

Speaking of Kansas

Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies Fall 1995

Center partnership to preserve Ritchie home

BY BILL WAGNON
Center Director

Two fellows of the Center for Kansas Studies teamed up with the Shawnee County Historical Society to delve into the life and times of Mary Jane and John Ritchie, whose pioneer home has recently been acquired by the Society for historical preservation.

This outreach is one of several initiatives undertaken by the Center of Kansas Studies this year and demonstrates mutual benefits that flow when academics link together across discipline boundaries to examine the state's history and culture in cooperation with community groups.

Tom Averill, professor of English and Washburn writer-in-residence, and Bill Cecil-Fronsman, associate professor of history, have responded to a request from Shawnee County Historical Society to organize and direct a research project which will aid the Society in its restoration and preservation efforts regarding the Ritchie house. The project is intended to restore the house to its pioneer character, to excite the Topeka community about the benefits of historic preservation of its built environment, and to remind successive generations about areas past activities and those who contributed to their character.

Following the 1855 winter spent in a dugout, John Ritchie built his wife, Mary Jane, a stone dwelling the next summer from rocks quarried along the banks of the Shunga Creek. That structure

remains on its original site at 1116 Madison. The Ritchies were community activists from their arrival in Topeka, which had been established at the end of 1854 by Cyrus K. Holliday and a group of town promoters.

The Ritchies' early association with John Brown in running the underground railroad which spirited escaped slaves from Missouri to Canada. Ritchie actively defended Topeka against predications of the proslavery residents of Tecumseh and Lecompton and fought on the Union side when the Civil War broke out.

The couple jointly promoted the town and developed real estate. They built a commercial block at 6th and Kansas Avenue which served as offices for the state once Topeka became the capital in 1861.

They platted their farm along the Shunga into residential lots made available to former slaves following the Civil War. They both were in the vanguard of the female suffrage movement in Kansas as well as champions of the temperance. They mortgaged their property to assure that Washburn College had a campus of its own.

When the Ritchies died a few years apart during the decade of the 1880s, they left a legacy of leadership that had guided Topeka's early development.

Preserving their first permanent home will honor that contribution and serve as a continuous reminder that places develop because of the efforts of real people.

Center has homepage on the Internet

The Center for Kansas Studies has a homepage on the Internet. Viewers should use NETSCAPE V1.1 or higher for the best viewing results.

The contents of this homepage include the mission statement of the Center for Kansas Studies, news about the minor in Kansas studies, a list of the fellows, bibliography of Kansas literature in print, bibliography of Kansas books in print, list of movies made in and about Kansas, and a historical bibliography of Kansas.

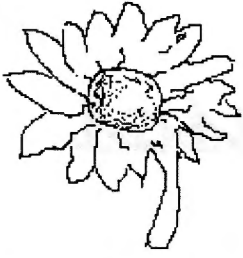
Readers may e-mail questions and comments about this homepage to Tom Averill at zzaver@acc.wuacc.edu or call him at x1448.

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Law graduate promotes his book about POW

BY PATTI SLIDER
Asst. to Dean for Development

Vince Green, 1978 Washburn Law School graduate, visited the law school Oct. 13 to promote his latest book, "Extreme Justice." It is the story of a German POW held in a U.S. prisoner of war camp in Tonkawa, Okla., who gave secret information to his American captors on how to bomb his comrades' home towns. His fellow POWs discovered this and beat him to death. Five men were tried in Oklahoma by future Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, found guilty and hanged at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

"Writing this book was a different sort of task," Green said.

I did research at the National Archives and then took a trip to Hamburg, Germany to interview the child of one of the hanged soldiers. The son of a banker was only two-years-old when his dad was a POW. The skills I learned as a trial lawyer are useful in interviewing people for my books."

Green was a criminal trial lawyer in the U.S. Army for five years. He served as an Army JAGC officer in Germany at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and represented over 200 soldiers at courts-martial. His legal experience has been the basis for much of his writing. He said, "The skills I learned at Washburn Law School have been invaluable everywhere I've gone and

in everything I have done whether in the state legislature, trying a case or writing."

He has taught creative writing, clerked for a South Dakota Supreme Court Justice and currently runs his own legal research business. He was elected to the South Dakota Legislature in 1992 and 1994, and serves as the assistant minority leader. His wife, Chris Hutton, is also a 1978 Washburn Law School graduate. She is a law professor at the University of South Dakota. They have two daughters, Molly and Maggie, and live in Vermillion, South Dakota. (This program was sponsored by the Center for Kansas Studies through its program to examine the state's history and culture.)

Minor in Kansas Studies Four courses offered in spring

Four courses for the minor in Kansas Studies are being offered this spring. Students can enroll in Kansas Archaeology, Kansas Literature, Topeka and the Urban Experience, and State and Local Government.

To minor in Kansas Studies, a student must complete five courses from the list of nine courses. A short description of the minor and a list of the requirements can be found in the 1995 Washburn University catalog on page 114.

Kansas Archaeology (AN 225) will be taught by Thomas Witty, former Kansas state archaeologist. The course is offered on Monday and Wednesday, 9 to 10:15 a.m..

Kansas Literature (EN 138) is a telecourse taught by Tom Averill. The class will meet on Saturdays from 11- 12:20 p.m.

Topeka and the Urban Experience (HI 317) will be taught on Tuesday and Thursday from 11-12:15 by Bill Wagon.

State and Local Government (PO 107) will be taught by Loran Smith on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 - 10:50 a.m.

Students who have questions about the minor can contact Bill Wagon (x1316), director of the Center for Kansas Studies and chair of the History Department, or Barbara Burgess (x1801).

Haywood to speak at Kansas Day program

The Center will again sponsor a speaker in recognition of Kansas Day. The 1996 speaker is C. Robert Haywood, emeritus professor of history at Washburn and prominent scholar of Kansas. Haywood was quoted by Governor Graves in his inaugural address last January.

Haywood will speak on "Kansas Humor and the J-D Syndrome." When asked what the J-D syndrome was, Haywood suggested coming to hear his speech to find out.

He will speak at 4 p.m. Jan. 29, 1996, in the Kansas Room of the Memorial Union. Refreshments will be served.