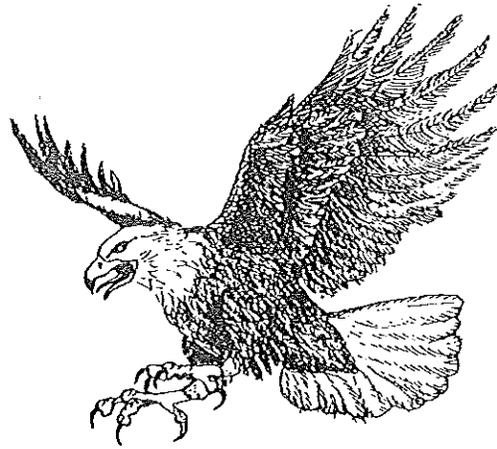


BAND

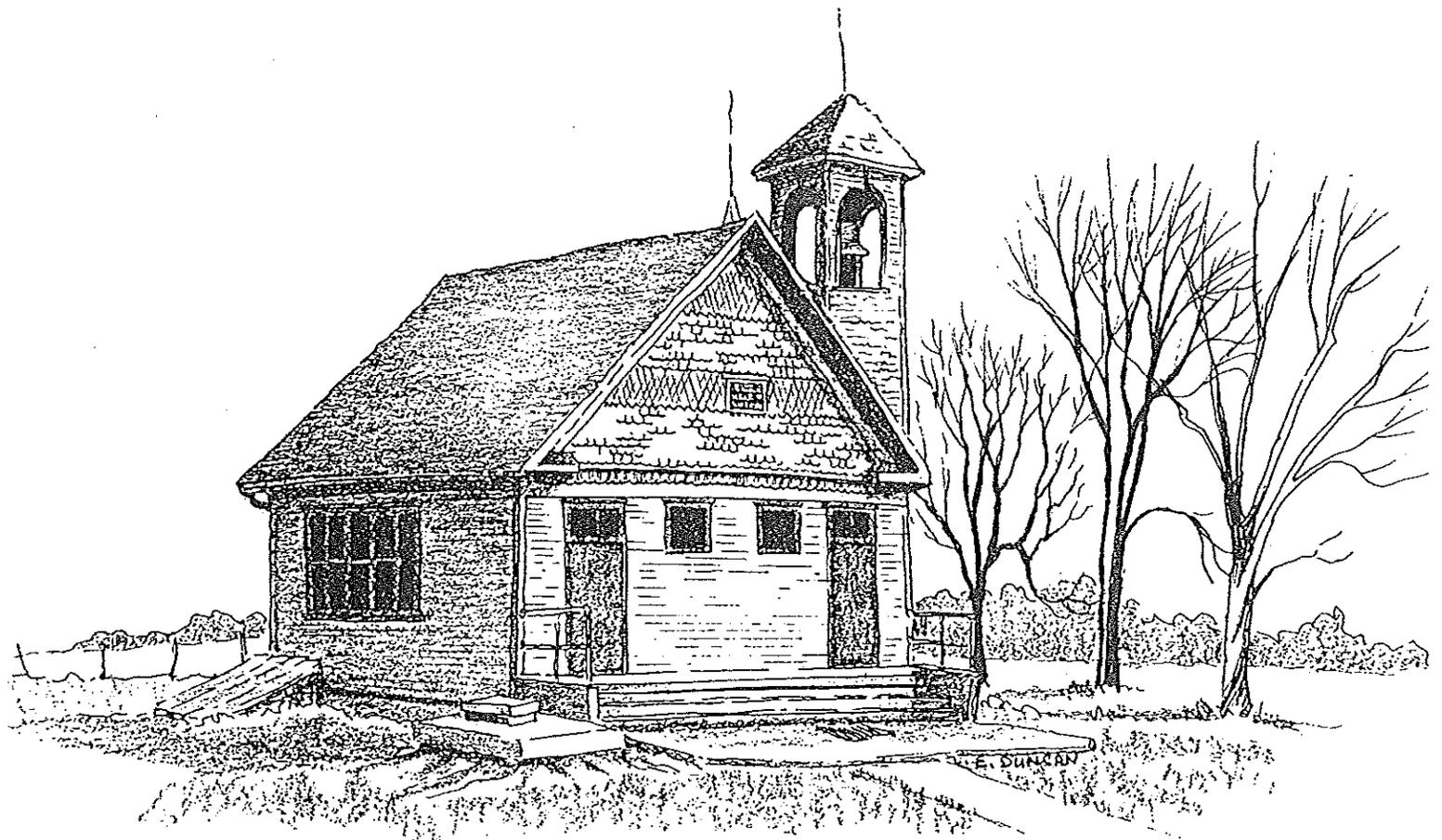


CHANCE

VOL. 19, No. 2

LECOMPTON, KANSAS

SUMMER, 1993



KANWAKA

By Margaret Wulfsuhle

The community of Kanwaka, roughly 9 square miles in size, is located midway between Lawrence and Lecompton on either side of Highway 40. Kanwaka township extends from Queen's Road west to the Shawnee County line, an area approximately 10 miles in length and 5 miles in width.

When Kansas Territory was opened for settlement after the Kansas-Nebraska bill was signed into law by President Franklin Pierce on May 30, 1854, many of the quarter sections of land in eastern Kansas were assigned to

veterans, or their widows, as a bonus for past military service. However, quitclaims on these quarters could be purchased for reasonable prices since many veterans never intended to come to Kansas. Most settlers became original pre-emptors by staking claims. This was done by driving a post into the ground and emblazoning on a piece of wood, "I claim 160 acres of which this is the center", then laying four logs together to mark the foundation of a house to be built later. Sometimes a trade could be arranged with someone wanting to leave the territory. Such was the case of the

Thomas Anderson family from Limerick, Ireland. In the spring of 1857 they acquired the land at the northeast intersection of California and Lecompton Roads by trading a team and covered wagon to a woman whose husband had been killed by the Indians. She and her children only wished to return to her native state and they needed transportation to do so.

Being close to both Lawrence and Lecompton, Kanwaka was never projected to become a town. Had that occurred, it likely would have been located at the site of the first settlement by John Allen Wakefield, a free-stater from Iowa. Wakefield arrived in Kansas Territory on June 8, 1854, with two wagons, a carriage, a buggy, his wife, three sons, a daughter, and a young niece. While the family rested at a spring near Lawrence which, at that time, consisted of two unfinished cabins, John and the eldest son, William, explored the countryside between Lawrence and the present site of Topeka. Returning along the main road, they came upon a spring that gave rise to a creek on the rolling prairie about six miles west of Lawrence. Here, on July 19, 1854, John Wakefield unloaded his wagons, pitched his tent, and staked his claim. He named the place "Elysian Plains". The present location is at the southeast intersection of Highway 40 and Trail Riders' Road. With the help of his sons, Wakefield built a one and one-half story, six-room, hewed log house. Because there was no sawmill in the area, lumber for floors and furnishings were hauled from Independence, Missouri.

The first public meeting in Kanwaka took place at Elysian Plains in September 1854. A claims dispute was presided over by John Wakefield who earlier had been chosen to act as judge of the Squatters Court. Thereafter he was known as Judge Wakefield, an impressive figure as he travelled about the countryside in his red stagecoach driven by one of his farm hands. When his log house was burned by proslavery sympathizers on the night of September 1, 1856, the family built a much larger stone house known as Wakefield's Tavern. Since it was located on the main road, the tavern was a logical rest stop for travellers and a favorite gathering place for neighbors.

Other settlers who arrived in Kanwaka during the summer and fall of 1854 were John Lyon, Knott Crockett, David and George Buffum and their cousin Robert Buffum, Erastus and Judson Heath, Henry Lacy, Captain Charles Thomas, William Ricker, Charles Smith, and Henry Baldwin. Baldwin took the land just west of Wakefields. Homes of various kinds - log, shake, dugout and sod - were hastily erected and seemed fairly adequate for the mild winter of 1854 and 1855.

Among a large party from Ohio and Indiana who arrived in the spring of 1855 were Samuel Walker, Thomas and Robert Barber, Lewis Duffee, Margaret Sowash (who

became Mrs. Lewis Duffee), George Cosley, Roscoe and William Hazeltine, M.J. Burlingame, the Hay brothers, Bloom Swain, Mrs. Clarinda Hurd and sons Henry and George, C.C. Emery, Aaron Platts, Benjamin Stowe, Harrison Rawson, Judson and Nathan Cree, and Thomas Bickerton who claimed to be "from all over the world". Speaking in 1856 Bickerton said, "I am a native of Maine, age 40 years, both wife and children dead - died before I came here. Having no ties to bind me anywhere, I concluded to come to Kansas. I am a machinist by trade. I followed the sea from age 13 till about 30 years of age." Bickerton built his sod house on a beautiful site a mile south of the California Road, which he christened "Mount Joy". Although he did not have any strong feeling on the question of slavery, he was destined to play an important part in making Kansas a free state. With David and Robert Buffum he smuggled the famous Abbott howitzer, disguised as a farm implement, past federal agents at Westport and thence to Lawrence to be used against proslavery forces. He became an expert artilleryman rendering invaluable service during the border conflict and later in the Civil War.

Samuel Walker of the Ohio-Indiana party would also serve the state with distinction for many years. He arrived in the territory in April 1855.

Although he was a carpenter by trade, Walker had very little time to work on a house before proslavery leader, Colonel Henry Titus of Lecompton, paid him a visit and ordered him to leave the territory within two weeks. Walker's reaction to the threat was to organize the men of Kanwaka into a military unit called the Bloomington Guards who met for weekly drilling under the command of William Mace. When Mace moved away, Samuel Walker assumed leadership. The Guards were the first to come to the defense of Lawrence when Missourians laid siege during the brief Wakarusa War, December 5-9, 1855. It was during that week that Kansas suffered the loss of her first distinctive martyr to the cause of freedom. Thomas Barber, with his brother Robert and brother-in-law, Thomas Pierson, was returning to his farm after doing guard duty at the fortifications on December 6. They were accosted by a party of proslavery men who ordered them to return to Lawrence. In the ensuing argument, Thomas, though unarmed, was shot in the side and died almost instantly. The murderer was never brought to trial. After a temporary burial, Thomas Barber was given an appropriate funeral at the Free State hotel on December 16. A mile-long procession led by Generals Charles Robinson and James H. Lane accompanied by the Guards, other military units and townspeople, escorted the body up Mount Oread to a final resting place in Pioneer Cemetery. Thereafter the Bloomington Guards were known as the Barber Guards and Samuel Walker became Colonel Samuel Walker of the 4th Cavalry.

During the spring of 1856 a company of southerners calling themselves the "Law and Order" party began gathering in Hazeltine's Grove west of Walker's property. They searched and robbed travelers on the road, foraged for food on farms, stole horses, picketed homes of settlers, and kept them in fear for their lives. By May they numbered about 800, and on May 20 they moved toward Lawrence to join Sheriff Jones and Federal Marshal I.B. Donaldson in sacking the town. In an effort to save the Free State hotel, the freestaters were tricked into giving up the Abbott howitzer which Sheriff Jones then used along with another cannon, Old Sacramento, to bombard and burn the hotel. After destroying the two newspapers and burning nearly every building on Massachusetts street, Sheriff Jones declared that it was the happiest day of his life. Colonel Walker and Captain Bickerton led the attack on Franklin on August 12, 1856 where they captured Old Sacramento.

This cannon was a relic of the Mexican War which had been brought to Liberty, Missouri by Colonel Doniphan who then gave it over to the proslavery forces. Using a sand mold, Captain Bickerton made one hundred six-pound cannon balls from salvaged newspaper type. In August, 14 freestaters marched on Fort Saunders near Lone Star only to find it deserted. With 200 men under his command, Colonel Walker marched on Fort Titus 1 1/2 miles south of Leocompton on August 16 and demanded surrender. When the proslavery men refused to come out, Captain Bickerton brought Old Sacramento into position and fired into the log fort. After eleven shots, a white flag appeared at the window, signalling surrender. The 26 prisoners were traded man-for-man for freestate men held in the Leocompton jail, all except Colonel Titus, who was held at Lawrence until the Abbott howitzer was returned.

After that Captain Bickerton took Old Sacramento to his farm and buried it for safekeeping. It did not come out of hiding until he invited his neighbors to Mount Joy for the celebration of Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency in November 1860. He fired a 13-gun salute for the new president and another one for his new wife, Hannah, who also was from the state of Maine. Shortly thereafter, when Kansas was admitted to the Union on January 29, 1861, the new state received a 34-gun salute, thus marking the first Kansas Day celebration. For many years Old Sacramento sat on the lawn of the Douglas County courthouse and is now on display at the Watkins Museum in Lawrence.

Although Governor Geary ordered both proslavery and freestate militias to disperse, acts of violence continued to occur. Following the loss of three proslavery forts, houses belonging to Judge Wakefield, Thomas Oliver, Samuel Walker, Erastus Heath, Rev. Lewis and George Snyder were destroyed by fire on the night of September 1. More tragic was the senseless murder of David Buffum on September 17.

While working in a field near the California Road (now the intersection of Highway 40 and County Road 13) he was accosted by two proslavery men who demanded his horses. Protesting that the horses were essential to earning a livelihood for himself and his deafmute brother George, as well as his aged father and two sisters in Massachusetts, he was nevertheless shot in the abdomen for resisting. Judge Cato and Governor Geary travelling along the road, came to his assistance. Lingerin in agony for ten days, he was able to identify his assailants who were never brought to trial. Buffum's grave in Pioneer Cemetery is marked with a stone inscribed, "I am glad to die for the cause of Freedom in Kansas."

President Lincoln called for troops on April 15, 1861. Two days later Samuel Walker tendered his service with a company of 100 volunteers. Several men who belonged to the Barber Guards held commissions during the Civil War: Walker rose to the rank of Brigadier General of the Kansas Militia; Captain Thomas Bickerton commanded the First Kansas Volunteer Battery of 50 artillerymen which was mustered in on July 24, 1861 at Fort Leavenworth; Lieutenant Charles Colman commanded the First Volunteer Regiment of negro troops and lost his life in the Battle of Poison Springs near Camden, Arkansas, when his entire unit was massacred by Confederate forces. Knott Crockett was killed in the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee and Robert Buffum was hanged as a spy in Kentucky. Willimlee Lyon, serving with Company B, 9th Regiment Kansas Volunteer Cavalry was killed on April 20, 1862 and is buried in the abandoned Kanwaka Cemetery, as is John Mack who came to Kansas in August 1854 and died October 9, 1870.

Settlers who arrived in the territory with limited knowledge of farming were faced with a very real problem of determining what crops would thrive in the unpredictable Kansas climate. Some members of the Ohio-Indiana party had brought seeds, shrubs and fruit trees with them and Emigrant Aid Societies supplied seeds and scions to those wanting to experiment with varieties adaptable to the soil and rainfall in this region.

Ezekiel Colman, an outspoken abolitionist, who bought a quitclaim on land adjoining the Wakefield property, had been a manufacturer of wallpaper in Boston, Massachusetts. Coming to Kansas in 1854 at age 40, he was faced with the challenge of earning a living from the land to support his large family. By hard work and Yankee ingenuity, he became a successful nurseryman and one of the founders of the Douglas County Horticultural Society in 1867. Meetings were held at the new Kansas University in winter with Professors J.H. Canfield and W.C. Stevens, who advised members on problems with insects and crop disease. In turn, botany classes would visit summer meetings at the farms to observe progress of the experiments. Long after Thomas

Bickerton had moved to Florida, students came to study the many kinds of trees growing on Mount Joy. Each farmer had a specialty - small berries, chestnuts, pears, apples, black walnuts, broom corn and Osage orange trees which were used for fencing. When Judge Wakefield and Ezekiel Colman engaged in a boundary dispute, each planted a row of hedge creating a no-man's land between their farms that is still visible. Colman was most successful in the culture of berries, apples of many varieties, and black walnuts. In 1871 and 1873 he was awarded silver medals for his display of apples at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society competition in Boston.

Another reminder of this pioneer is the continued use of the name "Yankee" in modern developments. The small stream that ran through his farm actually rose from the spring on Wakefield's property. To catch water for his livestock, Colman dug a pond fed by the stream. When the rains came and the stream ran full, neighbors would say, "The Yankee's tank is running over". The stream has been tamed by soil-saving ponds and Yankee Tank lake, but still serves as a valuable water supply for cattle.

HISTORY OF KANWAKA SCHOOL

Many of the first residents on the Kanwaka Community had enjoyed early educational advantages in their native states, so it is not surprising that one of their foremost concerns was the education of their children. Before a public school was established, Nathan Cree, Erastus Heath and Henry Hurd had conducted private schools.

The first public school was held in a blacksmith shed on the northwest corner of Judge Wakefield's property (now Raymond Williams) in 1855 with Miss Mary Brown as teacher. When the building burned, school was moved to the loft of the Wakefield barn and was taught by Miss Lute. Both of these early locations were near the California Road and the children were allowed to run outside during classes to see the soldiers march by. The next year, 1857, a small frame building was moved to the permanent school site on section 36-12-18, an acre of ground donated by Deacon Baldwin. The furnishings consisted of backless benches. There were no desks and water had to be carried from the Colman farm (now Eugene Hird). Miss August Hunt was the teacher.

Much discussion and careful consideration about the best name for this school ensued. The school ground was on the water-shed between the Kansas and Wakarusa rivers. The name, Kanwaka, is said to have been coined by Dr. Helen Heath, from the first syllables of Kansas and Wakarusa. Thus the school became Kanwaka School. Actually the district was not formally organized until 1859 when C.L. Edwards, County Superintendent, enlarged the number of districts in the county from 5 to 35 and assigned Kanwaka the

number 15. (Douglas County was organized into townships in 1859 and the township took its name from the school).

During the Civil War (1863) the frame building was replaced by a stone structure which was located south of the 1903 building. Mrs. S.B. Prentis was the first teacher in the new building. At that time the district could not afford desks, so parents were asked to provide chairs and tables for their own children. The Heath children were the first to have desks made by their father who was a carpenter. Naturally there was some jealousy and one morning a snake was found in one of those desks. However, benches and desks were soon provided for all pupils.



During the years 1860-1890 the school building was the center of community activities. There were dances, literaries, theatricals, box socials, religious services, and meetings of the debating society, library association, Grange, Horticultural Society, Women's Temperance Society, and the Farmers' Alliance, which gave a concert in the schoolhouse in 1899. With the building of two churches in the community, some of the activity shifted away from the school.

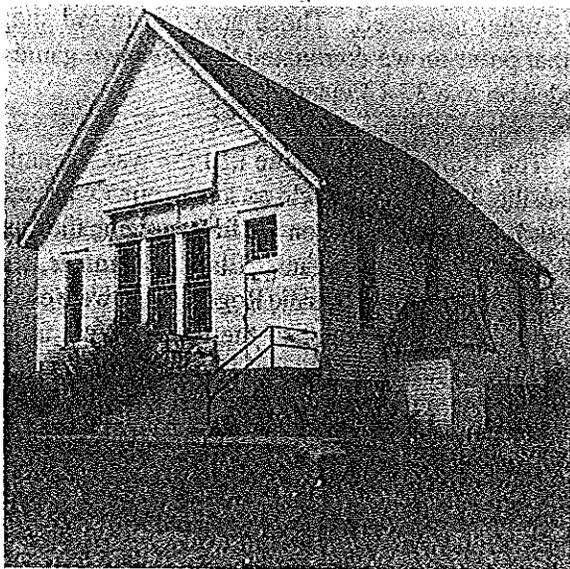
The old stone building was replaced by a frame school house soon after the turn of the century. Osgood Colman, Miss Lenora Ricker Hollingberry, and Mrs. Al Smith served as the committee to select an architectural plan for the new building. Mr. Colman and the two ladies traveled by horse and buggy over the county looking at schools. They chose a plan similiar to Apple Pie school, which was located west of Lone Star. The frame building was used for the first time in September, 1903. Nora Lane was the teacher and

C.O. Bowman was County Superintendent. This school boasted a furnace and Ralph Colman was the janitor.

A reunion of former pupils and teachers was held in connection with dedication of the new school October 20, 1903. The following former teachers were present: Flora Richardson Colman, Susie Platts Godding, Ida Evans Smith, May Richardson, Sara Richardson, and Mrs. S.B. Prentis, who recited an original poem, "Forty Years Ago".

In 1919 the following certificate was issued from the State Board of Education of Kansas: "In recognition of the satisfactory condition of the school buildings, grounds, equipment, quality of work being done, and the evidence of community interest, Kanwaka School, No. 15, Douglas County, is hereby approved as a Standard School".

On March 20, 1963 the patrons of Kanwaka voted to become part of Wakarusa Valley District #98. The building and grounds were sold at public auction September 14, 1963 to Clay Ed Shaw, 721 Swartz Road, Lawrence, Kansas.



Union Congregational Church - Now Kanwaka Hall

Religious services were held in private homes or in the schoolhouse until the 1890's when two churches were built. Land for the Union Congregational church was donated by J. Michael and Christiana Hanselman in 1889, and funds for the building were raised by Reverend A.H. Goudy and the Hopeful Workers with William Raymond, treasurer. Services were held in the 26 x 64 foot basement for two years until the building could be completed. Outstanding features of the church, dedicated July 31, 1892, were colored glass windows, swinging doors opening from the vestibule, an elaborate brass chandelier holding six kerosene lamps and ornate grills along the walls to regulate heat from the large wood-burning furnace in the basement. The church flourished for a decade, then discontinued services for lack of participants.

For many years it was owned by the Fraternal Aid

Lodge, under the trusteeship of George Richards, Arthur Richards and Samuel Buchheim. It was used for a polling place, dances, political meetings, travelling shows, theatricals and family reunions. Kanwaka Township purchased the building in 1938, improved the basement and heating system, furnished a kitchen and installed plumbing. The building is well maintained and serves as a community center as well as the Township Hall.

A revival conducted by Reverend Thomas Holbert at the schoolhouse in 1893 led to establishment of a United Brethren church on the northeast corner of Henry Baldwin's farm. The cornerstone of the beautiful building was laid June 1, 1894 and the dedication took place a year later on June 23, 1895. The Kanwaka Ladies Aid served farm sales, held bazaars and did quilting to raise money for carpets, a piano and other furnishings. Ministers from Lawrence held services, mostly on Sunday afternoon, and people of all denominations attended. As roads improved, attendance shifted to urban churches, but Sunday School activities for young people continued until 1933 when the building was sold for lumber.

George Francis built a general store in 1905, located seven miles west of Lawrence at the junction of the Stull and California Roads. Most customers were farmers who came by team and wagon to exchange produce for livestock feed and groceries. Less welcome were the bands of gypsies who frequently traveled the highway in covered wagons. Once, as the Francis family was about to sit down to the dinner table, about two dozen gypsies crowded into the store. A few made purchases, but when they departed, many articles including every lantern chimney in stock had disappeared as had the silverware, china and food from the dinner table. With shotgun in hand, Mr. Francis pursued the caravan and collected in silver coins from the Queen enough to pay for the stolen goods.

In 1920 he sold the store to George Richards who made some improvements and added a gasoline pump. When the Fort-to-Fort road rerouted traffic from the south side of the store to the east side, Mr. Richards simply moved the merchandise to another room to keep the front facing the main road. A succession of a half-dozen owners operated the store until it was closed by the owner, Roger Caruthers, due to World War II rationing. Sparks from a trash fire ignited the building and burned it to the ground March 12, 1970.

The city limits of Lawrence have moved westward to within three miles of Elysian Plains where Judge Wakefield staked his claim in 1854. The old Judge and his contemporaries would be amazed at the developments and improvements that have taken place. They would marvel at the number of well-educated, successful citizens of Kanwaka who have served their country well in military, cultural, and political arenas. They would take pride in the community they helped establish nearly 140 years ago. It is a desirable place to live.

