

Historical Highlights



President's Message

First, a big "Thank You" is in order to each of you who renewed your membership. Membership dues are critical to the funding of SCHS's educational programs.

As your President, I often have the privilege to represent your society at many local events. Again, this year, I participated in the Kansas District Three History Day Program held on February 27th at Washburn University's Memorial Union. Rachel Goossen, the district's coordinator, together with her dedicated friends at the Washburn University History Department, put together another powerful competition. They enlisted the services of over 60 volunteers, including several SCHS members, to serve as judges. I want to emphasize that this is no small deal as the event literally packs the Memorial Union. Over 200 junior and senior students from our area schools made presentations consisting of historical papers, individual exhibits, group exhibits, individual and group performances, documentaries, and individual and group websites. The topics they covered were just as diverse, ranging from: "Apollo 13: A Successful Failure"; "Through Pen and Lens: Gordon Parks Encountering Inequality"; "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919"; "Miracles Out of Nowhere: Exploring the KANSAS Legacy"; to "Title IX: Exploring Equality on the Playing Field". It is no coincidence that with this abundance of great local talent the SCHS hopes to be able to use several of these students projects as part of our events later in the year. Last year our 2015 Historic Preservation Awards Ceremony was highlighted by the presence of six Seaman High School students who showcased their History Day projects to those in attendance. We intend to enlist more students this year for the 2016 Historic Preservation Awards Ceremony that will take place in May. Other highlights of the History Day Program included special scholarship awards. Avery Munns received a \$500 Washburn Admissions Award. Avery was a familiar face as we used her talents at last year's annual meeting where she presented her



SCHS President David J. Heinemann

Inside this issue

Presidents Message	1
SCHS Summer Camp	2
Post-War Immigrants	4
Immigration & Incense	6
John Brown in Fiction.....	10
Membership.....	15
Membership Form.....	17
2015 Annual Meeting	18
Get Involved	20

Special points of interest

- Upcoming Events are listed on page 12.
- Renew your 2016 membership today!
- **Our Boy Charlie** premiere on page 15.
- Membership Form on page 19.

President's Message Continued

documentary entitled "James Lane: Pioneering Patriot". McKynley Larson was this year's recipient of the Phil Morse Washburn Scholarship valued at over \$4,000.

Another recent standing-room-only event hosted by the SCHS was the premiere public screening of *Our Charley: A Boy Forced to Choose*, that took place at the Jayhawk Theater thanks to Jeff Carson, Janet Nevels and the board of the Jayhawk Theater. *Our Charley* is a short documentary of the remarkable life of Charles Curtis. Debra Goodrich was the project director of this film made by the Trinity Marketing Group. The Kansas Humanities Council was a key partner with financial support. They intend to follow up with three additional short documentaries that feature Charles Curtis. This documentary was most timely as it appears that a statue of Charles Curtis will be unveiled on Kan-

sas Avenue later this month.

The SCHS Program Committee is finishing its work so that we will be able to provide at least one event each month throughout the remainder of this year. Our Membership Committee is following up each member's renewal with a check to make sure that we have as complete an e-mail list as possible of our members. SCHS needs to communicate with you without having to go through the extra expense of a mailing that can cost several hundred dollars. We all know these funds can be best spent on our education programs. So, if you are not receiving any e-mails from us, please let us know. We do not want you to miss any event that may not have appeared in the newsletter because it is published quarterly.



Meet the Editor

Johnathan Hart currently serves as a Trustee and as the Director of Public Relations for the SCHS. He is a native

SCHS Annual Summer Camp

School Field Trips

Springtime is always a busy time for the staff and volunteers at the Historic Ritchie House. The calendar starts to fill up quickly as classrooms schedule visits to the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center for unique experiential lessons centered on the Kansas Territorial days and the enduring struggle for freedom. Those visits always include spending time in the Historic Ritchie House as "Mrs. Ritchie" takes the youngsters back to the days that the Ritchie's home was also part of a secret network of the Underground Railroad.

Projected numbers in attendance for school field trips for the 2015-2016 school year will be approximately 2,800 students and teachers. This will be the highest attendance number in a school year since the "Rediscover Freedom's Pathway" school field trips began in 2012.

This year, a grant from the Topeka Public Schools Foundation has partnered with the Shawnee County Historical Society to provide Topeka Public School 7th grade students with a tailored school field trip aligned with the 7th grade Kansas Standards for History. An added lesson to the "Rediscover Freedom's Pathway" introduces the students to the story of the Exodusters who were former slaves of the South after the Reconstruc-



2015 SCHS Annual Summer Camp "Trails of Kansas"

tion period. A special "Thank you" goes to the Topeka Public School Foundation for their partnership.

Kansas Day at the Museum

Shawnee County Historical Society staff and volunteers represented the Historic Ritchie House for Kansas' 155th Birthday at the Kansas State Historical Society and Museum. School aged youngsters came throughout the day to experience many hands-on crafts, free admittance to the museum, and to enjoy hands-on table displays.

History Camp for Kids

"Early Immigrants of Shawnee County: Discovering the Language, Culture, and Traditions of Early Settlers" is the theme for this year's History Camp for Kids. The summer camp will begin June 6 and continue until July 15. We are expecting a partnership from six organizations in Topeka that have summer programs in which we provide one of the off-site places that campers will attend. Each of the partnering organizations will have approximately 25 students attending each week with other campers coming on a daily basis. Students will come to the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center once a week for 1.5 hours. Once there, campers will have presenters representing different early ethnic groups from Shawnee County for hands-on experiences with language, culture, and traditions.

We will have room for an additional limited number of campers (3rd through 5th grades) for friends and family of SCHS members. The program is free for each camper. Registration will begin in May. If you are interested in learning more please call: 785-234-6097.

-born Topekan and a real Jayhawker from Kansas.

He has served in the past as President of the Clinton County Historical Society and was the Operations Director for the Riley/Carmack House and the David Rice Atchison collection in Plattsburg, MO.

John enjoys researching and portraying the lives of individuals in the nineteenth century. He is the commander of the 13th Kansas Infantry Regiment and has been reenacting since he was 14. His enjoyment of military history prompted him to enlist in the United States Air Force as a Security Forces member and was active duty at Whiteman Air Force Base, MO from 2006 to 2010.

He is enthusiastic to be working on the publication: *Historical Highlights* for the SCHS.

Post-War Immigrant Experience

By Analeigh Vanderpool

About the Author



Analeigh Vanderpool is a senior at Washburn University where she will complete a Bachelor's Degree of History in December of 2016. She completed a successful internship at the Kansas Historical Society which resulted in the publication of her article "Buttons and Bowls: Trading with A.B. Canville" in their quarterly magazine. She is a trustee on the Shawnee County Historical Society Board of Directors and is excited to be one of the new co-editors of the SCHS quarterly newsletter.

In 1946, Justina Hohmann emigrated from Frankfurt, Germany, to the Midwest in order to marry the G.I. she had fallen in love with while he was stationed in Germany after World War II. Prior to the war, Justina came from a middle-class family with a father who was a veteran of World War I. Justina's father, Karl, did not like Adolf Hitler and never joined the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NAZI) movement. Karl prevented both of his daughters from joining the Hitler movement until it was made mandatory and never joined the Nazi party himself. This allowed Justina to pass the needed background checks and the vetting process before she was allowed to enter the United States.

When Justina landed in the Kansas City airport, her life prior to the war was completely destroyed. She had seen her home demolished by bombs and had lost so many friends and neighbors to the destruction of war. Her mother had passed away as well, and she was relying on someone whom she had only known for six months to help her start a new life in another

country with a different culture and a different language. "When I landed in the Kansas City airport downtown I looked all around and I didn't see Kenny anywhere. I just thought that I would just have to find a plane to get back to New York and then find a plane to take me back to Germany. A strange woman came up to me and introduced herself as a cousin of Kenny and explained that my plane was a whole day early and that Kenny was still on his way to the city. He lived in a small town away from the city on a farm then"¹.

When they arrived at the farm a few days later, Kenny's family, the Vanderpools, had a typical Midwestern meal ready for them. Fried chicken, corn on the cob, sliced tomatoes, fried okra, and mashed potatoes with gravy. "I was appalled," Justina said. "Tomatoes were pig food in Germany and I had never seen okra. I thought my dad had been right and that maybe I could still find a way to get back to Kansas City and go back to Germany"². Once she tried the food, however, she liked it and she decided to stay and give her new home a try.

The wartime couple got married in a Lutheran church, because that was the only church in the area. Justina described what it felt like to marry her husband in a Protestant church when she had been raised Catholic. “I knew that it didn’t matter where or when, but I felt like maybe I had disappointed my parents. By that time my father had died and my sister was the only family I had left, besides an aunt I didn’t talk to because of her involvement in the Nazi party”³. A few years after their marriage, they renewed their vows in a Catholic church.

After their initial wedding, however, Justina had to get her citizenship. She studied for weeks and practiced her English as much as possible. She had to pass a citizenship test, answer questions in front of a judge, and then renounce her German citizenship and heritage. “It was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. The judge told me that he was impressed with my knowledge of American history and the Constitution. But when I had to renounce my German citizenship I started crying. I still had family in Germany and I had

“What really surprised me was the animosity I received from people. People I didn’t know and that didn’t know me would call me a Kraut or a Jerry or a murderer-

only ever identified myself as German. And I had to say that I was no longer part of something that I had been my entire life.”

“What really surprised me was the animosity I received from people. People I didn’t know and that didn’t know me would call me a Kraut or a Jerry or a murderer. They didn’t know me. They didn’t know that my family had never liked Hitler and that we had no idea about the concentration camps⁴. I felt so bad that Kenny lost some friends because of me [Her husband lost friends because she was German and her country had been an enemy to the Allies]. Kenny had an uncle that came to visit us one day; he was a veteran from the First World War and had shell shock. He muttered to himself a lot. Well, Kenny was gone at work so I sat the man in the living room. He kind of scared me and it was just me and my two small kids at home at that

time. He saw the photo of my dad on the wall with him in his German uniform and the uncle really went crazy. He started yelling curse words and shouting out orders like he was on a battlefield somewhere. Kenny walked in the door within moments and got his uncle to leave, but it really bothered me”⁵.

Although Justina herself still has a thick German accent, she refused to teach her children the language she grew up with in order to uphold the oath she made many years ago to no longer be German. She still cooks some German recipes and is a member of the German American Club of Topeka. Her husband passed away in 1980 after battling cancer for many years. She has five grandchildren and six great grandchildren. When asked if giving up her German citizenship was worth it she says, “Absolutely. It was and still is very hard someday. But

About the Author



Chloe Mooradian is a History Major at Washburn University. As a sophomore, she is already a published author. She writes for *EpicPew* a modish theological review and her own blog called “Old Fashioned Girl.” In addition, she writes for the *Catholic Response*, a Catholic social commentary website.

She is also on the Key Holders Advisory Council for the Catholic Campus Center and President of God’s Bods for Washburn University.

She is excited to be working with the SCHS as our Senior Editor.

my home was destroyed and my friends were dead. Even my sister is no longer over there. Living here has been good for me and for my family”⁶.

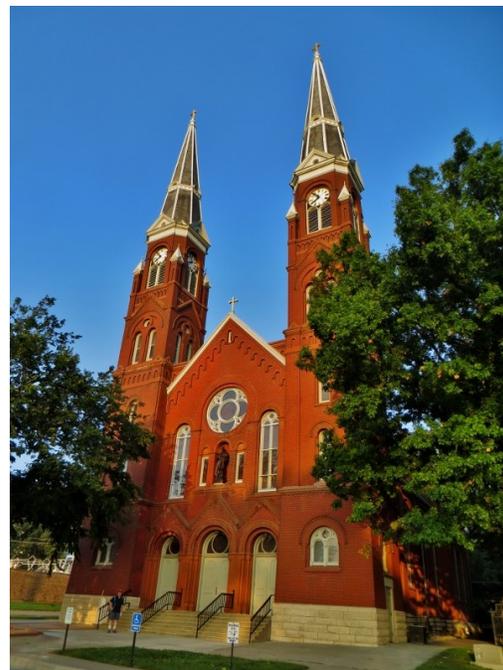
Notes

¹⁻⁶ Justina Vanderpool, interview by Analeigh Vanderpool, May 14, 2015, interview 1A, transcript, Vanderpool Oral History Collection, Washburn University, Topeka, KS

Immigration and Incense

By Chloe Mooradian

On February 13, 1887, approximately fifty German families and a young Catholic priest gathered in Assumption Church on Tenth Street in Topeka, Kansas. The parish was in the beginning stages of forming a National Parish – a church community instituted in their shared culture of a motherland and national identity. The small group of German immigrants, led by Father Francis Henry, a priest whom the archbishop had ordained less than a year before, wasted no time and threw themselves into the construction of a church they could call their own. A short ten months later, on December 11, 1887, Father Henry said the dedication Mass in a humble, two-story stone building that the families had built with their own hands. Structurally, the second floor served as the sanctuary and worshiping space, while the community utilized the bottom floor as a schoolhouse. Finally, the German immigrant population of Topeka had a building for the two most important facets of their lives: the education of their children and the worship of their God. Although highly representative of Catholic sentiment, St. Joseph’s Church in Topeka, Kansas, symbolized the greater aspirations and cultural expression shared by many immigrants who came to the state.



Saint Joseph Catholic Church

Kansas was home to a large number of German immigrants. Statistically, Germans were the largest nationality of Europeans to immigrate to Kansas.¹ Their presence as the majority immigrant category led to over sixty Kansas newspapers published in their native language.²

However, a majority of Kansas German immigrants did not emigrate directly from Germany. Instead, they passed through a series of stops on their way to America's heartland. According to the Kansas Historical Society, Czar Alexander II made military service obligatory, even for non-Russian, German immigrants in 1871. In protest, German immigrants came to America to inspect and value the land of Kansas for agricultural purposes. The presence of the Kansas Pacific Railroad was exponentially helpful in the creation of jobs and livelihood for the immigrants as they entered into the state. The first group of German immigrants to settle in Topeka left Russia in

1875.³ Despite their varied backgrounds, German immigrants found community in the streets of Topeka. A shared language provided an outlet for immigrants to maintain their heritage and identity in their homes, places of business, and daily interaction. Germans possessed a sense of pride concerning their heritage and culture, and this pride applied to their daily living as well as their religious practices. *In Spires for All Times: The Art and History of St. Joseph German Catholic Church*, authors Mary Christine Adams and Teresa Ann Thomas delved into the rich tradition that encompassed St. Joseph's. "The comers were eager to perpetuate their language and

On the corner of Third Street and Van Buren Street in Topeka, Kansas, two steeples reach for the heights. St. Joseph's Church symbolizes the cultural experience of German immigrants to Topeka in the late 1800s.

religion, often identifying with one another. Father Henry followed canon law, confining himself strictly to the use of German in the Church. Not a sermon, not a prayer, not a children's instruction was given in the English tongue during his forty-six years pastorate."⁴ Ironically, Father Henry himself had mastered the English language. The rigid adherence to the German language during the education and religious process symbolized a pride and acknowledgement of the parish's roots. The goal and desires of a national church included an appreciation for the beauty of a shared mother language and cultural experience. As a place of worship, the architecture of St. Joseph's Church on the corner of Third Street and Van Buren Street was German in its design and inspiration. When writing *Spires for All Times*, Adams and Thomas assembled a research team to discover the origination of the architecture for the building. After

investigation, they discovered that the plans were slightly modified versions of a blue print used in the building of St. Anthony Church in Streator, Illinois. St. Anthony's was referred to as a sister church in terms of its design. The architect responsible for the design of St. Joseph Church was a man named George P. Stauduhar, who died in 1928. Stauduhar was not a stranger to the church designing process—he had designed over sixty church buildings in Illinois alone, where he established his practice in Rock Island, Illinois.⁵ The building process for St. Joseph's church was mostly completed in 1899, for the cost of \$20,342.77. The basement would be finished in 1902 for an additional \$3700.00.⁶ The architecture boasted themes that nodded to the German heritage of the people who worshipped inside its walls. Adams and Thomas wrote about the culturally charged construction, and said, "Carolingian styling, which dates back

as far as the tenth century in German and French churches, is also exhibited. Typical of this style, is a steep narrow frontal façade, exaggerated by tall towers, topped with pointed spires, and accented by tall, narrow windows. This upward soaring structure is meant to draw one’s eyes heavenward and thus focus the mind on God. All of these features have been incorporated into the front of St. Joseph’s Church.”⁷ The gothic and German inspired qualities were incorporated both in the exterior architecture as well as the interior design. Vaulted ceilings, pillars and stained glass provided opportunities for parishioners and visitors alike to reminisce about both the beauty of the old country and the exciting opportunities that lay ahead in their new home. Although, just like the German people came from a variety of places of origin during their migration process, the church they worshipped in took into account the varied cultural backgrounds of each category of German immigrants. The German architecture embraced their shared culture. Upon observation, especially of the interior

A rendering of the restored interior.



Courtesy of stjosephchurchrestoration.org

design of the church, a large Russian influence is also traced. This is in part due to the German immigrants who resided in Russia during the last years of the 1800s before their move to Kansas, Topeka in particular. Thomas and Adams walked through the interior of the sanctuary and nave of the church, and wrote about the specific instances of Russian influence.

“Interiorly, the look is repeated in the tall altars with their towers and in the confessionals, also with towers and miniature spires. The look here is softened somewhat and shows a Russian influence in the domed, rather than pointed tops. Each tower, outside and in, begins as a four sided structure and then is transformed into an eight-sided spire.”⁸ Despite their identity as a German National parish, the families and individuals who attended Mass at St. Josephs’ Catholic Church acknowledged the ever-present influence of

other cultures on their German-American experience. The German heritage and cultural foundation of St. Joseph’s parish is still encompassed in the daily living of the parish to this day. Every June for the past forty years, the parish (now combined with Sacred Heart Catholic Church found on Freeman Avenue) hosts a Germanfest celebration, which is city-renowned for the characteristic German traditions of *krautstrudels*, Polka music, and of course, a good German beer. Father Tim Haberkorn, the priest of the combined parishes who grew up going to school and attending Sunday Mass at St. Joseph’s, told the Capital Journal at last year’s Germanfest celebration that he val-

ued the celebration of culture and heritage that the festival offered. “Germanfest means tradition, celebration, and reconnecting with parishioners and the community at large. It is a celebration of our faith and a time to come pray together and then play together.”⁹

The German influence spread throughout Topeka, and people of all ethnicities are welcomed on a regular basis to partake in the German cultural heritage and history of the parish and the area. The stories that fill the pews and hallways of the church are representative of the dreams experienced by immigrants to Kansas—the hopes of a better tomorrow while still holding on to an appreciation of where one was rooted, regardless of nationality. In this way, the building of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church was and is ecumenical in its desires. The passion for success in the United States was shared by many people through various waves of immigration. Adams and Thomas accurately described this relationship when they wrote, “St. Joseph Church truly was an expression of the Old World spirituality of its ancestors, preciously transported from Germany and Russia to its New World home in Topeka, Kansas.”¹⁰ The two spires that reach up to the sky from Van Buren Street symbolized the resilience of an immigrant population who pursued the dream for opportunity, expansion, and continued cultural appreciation in American society.

Notes

¹ “German Settlers in Kansas,” Kansas Historical Society, last modified April 2015, accessed February 25, 2016, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/german-settlers-in-kansas/16710>.

² Ibid.

³ “Germans from Russian in Kansas,” Kansas Historical Society, last modified June 2011, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/germans-from-russia-in-kansas/12231>.

⁴ Adams, Mary Christine and Teresa Ann Thomas, *Spires for All Times: The Art and History of St. Joseph German Catholic Church* (Topeka: Copy Center, 2011), 23.

⁵ Hoffman, John. *A Guide to the History of Illinois* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1991), 272.

⁶ Adams, Mary Christine and Teresa Ann Thomas, *Spires for All Times: The Art and History of St. Joseph German Catholic Church* (Topeka: Copy Center, 2011), 23.

⁷ Ibid, 33.

⁸ Ibid, 33.

⁹ Ditch, Linda, “Krautstrudel Still Most Popular at Germanfest,” last modified January 2, 2015, accessed February 15, 2016, <http://cjonline.com/life/food/2015-06-02/krautstrudel-still-most-popular-germanfest>.

¹⁰ Adams, Mary Christine and Teresa Ann Thomas, *Spires for All Times: The Art and History of St. Joseph German Catholic Church* (Topeka: Copy Center, 2011), 9.

About the Author



Mallory Lutz is a Co-Editor for the SCHS quarterly newsletter. She is a freshman at Washburn University where she studies History and Secondary Education. Her goal is to teach high school United States History and eventually become a professor of the Gilded Age. She enjoys travelling to historical sites and is currently on a quest to visit all 13 presidential libraries. She also works part-time as a hostess at RowHouse Restaurant in downtown Topeka.

John Brown in Fiction: A Comparative Analysis of James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird* and Russell Banks' *Cloudsplitter*

By Mallory Lutz

“The Old Man was a lunatic, but he was a good, kind lunatic, and he couldn't no more be a sane man in his transactions with his fellow white man than you and I can bark like a dog, for he didn't speak their language. He was a Bible man. A God man. Crazy as a bedbug. Pure to the truth, which will drive any man off his rocker,” recalled Henry Shackelford, the narrator of James McBride's 2013 novel *The Good Lord Bird*. Fictional accounts of John Brown range from portraying Brown as a monomaniacal, bloodthirsty abolitionist with a crazy gleam in his eye to a gentle Moses or even Christ-like figure who functions as the savior of the nation. Russell Banks' *Cloudsplitter* (1998) and James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird* (2013) fail to fully adopt either of these one-sided interpretations of Brown. Instead, both novels, though drastically different in style, examine Brown in a biographical and cultural context that is more nuanced. Though fictional, they give insight into the surrounding world around Brown and how his life experiences and beliefs shaped him as an abolitionist and motivated him to act with violence. McBride's novel offers a humorous, and at times glib, view of Brown, representing the “Old Man” as a devout and frequently over-the-top Christian. Banks' account on the other hand, gives more insight into Brown as a father in addition to an abolitionist. Banks offers a more pragmatic and realistic view than McBride. Both novels offer more than just a fictional examination of Brown; over 150 years after Harper's Ferry these two authors chose to write about Brown and his legacy and what John Brown and his sacrifice mean for our society today. This essay specifically examines the authors' portrayals of Brown in the following three areas: Brown's religiosity, Brown as a father, and his role in the Pottawatomie incident.

In James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird*, the narrator, Henry Shackelford, describes Brown's extremely unkempt appearance. While Henry is a somewhat unreliable narrator, the way he describes Brown reveals what the “Old Man” would have looked like on the Kansas Prairie. Like the journalist James Redpath who rode with John Brown in Kansas, Henry says of Brown, “His toes stuck clean through the toe points.” He goes on to say that Brown was a “sorry-looking package” (McBride 11). Immediately the reader gets a sense of Henry's personality and tone, while also understanding Brown's appearance, and how people responded to his presence in Kansas.

Henry, whom Brown calls Henrietta, for he mistakes him for a girl, describes how Missourians felt about Brown. “To hear them [the Missourians] tell it, Old John Brown and his murderous sons planned to deaden every man, woman, and child on the prairie. Old John Brown

stole horses. Old John Brown burned homesteads. Old John Brown raped women and hacked off heads” (McBride 10). While Missourians obviously would have felt resentment and even hatred toward Brown, Henry exaggerates the feelings of opposition toward Brown. John Brown did not wish to “deaden every man, woman, and child on the prairie,” nor did he rape women or, as many people fail to realize, “hack off” any heads. During the Pottawatomie Massacre, it was Brown’s sons who actually committed the deed of hacking the proslavery men to death with broadswords (Oates 135). Brown did in fact steal horses from Proslavers, but he justified his actions by saying it was for the cause of freeing the slaves. Regardless of the over-exaggeration of these statements, Brown and his sons were feared to some degree by border ruffians. Brown aimed to “strike a blow at the Slavers” and put the fear of a wrathful and vengeful God into those who upheld the “peculiar institution” (McBride 41).

Brown’s religiosity and Calvinist theology permeated all of his actions, from being a father, to a shepherd, to a staunch abolitionist. McBride confronts Brown’s religiosity with humor, describing Brown as constantly quoting scripture and bending scripture to fit his particular circumstance. Henry says, “I didn’t make head nor tails of what he was saying, for I was to learn that Old John Brown could work the Lord into just about any aspect of his comings and goings in life, including using the

John Brown did not wish to “deaden every man, woman, and child on the prairie,” nor did he rape women or, as many people fail to realize, “hack off” any heads.

privity” (McBride 24). Brown was prone to pray randomly and for hours on end.

“Thirty minutes later the fire was out, the dinner as cold as Dick’s ice house, and he was still prattling on... The Old Man’s prayers was more sight than sound, really, more sense than sensibility” (McBride 37).

Brown is portrayed as a religious fanatic who does not seem to truly know what he is talking about and selectively chooses to use the Bible when it benefits him. Henry also recalls how Brown would have conversations with his Lord: “He was prone to stop on his horse in the middle of the afternoon, cup his hand to his ear, and say, “*Shh*. I’m getting messages from our Great Redeemer Who stoppeth time itself on our behalf.” He’d set several minutes... on his horse with his eyes closed, meditating...” (McBride 46). This humorous account showcasing Brown’s religious language portrays him as a religious fanatic who truly believed the Lord was directing his every path when it came to freeing the slaves. While McBride’s account of Brown’s faith is whimsical, Banks offers a more believable

stance on Brown’s religiosity.

Owen Brown, the narrator in Banks’ *Cloud-splitter*, describes his father’s religious beliefs: “His constitution was, of course, the Bible, in particular the Old Testament. His Declaration of Independence and Preamble were the Books of Genesis and Deuteronomy. His Bill of Rights was taken straight from the New Testament: love the Lord thy God above all else, and treat thy neighbor as thou wouldst have him treat thee” (Banks 35). This example is more reflective of Brown’s true religious nature; he believed in a wrathful Old Testament God who demanded exact obedience from His followers. Brown’s belief in Jesus’ greatest commandments influenced him greatly as an abolitionist. He believed that loving one’s neighbor meant everyone, including slaves and free African Americans. Owen also describes his father’s “daily round of prayers and hymn-singing, Father’s morning Bible lessons, and his insistence on interpreting all events in Biblical terms were of great value” (Banks 44). Both authors mention

Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 23: Forging Freedom's Pathway History Bus Tour. Tours will board at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site at 11 am and 2 pm. Seating is on a first-come-first-serve basis. To reserve a seat call 785.354.4273.

Sunday, May 21: Historical Movie Night: *Young Lincoln* (1939), starring Henry Fonda. Time TBD. **Location:** Cox Communication Heritage Education Center.

Monday, July 4: Reenactment of the dispersal of the 1856 territorial legislature. **Location:** Constitution Hall, 427 S. Kansas Ave. Time TBD.

Stay Connected . . .

You can always find up-to-date information about upcoming events on our website at:

www.shawneecountyhistoricalsociety.org

Brown's ability and tendency to interpret specific events as biblical and proof that God was guiding him. Like McBride, Banks also mentions Brown's incessant praying. Owen remarks on his father's habit of praying for extremely long periods of time and recounts when "Father, as he occasionally did, due to the fervency of his feelings, lost the train of his thought and fell to stammering or repetition" (Banks 44). This is a common theme that both Henry and Owen experienced in the company of Brown.

Both novels explore the Pottawatomie Massacre in a different light. In McBride's novel, the title of the chapter in which the incident occurs is "Massacre," which causes the reader to believe Brown's actions on the creek were in-cold-blood killings, instead of just an "incident." McBride offers a more simplistic view of Brown's motivations for the Pottawatomie Massacre, while Banks delves deeper into how Brown and his sons perceived the border ruffians. Banks offers a more realistic and historically sound account of Brown's attacks at Pottawatomie while McBride provides a more elementary explanation for Brown's actions.

In *The Good Lord Bird*, Brown says, "I aim to strike a blow at the slavers. We know what they done. They killed Charles Dow. They sent Joe Hamilton to our Maker right in front of his wife. They raped Willamena Tompkin. They're rapists. Pillagers. Sinners, all. Destroying this whole territory. The Good Book says, 'Hold thine enemy to his own fire'" (McBride 41). Brown justifies attacking the men at Pottawatomie Creek because they are supposedly terrible and despicable men who deserve to die.

Banks examines more thoroughly the reasons for why Brown and his sons descended upon those specific families at Pottawatomie Creek. Owen Brown describes the border ruffians as a "staggering, loutish bunch of poor, ignorant, landless Southerners, men who bragged that they had come over to Kansas to help themselves first, by seizing abolitionists' land-claims, and the South second, by killing as many Yankee nigger-lovers as they could find. 'Especially those damned Browns'" (Banks 593-594). The Browns were disgusted with their proslavery neighbors because they saw them as ignorant and dangerous to Free Staters. Banks goes further to suggest why the border ruffians wanted to destroy Brown. Brown says, "In their [the Missourians] minds, we're out here following some Yankee version of their Colonel Buford, and, like them, all we want out of this for ourselves is a piece of free land...I think we have to show them somehow that they're wrong about us...Mainly, they have to see that we are willing to die for this. For they are not" (Banks 594). With this statement Brown sets himself, and abolitionists in general, apart from proslavery forces and suggests that abolitionists have the moral upper hand in the fight against Pro Slavers. Brown believes that antislavery forces will prevail because they are willing to die in order to free the slaves, and he believes that proslavery forces, on the other hand, are unwilling to sacrifice their lives in order to protect Southern "property." Brown goes on to say, "Because they are not willing to *die* for their cause, they have to see that we are willing to *kill* for ours... We need to slay

so many of them with a single, terrifying blow that the rest will start having sobering second thoughts” (Banks 594-595). Brown’s goal for the massacre was to accomplish this “terrifying blow” that would create an intense amount of fear strong enough to halt proslavery forces in their tracks. These were not random killings; Brown’s actions were calculated so that he could instill fear in the minds of the Pro Slavers.

Banks also examines the theory that the Brown family was provoked and they in turn slayed the men who threatened their family. Before the Pottawatomie killings, Brown also justifies his actions by saying, “Are these men not our sworn enemies, boys? Have they not hundreds of times sworn to kill *us*?” (Banks 603). It is as if Brown’s desire to implant fear into the Pro Slavers was not enough; he needed another, more tangible reason to justify murder. So he used the supposed threats against his family to argue that he acted in self-defense when murdering the men at Pottawatomie. Brown also adds the sacking of Lawrence to the list of reasons why these proslavery men should be murdered. “And we shall...make quick, bloody work of it, whilst the surrender and the sacking of Lawrence are still in the air, so that everyone in the territory on both sides will know why it was done” (Banks 602).

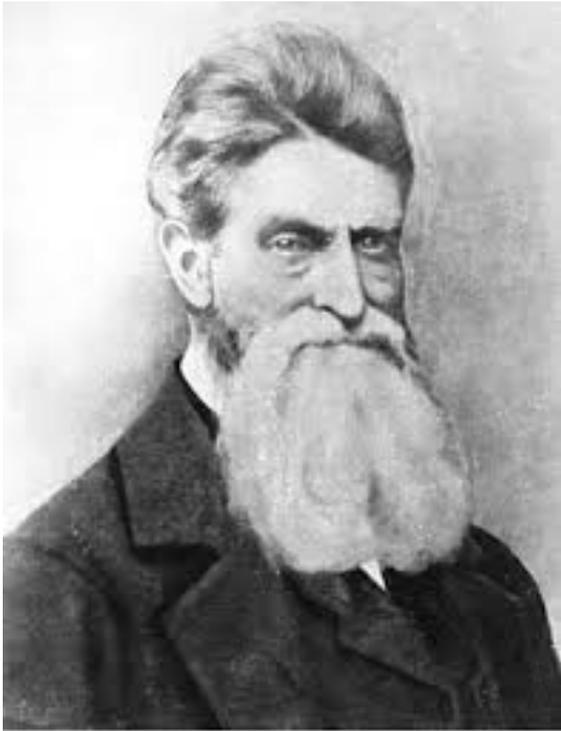
Unlike McBride’s novel, Banks offers an in-depth look at Brown as a father through the eyes of Brown’s son, Owen, who remarks on the harsh discipline Brown meted out to his children. Since childhood, Owen felt like his father was a larger-than-life figure—one who overshadowed Owen

and prevented him from becoming his own man. Owen also struggled with becoming independent and separating himself from his father. He describes the joy he feels when he “frees” himself from his father. He was “free of the force of his personality and the authority of his mind. Free of his *rightness*. Yes, more than anything else, it was his rightness that so oppressed me in those years” (Banks 326). Brown’s righteousness, piety, and devotion to his cause of freeing the slaves oppressed Owen and made him feel trapped. Regardless of whether or not Brown intentionally made his son feel this way, it shows the effect Brown’s dedication to his cause had on his family. Not only did they have to sacrifice when it came to everyday life and living conditions, his quest took a toll on them mentally as well. As a father, Brown witnessed the death of many of his children, including the murder of his son Frederick.

When it comes to the death of a child, both novels have differing accounts of Brown’s reaction. Brown’s son Frederick was murdered by a small band of border ruffians who exacted revenge on Brown. In *Cloudsplitter* Brown is in disbelief that his son “denied” him. When the murderers asked Frederick if he was one of John Brown’s sons, Frederick said no. (Obviously he was just trying to preserve his own life.) Brown did not descend upon the murderers or even stop to mourn his son; rather he was furious that Frederick denied him. In that moment Owen described his father as suffering from a “stupidity of the heart” (Banks 658). Brown was unable to show sympathy or properly mourn for his son and instead distanced himself from his emotions. Brown simply says, “He has made the blood remission. He is with the Lord” (Banks 658). Not only is this reaction disturbing since most fathers would grieve over their deceased children, it also shows that Brown valued his cause and calling to defeat the slaves more than he did his sons.

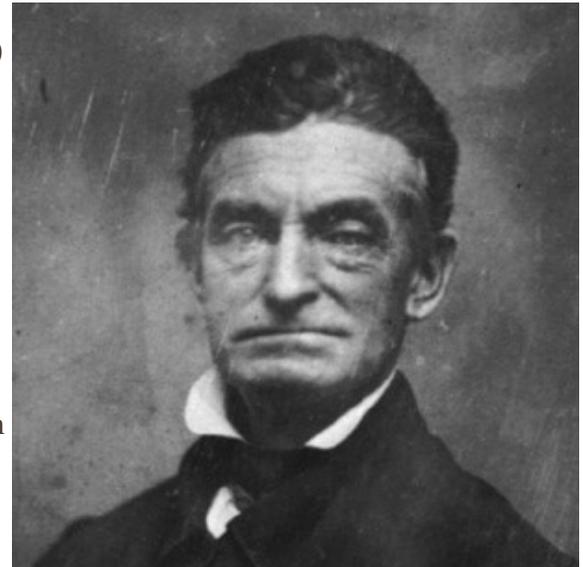
The Good Lord Bird depicts a more compassionate Brown in this tragic moment: “But he might as well have been talking to a hole in the ground, for even as he spoke, his mind was somewhere else.

The Good Lord Bird depicts a more compassionate Brown in this tragic moment: “But he might as well have been talking to a hole in the ground, for even as he spoke, his mind was somewhere else.



He knelt over Fred. He looked at him several minutes, and for a moment, the old gray eyes softened and it seemed like a thousand years had washed over the Old Man's face. He sighed, gently pulled Fred's cap off his head, pulled a feather off the Good Lord Bird, and rose" (McBride 122). This powerful passage shows Brown as a grieving father, one who lays over his son and looks deeply into his face, probably pondering the memories of his son's short life. In this instance, and in McBride's novel overall, Brown is depicted as a human, not some invincible being that history has put on a pedestal. He is a man like any other man, with flaws, emotions, and heartache, especially as he witnesses his son's death. While these novels examine Brown as a father, they speak to the legacy of John Brown and how society perceives him today.

Many people believe John Brown to be a hero, a martyr, and a savior of a nation that had succumbed to an evil institution. Others see him as a terrorist, a murderer, a conspirator, and a monomaniac who was crazy to think he could free the slaves. Though the incident at Harper's Ferry occurred over 150 years ago, John Brown clearly still plays a role in the American mind (after all, authors still write novels, poems, and songs about him). Both of these novels entered the discussion about what race, freedom, and equality look like in today's society. While progress in racial equality has been made since Brown's execution, the country still suffers from racial injustices. Both authors urge readers to look at society and examine race relations and equality. The authors beg the question, "Was John Brown's fight and sacrifice in vain?" Though the novels are about a man who lived and died in the 1800s, they point out that America still has progress to make when it comes to the freedom and equality Brown believed in so many years ago as he climbed the gallows to declare that the crimes of America would "never be purged away but with blood."



Works Cited

- Banks, Russell. *Cloudsplitter: A Novel*. New York, NY: HarperFlamingo, 1998. Print.
- McBride, James. *The Good Lord Bird*. New York: Penguin Group, 2013. Print.
- Oates, S.B. *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown*. New York ...: n.p., 1970. Print.

Brown, John. "John Brown's Famous Photographs," Washington, District of Columbia: Smithsonian Images. Web. Accessed 3/6/2016.

Premiere Showing of "*Our Charley: A Boy Forced to Choose*" a Great Success!

By George Bernheimer

Nearly 250 people viewed "*Our Charley: A Boy Forced to Choose*" which was screened at the historic *Jayhawk Theater* in downtown Topeka on January 24. This is the first segment the documentary about the life of Kansan *Charles Curtis*, Vice President of the United States under President Herbert Hoover. Production is now underway on the next segment which should be completed later this year. The project is being produced by historian and author *Deb Goodrich* with support from *Kansas Humanities Council*, *Shawnee County Historical Society*, and the *Trinity Marketing Group*.

Watch for the screening of the next segment!

Membership for 2016

Listed below are the current 2016 members.

Life Members:

Donald and Janet Chubb
Jerry and Barbara Estes
Mildred Francis
Carolyn Huebner
David Laird
Larry D. Marken
J. Douglas and Janice Mauck
Tom and Kathleen McClure
W. Walter Menninger, MD
Pat and Jerry Powers
Olive Stanford
Ann Strecker
Warren E. Taylor
Nancy Toedman
Mary B. Voigt
William O. Wagnon, Jr.
Cynthia Wahle
Mrs. Martin E. Wanamaker
W. R. Williams

June Windscheffel
Charles W. Wright

Regular Members:

Allen County (IN) Public Library
Betty Alderson
Gregory Allen
Dale Anderson
Grace H. Beam
Terry E. Beck
Brenda A. Blankenship
Melvin Bruntzel
Jayne Cafer
Dan and Helen Crow
Kay Conn
James S. Daniel
Downtown Topeka, Inc.
Shirley Driscoll
Duane and Beth Fager
Duane and Debbie Pomeroy

Betty Frantz
Thomas R. and Linda S. Garrett
Edna M. Greene
Anne Greitl
Joseph and Marilyn Ham
Johnathan Hart
Camille S. Heeb and Fred W. Schafer
Thomas and Cinda Henderson
Karen A. Hiller
Christine Hollenbeck
Mark and Cyndy Hunt
Shirley Huttenhoff
Duane A. Iles
Simone Johnson
Richard F. Jones
Robert E. Keeshen
Ken and Mary Kerle
Robert and Margaret Knecht
KU Libraries
Jim Lagerberg
Alice Landers
Connor Lavery
Bonna J. Lincoln
Carolyn Litwin
Frank A. Logan
Steve and Kim Magee
Patrick Macfee
Harriette Macnish
Roy and Judy Marks
Richard and Ramona McDonald
Bill McFarland
James A. McHenry, Jr.
Richard Meidinger, MD
Jeanne Mithen
Ted Mize
Lona and Phil Morse
Kevin and Mary Alice Murphy
Austin and Marianna Nothern
James Ogle
Jim and Nancy Parrish
Robert H. Reeder
Adam Ritchie
Laura Anne Ritchie
Patricia Ross
Alicia and John Salisbury
Janice Seagraves
Marsha Sheahan

Sabra and Alan Shirrell
Jack Shutt
James W. Sloan
Joan Smith
Jacqueline and Herschel Stroud
Lawrence Tenopir
Topeka Genealogical Society
Analeigh Vanderpool
Joan Davis Wagnon
Virginia Vogel Wallace
John and Nancy Whiffen
Rosemary Williamson
Barbara Winders
Jack Wisman
Doug Wright
Lee Wright

Patron Members:

Steven L. Adams
Richard and Nancy Anderson
Melba Banion
Betty S. Bomar
Jon E. Boursaw
Larry and Nancy Brooks
Tim and Margaret Carkhuff
Sheldon H. Cohen, PhD
Virginia Correa
Karen Craig
Bill Cutler and Elisabeth Suter
Patricia Decker
Lois and Larry Diminitt
Virginia Kay Foster
Rick Friedstrom
David Gabriel
Gem Properties, Inc.
Mary A. Hall
Jeanne Hoferer
Melissa P. Masoner
Tom Muth
Paul Post
Ramon Powers
Dee Puff
Elaine Schwartz
Dale and Judyanne Somers
John H. Stauffer
Steve and Marilyn Waugh

Carol and Max Yoho

Richard and Dorothy Hanger

Renovator Members:

Sustainer Members:

Nancy Kassebaum Baker
George and Diane Bernheimer
Charles T. Crawford
Kathy and Tuck Duncan
Tim and Jett Elmer
Nile and Kate Fowler
Rachel Goossen

Thomas Ellis
David J. Heinnemann
Doug and Dorothy Iliff
Patricia Michaelis
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
Topeka Schools Foundtion

SCHS Memberships make great gifts for friends or family!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership is from January-December, annually

MEMBERSHIP FORM (Please print)

Yes! I wish to join the Society that preserves the past and celebrates our heritage.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Check type of membership: _____ Regular (\$35.00) _____ Patron (\$50.00) _____ Renovator (\$100.00) _____ Heritage Education Sustainer (\$150.00 +)

GIFT MEMBERSHIP (Please print)

_____ \$ Gift Membership for someone I know who will benefit from membership. (Photocopy this form for more than one. Use rates listed above.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

VOLUNTEER for a COMMITTEE

- Nominations Membership Publications
- Annual Meeting/Socials Preservation Public Relations
- Landmark Preservation Committee Education/Communications

Name _____

(Make checks to "Shawnee County Historical Society")

Please send form(s) with your check to:

Shawnee County Historical Society, P.O. Box 2201, Topeka, KS 66601-2201

Get Published!

Have an idea for research in Shawnee County? Want to have your opinion heard? Have a family member or friend looking to build a resume? Consider submitting articles and/or letters to the editor. SCHS is looking for submissions to be between 1500 and 2500 words and must pertain to Shawnee County history. A review of submitted works will be chosen and you will be notified of your published work.

Annual Meeting Review

On Sunday, December 6 we held our annual meeting of the Shawnee County Historical Society at the Cox Communication Heritage Education Center. SCHS President *David J. Heinemann* addressed the members and guests, outlining the many accomplishments of the past year and the challenges that lie ahead.

Special Recognition

Carol Yoho and *Jeanne Mithen* were recognized for their many years of service in editing our *Historical Highlights* newsletter. Carol and Jeanne are retiring from their positions.

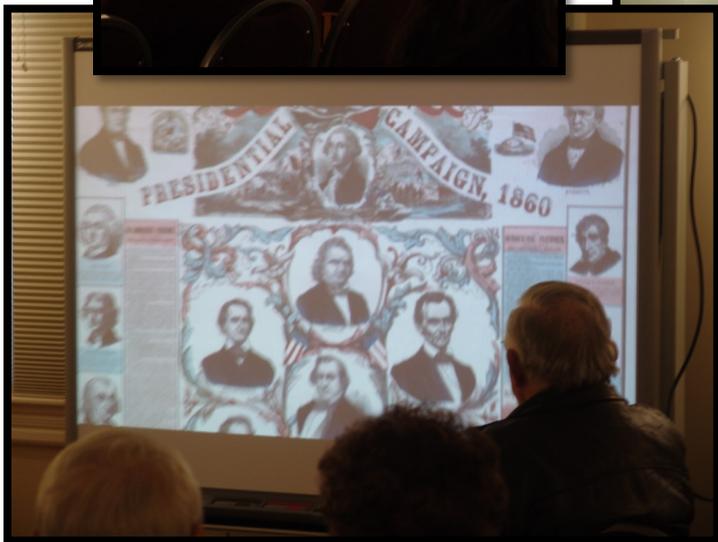
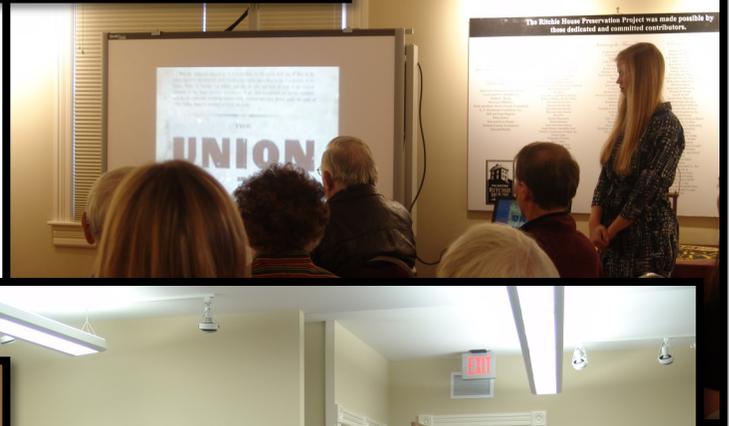
Board of Trustees Election Nominations were made of *Patricia Michaelis*, *Adam Ritchie*, and *Analeigh Vanderpool* to serve a 3 year term on the Board of Trustees. *Bill Wagnon* and *George Bernheimer* were nominated to serve a second 3 year term on the Board. All were elected to serve as nominated.

The highlight of the afternoon was the program presented by *Avery Munns*, Washburn Rural High School student and recipient of the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Award for her documentary "*James Lane: Pioneering Patriot*". Avery presented her documentary and fielded questions about Lane, her research on the project, and a new project in progress.

Our Thanks to *Shirley Driscoll* and *Johnathan Hart* for providing refreshments for the afternoon.

Officers for 2016

Following the membership meeting, the Board of Trustees met to elect officers for the coming year. Elected to a one year term beginning January 1, 2016 were *David Heinemann*, President, *George Bernheimer*, Vice President and President Elect, *Jill Wolters*, Secretary and *Bill Wagnon*, Treasurer.





P.O Box 2201, TOPEKA KS 66601-2201

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #545
TOPEKA KS

Lighting Freedom's Pathway;
Building Heritage Culture

Get Involved

The SCHS would like to thank all of our volunteers and staff that help us maintain our commitment and involvement in Shawnee County and other local communities. We could not make this happen without you!

There are many ways in which you can help the Shawnee County Historical Society preserve the past for the future. Become a member! Volunteer some time! Or make a donation. Also remember the SCHS in your estate planning.

Membership in SCHS is from January 1 through December 31 each year. There are three levels of support. The Society greatly appreciates and benefits from the highest level of membership in which you are able to participate. You will receive:

- Quarterly Newsletter
- Discounts at events
- Exclusive Members-Only Section on our website
- Online Archives

- The Shawnee County Historical Society News
- Invitation to the Annual Meeting on or near December 5, the anniversary of Topeka's founding
- Pre-announcements of Society activities and special events

Membership revenues also support other local endeavors including our Educational Program and History Day at Washburn University.

In addition, your Society works closely with the Kansas State Historical Society and is dedicated to a preservation focus, meant to preserve and celebrate the tangible aspects of our heritage. Together we can preserve Shawnee County History for future generations to enjoy.

We also work collaboratively with the National Park Service to provide learning opportunities for students and adults. The SCHS has partnerships with the National Association for State and Local Histories to preserve Shawnee County History.

2016 Officers :

David J. Heinemann, President
 George Bernheimer, President-Elect
 Jill Wolters, Secretary
 Bill Wagon, Treasurer

2016 Trustees :

George Bernheimer	Analeigh Vanderpool
Jon Boursaw	Bill Wagon
Jacqueline Bugg	Jill Wolters
Shirley Driscoll	Doug Wright
Tom Ellis	
Johnathan Hart	
David J. Heinemann	
Patrician Michaelis	
Stacie Torrez	