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## John Brown to Bob Dole: Movers and Shakers in Kansas History

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*John Brown to Bob Dole: Movers and Shakers in Kansas History*, edited by Virgil W. Dean. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006. xii, 408 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer John E. Miller is professor emeritus of history at South Dakota State University. He has written biographies of Governor Philip F. La Follette and author Laura Ingalls Wilder. His latest book is a dual study of Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, to be published in fall 2008.

If people make history, and they do, biography properly plays a central role in any adequate account of the past. We have progressed beyond the simple proposition propounded by Thomas Carlyle that history consists of "the biography of great men." Few of us would disagree, however, with the contention of William E. Connelley, one-time president and longtime secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, that "great men [and women] leave the impress of their genius upon the institutions they have helped to found" and that "to rightly understand the institutions of our State, it is necessary that we should have some knowledge of the [women and] men who builded it." This statement is approvingly quoted in the introduction to this fine collection by editor Virgil W. Dean, who also edits *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* and serves as director of publications at the Kansas State Historical Society.

Dean has assembled an all-star lineup to write the 26 biographies contained in the book. They are divided into five time spans, beginning with early European settlement of the territory (no American Indians are included). The authors include Nicole Etcheson, Jim Hoy, Burdett Loomis, Thomas D. Isern, Sally F. Griffith, Peter Fearon, Leo P. Ribuffo, and Craig Miner, along with the editor himself. Boiling down the thousands of possible subjects who could have been included to only 26 (27, to be precise, since one chapter is about a husband-wife team) was an unenviable task, making comprehensiveness impossible. Readers will no doubt think of people they would like to have seen in the book, but they will have to admit that the ones chosen for inclusion make up a broad range of interesting and significant characters who reflect a sense of the diversity of Kansas culture and the sweep of the state's history.

Many of the subjects could fit into several categories. Political figures include John Brown, James H. Lane, Alfred M. Landon, Gerald B. Winrod, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Vern Miller, and Robert J. Dole. After a single gubernatorial term, Walter A. Huxman made his biggest mark as a federal judge. Among the entrepreneurs and businessmen are William H. Russell, Joseph G. McCoy, Theodore C. Henry, Frederick H. Harvey, Bernhard Warkentin, and R. H. Garvey. Women involved

in a variety of endeavors include Clarina I. H. Nichols, Mary Ann Bickerdyke, Mary Elizabeth Lease, Kate Richards O'Hare, Marcet Haldeman-Julius, and Esther Brown. Authors include Charles M. Sheldon (who was also a minister), newspaper publisher William Allen White, book publisher Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, artist of many talents Gordon Parks, and ecologist Wes Jackson. Samuel J. Crumbine was a crusader for public health, and John Steuart Curry made his reputation as a regionalist artist.

The 10- to 12-page chapters are models of concision. While including basic biographical information about their subjects, including date and place of birth, education, and so forth, their real forte lies in the interpretive focus they all strive to achieve. Some essays, such as Marjorie Swann and William M. Tsutsui's on Curry, are strongly opinionated or one-sided, but most are balanced and judicious. That does not mean that they are dull or boring. Roger Grant's chapter on Fred Harvey's string of restaurants and hotels demonstrates why their creator was indeed "a remarkable entrepreneur." Bruce Kahler's piece on "Mother" Bickerdyke recreates the atmosphere in which thousands of men after the Civil War revered the contribution made by the angelic wartime nurse. M. H. Hoeflich relates the unique partnership that enabled the Haldeman-Julius husband-wife team to crank out 2,000 titles that sold more than 500 million copies during the mid-twentieth century.

I hesitate to single out any of the chapters, because they are uniformly well written. Those about some of the more obscure figures perhaps stand out most in my mind, because their stories are less familiar. The editor, the authors, and the publisher are to be commended for this fine collection, whose main contribution will be to whet readers' appetites for reading more deeply in Kansas biography.

*Marching with the First Nebraska: A Civil War Diary*, by August Scherneckau; edited by James E. Potter and Edith Robbins; translated by Edith Robbins. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. xxxi, 335 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Paul Fessler is professor of history at Dordt College. His research and writing have focused on the Civil War, immigration and ethnicity (especially German Americans), and public education.

This diary by August Scherneckau, a young German immigrant from Grand Island, Nebraska, provides evocative descriptions of the trans-Mississippi theater of the Civil War. Enlisting in the First Nebraska Volunteers in September 1862, Scherneckau spent much of the early part of his service in light duty in southeastern Missouri, particularly