

# STUDIES IN MIDWESTERN HISTORY

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## OMAHA'S MISSOURI VALLEY HISTORY CONFERENCE, 1958-2009: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY<sup>1</sup> Oliver B. Pollak<sup>2</sup> with Harl A. Dalstrom<sup>3</sup>

The history conference, the profession's agora, is an overlooked phenomenon in the sociology of knowledge and epistemology. Following the Royal Historical Society, New England antiquarian societies, and the American Historical Association, hundreds of state and county historical societies sprouted up across the nation throughout the nineteenth century. By the end of the twentieth century, annual history conferences were both regional (including the Southern, Northern Great Plains, and Western) and thematic (including conferences on religion, colonial America, and railroads). This phenomena includes the Missouri Valley History Conference (MVHC). This article

<sup>1</sup> This paper is dedicated to Dale Gaeddert (1938-2009), who chaired the MVHC for six years.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver B. Pollak is a professor emeritus of history at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, where he taught for 38 years. He earned his undergraduate degree from California State University, Los Angeles, and received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles. He earned a law degree at Creighton University School of Law in 1982. He chaired the MVHC in 1980-81 and in 1999-2000 and started this essay in 1980, put it away, picked it up again in 2007 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MVHC, and put it away again. The occasion of delivering the 2009 luncheon address, "The Role of Centennials," refreshed his interest. Despairing of ever publishing it he donated conference programs, correspondence, and notes to the University of Nebraska-Omaha Archives & Special Collections. Thanks to *Studies in Midwestern History* this inquiry based on over 4600 paper titles will see the light of day. Pollak thanks his colleagues and their 300 years of MVHC memory, but especially Harl A. Dalstrom, Richard A. Overfield, and Jo Ann Carrigan.

<sup>3</sup> Harl A. Dalstrom, is a professor emeritus of history at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and taught at the University of Omaha/UNO from 1963 to 2003. He is a member of the Council, Northern Great Plains History Conference.

examines the MVHC, which is still ongoing, from its launch in 1958 to 2009. During this period of time the conference, which has always been based in Omaha, has included about 4,600 scholarly papers and 125 luncheon and banquet addresses delivered by experienced and aspiring scholars. Thousands of CV's mention participating as a MVHC paper presenter, moderator, discussant, or attendee, and the first footnote of many published papers – including six journal articles or book chapters from your author – acknowledge the MVHC.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Approximately 4638 Papers Delivered</b>					
<u>1958-59</u>	<u>1960-69</u>	<u>1970-79</u>	<u>1980-89</u>	<u>1990-99</u>	<u>2000-09</u>
21	144	1044	1165	1113	1151

The origins of the MVHC lie with Professor A. Stanley Trickett, an energetic anglophile who arrived at Omaha University, a municipal institution, in 1957 to chair the History Department.<sup>5</sup> In a 1958 “brainstorm,” Trickett founded the Missouri Valley Conference of Collegiate Teachers of History, which would later become the Missouri Valley History Conference. The first conference featured five papers on history and six on classroom pedagogy. It would become an annual rite of spring for many historians located around the Midwest, but especially those who were in close proximity to Omaha.

The first conference met for one day on Friday March 14, 1958. The \$10 registration included three meals. In 1969 the \$4.50 registration and five meals totaled \$15.50. By 2009 registration cost \$60 and the two luncheons cost \$25 each. Of course, hotel expenses and the price of gasoline also rose over time. The conference was extended to two days, Friday and Saturday, in 1959, and to three days, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, in 1969. The speakers in 1958 were John D. Hicks, author of *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*<sup>6</sup>; Colonel Edward C. Dunn, from Leavenworth, a veteran of the Omaha Beach D-Day landing; and George L. Anderson, chair of the University of Kansas history department. Hicks was a Midwesterner who had earned his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin and had taught at the University of

<sup>4</sup> The six publications were featured in *Nebraska History*, *Journal of the West*, *Journal of Burma Studies* and also as chapters in two books.

<sup>5</sup> Harl A. Dalstrom provides an account of A. Stanley Trickett in Appendix B entitled, “A Remembrance and Appreciation of A. Stanley Trickett, MVHC Founder.”

<sup>6</sup> (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931).

Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of California-Berkeley and served as Mississippi Valley Historical Association president from 1932-1933.<sup>7</sup>

The MVHC did not meet in 1963 because Omaha hosted the 56<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA) at the Hotel Fontenelle in May 1963. At the MVHA Ray A. Billington delivered his presidential address, "Why Some Historians Rarely Write History: A Case Study of Frederick Jackson Turner" and John Harold Plumb presented on "British Attitudes to the American Revolution." "Local hospitality" under the chairmanship of A. Stanley Trickett "was unmatched." Attendance exceeded 1,100.<sup>8</sup> The MVHA had been founded in Lincoln in 1907, but would soon change its name to the Organization of American Historians, a regional cession to nationalization and another reason for the emergence of regional history conferences to fill the gap left by a more nationally-oriented profession.

### GOVERNANCE

Trickett, chair of the history department at Omaha University, served as MVHC General Chairman and appointed history faculty to manage the conference program (the Appendix lists all the chairpersons). The faculty shared invitations, publicity, and hospitality responsibilities. Chairing the program counted as "service" on a professor's annual report. Local arrangements were assisted by the College of Adult Education and then the College of Continuing Studies.

Department democratization started around 1967 but, as Harl Dalstrom has noted, "of course, this took time." It resulted in three year department chair terms and rotating committee appointments and scheduling responsibilities. By 1968 the MVHC program chair served for two years and received a reduced teaching load. The person handling the book exhibit stood in line as next chair, unless they were a graduate student or librarian. Professor Trickett became conference advisor in 1969. The program did not list specific coordinators for 1970 to 1973. MVHC became a non-profit corporation in 1981 and assumed all local arrangements.

The MVHC also served as a spark for the creation of the Northern Great Plains History Conference (NGPHC).<sup>9</sup> Inspired in part by the success seen in Omaha, the NGPHC began in 1966,

<sup>7</sup> On Hicks as a Midwesterner, see Jon K. Lauck, *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013), 35, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel P. Hays, "The Fifty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* vol. 50 (September 1963), 264.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief history of the NGPHC, see William E. Lass, "Historical Sketch of the Northern Great Plains History Conference, 1966-2015," *Studies in Midwestern History* vol. 1, no. 8 (October 2015), 74-83.

met in the fall (opposite of the MVHC's spring meetings), and migrated every year. Harl Dalstrom states:

I recall that the first Missouri Valley Conference of Collegiate Teachers of History in 1958 met in the Eppley Library which had an auditorium. Professor D. Jerome Tweton, emeritus, University of North Dakota, also remembered this in a conversation we had at this year's 50th NGPHC, held in Bismarck. (In his early career, he taught at Dana, and coming to the Missouri Valley meeting was part of his inspiration for founding the NGPHC at Grand Forks in 1966.)

Omaha University faculty attended the second annual NGPHC in Winnipeg and for many years University of Nebraska-Omaha history faculty took a university vehicle to the "Northern," meandering to the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Manitoba. During the 1990s professors Harl Dalstrom and William Pratt were awarded the Larry Rowen Remele Award for service to the NGPHC. Professor Larry Larsen of the University of Missouri, Kansas City, the most frequent non-Omaha MVHC attendant, also received the Remele Award. Perhaps the success of the MVHC influenced establishing the University of Nebraska-Omaha's European Studies Conference in 1975 and the Global Studies Conference in 1977. The motto may be, "Convene it and they will come."

In the late 1960s, the MVHC faced some adjustments. In 1968, host institution Omaha University, which had been founded as a Presbyterian college in 1908 but became a municipal college during the Great Depression, merged with the University of Nebraska.<sup>10</sup> The conference's new home thus became the University of Nebraska-Omaha, or "UNO." In its 12<sup>th</sup> year, 1969, the conference changed its name from the Missouri Valley Conference of Collegiate Teachers of History to the shorter Missouri Valley History Conference. The three day conference strained UNO's facilities and campus parking so in 1970 the MVHC took the conference to an off-campus hotel site. In 1971 the conference assumed its present configuration of two luncheon speakers. Despite the change of name the MVHC still welcomed all level of educators, the public, and students.

<sup>10</sup> See Tommy R. Thompson, *A History of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1908-1963* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1983).

### LUNCHEON SPEAKERS

Luncheon speakers have the task of stimulating the intellect following a meal. To find luncheon speakers, program chairs draw from personal contacts with graduate school colleagues, mentors, editors, and friends, and suggestions from faculty colleagues. While four luncheon speakers for the MVHC have been based at Yale, five have come from the University of Nebraska and the University of Minnesota and three from Northwestern, Kansas, Kansas State, and Illinois, clearly indicating a strong Midwestern tilt to the MVHC. International participants came from England, Canada, and Australia. Over time, communicating and recruiting participants shifted from letters, to telephone calls, and now email. UNO chancellors, vice chancellors, and deans have often introduced luncheon speakers, thus maintaining contacts between the history department and higher administration. The luncheons were usually dry, though wine appeared on a couple of occasions. Harl recalls selecting a speaker once took on greater proportions:

Sometime in the early 1970s when I was department chair, Professor Ert Gum got the idea that we should attempt to secure President Nixon as our principal speaker at the MVHC. This must have had the blessing of the University administration, so we had a luncheon meeting at the Omaha Club with Dick Herman, a key figure in the Nebraska GOP. Herman, who died recently, was at that time the U.S. member of the Canada-U.S. Boundary Commission, an obvious recognition of his service to his party. Herman's efforts notwithstanding, we got word that the President could not come, but we tried. This may not be worth mentioning, but at least I have noted the effort.

If this had materialized the governor or university president may have vied to introduce the chief executive. Presidents were frequently the subject of historical research, but most infrequent speakers at history conferences.

Luncheon speakers ran the gamut. I would like to have heard Harvey Wish of Western Reserve University in 1965 presenting "The Historian and the New Conservatism," in the wake of Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory over Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election. In 1976 Gilbert C. Fite of Eastern Illinois University presented "Life and Society in the People's Republic of China, Observations Based on a Three Week Visit." I can't imagine what W. Eugene Hollon, University of Toledo, discussed in 1978, "Long Ago and Far Away: Reflections Upon Three Years at an Academic Outhouse." Other luncheon speakers included George Tindall, Robin Winks, Tamara Hareven, Linda Kerber, and Leon Fink.

Two OU/UNO faculty served as luncheon speakers. In 1959 Casper Yost Offutt, brother of Jarvis Offutt, the American flier killed in France in 1918 for whom Offutt Air Force base is named, was the speaker. Casper, a Yale graduate, followed his Department of State career in Latin America by teaching law at Creighton and history at Omaha University. He spoke on “Some Thoughts on Argentina Before and After Peron.”<sup>11</sup> Fifty years later, on the occasion of UNO’s Centennial in 2009, I delivered, “Thinking Ahead: Why Centennials Matter,” the first luncheon presentation to focus on Nebraska.

### MIDWESTERNESS

Regional conference participants are predominantly from the area where the conference is held, though their interests and expertise may go well beyond the region.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, MVHC papers ran the intellectual range of time and space, local to global. The MVHC also reflected the sense of place and familiarity characteristic of the regional academic world. The objective of national, regional and topical conferences is to confer and share information. Regional conferences are generally less competitive to get on the program, cheaper, within driving distance, and more open to student participation. The conference is a step in the chain from ideation, research, writing, and audition, all in the pursuit of publication. For many graduate students at institutions close to Omaha, the MVHC provided an important and accessible step in that chain.

So, too, the programs of the MVHC reflected its Midwestern location. In 1960 Eugene Kingman, director of the Joslyn Memorial Art Museum, chaired a symposium, “Heritage of the Midwest.” William J. Peterson of the State Historical Society of Iowa presented “Iowa and the Middle West’s Heritage.” T. Alfred Larson of the University of Wyoming presented “Influence of the Middle West upon the Mountain West.” And, Jack W. VanDerHoof, from Kansas Wesleyan University, where A. Stanley Trickett had served as president from 1950-54, presented “Kansas – Lateness Lends Virtue.” Topics on Wisconsin appeared in 1961 and North Dakota and Oklahoma in 1962. In 1963, Robert N. Manley, University of Nebraska, presented the first paper on Ne-

<sup>11</sup> Oliver B. Pollak, *To Educate and Serve: Centennial History of Creighton University Law School, 1904-2004* (2007).

<sup>12</sup> The Southern Historical Association dates from 1934, and the Western History Association from 1961. The terms national, state, county, city, and region, followed by association, society, conference and convention are part of the American historical landscape.

braska, “Nebraska and the Federal Government: A Study in Frontier Individualism.” There continues to be a Midwestern ambience to the conference and it continues to serve as a meeting place of those interested in the history of the Midwest. In 2014, for example, the Midwestern History Working Group held an organizational meeting at the MVHC and, the next year, it would become the newly-minted Midwestern History Association.<sup>13</sup>

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

The conference has joint ventures with Phi Alpha Theta and the Society for Military History. Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society founded in 1921, established an Omicron chapter at Omaha University in the 1930s. Trickett, who liked conventions generally and also belonged to the Royal Historical Society, became international president of Phi Alpha Theta. He invited prominent Cambridge and Oxford English historians, J. H. Plumb and A. L. Rowse, to Omaha. The first Phi Alpha Theta luncheon in 1962 became a regular feature in 1971. PAT gave undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to actively participate in the conference.

The American Military History Foundation, established in 1933 and renamed the American Military Institute in 1939, became the Society for Military History in 1990. Its website claimed more than 2300 members in 2009. The Society has panels at the MVHC and the Northern Great Plains History Conference. Kevin Carroll of Arizona State University coordinated sessions through 2005 and set up a “Huddle” at the conference. The SMH at the MVHC named its award for best graduate student paper in Carroll’s honor for his “generous and thankless service for many years.”

### **SOCIALIZATION, ORGANIZING, ROUNDTABLES, AND STALWARTS**

The geography of participation and regional networks provide links in the profession. Graduate school friendships formed at schools like Northwestern, Louisiana State, Iowa, and UCLA assisted recruitment. Mentors suggested to their students that presenting a paper at the MVHC could be advantageous.

Women and black historians started caucusing in 1972 in the wake of the Vietnam War and the Nixon presidency and this proved to be part of a widening arena of topics and activities for the

<sup>13</sup> Margery Beck, “Historians Seek Revival of Studying the Midwest,” Associated Press (printed in *Lincoln Journal Star*), March 8, 2014.

MVHC. At the 1982 Silver Anniversary Program Dennis Mihelich convened the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, an affiliate of the AHA; Julien J. Lafontant convened the Black Studies Caucus; Jo Ann Carrigan and Jacqueline St John met with women historians; and Bill Pratt convened the Organizational Meeting for a Regional Labor History Society. In 1983 Napur Chaudhuri led the Caucus of Women Historians; William Pratt convened the meeting of the Farmer-Labor History Society; Walter M. Bacon organized the Caucus of Slavic and East European Historians; William B. Lemar and Robert Boy convened the Caucus of Military Historians; and Richard Overfield led the Caucus of College Teachers of World History. The University of Nebraska-Omaha introduced a world history course in 1981.

In 1998 we had the first Annual Nebraska History Scholars Roundtable. The topic was “The Past, Present, and Future of British Empire and Commonwealth History in the History Curriculum.” Participants included Pradeep Barua, University of Nebraska-Kearney; Sister Mary M. Gillgannon; Dane Kennedy and Mark Lee, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and Dick Overfield, Harl Dalstrom, and Oliver B. Pollak. We served sherry, reminiscent of the English faculty common room. The 2001 roundtable featured “Carbon Paper Dated Historians: Graduate Schools in the 1950s and 1960s,” with reminiscences by JoAnn Carrigan, Harl Dalstrom, Lawrence H. Larsen, and R. Alton Lee, graduates of Louisiana State, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma.

Two frequent attendees deserve special mention. Harl Dalstrom’s experience starts with the inception of the conference. Lawrence H. Larsen from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, has been the most frequent non-Nebraska attendee and a stalwart paper presenter in the area of urban, legal, and boss politics. He and his wife, Barbara J. Cottrell, wrote *The Gate City: A History of Omaha* (1982), and with Harl A. Dalstrom and his wife, Kay Calamé Dalstrom, *Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs* (2007).<sup>14</sup>

## HOSPITALITY AND CONFERENCE VENUES

The conference venue provides food, meeting rooms, book exhibit space, and proximity to cultural and evening attractions. Historians have a travel industry reputation as the “cottage cheese group,” unlike some other professions with higher spending drinking habits and expense accounts. Commercial text book publishers sponsored book displays with coffee and rolls, buffet breakfasts,

<sup>14</sup> (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1982) and (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).



and happy hour mixers. Over the years we observed publisher mergers, acquisitions, and bankruptcies. Hotel accommodations initially close to campus moved eastward, toward the Missouri River, to participate in the amenities within walking distance of the “Old Market,” Omaha’s downtown district.

1958-69	Prom Town House Motor Inn, 70 <sup>th</sup> and Dodge, near campus
1970	Hotel Fontenelle*
1971-74	Prom Town House Motor Inn**
1975-79	Ramada Inn West - 70 <sup>nd</sup> and Grover
1980-85	Regency West Hotel, 1999, 2000, renamed Park Inn Regency Lodge, 2001;
1986-88	Ramada, Ramada Central
1989-2001	Regency West, Best Western, then Park Inn Regency Lodge
2002	Sheraton, downtown
2003-15	Old Market/Downtown Embassy Suites
2016	Magnolia (formerly Aquila Court and Sheraton)

\*Built in 1914; became part of the Eppley chain; closed in 1971; demolished in 1983, it became the parking lot for the Roman L. Hruska Federal Courthouse.

\*\*Destroyed by a tornado on May 5, 1975.

The chancellor hosted and underwrote the Friday evening social gathering at one of Omaha’s increasingly numerous cultural attractions such as the Durham Western Heritage Museum, Boys Town Hall of History, Joslyn Memorial Art Museum, Joslyn Castle, Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, Omaha Healing Arts Center, Thompson Alumni Center, the Hot Shops Art Center, Kaneko, and the 40<sup>th</sup> floor of the First National Bank Tower. Hotel meeting rooms had iconic geographic names like Big Blue, Elkhorn, Platte, Missouri, Omaha, Council Bluffs, as well as the prosaic Executive Room.

### HISTORIAN’S ALLIES AND PUBLIC HISTORY

State historical societies, humanities programs, publishers, and editors see the MVHC as a way of reaching their constituents. The Midwest is well represented. The Kansas City Federal Archives, Strategic Air Command, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Eisenhower, Hoover, and Truman presidential libraries, and the Huntington, Newberry and Folger libraries participated periodically. Nebraska Humanities administrators Ann

Cognard, Sarah Rosenberg and Jane Renner Hood, moderated sessions and displayed their cultural wares. Marvin Kivett, James E. Potter, Larry Summers, and David Bristow, attended for the Nebraska State Historical Society. Editors from scholarly journals in Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Kansas and university presses are often on the program contacting historians to facilitate the publication process. Editors of *Teaching History: A Journal of Method* and *Locus: An Historical Journal of Regional Perspectives*, which endured at the University of North Texas from 1988 to 1996, have also attended.

Editors keep an eye on the MVHC in other ways, too. My history of the OU/UNO history department was rejected by several journals. For my swan song I presented the paper at the MVHC to an audience of three; not even my wife attended. The program mailing list included several editors. A few days after the conference, to my exuberant surprise, an editor called asking about my paper. The article finally appeared as "Fifty Years of Teaching History at Omaha University, 1908-1957," in the *Journal of the West*.

## PAPER TOPICS

### *Presidents*

The American presidency has fascinated historians. The first MVHC conference revealed this attachment: John D. Hicks presented "Theodore Roosevelt, A Man of His Times," and Arthur G. Umscheid, "The Woodrow Wilson Centennial and the State of Wilson Writings." But this interest has declined over time. Papers regarding the presidency declined from about nine percent between 1958 and 1969, to about three percent after 1970. There were 26 papers on Truman, 16 on Eisenhower, 13 on Hoover, 12 on Kennedy, 11 on Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, eight on Franklin D. Roosevelt, six on Lincoln and Nixon, and four on Taft. Unsuccessful candidates also had their day: John C. Frémont, Henry Wallace, Robert F. Kennedy, Harold Stassen, Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and Nebraska's own "Magnificent Loser," William Jennings Bryan. Twice, a first lady was discussed: Rosemary F. Carroll, Coe College, in 1994 presented "Lou Henry Hoover, the Early Years," and in 1995, "Lou Henry Hoover: The London Years, 1902-1916." Other aspects included panels on "Presidents and Prime Ministers" (1981); "Student Perceptions of Post Civil War Presidents, 1865-1981" (1984); "The Neoconservative Challenge to Liberalism and the Republican Party" (1987); "American Assassinations" (1990); and presidential ratings (1994).

### ***War and Revolution***

MVHC papers explored Greek and Roman exploits, American Revolution, War of 1812, American Civil War, Indian Wars, Spanish American War, Caribbean intervention, Mexican War, World War I, Spanish Civil War, World War II, Germany and Japan, Korea, Cold War, Vietnam, Panama, Granada, Falkland, Kuwait and Iraq, among others. American intervention and exit from Vietnam scorched a temporary lesion into America's foreign policy cortex, and Vietnam became grist for history conferences<sup>15</sup> In 1977 Phillip S. Paludan, University of Kansas, presented the first of thirteen Vietnam related papers, "My Lai and Shelton Laurel – A Psycho-Historical Dialogue," about the 1968 Confederate massacre of Union sympathizers. Paludan published *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* in 1981. The aftermath of war, the GI Bill, reconstruction, disability and Agent Orange, peace studies, relations with former enemies, and the lessons of war exercise mind and pen.

### ***Centennials***

In graduate school I noticed how important books came out on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an event, in particular *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (1966) by F. B. Smith. I admired the author's foresight to begin research a decade before the centenary. Centennials are popular occasions for MVHC presentations on topics such as Woodrow Wilson, Civil War, statehood, and presidencies. Omaha has a strong interest in the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition, which appeared at the 1998 MVHC as "Commemorating the Centennial of the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Expo: A Multimedia Presentation." Subsequent conferences featured "The Legacy of the Indian Congress Exhibit of Omaha's Trans-Mississippi Exposition of 1898," "African Americans at the Trans Mississippi Exposition of 1898," and "Images from the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition: Hidden Treasures at the Omaha Public Library."

### ***Gender, Race, and Ethnicity***

In 1964 Sister Mary McAuley (Gillgannon), College of St. Mary, delivered the first paper given by a woman, "The Apartheid and British Imperialism, 1870-1914." She also taught at UNO after

<sup>15</sup> I presented a paper on the topic in 1972: "The Four Empires of Vietnam," 1972, Central Africa Historical Association Conference, Salisbury, Rhodesia, published as *Vietnamese Conflict in Historical Perspective* (1973).

her “retirement.” Her repertoire included Irish history. Jo Ann Carrigan in 1969 was the first woman to chair a session. Ronald W. Hogeland in 1969 delivered the first paper on women’s history, “The Female Appendage; the American Woman in the Federal Age.” Glenda Riley delivered the first paper on women by a woman in 1970, “The Changing Image of the American Woman in the Early Nineteenth Century.” The first women’s history session occurred in 1972, “Women’s Suffrage in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.” In 1974 Jo Ann Carrigan, the first woman to chair the conference, promoted three panels devoted to women’s history: Women and Radicalism, Women Studies, and Black Women in History and Literature. Caroline Robbins of Bryn Mawr was the first woman luncheon speaker in 1970 and her lecture was entitled “A Crisis of Conscience in the Atlantic Community.” In 1985 and 2000 both luncheon speakers were women. In the twenty-first century 30 percent of the speakers were women. The 1973 program employed the terms chairman and chairwoman, which the 1974 program collapsed into chairperson. Nonetheless, Jo Ann Carrigan was still referred to as the Program Chairman.

Reviewing fifty years of titles reveals race language shifting from Negro, to Black, to Afro American, and to African American. Future researchers on ethnicity might trace interest in Chinese, Czech, German, Hispanic, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and other groups. For instance, the MVHC hosted 63 papers on Jewish subjects, (1969-79: 5; 1980-89: 22; 1990-99: 14; and 2000-10: 22).

### ***Historical Method***

Ideas from disciplines outside of history and even new historical methodologies may take several years to appear as subjects for historians. Members of the UNO philosophy department presented MVHC papers on Fernand Braudel and Michel Foucault and a paper on Orientalism stemming from Edward Said’s seminal 1978 publication, hopefully influencing historians before these methodologies were too well worn. I was influenced by Geoffrey Barraclough’s *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (1964) as were other historians who wrote about recent events. Some MVHC papers were written very soon after the events described, including “Carter, Somoza, and Human Rights in Nicaragua” (1982); “USA, ja; Reagan, nein: West Berlin and American Presidents, 1963-1982” (1984); and “Pilots for Clinton: The Airline Pilots Association in the Election of 1992” (1994). Sir Lewis B. Namier pioneered prosopography to identify the structure of English eighteenth century government, a method that locates political interconnections and influence. In 1971 Reid Holland of Oklahoma State University presented “Black Elites in American History:

A Collective Biography”; in 1972 Burton W. Folsom, University of Nebraska, presented “The Collective Biography: A Select Survey of American Literature”; and in 1982 Charles R. Middleton, University of Colorado, Boulder, presented “A Prosopographical Study of the Irish Aristocracy in the 1830’s.”

### ***Technology and Pedagogy***

Professor Trickett delivered a presentation in 1959 entitled “The Uses of the Overhead Projectors in College History Teaching.” Captain Harry L. Baulch of the United States Air Force Academy followed in 1960 with “The Overhead Projector in the History Classroom.” Overhead users know there are four ways to place a transparency on the glass, only one of which is correct. Since that time scholars have added color transparencies to their arsenal. The opaque projector provided another medium of illustration. Librarian Laurene E. Zaparozets introduced information technology in 1984 with “Self-Service’ Online Bibliographic Databases.” More recently smart carts, Elmos, and Power Point have rendered the overhead projector obsolete in many eyes. Keeping up with the expansion of online resources is a disguised blessing. In 2008 the MVHC schedule went online, thus reducing the number of printed programs.

#### **1986**

“Clio’s Computer: The Historian’s Employment of Computer Techniques”

“From Floppy Disk to Printed Page: The Word Processor and Publication”

#### **1989**

“In Print, Online, and Ondisk: ‘State of the Art’ for Humanities Scholars and Historical Research”

#### **1992**

“Can We Teach an Old Discipline New Tricks? Computers and Historical Research”

#### **1993**

“The Impact of Imaging Technology”

#### **1997**

“Searching Electronic Resources for Research and Teaching in History”

### ***Print Culture, Foodways, and Quilts***

As my career matured I became increasingly interested in topics virtually unknown to historians in the 1950s but which blossomed in the last quarter of the twentieth century and these topics could be seen on the MVHC program. In 1988, for example, Andrew J. Dunar of University of

Alabama at Huntsville presented “What Truman Read: Self-Education and the Presidency.” Several recent studies have investigated the libraries and reading habits of leaders and literary personalities including Hitler, Stalin, Sir George Grey, and Marcel Proust. Literary history also became a topic at the MVHC and led to papers on Nebraska authors such as Willa Cather, Bess Streeter Aldrich, Wright Morris, Mari Sandoz, Loren Eiseley, and Tillie Olson.

Early traces of the burgeoning field of food history can be found in Homer L. Knight, Oklahoma State University, “English Game and Food Laws” (PAT 1967 luncheon address); and during the 1970s, “Hoover and Indian Famine”; “Food and the Cold War”; and “Food Production in the U.S.: The Myth and the Verity.” Quilts emerged as a scholarly subject beyond the cultural and textile artifact. They became a voice of suffering veterans and those afflicted with HIV. They were the subject of a Tony Award-winning 1984 Broadway musical *Quilters*. In 1979 Evelyn Haller presented “The Quilt as Metaphor in Willa Cather’s *One of Ours*.” In 1989 Joseph F. Stonuey and Patricia Cox Crews, University of Nebraska, presented “Eight Decades of Nebraska Quilting Traditions: 1860-1940.” In 1993 Nancy Johnson, University of Nebraska-Kearney, presented “Crazy Quilt Legacy: Uncovered Myths of Women’s Madness on the Plains.” The International Quilt Study Center & Museum opened in Lincoln in 2007.

## CONCLUSION

Founded and organized by Omaha University’s history department, the MVHC is the longest standing professional gathering of historians in the Midwest. Although created as a Midwest regional conference, it had – and has – a national and global outlook. Papers cover virtually all time periods, thematic topics, and methodologies, often reflecting broader disciplinary trends within the field of history. Like the history profession itself, the Missouri Valley History Conference has progressed over the years to incorporate women and students; to think outside the box, and through inclusion make the box bigger; and to maintain a healthy smoke free environment.

**Appendix A**  
**Program Directors**

1958-59 Thomas N. Bonner*	1985-86 Marian Nelson
1960-61 Frederick W. Adrian*	1987-88 Michael L. Tate*
1962 George A. Rothrock	1989-90 Jerold L. Simmons*
1963 56 <sup>th</sup> annual MVHA	1991-92 William C. Pratt*
1964 Roy M. Robbins*	1993-96 Dale A. Gaeddert
1965-67 Ert J. Gum	1997-98 Lorraine M. Gesick
1968-69 Harl A. Dalstrom*	1999-2000 Oliver B. Pollak*
1970-71 Richard A. Overfield*	2001-02 Sharon E. Wood*
1972-73 Dale A. Gaeddert	2003-04 Tom Buchanan*
1974-75 Jo Ann Carrigan	2005-07 Moshe Gershovich
1976-77 Tommy R. Thompson*	2008-09 Maria Arbeláez
1978-79 Jacquelyn St. John	2010-11 Charles W. King
1980-81 Oliver B. Pollak*	2012-13 Jeanne Reames
1982-83 Bruce M. Garver*	2014-15 Dennis J. Smith*
1984 Jo Ann Carrigan	2016- Martina Saltamacchia

\*Published in field of Nebraska or Midwestern history.

**Appendix B**  
**“A Remembrance and Appreciation of**  
**A. Stanley Trickett, MVHC Founder”**  
**by Harl A. Dalstrom**

I can give some background on A. Stanley Trickett, but I do not recall visiting with him as to the founding of the Missouri Valley Conference of Collegiate Teachers of History in 1958. Considering his career, personality, and energy level it is no surprise that in his first year as Chair and Professor of History at the Municipal University of Omaha he was in all likelihood the guiding figure in creating the Conference.

In January 1957, the University of Omaha Board of Regents approved splitting the Department of History and Government into separate departments of History and Political Science and named Dr. A. Stanley Trickett, age 45, to be Professor and Chairman of the Department of History, which at the time of its creation had five historians, plus Dr. Trickett upon his arrival. I remember reading in the evening paper about his appointment and the creation of the separate department.

I began undergraduate study at the University of Omaha in September 1954 and soon decided to major in history. During the next three summers I earned enough credits to permit me to do graduate work in the 1957-1958 school year. That fall, I took Dr. Trickett's undergraduate survey of English history to 1688 and in the second semester I took his British Empire and Commonwealth course for graduate credit. In August 1959, I completed my M.A. and Professor Trickett was a member of my thesis committee. As a beginning historian it was a fine experience to attend the first and second Missouri Valley History Conferences in 1958 and 1959. In September 1959 I began Ph.D. work at the University of Nebraska which I completed in 1965, almost two years after having joined the University of Omaha faculty. In 1971, I succeeded Professor Trickett as chair of the Department of History.

Albert Stanley Trickett was born August 3, 1911, in Swinton, north of Rotherham in the West Riding of Yorkshire, England, the first child of Albert and Maud Mary (Stanley) Trickett. Four months prior to Albert Stanley's birth, England's census reported that his twenty-nine-year-old father worked as an "Axle Inspector." In 1914, the Trickett's emigrated to the United States, settling in Forksville, Sullivan County, in northeastern Pennsylvania, where the senior Albert Trickett was a Methodist minister. By 1920, he had a parish at Newfield, Tompkins County, in south central New York, not far from Ithaca. A decade later, after an apparent posting at Brunswick, Ohio (south of Cleveland), and possibly other congregations, the Rev. Albert Trickett was back in New York, serving as a Methodist minister in Watkins Glen, Schuyler County. Living with Rev. Trickett and his wife Maud Mary in this community at the south end of Seneca Lake were their children, Albert Stanley, who came to be called "Stan," age 18; Gertrude, age 16, and Paul, age 7. Paul became a physician.

After prep school at Cazenovia, New York, A. Stanley Trickett attended Asbury College (now Asbury University), a Methodist school in Wilmore, Kentucky, near Lexington, where he graduated with a major in history in 1932. The following year, he received a master's degree from the University of Kentucky, with the thesis "The Siberian Policy of the United States, 1917-1918, A



Study of American Diplomacy Prior to the Siberian Expedition of 1918-20." In the meantime, in the summer of 1931, Stan had been chosen from Schuyler County to attend a Citizens Military Training Camp at Madison Barracks, New York. This month-long program would be the beginning of a long experience in the Army Reserves.

Trickett concluded that doctoral work was more affordable in England and went to the Victoria University, Manchester. Scholarships took him to the school of International Studies, Geneva, and the League of Nations' Institute of International Relations. Continuing his diplomatic history focus he finished his Ph.D. under the guidance of A.J.P. Taylor in Manchester, in December, 1935, with a dissertation entitled "Anglo-German Diplomatic Relations, 1898-1899."

By 1936, Trickett back in the United States, taught briefly at Northwestern University before becoming chair of History and Political Science at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. He informally attended theology classes and was ordained "for service in education." He became a Methodist minister, and said, "It made quite a difference in my status during World War II. I'd been commissioned a lieutenant in the Field Artillery Reserve. Ten years later I was an Army chaplain!" Stan would become a major during the war and later remained active in the Reserve, attaining the rank of colonel in 1965.

On December 28, 1938, while on the Drew University faculty, Stan Trickett married Mary Patton Aughterlonie, in Falls Church, Virginia. Mary, a widow, was a native of Newburgh, New York. In 1940, the Tricketts were living at Chatham, New Jersey, a short distance from the Drew campus, and just west of New York City. During his time at Drew, Dr. Trickett did off-campus speaking and radio work, particularly a program called "Behind the International Headlines." In what must have been a most interesting experience, he spent the summer of 1938 in Europe.

During World War II, Trickett served in England, North Africa, Sicily, and mainland Italy, including service in the Fifth Army at Cassino. He became Deputy Theater Chaplain, and his work brought him three Papal audiences. He was aide to a Methodist bishop in visitations with U.S. forces over a large area and was at Buchenwald soon after the Third Reich collapsed.

Coming home after the war, Trickett was employed as Associate Secretary, Division of Foreign Missions, of the Methodist Church. From 1947 to 1949, accompanied by Mary, he returned to Europe where he served the World Council of Churches as secretary of its Reconstruction Department. Stan and Mary traveled extensively, including a trip to far northern Scandinavia, where

he, Mary and three of her relatives carried a big supply of gasoline in cans for driving in this isolated area well above the Arctic Circle.

In 1949, the Tricketts returned to the U.S. via Africa and South America. Stan became dean at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina and served as its president from 1950 to 1954. In the latter year he became Executive Director, Washington State Association of Non-Tax Supported Colleges and Universities. Except for a month while on an Army assignment to lecture to Protestant chaplains in Japan, Korea, and Hawaii, he held this position until he came to Omaha in 1957. During his Seattle sojourn he broadcast a series of network programs entitled "The Modern World."

When Stanley Trickett came to the University of Omaha, he was not a complete stranger. In April 1951, as President of Kansas Wesleyan, he had been the speaker at the University of Omaha's Honors Convocation and had addressed the school's Town and Gown Club. Three years later, he spoke again to the Town and Gown Club, evidence that he had won the respect of University of Omaha President Milo Bail.

Once settled with Mary in a house close to campus, Trickett immediately strengthened the history department's graduate program by establishing a Graduate Internship program. The "Graduate Interns" were ultimately designated graduate assistants. He was very active as a graduate instructor, particularly in seminar teaching and in M.A. thesis direction. His work on the university library committee was important in building the graduate programs in history and kindred areas.

Professor Trickett, although not a publishing researcher, served on the editorial board of *The Historian*, and authored highly perceptive book reviews that were fair to authors and helpful to readers. In this spirit he worked to create an academic environment that would build upon the existing research accomplishments of his department. Indeed, Dr. Roy M. Robbins, who came to the University of Omaha in 1954 as Professor of History and Director of the University's Graduate Division, had written *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Princeton University Press, 1942). Emerging as a distinguished scholar in the history of medicine was Dr. Thomas Neville Bonner who joined the department in 1955 and also taught the University's social science survey course. His *History of Medicine in Chicago, 1850-1950: A Chapter in the Social and Scientific Development of a City* (1957), *The Kansas Doctor: A Century of Pioneering* (1959), and *American Doctors and German Universities* (1963) were completed or published during his years at the University of Omaha.

A. Stanley Trickett had a “take-charge” personality. He distinguished himself in public service, particularly speaking engagements. In teaching and in public presentations, including the University’s “TV Classroom,” he obviously enjoyed what he was doing. He placed much emphasis upon counseling undergraduate and graduate students, and it is reasonable to say that his approach was “directive.” In a well-publicized event not long after he came to the University of Omaha, he received the Award of Merit of the Federal Bar Association of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut which emphasized his work in advising pre-law students.

He had a commanding voice and physical appearance, yet he was congenial and what we might call “a good schmoozer.” In building the profile of his department and the University of Omaha, he had the blessing of President Milo Bail. His strong personality did not wear well with everyone, and by the late 1960s a thrust toward democratization in the department led Professor Trickett to adjust successfully. This change reflected the evolution of the campus by the time of the merger in 1968 with the University of Nebraska.

Soon after coming to the University of Omaha, Trickett became a member of the Omicron Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the history honor society. Following his editorial board work on the society’s journal, *The Historian*, he served successively as a councilor, vice president, and, from 1975 to 1977, as international president of the large organization.

Although Trickett had lived most of his adult life in or near large cities, his years at Kansas Wesleyan University and his work with private colleges in the state of Washington perhaps showed him that attendance at national conferences may not have been a practical option for many college history teachers. In addition to offering an outlet for the scholarship of academic historians within reasonable driving time of Omaha, an impressive array of nationally prominent historians were brought to the Conference as banquet speakers.

In 1958, the year of the first Missouri Valley Conference of Collegiate Teachers of History, the University of Omaha marked its fiftieth anniversary as an institution. Its first two decades as a private university had been a time of grim finances, and only with the attainment of municipal status and property tax support in 1930-1931 did it start to achieve a measure of security. The mid-1950s brought evidence of positive advance for the University of Omaha.

Milo Bail’s hiring of administrators and faculty heralded a quest for dynamism and prestige at the University, and the appointment of Roy Robbins, Thomas Bonner, Trickett, and others reflected this thrust. In 1956, William T. Utley, who chaired the soon-to-be-divided History and

Government Department, served as coordinator of a city charter convention which produced a new municipal governance document that, upon the voters' approval, modernized Omaha's city government.

Whoever had the initial idea for what would become the Missouri Valley Conference, it reflected the academic development and community outreach of the Municipal University of Omaha in the 1950s. The MHVC was founded and flourished during Trickett's fourteen-year tenure as chair of the history department. Although I have no knowledge of the details of putting together the meeting prior to the time that I joined the faculty, it is reasonable to assume that Dr. Trickett enlisted the help of his colleagues.

Stan and Mary retired to Florida in 1974, and I subsequently visited with Stan by phone or mail. Stan liked to attend conferences, and shortly after he retired I saw him at the Western History Association meeting in Rapid City which he attended as vice president of Phi Alpha Theta. The last time I saw him was on April 2, 1976, when, in his clergyman capacity he presided at my wedding to Kay Calamé. His name is on my M.A. thesis, marriage license, and academic appointment. Stan died on March 26, 1994, outliving Mary by less than two months. The Tricketts had no children.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In addition to my recollections, the foregoing relies upon articles in the online *Omaha World-Herald* found using the search term, "A. Stanley Trickett," and dates. The most helpful of these articles was Walter Rawley's feature story, "Most Traveled Omahan – A. Stanley Trickett Has Seen The World," in *World-Herald Magazine, Sunday World-Herald*, May 18, 1958. The search term, Missouri Valley Conference of Collegiate Teachers of History," was helpful as were personal names used for checking dates. My wife Kay adroitly used Ancestry.com to help me find census and other material on the Stanley Trickett's early life, marriage, travel, and death. The *New York Times* is helpful in tracing his life in the 1930s and 1940s and a search of *The Historian* online shows his Phi Alpha Theta work. My thanks to Graydon (Jack) Tunstall, University of South Florida and Executive Director, Phi Alpha Theta, and my colleague, Oliver B. Pollak, for their assistance. Tommy A. Thompson's *A History of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1908-1982* provides background information as does Lawrence H. Larsen, Barbara J. Cottrell, Harl A. Dalstrom, and Kay Calamé Dalstrom, *Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs*.