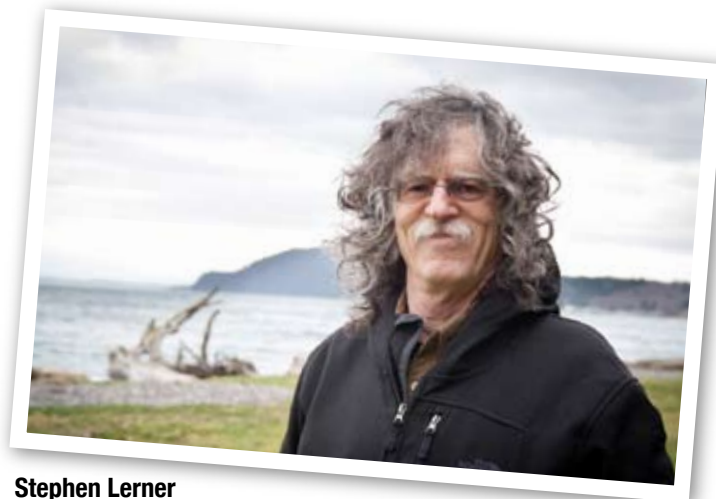
Florence on Film

Florence, Kansas, a short film produced by filmmaker **Stephen Lerner** and the Florence Historical Society with the support of a KHC grant, examines the central Kansas community's sense of place through residents' memories of the past and dreams for the town's future. KHC asked Lerner to share the story behind the film.

Why Florence?

Florence's history captivated me. It was once a railroad center, it experienced an oil boom, and it was home to a large Mexican population. Florence was a real boomtown in the 1920s, full of promise and dreams of limitless growth. However, like so many rural Kansas towns, Florence's dreams of unbounded possibility collided sharply with developments in transportation, agriculture, and technology. These changes — along with the devastation of the great Flood of 1951 — profoundly changed the nature of the rural landscape.

The story of Florence seems both unique and universal. I wanted to tell this town's story entirely in the voices of people who grew up there, or who have years of intimate familiarity with this place. I believe *Florence, Kansas* has a lot to say about what it means to live in a small rural town today.



Stephen Lerner

The Kansas Humanities Council was absolutely essential to the realization of this project. The partnership between the filmmaker and the community, required by KHC grant, helped me forge a bond with key community members. The relationships with community members have kept the film true to the town and have been an invaluable part of the process. I am extremely grateful to KHC for the helpful feedback and support that made this film possible.

For more information about the *Florence, Kansas* short film, visit www.kansashumanities.org.

Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway depot, Florence, early 1900s.

Photo courtesy of the Kansas Historical Society.



Statehood Speakers Bureau Still Available

Visit www.kansashumanities.org to download the Statehood Speakers Bureau catalog and to view photos of Speakers Bureau events from around the state. Contact Deborah Pomeroy, Resource Center Coordinator, at deborah@kansashumanities.org or 785/357-0359 for more information.

Settling the Sea of Grass presentation in Kinsley.

The Show Must Go On

Billed as “Kansas’ Finest” theater upon its opening in 1926, the Jayhawk Theatre in Topeka has been shuttered for over three decades. Recently, filmmaker Juli Pitzer and the Jayhawk State Theatre of Kansas produced the short film *Preserving the Past: Topeka’s Jayhawk Theatre*, supported by a KHC grant. **Christy Davis**, humanities consultant for the project, shares the story of the movie palace’s glory days and its importance to community, past and present.

Although the rattle of a movie projector has eluded the Jayhawk Theatre for thirty-five years, the building continues to capture the imagination of Topekans. For some, the theater holds warm memories. It was where they had their first kiss or launched popcorn onto the heads of those in seats below. For others, it recalls the days of segregation, when the main auditorium was reserved for “whites only.” Long ago, Topekans perpetuated the legend that it was the Jayhawk where vaudevillian-turned-burlesque dancer Gypsy Rose Lee got her start, filling in for her eloped sister.

The Jayhawk Theatre and Hotel was built for Topekans by Topekans — an imposing steel structure with classic architectural details meant to rival the Kansas City movie palaces that drew local dollars away from Topeka’s downtown. In the 1930s, the building became an



Christy Davis

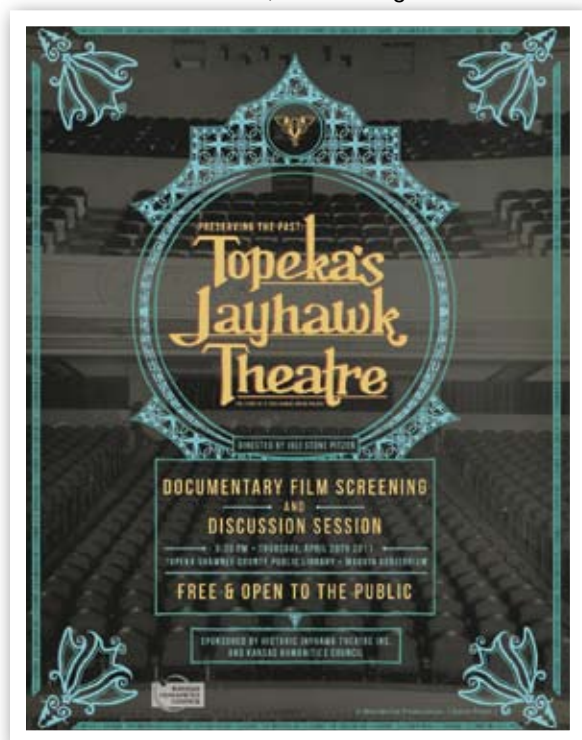
ambassador for the state, the place where Governor Alf Landon accepted the Republican nomination for president.

For years, it seemed, the Jayhawk Theatre had gone the way of Gypsy Rose Lee. The theater closed in 1976 and barely escaped demolition in 1992. But, like burlesque, the Jayhawk is making a comeback. For those without first-hand memories of its heyday, the theater, encapsulated within the Jayhawk Hotel, is, like an undiscovered Egyptian tomb, a cavernous place of beauty waiting to be explored.



Photo courtesy of the Kansas Historical Society.

The Jayhawk Theatre was built as part of a downtown Topeka complex that included the Jayhawk Hotel and the Crosby Brothers department store.



Watch the *Preserving the Past: Topeka’s Jayhawk Theatre* short film trailer at www.kansashumanities.org. Find out more about the future of the Jayhawk Theatre at www.jayhawktheatre.com.

Grants Awarded Since January

Bowlus Fine Arts and Cultural Center, Iola

\$8,318 for the *Buster Keaton & Kansas Filmmakers* event. Susan Raines, project director.

Caldwell Chamber of Commerce

\$1,222 for the *Threads of Our Kansas Quilting Heritage* exhibition and public programs. Claudia Ehlers, project director.

Center for Great Plains Studies at Emporia State University, Emporia

\$5,348 for the *Mapping Buffalo Bill's Great Plains* digital history project. Jim Hoy, project director.

The Frank Carlson Library, Concordia

\$3,264 for the *Prairie Politician: Telling and Preserving the Frank Carlson Story* exhibition update. Denise de Rochefort-Reynolds, project director.

KPTS, Wichita

\$9,533 for the *Lost Nation: The Ioway 2 & 3* documentary films. Kelly Rundle, project director.

McPherson County Old Mill Museum, Lindsborg

\$3,500 for *School Days: Digitization of Photographs & Documents from the 123 One-Room Schools of McPherson County* project. Lorna M. Nelson, project director.

Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence

\$7,900 for the *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* exhibition. Nancy Mahaney and Steve Goddard, project directors.

Stafford County Historical and Genealogical Society, Stafford

\$3,494 for the *Gray Studio Glass Plate Negatives Project*. Michael Hathaway, project director.

Contact Edana McSweeney,
Director of Programs, at
edana@kansashumanities.org
or 785/357-0359 or visit
www.kansashumanities.org
for more information about grant
guidelines and deadlines.

Students at the Golden Rule School, District #34, McPherson County.

Photo courtesy of the McPherson County Old Mill Museum.



Photographic Memory



Photo courtesy of the Ellinwood Community Library.

One day in 1912, dozens of proud automobile owners drove their cars onto Main Street in Ellinwood, while crowds of spectators looked on from the sidewalks. What caused this early twentieth century traffic jam in south central Kansas? The vehicles were being photographed for the *American Auto Journal* to promote the construction of roads between Kansas communities.

This photograph is one example of the hundreds of historical images preserved by the Ellinwood Community Library and the Ellinwood Community Historical Society with support from a KHC grant. The library and historical society have hosted a local display of the photographs, and there are plans to put the images online. For more information, contact the Ellinwood Community Library at 620/564-2306.

Grants in support of photograph preservation projects and interpretive exhibitions are available. For more information visit www.kansashumanities.org or contact Edana McSweeney, Director of Programs, at edana@kansashumanities.org or 785/357-0359.

“Center of Everything”

In 1883, the 43-room Greenwood Hotel opened in the southeastern Kansas town of Eureka and soon built a reputation as “The Grand Princess of the Prairie, Center of Everything.” According to the Greenwood Preservation Society’s blog, “In the Greenwood’s prominent years it is estimated that over \$1,000,000,000 worth of cattle were traded in its lobby. Million dollar oil deals were completed behind its walls.”

On June 16th, visitors to the Greenwood Hotel Complex have the opportunity to see the newly restored building and to view a new exhibition, *Greenwood County: The Social and Economic Story of Kansas*. The exhibition, funded by a KHC grant, looks at the industries that shaped Greenwood County’s history: cattle, oil, and transportation. As Heather Fuesz of the Greenwood Preservation Society explained, “These three stories share our past and illustrate how transportation brought many of the unlikeliest of folks together under one roof at the Greenwood Hotel for commerce and companionship. Drovers, wildcatters, bakers, bootleggers, businessmen, common folk, working women of questionable trade, and many more all shared in the market and money exchange that bustled within the walls of the Greenwood Hotel.”

Greenwood Hotel Open House
Thursday, June 16 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
300 N. Main Street in Eureka
Visit www.greenwoodhotel.org for more information.



Photo courtesy of the Greenwood Preservation Society.

Greenwood Hotel, Eureka.

Hosts Wanted for Smithsonian Exhibition

KHC invites museums, public libraries, art centers, and other cultural organizations to apply to host *The Way We Worked*, a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition. The exhibition is touring Kansas in 2012 and 2013. The Smithsonian Institution is looking for host communities with populations fewer than 20,000.

Work strengthens the American spirit, whether it's on the railroad, in a coal mine, or on the farm. *The Way We Work* explores the stories of America's workers and invites us to consider how the workplace and workforce have changed over time. Through photographs from the National Archives, audio and video clips, and hands-on components, Kansans will discover how, together, our work makes America.

Deadline: June 30, 2011.

Eligibility requirements and application are available at www.kansashumanities.org.

Contact Edana McSweeney, Director of Programs, at edana@kansashumanities.org or 785/357-0359 for more information.



Photo courtesy of the Overland Park Historical Society.

The way we worked: An attendant pumps gas at an Overland Park service station in the early 1950s.

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