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## Book Review: Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000

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*Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000.* By Craig Miner. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002. xvii + 534 pp. Photographs, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.

Writing a one-volume state history is a formidable task. Deciding what political, economic, and social topics to cover that reflect the state's identity and character are extremely challenging. Craig Miner recognized and accepted these challenges, and the result is the best single-volume history of Kansas written to date.

Miner focuses his study on the state's important people and key events, emphasizing throughout how these people and events contributed to many of the contrasting attitudes and images of Kansas—progressive, conservative, racist, backward—which continue to persist in the twenty-first century. Astute evaluations of many of the colorful and controversial figures in Kansas history, such as Charles Robinson, James Lane, John Brown, Mary Lease, Carry Nation, William Allen White, Rolla Clymer, John Brinkley, and Joan Finney, are Miner's forte. His critical analysis of significant events is equally thought provoking. Topics include the turbulent territorial period; land settlement; railroad construction; farming and labor problems; suffrage, prohibition, populist, and progressive reform movements; the impact of automobiles, oil discoveries, and aviation; and the civil rights movement. In addition, Miner provides engrossing commentary on movie censorship, particularly the banning of the film *Birth of a Nation* in the state, and on state education issues, including the creation and role of state institutions of higher learning.

Some readers may desire more coverage of particular subjects. For example, Miner could have given more information on Native Americans, particularly the Indian Wars, the impact of missionaries on Indian cultures, and early twentieth-century issues. He does, however, address Indian gaming issues under Governor Finney. Other readers may want more

mention of social, cultural, and athletic events that involved Kansans.

Miner's *Kansas* is based on sound research and extensive citations of sources. The book contains appropriate illustrations, though better maps could have been provided. The author has included an informative and well-organized introduction and conclusion that help readers better understand the state's past, present, and future. Numerous and well-placed direct quotations support Miner's interpretations, and the historiography he provides is valuable. Students of Kansas history will definitely want to include this magnificent book in their collections.

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