

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

1995

**Review of "A Funnie Place, No Fences": Teenagers' Views of Kansas, 1867-1900** Edited by C. Robert Haywood and Sandra Jarvis

Carol Miles Petersen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Petersen, Carol Miles, "Review of "A Funnie Place, No Fences": Teenagers' Views of Kansas, 1867-1900 Edited by C. Robert Haywood and Sandra Jarvis" (1995). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1065.  
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1065>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*"A Funnie Place, No Fences": Teenagers' Views of Kansas, 1867-1900.* Edited by C. Robert Haywood and Sandra Jarvis. Lawrence: University of Kansas, Division of Continuing Education, 1992. Preface, introduction, illustrations, photographs, references. xvi + 349 pp. \$19.00 paper.

For some time we have had accounts written by men of the early years in a new state; then women's diaries began to be discovered recording events from a woman's perspective. With this book, we now have a sense of what it was like to be a teenager who had moved from New York or Iowa into a prairie land with little broken ground and "no fences." *"A Funnie Place"* adds an important dimension to both our historical and sociological understanding of daily life on the Kansas Plains.

These diaries of teenagers, the original spellings retained, record activities in the state's pioneering years. The youngsters tell of their chores before and after school, on weekends, during summers. They recount planting sod corn, "hurding" cattle, washing and hanging

out clothes that may freeze on the lines or be covered with the ubiquitous windborne Kansas dust before they can be taken in and ironed. They pull weeds, haul water, milk cows. In short, they do whatever their size and age permit, and that is a great deal.

Most write about having company and going visiting. The boys find time to hunt and fish and play baseball along with their chores. The girls, too, enjoy playing games, seeing each other and talking about their "j gentlemen" friends, and going to dances from which they may not return until three or four in the morning. Almost all go to school and Sunday school.

One of the striking features in these diaries is their writers' total acceptance of the amount of work they accomplish, which makes most of them seem more mature than their years. While these writers may not have been average teenagers, for the average probably did not keep a diary, the reader feels that the life the youngsters are recording is the norm. My mother, born and reared on the farm her grandparents homesteaded near Winfield, Kansas, recounted to me stories her mother had told her that paralleled these entries.

There are also a few childhood reminiscences by adult Kansans, William Allen White for example, as well as a good number of photographs that affirm visually the kinds of chores, landscapes, and dress of the time. Sandra Jarvis, the illustrator, provides some fine sketches.

CAROL MILES PETERSEN  
Omaha, Nebraska