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# Cavalry To Campfires: The Politics Of Preservation In Frontier Historical Park

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CAVALRY TO CAMPFIRES  
THE POLITICS OF PRESERVATION IN FRONTIER HISTORICAL PARK

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the Fort Hays State University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts

by

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## ABSTRACT

Located on the bank of Big Creek in the Smoky Hills Region of the Great Plains is a small wooded park that contains a unique history. Today, the park is split into two sections, one being Frontier Park and the other being the Fort Hays State Historic Site that administers four original buildings from the active years of Fort Hays. Visitors from all states in the Union and many countries pass through Hays to visit the park. Whether to step back in time and experience life of the nineteenth century frontier or to absorb the quiet serenity of the state park's natural area.

Many visitors may not realize the political battle that took place in order to establish a state park located in Hays. From the time the military decided to place forts in the area in 1865, the land was known for its unique scenic quality due to the abundance of trees located along Big Creek, one of the few water sources in the region. For one hundred years the Fort Hays Military Reservation was at the heart of a political battle over the proper use of the land after the deactivation of the Post. During the active years of Fort Hays, military personnel worked to protect the trees along Big Creek. The post surgeon took part in a natural survey of the land, noting the unusual timber growth and variety of wildlife species. After the closing of Fort Hays in 1889, the land was turned over to the care of the Department of the Interior.

Political debates arose in the wake of the fort's closure in 1889. The seven thousand six hundred acres of the former military reservation rested in the hands of the federal government. Coinciding with the timing of the fort's closure was the rising popularity of the conservation movement. While representatives from Kansas were in

talks with the Interior Department about the right of the state to own the property, the development of a public park became one of the stipulations for the federal land transfer to the state of Kansas. The finalization of the land transfer agreement took place in 1901. From this point forward, a multitude of people from a variety of backgrounds worked to develop Frontier Historical Park as a modern state park in western Kansas. The goal of the park was to provide a place of relaxation, recreation, and historic interests to visitors traveling through the state of Kansas.

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I also want to thank members of the history department at Fort Hays State University for allowing me the opportunity to obtain my Master's Degree and gain valuable experience as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. A special thank you to Dr. Juti Winchester for serving as both my undergraduate and thesis adviser. Also, Dr. Kim Perez and Dr. Paul Nienkamp for agreeing to serve on my thesis board. A big thank you goes to Connie Schmeidler and Tammy Younger for giving me the opportunity to work at the Fort Hays State Historic Site. The job allowed for me to give tours for a variety of people that arrive in Hays from every state and several countries. Their excitement for visiting

inspired this thesis and pushed me to know more about the preservation of Fort Hays and Frontier Park.

This Thesis is Dedicated to the Memory of Gregory Hall Thomas, Ph.D.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis tells the story of the development of Frontier Historical Park in Hays, Kansas and the many people that aided the state park's construction. The chapters provide the necessary background information about the early American conservation and preservation movements that allowed legislatures across the country to establish national and state parks to protect America's unique environmental and culturally rich heritage. The development of Frontier Historical Park was a multilateral movement made up of several different individuals and groups that envisioned a modern state park in western Kansas. Their efforts over the course of one hundred years combined both natural and historic features of the former Fort Hays Military Reservation to provide a unique experience for visitors and travelers to the region.

In the twentieth century, the overwhelming popularity of national parks propelled the Interior Department to suggest that states should take some responsibility for safeguarding the nation's public land and curiosities.<sup>1</sup> In Kansas, citizens from a variety of backgrounds and occupations took the challenge seriously and considered places around the state that corresponded with the request by the Interior Department, settling on the former Fort Hays Military Reservation as a suitable first location. The military reservation contained a multitude of plant and animal species. Big Creek flowing through the land added a scenic quality to the site due to the scarcity of water in the area. The area along the creek included several vast areas of trees that were unique in a geographic

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman Tilden, *The State Parks Their Meaning in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1962), 10-12.

region known for its timber scarcity and susceptibility to droughts. When the War Department deactivated Fort Hays in 1889, forestry advocates believed the area could be an ideal location for a public park with the goal of providing visitors a shady refuge, while remembering those once stationed at Fort Hays.

Chapter One places Kansas in a larger national discussion about park development in the United States. Historian John Reiger credits the nineteenth-century artist George Catlin with conceiving the idea of a national park as different from the European game reserves, private lands that conserved wildlife for recreational hunting by the elite classes.<sup>2</sup> In theory, Catlin proposed the notion of classless access to parks. Catlin sought to preserve man and beast in the Yellowstone region creating a snapshot of nineteenth century America untouched by progress.<sup>3</sup>

In 1872, the United States Congress passed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act establishing the first National Park in the United States. While the park's creation was a massive victory for Catlin and other nature advocates, the use of the federally managed land and the mission of the park took years to decipher and the results affected the way both national and state parks are administered. In 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad brought tourists from the eastern United States to Yellowstone for the first time. A journey once reserved only for a few hardy trappers and explorers was now

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<sup>2</sup> John Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975), 93.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Kantor "Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks" *Public Land and Resources Law Review* vol. 28: 40. <http://scholarship.law.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1267&context=plrlr> accessed March 19, 2017.

accessible to ordinary people, dramatically altering the vision of parks and creating the business of park tourism.

Even before the twentieth century, individual states began to realize the potential of tourism and its correlation with park development. As early as 1877, the Kansas Legislature created the position of State Fish Commissioner. Tasked with developing fish culture in the state, this laid the groundwork for the Kansas Fish and Game Department, putting the commissioner in charge of curbing destructive behavior towards natural resources by citizens. In 1905, the Kansas Legislator implemented the first laws concerning open and closed hunting seasons mandating that all must carry a license. The license program generated a fund that allowed the state to employ more wardens and support conservation efforts.<sup>4</sup>

In 1911, Kansas Chief Forester Christian Jensen expressed interest in developing a complete state park system for Kansas. Jensen presented his ideas on categorizing parks along with suggestions for future locations to the State Conservation Commission. His proposal dramatically altered the commission's view on park development by classifying parks by their essential functions. Jensen created four categories: historic parks, scenic parks, game parks, and a state arboretum. Newspapers across Kansas covered Jensen's plea with government officials and the general public about his ideas on park

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<sup>4</sup> State of Kansas, *Report of the Kansas Fish-and-Game Warden 1905* (Topeka: Geo. W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1904) 3-4.

development. Jensen himself understood the power of the media and used the platform to publish long editorials expressing his thoughts.<sup>5</sup>

Chapter Two covers the origins of Frontier Historical Park including how the state obtained the deed for the land, and highlights individuals involved in the process of the creating a state park in western Kansas in 1931. The Fort Hays Military Reservation was a seven thousand six hundred acre plot of land purchased by the United States Army in 1867. To coincide with the arrival of the railroad to the region. Fort Hay's records reveal that during the period of activation, it is clear that Army personnel were the first to conduct a natural survey of the land, taking note of the area's natural qualities. The area's lack of trees other than those along Big Creek led military officers to order their men to guard the trees along with creek against vandals. This chapter discusses the Army's role in protecting the natural features of the reservation.

This chapter also discusses the impact of the deactivation of Fort Hays in 1889. On the fort's closure. Prominent Hays pioneer and horticulturalist Martin Allen persuaded United States Representative Charles Curtis to use his position on the Public Lands Committee to advocate for the transfer of the former reservation to the state of Kansas for the purpose of constructing a college, agricultural experiment station, and a public park. Drawn out debates began regarding the transfer. State, and local leaders faced difficulties successfully reaching an agreement with the Interior Department

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<sup>5</sup> "Suggest System of State Parks to Preserve Historical Ground and to Show Resources," *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 8, 1911, accessed October 12, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/64107184/?terms=State%2BParks>.

regarding the specifics of the transfer. This chapter ends with the official dedication of Frontier Historical Park in 1931.

Chapter Three examines the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Veteran's Camp 1778, role in the evolution of Frontier Historical Park. The federal program founded by President Franklin Roosevelt employed young men and veterans to revamp America's public lands. Hays native Congresswomen Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy and Dr. Clarence Rarick, President of Fort Hays Kansas State College persuaded the federal government to transform Frontier Historical Park into a modern state park for western Kansas and make it a desirable place for tourists.

The work by Veteran's Camp 1778 dramatically altered the landscape of the park by constructing shelters, roads, bridges, dams, clearing Big Creek, and forestation. The camp also worked to stabilize the two remaining buildings from Fort Hays, the Blockhouse, and the Guardhouse. The primary sources used in this chapter include extensive records from the Frontier Historical Park Board, who were responsible for correspondence, minutes, and monthly updates about the CCC enrollee's progress in the park.

Chapter Four concludes with the evolving identity of Frontier Historical Park from the period after the CCC's involvement up through the dedication of the Fort Hays State Historic State in 1965. During these decades the Frontier Historical Park Board worked to keep the park relevant in the growing popularity of auto tourism. The board

wanted the park to serve the needs of a variety of people while maintaining the park's natural and historic integrity.

Limited scholarly articles discuss Frontier Historical Park. These chapters extensively rely on primary sources from a variety of newspapers, Frontier Historical Park Board records, minutes, and caretaker reports that covered the people and the progress of the state park's construction. A few of the supplemental sources used throughout these chapters include Leo Olivia's *Fort Hays Keeping Peace on the Plains*. This source provided general information about Fort Hays including the several location changes of the fort's location, the personnel stationed at the Fort Hays, and the military's involvement in the region during the fort's activation.<sup>6</sup> Joseph R. Tomelleri's "Big Creek and its Fishes" this source provided detailed information about the variety of aquatic life that thrived in Big Creek.<sup>7</sup> James Forsyth's *Lighthouse on the Plains: Fort Hays State University 1902-2002* provided information about the development of Fort Hays State University that shared a common history with Frontier Historical Park.<sup>8</sup> President C.E. Rarick was president of the park board and aided in the campaign to allocate federal funds for the park's construction through the CCC and the National Youth Administration (NYA). All of these sources aided in understanding the development of Frontier Historical Park and its evolving identity over one hundred years.

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<sup>6</sup> Leo Oliva, *Fort Hays Keeping Peace on the Plains* (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Joseph R. Tomelleri, "Big Creek and its Fishes" (MA, thesis, Fort Hays State University, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> James Forsyth, *Lighthouse on the Plains: Fort Hays State University 1902-2002* (Hays: Fort Hays State University, 2002).

## CHAPTER ONE

### Parks Americana: Kansas and the National Perspective

*“Who will gainsay that the parks contain the highest potentialities of national pride, national contentment, and national health? A visit inspires love of country; begets contentment; engenders pride of possession; contains the antidote for national restlessness.... He is a better citizen with a keener appreciation of the privilege of living here who has toured the national parks.”<sup>9</sup> - Stephen T. Mather*

By the time the official dedication of Frontier Historical Park took place in 1931, the Federal Government and several individual state governments took the initiative to develop vast public park systems with the goal of safeguarding the nation’s unique cultural and natural heritage. The conservation movement that emerged during the nineteenth century set the precedent for the management of public lands in the United States. Yellowstone Park was founded in 1872, and inspired the many national and state parks that were later founded. In order to fully understand the intention behind Frontier Historical Park it is crucial to contextualize it in the wake of American conservation policy, particularly the development of Yellowstone National Park.

Historian John Reiger, credits George Catlin with the founding of the national park concept.<sup>10</sup> Best known as a student and a painter of Indians and their lifestyles, Catlin spent a majority of his free time recreationally hunting. Inspired by his passion for the outdoors, Catlin formulated a plan in 1832 to establish a magnificent park that

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<sup>9</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Reports of the Department of the Interior 1920 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920)* 13.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=vVtKAQAAMAAJ&pg=RA8> accessed March 12, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> John Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975), 93.

preserved a section of the Great Plains landscape in its entirety, containing Indians and wildlife as a snapshot of nineteenth century America. In Catlin's mind the federal government would manage this park and allow for it to be enjoyed by the public.<sup>11</sup> He described the park as "a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages!"<sup>12</sup>

The inspirational roots for Catlin's park lay in the European concept of large game parks where aristocratic sportsmen preserved wildlife and habitat for the purpose of their own amusement. In order to protect wildlife in the United States, Catlin's idea would suspend time, keeping the area untouched by time and progress. Catlin tailored the European game preserves to be adopted in the United States. He disagreed with the European game preserve model, believing economic status should not be the criteria for allowing people to experience nature. Since the United States possessed more land than Europe, Catlin believed that the American people should hold the deed to the nation's wildlife and habitat.

Despite a couple of earlier examples of federal action taken on behalf of setting aside natural areas for public use, Congress established Yellowstone as the first national park in 1872.<sup>13</sup> The fight for the protection of Yellowstone was an important moment for park development in the United States due to the intense debate among park advocates

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<sup>11</sup> Isaac Kantor, "Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks," *Public Land and Resources Law Review* 28, no. 41 (2007): 43, <http://scholarship.law.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1267&context=plrlr> (accessed March 19, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> John Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1975), 93.

<sup>13</sup> Two earlier examples of large parks during the time included, Arkansas Hot Springs (1832) and Yosemite Valley (1864). Neither of which was designated a National Park.



and foes and the precedent the park's establishment set for future national and state park development.

In 1807, mountain man John Colter recorded the first European visit to the Yellowstone region. After coming under attack by Indians, Colter took shelter in the region where he witnessed the marvelous wonders of the area. Skeptics dismissed Colter's description of Yellowstone because his claims sounded like fiction. A trapper named Joseph Meek recorded the second description of Yellowstone in 1829. Meek described the landscape as "a country smoking with vapor from boiling springs and burning with gases issuing from small craters." His claim of craters "issuing blue flame and molten brimstone," seemed to stretched the truth by a skeptical public.<sup>14</sup>

Following Meek's trip several other explorers attempted the journey including Warren Angus Ferris, a clerk in the American Fur Company, who wrote the first description of the Firehole Geyser Basin. In 1852, Jesuit missionary Father De Smet witnessed natural marvels and spoke about his adventures that remained taboo and widely discredited by the public until the 1860s. In 1859, W.F. Reynold conducted the first government sponsored expedition to the Yellowstone region. The exploration yielded little accurate information and caused several private explorers to make the journey themselves. Due to the large distrust by the public about the wonders of the Yellowstone region.<sup>15</sup> In 1870, the large expedition under the direction of Henry D. Washburn and N.P. Langford established facts about the wondrous natural features that the Yellowstone

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<sup>14</sup> Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, 95.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Sterling Yard, *Glimpses of our National Parks* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 14-15. Many of the explorers did not mention their travels in fear of being beaten by skeptics, and being associated with imposters that scammed crowds with charming but inaccurate stories about the west.

area contained.<sup>16</sup> The Washburn-Langford Expedition led to the creation of Yellowstone Park.<sup>17</sup>

The Yellowstone National Park Protection Act of 1872 established the reservation and called for the protection of a natural museum of wonders, including geysers, hot springs, and canyons. The park was not intentionally set aside as either a game or wilderness preserve in the way that Catlin envisioned; instead, Congress protected the multitude of curiosities the park offered to the people. Congress abandoned the original plans to leave the area in its pristine condition believing the area could be improved with the construction of roads, hotels, and other conveniences.<sup>18</sup>

The statute designating the Yellowstone Reservation stated the land “is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy or sale...and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”<sup>19</sup> Interior Secretary Columbus Delano authorized regulations to “provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders... and their retention in their natural condition.”<sup>20</sup> Government officials, businesses, and park visitors interpreted the proclamation in numerous ways that led to the continuing debate over the proper use of public lands.

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<sup>16</sup> Washburn was appointed surveyor general of Montana in 1869 and served in the position until his death. Langford was an explorer, businessman, and historian. He was appointed the first Superintendent of the Yellowstone Park, where he received the nickname, “National Park Langford” on account of his initials.

<sup>17</sup> Yard, *Glimpses of our National Parks*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of American Conservation*, 98. During the 1870s and early ‘80s, most of Congress and the public quickly forgot about the park due to the lack of convenient access. The only visitors included sportsman, hide hunters, and expedition members.

<sup>19</sup>“Transcript of Act Establishing Yellowstone National Park,” *Our Documents*, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=45&page=transcript> (accessed December 10, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> “Transcript of Act Establishing Yellowstone National Park.”

In 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad brought tourists from the eastern United States to Yellowstone for the first time. In the past, the journey to Yellowstone was only attempted by a few hardy souls. The railroad allowed visitors the opportunity to withstand the treacherous journey with relative ease. The railroad created the new business of park tourism with attendance increasing five-fold within the first year after the railroads' arrival in Yellowstone.<sup>21</sup>

During the park's early years, the Yellowstone Improvement Company held exclusive control of the region. E. Haupt, Superintendent of the company believed the first step towards improving the park was to remove as much game as possible. Haupt and his men constructed saw mills to cut down timber within the park for hotel construction and rechanneled some of park's natural hot springs.<sup>22</sup> The unique landmarks of the park was under threat of being surrounded and exploited by the company's pursuits.<sup>23</sup>

George Bird Grinnell the editor of the popular sportsman magazine, *Forest and Stream* campaigned for the end of what he coined, "The Park Grabbers", a moniker he branded the Yellowstone Improvement Company.<sup>24</sup> As a trained ornithologist, paleontologist, and ardent sportsman, Grinnell commenced an excursion to Yellowstone in 1875. His journey inspired a deep-seated love for the park, including a desire to protect the park and its wildlife. Grinnell penned a passionate editorial in *Forest and Stream*

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<sup>21</sup> Reiger, *Sportsmen and the Origins of the American Conservation Movement*, 102.

<sup>22</sup>George Bird Grinnell, "The Park Monopolist Checked", *Forest and Stream* (January 11, 1883) <https://archive.org/stream/ForeststreamXIX#page/n563/mode/2up/search/January+11> (accessed December 15, 2016).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

chastising those who occupied the Yellowstone region and exploited its natural resources and beauty.

Grinnell, like Catlin, believed all Americans should have a vested interest in the park regardless of economic class.<sup>25</sup> Grinnell's scathing editorial influenced the essence of how public parks are managed and the purpose they hold in American society. Federal, state, and municipal parks containing either scenic, scientific, or cultural qualities, are for the enjoyment of all people, regardless of one's social or economic status. Grinnell's fight against commercial interest garnered support from an unlikely ally, General Philip Sheridan, a cavalry hero of the Civil War and a key figure in the Plains Indian Wars.

Sheridan shared similar views about the purpose of parks and proposed Congress expand Yellowstone to provide greater protection for the native elk and buffalo. Western politicians who believed Yellowstone was already too large dismissed Sheridan's request for expansion. Grinnell, Sheridan, and Missouri Senator George Vest, met in Washington and launched an assault on the railroad lobby that held sway over public land policy. These men called for an investigation into park contractors, reviewed park contracts, and proposed the expansion of Yellowstone. They attempted to curb the rapid decrease in game from human involvement by proposing park rules and hunting regulations.<sup>26</sup>

In August 1886, anti-park politicians defunded maintenance for the park. Gravely concerned for the park's future, Sheridan used his clout, resources, and connections to prevent future damage to Yellowstone. Sheridan dispatched "Troop M" of the First

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Schullery, *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder in the Last Wilderness* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2004), 111.

United States Cavalry to take control of the region. The troops arrived with the intent of taking temporary control of the park to protect the area's unique resources. Thirty years later, the cavalry remained in the park.<sup>27</sup>

When Congress established the park, they did not make any provision to establish formal authority to oversee Yellowstone and future parks. By 1890, the cavalry's presence in the park was a permanent arrangement. The military's patrol of the park's two million acres on horseback was a daunting task. Soldiers established their own rules and regulations for visitors because of the lack of official offenses against destruction of property and poaching.

Grinnell was aware of the awe-inspiring beauty the nation offered. He used the pages of his magazine to persuade the American public to embrace resource management and support full protection of Yellowstone Park. Advocates rejoiced on May 7, 1894 when President Grover Cleveland signed into law the "Act to Protect the Birds and Animals in Yellowstone National Park."<sup>28</sup> The new law safeguarded the Yellowstone preserve and placed the country on the path for resource management and the popularity of the public park concept.

The dawn of the twentieth century ushered in new changes and challenges for the United States that stemmed from the growing industrial market and burgeoning cities. In response to urbanization Americans increasingly became interested in the natural world and the concept of conservation. The presidency of Theodore Roosevelt dramatically

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<sup>27</sup> Grinnell, "The Park Grabbers."

<sup>28</sup> "An Act to Protect the Birds and Animals in Yellowstone National Park," *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/53rd-congress/session-2/c53s2ch72.pdf> (accessed January 3, 2016).

increased awareness about natural resource management policy. Roosevelt and Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot transformed the word conservation into a movement that affected national, state, and municipal governments.<sup>29</sup>

In 1903, Roosevelt boarded a train that took the president on an exhausting two hundred whistle stop tour of the country. Towards the end of the trip, the train arrived at the outer edges of Yellowstone Park. In need of refuge and rest, Roosevelt accompanied Yellowstone Park Superintendent Major John Pitcher on an impromptu two-week camping trip where Roosevelt was submersed in the natural wonders of the park. At the trip's conclusion, Roosevelt delivered a speech at the construction site of a new arch at the north entrance of Yellowstone. The President reminded on lookers of the essential democratic principle embodied by the parks; they are created "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people."<sup>30</sup>

Roosevelt endorsed all aspects of conservation and preservation and brought the issues into the mainstream.<sup>31</sup> He expanded the park concept to include not only scenic and scientific protection, but cultural preservation. On January 29, 1906, Roosevelt signed a bill into law that further defined and widened the definition of a park. It

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<sup>29</sup> Samuel P. Hayes, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1999), 122-140.

<sup>30</sup> Lee H. Whittlesey, Paul Schulery, "The Roosevelt Arch: A Centennial History of an American Icon," *Yellowstone Science* 11, no. 3 (2003): 14, [https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/upload/YS\\_11\\_3\\_sm.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/upload/YS_11_3_sm.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Conservation and preservation are closely related and are commonly mistaken as meaning the same thing. Conservation is generally associated with the protection of natural resources, while preservation involves the protection of buildings, objects, and landscapes. Conservation seeks to mitigate the proper use of nature, while preservation seeks to protect nature from use.

established Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, the first prehistoric cultural site to be preserved.<sup>32</sup>

On June 8, 1906, Roosevelt expanded the power of the presidency to safeguard national monuments by signing the Antiquities Act.<sup>33</sup> The law gave the President of United States the authority to designate by proclamation national monuments on federal land to protect significant natural, cultural, or scientific features of the United States. The law dramatically altered the way the federal government viewed public lands.<sup>34</sup>

The evolution of national resource management policy concerning the designation of national parks and monuments was the result of dedicated park advocates that insisted the federal government take control of the national conversation regarding the issue. While the federal government extensively crafted the mission for public lands, state governments took the national standard and applied it to their individual states. The popularity of national parks spurred the development of state park systems across the country, with Kansas at the forefront of the movement.

Kansas conservation and resource management began in 1877, when the state government established the position of Commissioner of Fisheries. The job's primary task was to be a steward of the many natural streams and waterways throughout the state and to promote and develop fish culture in Kansas. Establishing this position was the first

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<sup>32</sup> Whittlesy, Schulery, "The Roosevelt Arch: A Centennial History of an American Icon," 15.

<sup>33</sup> "Antiquities Act of 1906," *National Parks Service*, <https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/anti1906.htm> (accessed January 12, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> David Harmon, Francis P. McManamon, Dwight T. Pitcaithley, *The Antiquities Act: A Century of American Archaeology, Historic Preservation, and Nature Conservation* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2006), 15-25.

important step that allowed the state government to develop conservation and public land policy. In his first annual report Kansas State Fish Commissioner D.B. Long addressed the governor of Kansas, explaining that the waters of Kansas, like the plains, were undergoing rapid change, and the state was at a critical point in its natural resource development.

Twelve years before the formation of Long's position, the area of the state west of Manhattan was considered fit for nothing but buffalo and Indians. As of 1878, the finest wheat country in the world was located two hundred and fifty miles west of Manhattan, and many of the streams contained pure running water from natural springs. Long presented the argument that stocking streams with better fish species should be a goal for the state. If Kansans did their part in promoting and maintaining the natural features, they would be useful to the visitors traveling through the state by rail.<sup>35</sup>

While Long's position existed before Kansas' state parks, he was influential in park origins. His belief that maintaining the state's natural resources as an attraction for visitors to use as leisure grounds became one of the first steps toward a park system. Long's vision allowed for the possibility of a state park system long before the official dedication of a park or wildlife reserve took place in Kansas.

On June 30, 1905, the state of Kansas established the Office of State Fish and Game Warden with the position officially going into effect on January 1, 1907. The purpose of the new office was for propagating fish and game, restocking the waters with fish, and returning game birds and animals to timber and prairie lands. Also, the law

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<sup>35</sup> State of Kansas, *Kansas Fish Commission Report 1877-78* (Topeka: Geo. W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1878): 4-5.



introduced a hunting license clause that required all persons who hunted protected game birds to acquire a license.

The money collected from licenses supplied the necessary funds to carry out the provisions of the law and pay for conservation efforts in Kansas. The law required all sportsmen from the state, along with those visiting the state, to obtain the requisite license. The law provided the state fish and game warden the authority to appoint more deputy wardens in each county of the state. The position provided the first legal force to prevent the exploitation of natural resources in Kansas.<sup>36</sup>

The duties carried out by the state fish-and-game warden included enforcing laws, respecting the breeding and propagating of game and food fish, and the distribution of fish throughout state waters. The position carried a hefty amount of legal authority to enforce state law in regard to fish and game policy, along with granting the warden the same enforcement as a police officer or sheriff.<sup>37</sup>

The law introduced strict regulations on fishing and gave the fish and game warden the authority to apprehend individuals. It became unlawful for a person to catch, take, or attempt to retrieve fish from waters with any other method than with a fishhook, hand line, and set line. It was unlawful for anyone to throw anything that could be poisonous to the environment into waterways, including the practice of discharging dynamite. The regulation marked the earliest attempt in Kansas to regulate pollution.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> State of Kansas, *Report of the Kansas Fish-and-Game Warden 1905* (Topeka: Geo. W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1904): 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> State of Kansas, *Report of the Kansas Fish-and-Game-Warden 1905*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

The state's new law did not exclusively pertain to fish and water ways despite this being a higher priority because of the scarcity of these resources in the state. The law covered wildlife and introduced open and closed season laws connected to the types of species allowed for hunting. The game seasons applied to animals including quail, meadowlarks, robin, pheasant, red squirrel, and waterfowl. The law required that during these particular hunting seasons, every person must possess a license payable at the County Clerk's office at the price of one dollar.<sup>39</sup>

The passage of the law was a significant moment in Kansas conservation policy, especially for a state that lacked any proper provisions before 1907. The bill was a critical legislative task that shaped state park laws, guidelines, and expectations for park guests. Visitors were expected to follow the uniform standard of the law respecting natural and cultural resources of the state.

In September 1911, Christian Jensen, one of the chief foresters and landscape architects in Kansas, expressed interest in assisting the State Conservation Commission in perfecting plans for a state park system for Kansas.<sup>40</sup> He wrote to President R. H. Faxon of the commission suggesting the types of parks needed and offered his expertise and services for the project. In his proposal letter, Jensen wrote about the importance of state parks citing economic and aesthetic reasoning. He continued by saying that the designation of several parks should take place in various sections of the state with the primary goal of preservation of historic events and objects and for the restoration and

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<sup>39</sup> "The New Fish-Game Law: It Cost a Dollar License Fee to Fish, but You Can Cut Bait Free," *The Times*, March 23, 1905, accessed November 23, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/?spot=5910325>.

<sup>40</sup> Christian Jensen graduated from the Biltmore Forestry School, the first forestry school in the United States.

conservation of natural resources. The parks should be established and maintained by the state under the supervision and protection of a superintendent of state parks.<sup>41</sup>

Jensen designed four categories of parks that the state should possess under its jurisdiction. The categories included historic parks, scenic parks, game parks, and a state arboretum. Historic parks were for the preservation of grounds, buildings, and objects of historical value in the state which held particular interest to all citizens. Historic parks were a smaller area of park land to establish on or near historically significant land. Jensen believed historic parks would attract travelers to the state and encourage them to stop on their long drives and give them a place of rest where they could also learn about the historical significance of the park area.<sup>42</sup>

Scenic parks included grounds where cliffs, woods, and water could serve as playgrounds.<sup>43</sup> Game parks included large areas in the western half of the state, along with smaller areas in the eastern portion of the state. These game reserves were for the restoration of the bison and deer populations that for most of Kansas' history was the state's most valuable resources. Jensen also proposed an arboretum park, a place connected with an educational institution and meant to exhibit the species of trees and shrubs throughout the world that could adapt to the Kansas climate. According to Jensen,

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<sup>41</sup> "Suggest System of State Parks to Preserve Historical Ground and to Show Resources," *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 8, 1911, accessed November 25, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/64107184/?terms=State%2BParks> .

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Public playgrounds became increasingly popular during this period. Playgrounds are not only for children but adults. The area would be utilized for recreational purposes, both by building artificial structures and using natural landscape for recreation. Adults and children used the area to engage in sports and games.

a park of this stature was a great educational institution that possessed the ability to further people's knowledge about the natural world.

Jensen viewed park development as a solution to the state's economic problems. The state park system he envisioned significantly added to the attractiveness of Kansas and could increase its popularity. State parks could attract more people to the state and provide travelers a location to relax and experience unique Kansas landscape. Jensen believed the land needed for a state park system could be secured for state recreation without any additional cost to the state, and the establishment of a park system was possible with only moderate cost to the taxpayer.<sup>44</sup>

Jensen, along with other state park advocates, stressed that state legislators had the opportunity to immediately invest in state parks at a lower cost and with relative ease, as opposed to delaying the project and incurring a higher cost. Jensen pointed out that the investment in beautification and preservation of historic sites would increase money spent in the state from tourists, who not only would make a park the focal point of their vacation, but also those traveling to other states. Jensen's park vision took longer to achieve than he hoped. Instead of the state developing parks in a timely matter, the state park movement came together over several decades because of budgets, land acquisition, and differing political opinions.

In 1912, the idea of state parks increased in popularity when the Kansas Conservation Commission presented a proposal for a complete system of public parks,

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<sup>44</sup> "Suggest System of State Parks to Preserve Historical Ground and to Show Resources," *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 8, 1911, accessed November 25, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/64107184/?terms=State%2BParks> .

memorial sites, and playgrounds. The plan encompassed pleasure grounds throughout the state, restoration of historical points including Pawnee Rock, and adding the buildings of old Fort Hays to the state park already located in Hays. In May 1912, Jensen pushed for the implementation of a conservation program in Kansas, stating that “the conservation of our natural resources was the most important question before the American people,” with other conservation advocates across the country sharing his belief.

On April 6, 1912, Jensen sat down and wrote a lengthy and scathing editorial that appeared a month later in the *Wichita Daily Eagle*. Jensen’s editorial continued his passionate plea for the development of a state park system in Kansas. He quoted the words of people including Grover Cleveland who told the Conference of Governors in 1908,

It seems to me that thoughtful men should not be accused of exaggerated fears when they depreciate the wealth-mad rush and struggle of American life and the consequent neglect of outdoor recreation, with the impairment of that mental and physical vigor absolutely essential to our national welfare, and do abundantly promised to those who gratefully recognize in nature's adjustment to the wants of man, the care of the good God who made and loveth all. Manifestly, if outdoor recreation is important to the individual and the nation, and if there is a danger of their neglect, every instrumentality should be heartily encouraged which aims to create and stimulate their indulgence in every form.

The conference was sponsored by President Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, and brought governors and representatives from every state to Washington D.C. to discuss the proper use of natural resources and the many governmental entities that could help achieve progressive conservation policy. Roosevelt delivered the opening

address, “Conservation as a National Duty,” with other speakers including politicians, natural resource experts, and industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and James J. Hill.<sup>45</sup>

Jensen credited the conference for seizing the attention of the public that developed a yearning for natural resource conservation. State governments welcomed the idea of what these resources could do for the physical and moral well-being of the people. The state’s representatives and governors unanimously agreed that, “the lands should be so used that the beauty, healthfulness, and habitability of our country should be preserved and increased, and all those means of health and happiness which from selfishness or ignorance are likely to be destroyed should be preserved for the people.”<sup>46</sup>

Roosevelt and Pinchot were largely responsible for the growing interest in national parks and forestry. Jensen described the movement as being constructed of different leaders interested in several resource management areas. He attempted to separate the differences to avoid any confusion between the use of public lands. Jensen pointed out that the purpose of these parks overlapped but all had distinct differences. The confusion came from the idea that forestlands should be selected and maintained chiefly for the growing of trees, the protection of the soil, and conservation of the water supply. Other purposes than these were quite incidental and, if considered at all, subordinate. In the case of parks, the main objective was the management of the natural beauty of landscape, topographical features and the provision for recreation.

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<sup>45</sup> Conference of Governors, *Proceeding of a Conference of Governors*, Washington G.P.O, 1908. [https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/AMALL:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(amrvg+vg16](https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/AMALL:@field(NUMBER+@band(amrvg+vg16) (accessed January 17, 2017).

<sup>46</sup> “State Parks and their Justification,” *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, May 12, 1912.

Jensen applauded the work of the national parks in his letter where he explained that the large parks of the west including Yellowstone, Yosemite, Mount Rainer, and Sequoia, comprised of more than forty million acres set aside by the federal government for their unusual beauty and interest. The great benefit of these parks to the whole country was the reason for setting them aside as national rather than state entities. According to famed naturalist and Sierra Club founder, John Muir, “National Parks are the wildest health and pleasure grounds accessible and available to tourists seeking escape from care and dust and early death.”<sup>47</sup>

By 1912, municipal parks were more popular and well-known than national parks. Citizens believed municipal parks were a necessity for any self-respecting community. They contributed more to the health and pleasure of urban population and furnished the most necessary and available antidote to the artificiality and stress of life in cities. For convenience, they were located in close proximity to the population. Due to the high value of land, parks were limited in areas and seldom had variety in topography.

Jensen recognized the gap between the vast untamed national parks of the west and the calming green space of the city. Throughout the country, there were people everywhere in search of the beautiful scenes of nature, and in almost every state, there were places fit to supply their needs if developed properly or open to the public. Most of these places lacked the uniqueness to become a national park, or were not situated to

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

serve a single city. The fear was that the land would be gradually destroyed or moved into private hands with little hope to regain it as a public treasure.<sup>48</sup>

Jensen pleaded with Kansans who did not see the importance of adopting a state park system by giving examples of other states who recognized the need before it was too late. He included Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York for understanding the need for public reservations. Wisconsin secured several large tracts as pleasure grounds and adopted a plan for a comprehensive system of state parks. Well-respected Bostonian landscape architect, John Nolen, recalled the situation where a state lost the fight for public holding of lands noting “it is a disgrace for any self-respecting state, and a cowardly shirking of responsibility to future generations.”<sup>49</sup>

The purpose and requirements of state parks were similar to the demands of national parks. However, on account of their limited number and locations, National Parks were accessible only to people living near them and for those who could afford the expense of a long journey. City parks might serve the same purpose as a state park, but as managed landscapes, they did not have the feel of wilderness; city spaces usually contained manicured gardens or statues. State parks encompassed a unique landscape or historical feature.

The consideration of accessibility and the cost of reaching the parks by people from all classes and economic backgrounds mattered when state officials considered choosing a location for a state park. Unlike national parks, state parks had to be inclusive

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<sup>48</sup> Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) 20-27.

<sup>49</sup> “State Parks and their Justification,” *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, May 12, 1912.



and more considerate of the public that paid for their administration and upkeep.

According to Jensen, state parks provided the best means for managing places of historic and scientific interests.<sup>50</sup>

Jensen further argued that state parks could provide the state with economic revenue from visitors and tourists. State parks were the only means of managing, protecting, and appropriately improving places of unique and historic beauty. Jensen's final point was that these parks would fill a void like no other state agency could by including adequate and permanent provision for wholesome outdoor recreation and pleasure. Jensen cited Nolen once again, "if it is right for states to spend millions of dollars on charitable and penal institutions as they do, made necessary in part, at least, by unfavorable physical and social conditions, is it not wise and good to spend something on preventive measures, which would make such institutions less necessary?"<sup>51</sup>

Jensen had observed the experience of other states that found it profitable and useful to protect places of uncommon beauty and interest, and maintain land for pleasure, camping grounds, and outdoor health resorts. He sought to justify a similar state park system for Kansas, a state with nearly two million people and undeveloped resources sufficient to support ten times its population. "Is Kansas not good enough?" Jensen questioned in his plea for state parks and placed them in the context of a progressive ideas during the period, "Kansas was first state in the Union to banish the liquor traffic from its borders, and enforce prohibition, resulted in a moral, physical and financial uplift

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

of the sunflower state, not precedent by any other commonwealth.”<sup>52</sup> Jensen believed a state park system was an extension of the same moral movement ushered in during prohibition.

While it was true that Kansas possessed neither mountains nor vast forests, it did have wooded parks bordering streams and places of scenic beauty potentially valuable for play and camping grounds. Moreover, Kansas was rich in history and in Jensen’s opinion should be set aside before it was too late. Small roadside parks along the important highways in the state were needed as comfort stations for overland travelers, for the minority of people who traveled in covered wagons as well as the majority who traveled in automobiles.<sup>53</sup>

Jensen closed his plea with newspaper readers stating that, “it is to be hoped that the great state of Kansas will no longer delay action in making a comprehensive survey of the resources and places suitable and available as outdoor health and pleasure grounds for the lasting benefit of the people.”<sup>54</sup> Jensen’s appeal to readers all over the state began to make headway, and his idea spread among many who agreed with his vision. His argument for a vast state park system was taken seriously by State Fish and Game Warden, W.C. Tegmeier, who in his 1916 biannual report to the governor addressed several of his own goals and concerns for the state’s natural resources. Tegmeier explained that the state possessed thousands of acres of land that would make the finest game

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Jane Holtz Kay, *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take it Back*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 141-147. At the beginning of the twentieth century automobiles continued to be marketed towards the rich time as progressed more people wanted an automobiles because of the freedom it allowed them to maneuver. Automobiles allowed people the freedom to live elsewhere instead of near rail lines.

<sup>54</sup> “State Parks and their Justification,” *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, May 12, 1912.

preserves of any state in the Union. He argued that these preserves were needed to save the fast-disappearing birds and animal life in Kansas.<sup>55</sup>

In that report, Tegmeier brought up that he believed people's desire for vacations was the driving force behind resource management and the need for proper public lands in Kansas.

I know there is not a man living who is tossed about month after month in the bustle and bang of business life who does not need a vacation; he needs it for his mental, moral and physical development; he needs the woods, the music of our streams, the warbling of the birds, and a chance to drive out the fetid air of a stuffy office and dusty street and to fill his lungs with pure, vigorous ozone found in the woods and open fields.<sup>56</sup>

Tegmeir argued that nature was people's greatest tonic. Humans, needed the outdoors from time-to-time. People longed to build a campfire in a shaded spot close to a stream, "the greatest charm of nature was the wildlife, the beauty of the natural landscape would be desolate without the birds and animals that had delighted people since the beginning of time; music of the rivers and streams would be sad were it not for the for the sport of going-a-fishing."<sup>57</sup>

Tegmeir was more philosophical than Jensen in his desire to show that all people had a yearning inside of them to be outdoors. He argued that men and women all over the world desired the simplicity of the past, and searched to find greater moral and physical strength and pure happiness, which was thought to be lost. Tegmeir believed that business men were so engrossed in the work of building towns and amassing fortunes that

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<sup>55</sup> State of Kansas, *Fish and Game Department Biennial Report, 1914-1916* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1916) 8-10, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3Yevb2l0sbVR0p0ZXhMLXZTc1U/view> (accessed January 19, 2017).

<sup>56</sup> State of Kansas, *Fish and Game Department Biennial Report, 1914-1916*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

they failed to familiarize themselves with the natural beauty of the world. Fishing was one of the finest enterprises of boyhood, and his exploits as a boy become fond memories as a man. Tegmeir asserted that was something wrong with someone who did not find delight in “playing the gamey trout,” or in the quickening heartbeat of finding a fresh track of antelope or hearing the whirr of quail.<sup>58</sup> According to Tegmeir, it was the outdoor life that

lured the man or woman whose veins filled with red blood of health and vigor. In every human being was a delight in fishing, when the fishing fever struck the angler he gathers up his tackle and goes to the stream, full of hopes and anticipation. His imagination runs wild; he sees himself returning with a string of fish that will be the envy of his neighbors and at the same time be a meal.<sup>59</sup>

He used this story to show contrast and hoped that while the person was eating the fish, he was reminded of the fact he wished the wheels of the state and federal governments continued to run smoothly, especially those who worked on behalf of fish and game.

On January 1921, two hundred conservationists from all over the United States met in Des Moines, Iowa at the invitation of Iowa Governor William L. Harding for the National Conference on State Parks. Representatives concerned themselves with what was the best use of any given piece of land that was either natural or historical in nature.<sup>60</sup> According to the report on the Des Moines Conference, the attendees believed that

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>60</sup> George Bennet, “The National Park Conference at Des Moines, Iowa, January 10-12, 1921,” *Iowa Conservation* (January-March 1921), 14.  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=MrfkAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA122&lpg=PA122&dq=George+Bennett+The+National+Park+Conference+in+Des+Moines+Iowa> (accessed February 6, 2017).

without commercial implications and outside forces these areas could be utilized for the development of recreation and leisure spots. The twin concerns of preservation and recreation brought these representatives together to begin constructing and promoting the concept of state parks. These parks, along with their city and national counterparts, could relieve some of the stress that urban life placed on individuals and families. They saw that people were still connected to nature, once much easier to obtain before the massive population boom of cities.<sup>61</sup>

The man responsible for the Des Moines Conference was Director of National Parks, Stephen Tyng Mather. He determined that the time had come when the states should begin to do what the nation was doing on a smaller, more local scale. One of Mather's concerns included that the national park concept had sparked the public imagination and became much more popular than anticipated. New modes of transportation brought large groups of American and foreign tourists to these unique sites. National Parks including Yosemite, Glacier, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon began to take in more tourist than expected by anyone involved in the national parks system.<sup>62</sup>

Within the boundaries of these preserves, a guest asked the question, "why can't we have a national park, too?" The director was overwhelmed with offers of new parks that did not seem to him to have national significance, despite some of them being excellent offers. The borderline between national and state significance was complicated.

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<sup>61</sup> Freeman Tilden, *The State Parks Their Meaning in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962), 10-12.

<sup>62</sup> George Bennet, "The National Park Conference at Des Moines, Iowa," 10-11.

What was significant to a state might not appeal to the nation. It was also difficult for state parks to be elevated in status if they were being protected and administered properly at the state level. The federal government did not view it as prudent to transfer power from the state to nation if the necessary care was being administered for the park.

Decisions at national and state levels came down to the individuals of varying personalities and political ideologies. They influenced the decision on what, and even if, the government should take control of a landscape or monument that offered national or state significance. It was up to the state or the federal government to determine the preservation criteria for places that are scenic, historical, or scientific areas.

The conference at Des Moines generated a movement toward the creation of recreation area systems within the individual states that mimicked the National Parks Service. The result was the establishment of the National Conference on State Parks. The governing doctrine produced by the organization urged, local, county, state, and national governments to acquire additional land and water areas suitable for recreation, for the study of natural history and its scientific aspects, and the preservation of wildlife as a form of conservation of our natural resources. The new organization encouraged the interest of non-governmental agencies and individuals in acquiring, maintaining and dedicating for public use and in educating the citizens of the United State in the values and uses of recreational areas.<sup>63</sup>

The concept of parks was not new, much of what was established by the conference was built upon previous successes before 1921. However, the conference

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<sup>63</sup> Freeman Tilden, *The State Parks Their Meaning in American Life*, 25.

recognized and brought together the small achievements the people behind them and called for an effort forward on a national campaign for state control of scenic areas of historic or natural value that did not qualify for federal control. The state park movement was in the works before the conference with one of the most famous cases being the preservation of Niagara Falls State Reservation. This case jump-started setting aside unique areas from the exploitation of people. The people of New York pooled their money together to save a unique landscape in their home state that was of interest to both New Yorkers and the rest of the country and world.<sup>64</sup>

When Mather read the list of existing state parks at the Des Moines conference, there were twenty-nine states that had no parks. California, Idaho, North Carolina, Kansas, Michigan, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania all only had one park each. North Dakota, a state that showed considerable interest in preserving the unique history and natural features of the high plains had seven parks. Iowa, the state hosting the conference, possessed four parks; Texas and Ohio had five; Minnesota and Wisconsin each had six. These examples show that there was considerable progress in the state park movement across the country in 1921, each state adding character to the process and preserving places of unique value. However, by the time of the Des Moines conference there was a

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<sup>64</sup> Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 6-7. In the mid-nineteenth century private developers acquired the best scenery of Niagara Falls. By 1860, the area was filled with vendors, tour guides, and frauds. Visitors paid ample amounts of money to see the Falls. European visitors to Niagara citizen the United States for letting a national treasure be exploited in this fashion.

call for a collective and coherent effort to focus the mission to bend the ear of more state legislators.<sup>65</sup>

One benefit of the conference was the development of a solid definition for “state park,” that resembled Jensen’s design for Kansas. Each committee member had a different idea of what a state park could be but after a long and painstaking effort, they developed a six-point classification system for state parks including parks, monuments, recreation areas, beaches, parkways, and waysides. Next, the committee defined “state park” as relatively spacious area of outstanding scenic or wilderness character, oftentimes containing significant historical, archeological, ecological, geological, and other scientific values, preserved as nearly as possible in their original or natural condition and provided opportunity for appropriate types of recreation where such would not destroy or impair the features and values to be preserved and commercial exploitation of resources was prohibited.<sup>66</sup>

Primarily to preserve objects of historic and scientific interest and places commemorating prominent persons or historical events a state recreation area and provided non-urban outdoor recreation opportunities to meet other than purely local needs, but had the best available scenic quality.<sup>67</sup> Hunting and some other leisure activities not usually associated with state parks were permitted, while commercial exploitation of resources was typically prohibited. State waysides were relatively small areas along highways selected for their scenic or historical significance and providing an

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<sup>65</sup> Bennet, 10-11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>67</sup> Tilden, 12-13.



opportunity for travelers to relax, enjoy a scenic view, read a historical marker, or have a picnic lunch. A highway department administered these small areas, while the larger and more scenic waysides were sometimes placed under management as units of state park systems.<sup>68</sup>

The National Council of State Park's guidelines set a standard for the classification of state parks. These guidelines helped clear up much of the debate on the purpose of state parks solidified them as an important factor in the wider conservation and preservation movement. With its combination of natural beauty and historical significance, Frontier Historical Park serves as an effective example of the early Kansas state park movement.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Monument to Pioneer Perseverance: The Origins of Frontier Historical Park

*“The city of Hays can make a memorial to our soldiers dead of the Fort Hays park of which we will be in possession someday, and every citizen will rival his neighbor in planting one or more trees there.”<sup>69</sup>*

While it is important to place Kansas in the context of the national conversation concerning public resource management, by focusing on the development of Frontier Historical Park this demonstrates the complexity and difficulty to dedicate a state park. In western Kansas, a geographic region known for its scarcity of trees and susceptibility to droughts designated its Frontier Historical Park as its first state park on the former Fort Hays Military Reservation. When the Army abandoned Fort Hays in 1889, the state of Kansas entered into a passionate debate to transfer the land to state ownership with one of the uses for the land being a public park. It is imperative to relate the violent history of the military reservation and juxtapose its transformation into a peaceful state park.

Post-Civil War construction of the transcontinental railroad opened western lands to American settlement and created conflict between Indian nations and settlers. The United States Army established forts across the West, locating several in Kansas because the state had several commercial and emigrant trails within its borders and several

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<sup>69</sup>“Hays Memorial,” *Hays Free Press*, March 23, 1922, accessed February 12, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/186579939/?terms=Fort%2BHays%2BPark> .

became quite well known including Fort Riley and Fort Larned. Others acquired a colorful reputation, like Fort Dodge and Fort Fletcher (later renamed Fort Hays).<sup>70</sup>

The military moved the Fort Hays location several times during its activation. General Order 22 of the Department of Kansas officially established Fort Fletcher in 1865. The document directed, Companies A and F of the 13<sup>th</sup> Missouri Cavalry to establish a post to be named Fort Fletcher.”<sup>71</sup>

The First U.S. Volunteer Infantry was the first unit stationed at the post. Their orders included the protection of the stage line belonging to the Butterfield Overland Despatch from what the company and the government viewed as hostile Indian tribes in the region. Their orders proved to be dangerous business with the first violent encounter occurring on November 28, 1865 and ending with the killing of seven Indians by soldiers. With Indian raids becoming increasingly frequent the stage line closed for safety concerns and the Army abandoning the post five months later in May 1866.

Five months later in October, the Army reopened the post, relocating it nearby and assigning regular troops from Company C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry under the command of Lieutenant G.W.H. Stouch, to the fort.<sup>72</sup> On November 17, 1866, military personnel at Fort Fletcher received orders renaming the post to Fort Hays.<sup>73</sup>

No matter its name, the new post was prone to natural disasters. On June 7, 1867, destructive flooding of Big Creek nearly wiped out Fort Hays. Several soldiers drowned

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<sup>70</sup> Leo Oliva, *Fort Hays Keeping Peace on the Plains* (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1980) 20-25.

<sup>71</sup> Leota Motz, *Old Fort Hays 1867-1889* (Hays: Old Fort Hays Historical Association Inc, 1940), 2.

<sup>72</sup> Motz, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Order 22 read, “Subject to the approval of the Secretary of War, the Post being established at Camp Fletcher will be designated Fort Hays, in commemoration of the name and services of the late General Alexander Hays, United States Volunteers, who was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness. By command of Major General Hancock, Chauncey McKeever, Assistant Adjunct General.”

and widespread damage affected the property, stores, and supplies. Elizabeth Custer later described the night as terrifying. Custer and her maid worked to save soldiers' lives who fell into the fast moving waters of the creek.<sup>74</sup>

Other factors proved that the Fort Hays site was a poor location for the military reservation. Railroad executives with The Union Pacific Rail Eastern Division had workers quickly laying track west across Kansas. If the garrison remained in place the railroad would miss the location by several miles. General W.S. Hancock and Major Alfred Gibbs decided to relocate the fort once again and determined a new site for Fort Hays, moving the post fifteen miles northwest and near where the railroad would cross Big Creek.<sup>75</sup>

Major Gibbs took command at the new Fort Hays on June 23, 1867. A week later at the Independence Day ceremony, the first United States flag rose above the post overlooking the seven thousand five hundred acres of Kansas prairie that encompassed the military reservation. In July 1867, Post Surgeon Lieutenant M.R. Brown surveyed the recently-acquired land. The survey included a wide-ranging examination of the military reservation and detailed notes of the natural features of the region. Lieutenant Brown observed the area to be well-timbered and remarked on the abundance of water, something unusual for the region. Later, Brown's notes helped to buttress the argument to preserve the region after the military's abandonment.

All scientific work fell to the post surgeon, whose job included acting as a naturalist. This duty led to the observation of flora and fauna on the reservation. Brown's

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<sup>74</sup> On the night of the flood, George Custer was absent on a scouting expedition.

<sup>75</sup> Motz, 3.

census concluded that the reservation contained a variety of species, including coyotes, mountain lions, antelope, porcupines, badgers, prairie dogs, beaver, gopher, mink, and herds of bison.<sup>76</sup> The aquatic life in Big Creek consisted of freshwater turtles weighing twelve to fifteen pounds, otters, and multiple species of fish, including catfish and carp.<sup>77</sup>

Military personnel at Fort Hays took the task of protecting and developing the reservation's tree population seriously. They were the first individuals to encourage the growth of trees located along Big Creek and its immediate vicinity. Military personnel took crimes against nature seriously, and similar to Sheridan's soldiers patrolling Yellowstone, those at Fort Hays patrolled the military reservation in search of those who desecrated the few natural trees in the region.

On November 18, 1869, officers sent soldiers to Big Creek on the reservation to arrest and bring back to the post any citizen or soldier found cutting or injuring the living trees in any way.<sup>78</sup> In a newspaper article from the *Ellis County Star*, the officers noted that, "the other day a dilapidated specimen of humanity stopped and deliberately broke off the lower branches, and otherwise disfigured one of the trees on the bank of the creek within sight of the post, and then went on his way to camp to cook beans. If these

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<sup>76</sup> Fort Hays Records, "Zoology," 1877. In the early years of the fort's establishment, the survey of the reservation included several herds of buffalo grazing on the adjacent hills. In 1877, the fort records included an update on the that he noted no longer ranges in the vicinity of the Post, and many reports not seeing buffalo between the Arkansas and Republican Rivers.

<sup>77</sup> Motz, 4. In 1878, during the active years of Fort Hays State Fish Commissioner D.B. Long experimented with the fish culture in the area. Long placed 5,000 young California salmon into Big Creek at Hays City and the same number at Ellis.

<sup>78</sup>Fort Hays Post Records, "Trees,"November 11, 7, 1867.

wandering bohemians are not checked in their wood-grabbing, our few little shade trees will soon be destroyed.”<sup>79</sup>

Not only did the officers prevent the destruction of trees, but they were the first to plant trees on the reservation and nurture the population of timber. Officers gave soldiers the task of traveling to the Saline River to retrieve trees from the bank to be transplanted to the reservation.<sup>80</sup> Soldiers planted trees on the parade ground and near the bridge crossing Big Creek. Patrols prevented cattle and vandals from entering the vicinity of the newly planted trees. Officers gave their soldiers the authority to shoot livestock and the offenders if peaceful measures did not suffice.<sup>81</sup>

Once the Army decided that Fort Hays would not be moved once again, officers compiled a list of buildings that needed to be constructed. The fort took on the look of a small town that featured a modern hospital with cutting-edge medical equipment, barracks, a guardhouse, officers homes, bake house, a laundry, and the “Blockhouse” served as headquarters.<sup>82</sup>

During its active period, Fort Hays personnel served at the center of the Indian Wars. The post, along with newly established Hays City, became home to colorful characters such as James Butler “Wild Bill” Hickok, William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody, General Philip Sheridan, and Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer.<sup>83</sup> By 1890 the Indian Wars concluded in Kansas and the large number of frontier forts dwindled. In

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<sup>79</sup> *Ellis County Star* (Hays, Kansas), June 1, 1876.

<sup>80</sup> Fort Hays Post Records, “Trees,” February 19, 1870.

<sup>81</sup> Fort Hays Post Records, “Trees,” February 25, 1870.

<sup>82</sup> Motz, 3-7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. For economic reasons, the number of soldiers fluctuated according to necessity and the activity of the Indians in north central Kansas, the average number of men stationed at Fort Hays was approximately two hundred.

April 1889, after lengthy debates among Army officials on the future of the forts, they decided to permanently close Fort Hays.<sup>84</sup>

Deactivation of the Fort Hays Military Reservation took place on April 7, 1889. Citizens of Hays City, as well as military personnel noted the occasion as a somber and wistful day, especially when the last soldiers vacated the fort and the flag that had flown high above the parade ground descended for the last time. During the fort's active years both animosity and reverence existed between the citizens of Hays City and the soldiers at the fort. The low ranking soldiers tended to wreak havoc on the town, while the Seventh Cavalry Band had become a fixture in community events. Officers and their wives added a touch of class to everything they attended. The fort's inhabitants would be missed.

Immediately upon the abandonment of the reservation by the War Department, the Interior Department took control of the grounds and appointed Hays resident Simon Motz as custodian, and Nathaniel Robbins as watchman to protect the physical property. Soon, many of the buildings were moved, auctioned off, or destroyed, leaving only the Guardhouse and Blockhouse. Meanwhile, E.J. Turner, the Kansas Sixth Congressional District Representative urged Congress to grant the entire tract of land to the state of Kansas. Through Turner's efforts, the tract was withheld from disposition or settlement

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<sup>84</sup> Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth in eastern Kansas remain open to present day.

under the Congressional Act of July 5, 1884<sup>85</sup>, until Congress had an opportunity to take action on the matter of its disposal.<sup>86</sup>

In 1895, the Kansas delegation in Congress, led by Representative Charles Curtis, took up the cause of returning the land to his home state of Kansas. Curtis' understanding of the issue occurred during a scheduled town hall event in Hays. While Curtis spoke with his constituents, he discovered their interest for the abandoned military reservation and their desire for land to be used for a school, agriculture, and park purposes. Curtis himself grew increasingly interested in the idea after speaking with prominent Hays pioneer and horticulturalist, Martin Allen, one of the most ardent supporters and who was one of the first people to propose a plan for the reservation land. Allen envisioned the potential of the reservation's land soon after he moved to Hays City.

When a group of Ohioans, including Allen, arrived in Hays City in 1873, the frontier town offered few redeeming qualities. Allen and his colleagues realized the potential of the town and began buying up all of the unsold lots in Hays City for future residential and commercial purposes. Allen quickly became known as a prominent

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<sup>85</sup> "An Act to Authorize the Sale of a Certain Portion of the Fort Hays Military Reservation, Kansas, to the Ellis County Agricultural Society, of Kansas," *Library of Congress*, June 11, 1884. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/48th-congress/Session%201/c48s1ch74.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2017). "That by and with the advice and consent of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized to sell to the Ellis County Agricultural Society, of Kansas, on such terms as he may designate, for not less than appraised value thereof, such value to be ascertained as in the case of other sales of lands subject to appraisal, a portion of the Fort Hays Military Reservation not to exceed one hundred and sixty acres in extent, and having such metes and bounds as the Secretary of War may designate" Provided, that the War Department shall retain entire control of Big Creek and all the timber along its banks on each side."

Hays City became the county seat of Ellis County in 1870. In the late 1860s through the 1870s, the harsher elements of the railroad town's population began to vacate the area and continued to follow the construction of the Kansas Pacific railroad, or moving to Dodge City, Kansas. Volga-German and Bukovina German immigrants replaced the town's construct. In 1895, members of the community changed the name of the town to Hays. Warren E. Blazier, *Hays Chamber of Commerce Memo*, October 23, 1928, 2.



horticulturist in western Kansas, and while being from a heavily wooded area of Ohio, he viewed the little timber in the area with reverence and sought to protect the trees from destruction. In 1874, Allen served as Justice of the Peace in both Illinois and Kansas. A judge appointed him United States Circuit Court Commissioner, where he pursued the prosecution of individuals caught cutting trees on the Fort Hays Reservation. He served in the position until he resigned to run for the Kansas legislature in 1880.<sup>87</sup>

Allen started his beautification project of Hays on his own property, planting rows of trees and gardens that made the prairie landscape look like an oasis. He wanted the entire town to mimic his backyard and planted rows of trees on each side of North Fort Street. Allen was the first member of the community to be interested in the public lands of the area.<sup>88</sup>

In 1880, Allen realized the potential that the land of the former military reservation offered the community of Hays. He began a comprehensive campaign aimed to influence the United States government to donate the land to Kansas. Explaining the venture, he stated, “At my instance, a resolution was reported by the appropriate committee respectfully requesting our delegation in Congress to use all reasonable means to secure the Fort Hays Military Reserve upon its abandonment for an experimental station or testing grounds in agriculture, horticulture, and forestry.”<sup>89</sup> Allen argued that

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<sup>87</sup> “Rich Growths of Trees Here Trace Back to Martin Allen,” *Hays Daily News* (Hays, Kansas), July 6, 1961.

<sup>88</sup> One cemetery existed in Hays City in the early years. The plot of land dubbed, “Boot Hill,” by the locals was the final resting place for many of the undesirables from the town. When Martin Allen’s daughter died he did not believe Boot Hill was a proper resting place for his daughter. In honor of his daughter, he donated a plot of his own land for the development of a city cemetery, with his daughter being the first interment. The cemetery is still located in Hays, and its properly named, Mount Allen Cemetery.

<sup>89</sup> “Rich Growths of Trees Here Trace Back to Martin Allen,” *Hays Daily News*.

Hays City should display an artificial forest because of its lack of natural growth of trees. He urged the residents of Hays City and the surrounding area to not oppose this measure, because of its potential benefit to the region.<sup>90</sup> Allen did not expect Fort Hays to remain open until 1889, so his vision took longer than he anticipated to come to fruition.

As a member of the Public Lands Committee, Curtis believed he could assist on behalf of the Hays City community by requesting that the Interior Secretary donate the land to the state. Thomas B. Reed, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, called Curtis to the floor to explain the measure, addressing Curtis, “Well, Indian, is there any more public land in Kansas which you want to steal for your state?” The reference was a jab at Curtis’ Indian heritage.<sup>91</sup> Never the less, Curtis responded by explaining that Kansas contained thousands of acres of unsettled public land in the state, but he would be content with the old abandoned military reservation including the remaining Fort Hays buildings to be turned over to the state for college and park purposes.<sup>92</sup>

Curtis asked Speaker Reed to allow for a joint resolution, appealing to the Kansas representatives in Congress to secure the passage of an act donating the Reservation to the state of Kanas for the establishment of a branch of the State Agricultural College, a branch of the State Normal School, and a public park.<sup>93</sup> Both Houses of Congress adopted the resolution of the land donation. The measure failed to become law on March

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> “Hays Relives Days When It was Military Outpost,” *The Iola Register*, June 23, 1931, accessed, January 11, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/4968053>. Charles Curtis was born in Kansas Territory and was of Kaw ancestry.

<sup>92</sup> “Hays Relives Days When It was Military Outpost,” *The Iola Register*, June 23, 1931, accessed, January 11, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/4968053>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

4, 1897 due to the inability of President Grover Cleveland to approve the bills presented to him during the closing hours of his administration.<sup>94</sup>

The land donation almost never happened. Upon hearing the news of the bill's failure, the Kansas congressional delegation immediately renewed efforts to push for the bill's passing., Interior Secretary Nathanael Hitchcock, issued an order revoking the previous provision barring the land from private settlement. For unknown reasons Hitchcock authorized the land to be appraised and allowed for private bids for the land.<sup>95</sup>

This decision allowed for citizens to apply for a homestead application and to purchase sections of the former military reservation and the local land office received between one and six applications per section of the reservation. Disagreeing with Secretary Hitchcock's revocation, the Land Office employees rejected all of the applications, temporarily saving the land from development. Kansas Attorney General Aretas Allen Godard wrote to the Interior Secretary Hitchcock, requesting his office freeze the proposal until Godard was able to review the law. Hitchcock obliged the state attorney general's request.<sup>96</sup>

While debates over the legality of the law took place in Washington D.C., the citizens of Hays ramped up their own efforts to protect the original intent of the donation of the former military reservation. In response to the Interior Department, a "Hays Citizen Committee" obtained the consent of Kansas Governor William E. Stanley and Attorney General Godard to employ W.E. Saum as counsel to attend a special meeting in

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. On March 4, 1897, Grover Cleveland left the Office of the Presidency for his successor William McKinley.

<sup>95</sup> Blazier, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 3.

Washington D.C. representing the state of Kansas. Saum's task was to urge for a rehearing of the matters regarding the law.

Saum appeared before the Interior Department and argued with the committee about the sudden change in the donation clause. In response, the committee reopened the case and a complete resubmission of the entire matter with the final decision obtained for the state of Kansas in October 1901.<sup>97</sup> The committee passed the law granting the state of Kansas full care of the seven thousand six hundred acre reservation for the purposes agreed upon, dismissing all homestead law requests and barring the private ownership of any part of the former military reservation. The law agreed upon by all parties involved read:

That the abandoned Fort Hays Military Reservation, and all the improvements thereon, situated in the state of Kansas, be and the same are at this moment granted, to said state upon the conditions, that said state should establish and maintain perpetually thereon; First: An Experiment station of the State Agricultural College. Second: A western branch of the Kansas State Normal School, and that in connection therewith the said reservation shall be used and maintained as a public park. Provided that said state shall within five years after the passage of this act, accept this grant, and by proper legislative action establish on said reservation, an experiment station of the State Agricultural College, and a western branch of the Kansas State Normal School. And whenever the said lands shall cease to be used for the purposes herein mentioned, the same shall revert to the United States. Provided further, that the provisions of this act shall not apply to any tract or tracts, to which a valid claim has attached, by settlements or otherwise, under any of the public land laws of the United States.<sup>98</sup>

In accordance with the stipulations set by the federal government that the state of Kansas was required to fulfill, the priorities for the three tasks did not receive equal attention by state officials. The Agricultural Experiment Station opened in 1901

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 18.

following the decision handed down by the Department of the Interior, and the construction of the Western Branch of Kansas State Normal began the following year in 1902.<sup>99</sup>

State officials viewed the park as the lowest of the three goals to pursue. Five years after the passage law on April 1, 1905, the Board of Regents of the Agricultural College spent a special session determining the location of the public park on the former military reservation. Board members decided to locate the park on the south end of Hays on the banks of Big Creek.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the determination of the park's location, the area did not receive many improvements while the experiment station and the normal school flourished.<sup>101</sup> The early history of the park's development connected with the early years of the of the Agricultural Experiment Station. The responsibility for development and maintenance of the park fell to the station by order of the Board of Regents.

In 1905, forty three acres were ceded for the purpose of a state park and Experiment Station employees took the initial step towards park development. They graded drives, built fences, and gates, and grew trees in the nursery. In the first years,

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<sup>99</sup> "Fort Hays Park Located," *The Hays Free Press*, April 1, 1905, accessed March 12, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/145214619/?terms=Fort%2BHays%2BPark> .

<sup>100</sup>Blazier, 19.

<sup>101</sup> The Normal school opened on June 28, 1902. While the majority of the Fort Hays buildings were moved off or torn down, the Guardhouse and the Blockhouse remained on the premises. Taking advantage of the two buildings officials at the Normal school converted the Guardhouse into a gym with over a thousand dollars in furnishings. Faculty chose the old parade ground to be the location of the football field.

they planted numerous species including Redbud, Bur Oak, and Black Walnut.<sup>102</sup> The employees also planted a grove of Siberian Elm west of the original park.<sup>103</sup>

The movement for municipalities in Kansas to acquire land for the development of green spaces became increasingly popular around the beginning of the twentieth century. The movement's popularity increased interest in the park that Hays citizens and Experiment Station employees nicknamed, "Fort Hays Park". Kansas government officials took on the challenge after National Forester Gifford Pinchot visited Topeka in January 1909. Pinchot spoke to state officials on the importance of the state to protect the forests within its borders, especially in the western part. The forest committee in the Legislature in 1909 introduced bills concerning Fort Hays Park, directing them to take in the trees and creek bottom from the railroad bridge to the old fairgrounds. The State Forester Christian Jensen, along with employees of the Normal school and the experiment station, urged the citizens of Hays to help promote and build up the park so that the area would be a great credit to the city and the state.<sup>104</sup>

In 1909, Reno County Representative W. Y. Morgan introduced four forestry bills in the state legislature. The bills fell directly in line with the recommendations of Kansas Governor Walter Stubbs, who fully endorsed Pinchot's recommendations and the officials in Washington on the best methods to increase trees in Kansas. One of the bills

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<sup>102</sup> William M. Phillips, "A History of the Agricultural Research Center, The First 100 Years," <http://www.wkarc.org/research-centers/hays/ARCH-100yr-History.pdf> (accessed February 10, 2017).

<sup>103</sup> With the exception of trees adjacent to the Big Creek, the majority of the trees in Frontier Park today are from the initial planting by the experiment station. Some of the trees that originally lined the creek, especially those growing west of what is now Main Street, were destroyed as part of the "channel improvement" that took place following the 1951 flood.

<sup>104</sup> "Fort Hays Park Located," *The Hays Free Press*, April 1, 1905, accessed March 12, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/145214619/?terms=Fort%2BHays%2BPark> .

provided the governor authority to appoint a state forester with practical knowledge in horticulture and required them to be a trained forester. This clause avoided any favoritism and cronyism for future gubernatorial appointments. The forester was required to supervise all forest interests in the state, secure data and information and make it available to the public by use of media. The forester cooperated with towns, corporations, and individuals in the planting and maintenance of forest trees. Another bill exempted taxation tracts no less than one acre or more than ten acres of forest trees of varieties approved by the state forester.

Representative Morgan's third bill was of keen interest for cities in Kansas. It authorized cities to purchase land and establish and maintain municipal parks, inside or outside the city limits. The measure's main objective enabled cities to purchase cheap land within city limits, plant trees, and maintain parks for the use and benefit of the people. The fourth bill presented provided protection for trees along streets and country roads.<sup>105</sup>

The bills introduced by Representative Morgan and encouraged by Governor Gibbs proved that Kansas took an increased interest in not only safeguarding the state's resources but supported programs to expand wooded areas. While state officials fought for the protection of the natural features of Kansas, including those in Hays, students at the Normal school were interested in preserving the unique history that had afforded the school's construction. The students viewed the preservation of historic landmarks as a crucial compliment to the unique landscape.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

In 1916, the student body voted to assess itself six hundred dollars for the construction of markers to commemorate the history around the former military reservation. The student body followed in the footsteps of the 1915 graduating class that paid for the construction of a monument to mark the location of what student's popularly referred to as, "Custer Island," the spot where General George Custer assumingly camped during his time at Fort Hays in the late 1860s.<sup>106</sup>

Members of the Fort Hays Kansas State Normal School Class of 1916 erected a twelve foot tall concrete pyramid dedicated to the general at Custer Island. The students worked to mark the old post cemetery that contained the internment of one hundred eighty soldiers along with a lone grave near the fort. The students also tasked themselves with marking the site of Rome, a town short-lived founded by William Rose and William F. Cody that predated Hays City.<sup>107</sup>

The burst of enthusiasm for environmental causes faded in Kansas, but by 1921, a public outcry arose for the government to get serious about a state park system. In an April 10, 1921 article in *The Salina Daily Union* the author called for the Kansas government and citizens to realize the potential that state parks had for attracting tourists to Kansas. Parks in all localities that offered travelers shade, water, and a place to eat lunch could substantially increase the desire for travelers to visit the state. The author explained that the eastern half of Kansas had thousands of suitable acres for parks that have natural beauty, according to the report of a select committee of the horticultural

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<sup>106</sup> "Historic Spots at Fort Hays to be Preserved," *Topeka Capital*, December 17, 1916.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*



society on state parks. With small funds, the areas could be maintained by the state to give Kansas a reputation for hospitality.<sup>108</sup>

The report pointed out that in western Kansas every place where a state highway crosses a stream, there is an opportunity for a park, particularly for highways that travel from north to south crossing river systems such as the Republican, Solomon, Saline, Smoky Hill, Arkansas, Cimarron, and their tributaries. The report from the committee stated:

In the making of Kansas, nature evidently regarded the need for farm and grazing land, and there are no such areas within her borders as the great natural parks. Also, to maintain parks for the preservation of areas of natural beauty or historical interests the purpose of the vast park of providing areas from recreation and amusement of the people. Kansas has no great area of lake or coast for fishing, no mountains to climb, and the world knows that corn fields and summer resorts are not identical territories. It seems probable that for time the recreation of Kansas will be gained thru automobiling to places of interest. In the making of parks, the effort of Kansas may well be directed toward making the most of the small areas which are suited for park purposes.<sup>109</sup>

The same week that the Kansas Horticultural Society's proposal was published, the State Conservation Commission outlined plans for a complete system of public parks, memorial sites, and playgrounds and presented it to the state legislature. The conservation commission's spots of interest included the restoration of historic points such as Pawnee Rock, where the construction of a monument took place to honor the old frontier days and for the enlargement of the state park already established in Hays. The plan not only

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<sup>108</sup> "Kansas Parks For Tourists," *The Salina Daily Union*, April 10, 1921, accessed January 15, 2017, [https://www.newspapers.com/clip/5910233/the\\_salina\\_daily\\_union](https://www.newspapers.com/clip/5910233/the_salina_daily_union).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. The committee also suggested that dedication in every locality of parks as memorials to heroes of World War I, and the planting of walnut trees in all parks as mementos of loyalty and patriotism.

would increase the protection of the natural features of Fort Hays Park, but expanded the area to include the buildings at old Fort Hays and make it a state historical park.<sup>110</sup>

The city of Hays did not take the idea of a park system for their community lightly. Residents viewed the concept positively as a way to attract visitors and potentially new residents. By 1921, the small community was trying to reinvent itself by focusing less on its frontier past and rebrand itself as a progressive twentieth century community. An article in the *Hays Free Press* told its readers, “If you wish to be gratefully remembered, identify yourself actively with the movement for a park system for Hays.” It went on to ask the question, “Has the city of Hays the courage to achieve an ideal future, which is within our grasp?”<sup>111</sup>

When Hays was in possession of a beautiful park, the writer asserted, it would be the crowning achievement and glory of the town. Hays citizens coveted the distinction of being the most beautiful city in western Kansas, and remarked the article that the two main avenues of Normal and Juniata were the finest vistas in the state. The community of Hays quickly moved in the direction of becoming the most cosmopolitan town in the western half of the state with the construction of Sheridan Coliseum on the campus of the Normal school. The article noted that the venue attracted acts from all over the country to perform there. The faculty at the school had earned the reputation of being the best in the state. However, the writer saw that Fort Hays Park had potential, and a

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<sup>110</sup> “Move For State Parks,” *The Bronson Pilot*, April 12, 1912, accessed January 18, 2017, [https://www.newspapers.com/clip/5909215/the\\_bronson\\_pilot](https://www.newspapers.com/clip/5909215/the_bronson_pilot).

<sup>111</sup> “Hays The Coming City: The Future of Hays as An Attractive Place of Residence,” *The Hays Free Press*, July 28, 1921, accessed February 2, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/186580728/?terms=State%2BPark>.

municipal park system was what the community lacked to be taken more seriously by “easterners.”<sup>112</sup>

The Hays community viewed the park as good advertisement for the city to attract newcomers who sought a healthy climate in a growing and modern city. Local newspaper editorials responded to the *Hays Free Press* article and called on the “wise and liberal citizenry” to fully support the park system for Hays. Businessmen were told to “talk up” a park system and to take pride in the city. If locals supported parks it would be understood by others in the state that Hays was the up and coming city of western Kansas.<sup>113</sup>

A similar movement existed in Hays to protect the historic landmarks at Fort Hays. Until the 1920s, The Fort Hays Kansas State Normal School’s Class of 1916 was the last group of dedicated Hays community members to put forth the effort to erect monuments to commemorate the Fort Hays era. On March 25, 1925, Kansas State Senator J.W. Davis alerted his colleagues in the Kansas legislature to the fact that Kansas was losing historic landmarks. Davis pointed to the disregard of Fort Atkinson, Fort Shawnee, and Fort Hays as locations in Kansas that citizens had neglected.

Davis’ speech had the feeling of a university lecture rather than a plea for state intervention on behalf of the former military posts. His speech questioned his colleague’s memory and tested their historical knowledge by asking them if they remembered Fort Atkinson, or why the legislature refused to make an appropriation for the preservation of

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<sup>112</sup> The term easterner in this context is referring to people from eastern Kansas. There exist a tension between the two areas of the state diving it into western and eastern Kansas.

<sup>113</sup> “Hays The Coming City: The Future of Hays as An Attractive Place of Residence,” *The Hays Free Press*, July 28, 1921, accessed February 2, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/186580728/?terms=State%2BPark>.

Shawnee Mission, the first mission to the Indians in the state. Following his passionate questioning about the two previous pieces of Kansas history, his bewilderment increased while discussing the neglect to Fort Hays, exclaiming “What memories cling to that old fort!”<sup>114</sup>

Senator Davis gave a brief history concerning Fort Hays to get his point across to the legislature on how important Fort Hays was to the story of Kansas, and the importance of preserving the few buildings left standing. Davis was baffled by the neglect of the state towards Fort Hays’ history since the state owned the land containing the remaining buildings. In Davis’ conclusion, he asked the legislature, “so where are the landmarks?” Many of the locations that once held importance for the state’s history were gone, he continued, the state must provide protection for the few surviving locations that added to the commemoration of the memory of those who stood to fight on behalf of Kansas.<sup>115</sup> By 1927, little progress took place concerning the preservation projects that Senator Davis had scolded his legislative colleagues for neglecting.

The movement to preserve the two remaining structures had its inception at the summer session of the Kansas Authors’ Club meeting that took place in June 1927 in Hays. Visiting members of the club drove over to the Experiment Station and State College grounds and the old fort. The visitors were so impressed with the historic significance of Fort Hays that they passed a resolution urging that action be taken by the State Historical Society to preserve the two buildings. The Kansas Authors Club wanted

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<sup>114</sup> “Landmarks go to Ruin State Does Nothing to Preserve Historic Centers,” *The Kansas City Star*, March 14, 1925.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

the historical society to take the proper steps to preserve the Blockhouse and the Guardhouse. The state legislature warmly endorsed the resolution which was presented by Dr. Charles E. Coles, the Episcopal Archdeacon of western Kansas.<sup>116</sup>

On July 7, 1927, the movement to preserve the two remaining buildings from Fort Hays moved forward. The sentiment expressed by Senator Davis resonated with the people in Hays, along with civic groups and military organizations. The Blockhouse and the Guardhouse were in disrepair and farmers were using the building as chicken coops. Many individuals and organizations viewed the condition of the buildings as disrespectful. At their two-day meeting held on July 4, 1927, the VFW pushed for a resolution to urge the state government to preserve the two buildings.<sup>117</sup>

The meeting took place in Kansas City, Kansas and included representatives from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) along with President Leon S. Picken of the State College of Hays. The VFW and state officials urged the State Historical Society to take the necessary actions to provide the proper care for the two remaining buildings and for it to be further resolved that a copy of the resolution to be sent to the State Historical Society and include the statement.

Picken stated, "The fact that neither the citizens of Hays nor the state school now occupying part of the old Fort Hays Reservation are doing anything to preserve these buildings is being given publicity outside the school and the city with the object of interesting for their preservation,"<sup>118</sup> commenting on the action of the veterans that

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> "Would Preserve Fort Buildings," *The Hays Free Press*, July 7, 1927.

officers row and the other buildings should have never been torn down, but there is nothing that could be done to reverse the course, but there is the opportunity to preserve the last remaining buildings. The effort was successful and the resolution passed to preserve the two buildings.<sup>119</sup>

The Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, William E. Connelley, took the necessary steps to preserve the remaining buildings and included them into the Fort Hays Park. Connelley shared a common desire for the Fort Hays Park to become a modern state park protecting the natural and historical significance of the area. A well-versed student of Kansas history, Connelley had never visited Hays until he came to the town at the age of seventy three by the invitation of W.E. Blazier, secretary of the Hays Chamber of Commerce. Connelley was asked to investigate the feasibility of preserving what was left of the old Fort Hays before time and weather ruined it.<sup>120</sup>

Connelley proposed to combine the preservation of the fort with the maintenance of the state park. Officials of both the state teachers college and the Fort Hays Experiment Station were willing to aid in finding a way to set a satisfactory boundary for the park, and finally to include placing markers for all of the building sites once at Fort Hays.<sup>121</sup>

The extent of this project was great and due to its historical significance it was introduced to the State Historical Society.<sup>122</sup> Upon Connelley's investigation, he grew

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> "Paints a Picture of a Park Beautiful," *Hays Record*, January 21, 1928.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> The society was a non-political organization given custody of historical material in the state for supervision and preservation.

enthusiastic about the project. Connelley outlined plans at a joint meeting of the Board of Regents and visiting legislators in President W.A. Lewis' office, "this is the only chance Kansas has to establish a real state park. A park that will not only be an asset to Hays but of historic value and interest to tourists and visitors," said Connelley in a plea to have his vision fulfilled.<sup>123</sup>

Connelly argued that the Historical Society and the Board of Regents needed several acres of the seventy six hundred acres of the original tract of land but assured critics that the land along Big Creek was of little value for agricultural purposes. Connelly remarked that he never dreamed that Hays possessed such a magnificent stream as Big Creek. The park would beautify the creek and bridges could be built over it to provide a scenic drive. Connelly's vision included the rehabilitation of the two fort buildings, and markers would be placed at the site of every building that once stood on the old reservation.<sup>124</sup>

Plans for the Fort Hays Park along Big Creek included landscaping to include native shrubbery, flowers, grass, and he believed the park should have a zoo containing native Kansas animals. Though the land already held three buffalo, in Connelly's plan more animals would be added to the natural collection. Connelly's proposed state park project fit much of the criteria that Christian Jensen envisioned for Kansas.<sup>125</sup>

The Kansas Legislature adhered to the ideas proposed by so many groups and individuals who recognized the potential of a state park on the site of the former military

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

reservation. In 1929, the legislature selected Frontier Historical Park to be the official name of the state park located on the old Fort Hays Military Reservation, and this new park would encompass the historic buildings into the current Fort Hays Park. In 1931, the Legislature authorized the establishment of the Kansas Frontier Historical Park.<sup>126</sup>

The act granted the state Board of Regents the authority to designate and set aside former sections of the military reservation containing the original buildings along with the other portions of the reservation that the Board deemed of particular historic and natural interest including the former parade ground and the wooded area along Big Creek. The Legislature ensured that the Board of Regents controlled all general supervision and oversight control of the Kansas Frontier Historical Park. However the daily operations and oversight of the park were placed under a board of managers. This board consisted of the chairman of the state Board of Regents, the secretary of the State Historical Society, the president of the Kansas State Agricultural College, the president of the Kansas State Teachers College at Hays, and a fifth member to be appointed by the governor. It was given the authority to revise and execute the rules and regulations for the use, preservation, improvement control, and maintenance of the park ground and buildings.<sup>127</sup>

On March 6, 1931, the approval of House Bill No. 626 signaled a major victory for those involved in the process of getting the state to designate a state park that adhered to the original tenet of the agreement between the Interior Department and the state. Hays now possessed an official state park encompassing the original Fort Hays Park and the remaining Fort Hays buildings.

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<sup>126</sup> State Board of Regents, Kansas Frontier Historical Park Ellis County Misc. Record, 17, 486.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 488.



On June 23, 1931, amid colorful pageantry, the city of Hays came together for the dedication of Frontier Historical Park during Founder's Day. The occasion coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of Fort Hays Kansas State College. Charles Curtis, who worked on behalf of Hays citizens to secure the land for the state and the benefit of the region, headlined the event. He was now the Vice President of the United States.

Curtis, who college President Lewis referred to as, "the daddy of the college" because of his commitment to the community during his time as a representative, was the Founder's Day speaker for the morning ceremony.<sup>128</sup> Kansas Governor Harry H. Wooding gave the dedicatory address in the afternoon at the park's celebration. Reminiscent of Hays' pioneer days, the program included a military parade and maneuvers, a frontier pageant with Indians from Haskell Institute of Lawrence, Kansas, a cavalry unit from Fort Riley, and a covered wagon train. A cowboy round up and a rodeo also took place during the festivities.<sup>129</sup> Hays citizens, along with state and national leaders, came together in Frontier Historical Park to celebrate a landmark that many people fought to preserve. The park, under the control of the Kansas Historical Society and the State Board of Regents, was the first state park to be established in western Kansas

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<sup>128</sup> "Wife of Early Hays Editor Gives History of F.H.K.S. College," *The Hays Daily News*, October 20, 1952, accessed January 12, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/3980471/?terms=Fort%2BPark>.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### Roosevelt's Tree Army Arrives in Hays

*“For the enrolled men, many of whom had never before seen Nature at close hand, the experience is one not only of personal reconstruction and training in the manual arts, but also in contact with those basic properties inherent in nature that we, as landscape architects, recognize as the very reason for the existence of these great State Parks. In the process of educating the public to a true appreciation and a proper use of facilities offered by State and National parks, the experience of these thousands of young men will be a factor of compelling importance.”<sup>130</sup> - Norman Newton*

The Kansas state park movement coincided with economic prosperity across the country during the 1920s. Many towns and regions constructed a park system or advocated for the establishment of a state or national park to add to their progressive image. America's consumer economy came of age at the same time, with rising wages and falling working hours, giving Americans more time for leisurely activities including outdoor recreation. Park advocates took advantage of this growing phenomenon.<sup>131</sup>

The Stock Market Crash of 1929 was the starting point of the Great Depression that ended the prosperity of the twenties. Fear and anxiety consumed the public regarding the economic future of the country. The stock market crash's immediate effect included a rise in the unemployment rate from just over three percent in 1929, to more than twenty-five percent by 1933.<sup>132</sup>

Facing severe criticism by an anxious American public, President Herbert Hoover and his Vice President Charles Curtis attempted to mend the nation's financial and

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<sup>130</sup>Linda Flint McClelland, “Building the National Park: Historic Landscape Design and Construction,”(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) , 15.

<sup>131</sup> Kendrick A. Clements, *Hoover, Conservation, and Consumerism Engineering the Good Life* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>132</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash of 1929* (New York: Mariner Books, 2009), 88-100.

unemployment problems. One of the administration's solutions included the expansion of works projects across the country, giving the unemployed temporary infrastructure jobs. The new plans allowed for additional appropriations for the construction of roads and trails in national parks and monuments and other public works. Despite Hoover's best attempts, these relief efforts failed to halt the nation's economic decline.<sup>133</sup>

Due to growing criticism over the economy, Democratic nominee Franklin Roosevelt challenged Hoover's re-election bid in 1932. Roosevelt benefited from being related to his fifth cousin, Theodore Roosevelt. While not a keen sportsman like his cousin, Franklin Roosevelt held deep convictions about the importance of conservation issues and advocated conservation policy at every level of office he held over his political career.<sup>134</sup>

In 1932, Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover in a landslide, political pundits citing the economic condition of the country for Hoover's loss. Roosevelt took office on March 4, 1933, and on March 9th, he conducted a conference to relieve unemployment. He invited the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, and War along with a budget director, the Army's Judge Advocate General, and the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior to devise a plan for the implementation of a national conservation program to relieve

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<sup>133</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Parks Service, 1933-1942 An Administrative History*, (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior) 1985, 2. While the concept of national construction corps is attributed Franklin Roosevelt and to a less extent Herbert Hoover, the idea was conceived by conservationist George H. Maxwell in 1915. Maxwell proposed that young men be enrolled into a national construction corps to help in forests and plains conservation work, to fight forest fires, prevent flooding, and to reclaim swamp and desert lands.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. As a young man, Roosevelt served as Chairman of the Committee on Forests, Fish, and Game in the New York State Legislature; he attributed his cousin's legacy to his fondness for the position. As chairman, Roosevelt achieved the passage of the first piece of New York State legislation on supervised forestry.

unemployment. Roosevelt suggested the Army recruit and train five hundred thousand men for the program and place the enrollees under the supervision of the Interior Department.<sup>135</sup>

Congress passed the Emergency Conservation Work Act on March 31, 1933, that established the Civilian Conservation Corps.<sup>136</sup> This legislation aimed to address both the growing unemployment rate among young men and use their labor to improve the natural resources of national and state property. Three days later Roosevelt signed the act and urged for its immediate implementation. His call for two hundred and fifty thousand recruits sent shockwaves throughout offices in the nation's capital. Thousands of workers in hundreds of offices in Washington D.C., and across the country, successfully launched the CCC that spring, accomplishing Roosevelt's goal by the first of July, the press referring to the recruits as, "Roosevelt's Tree Army."<sup>137</sup> Though Roosevelt held the final authority on all matters, Louis Howe, the President's personal assistant, and the first CCC director, Robert Fechner helped get the program started.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. The original outline of the bill was met with opposition from labor leader William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, who voiced his opposition to the bill believing that the Army's supervision of the young men would lead to the militarization of American youth. Major General Douglas MacArthur responded by stressing that that majority of the monitoring would be under the direction of the Interior Department and the young men would not receive military training.

<sup>136</sup> For consistency, the Emergency Conservation Works Act will be referred to as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

<sup>137</sup> Joseph M. Speakman, "Into the Woods: The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps," vol. 38, no. 3 (Fall 2006) 1-6, 2017 <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/fall/ccc.html> (accessed March 12, 2017). Any of the employees could not believe that they accomplished such a challenging goal. At the time the closest parallel anybody could compare it to was the drafting of 181,000 men into the armed services in the spring of 1917, following the United States declared war on Germany.

<sup>138</sup> Louis Howe developed a friendship with Roosevelt while covering the New York Legislature in 1912. The two men became close and shared the desire to make Roosevelt president. Howe became the central political organizer for Roosevelt's successful gubernatorial and presidential elections.

Roosevelt and his advisers, including representatives from the Interior Department, made the decision to structure the CCC as a quasi-militaristic organization similar to the National Parks Service and the Boy Scouts. Recruits trained at military installations across the country and were delegated to regions including forests, national parks, and state parks in need of work. The CCC Board limited the recruits to single men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five and World War I veterans.<sup>139</sup>

Many state officials, including those in Kansas, viewed the CCC program as a unique opportunity to improve their existing state parks. The state park division of the Emergency Conservation Works allowed the National Parks Service an opportunity to temporarily head various state parks systems. The program allowed for the construction, repair, and expansion of recreational parks, wildlife conservation refuges, and historic restoration programs in participating states.<sup>140</sup>

A memorandum sent by Conrad L. Wirth from the Interior Department to the district officers, inspectors, procurement officers, park authorities, and camp superintendents set forth the fundamental facts concerning State Park Emergency Conservation Work division of the CCC. These facts included the programs goals and provided a template for those working in the camps regarding what could be used for publicity purposes.

A state park developed under the State Park Emergency Conservation Work Division would have its timber tracts improved and protected, and its topography saved

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 11. Forest and National Park employees opposed the two hundred men requirement due to many jobs not requiring such a vast number of people, but they were forced to change their programs to accommodate the president's vision.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 5.

from erosion and flood. The park's adaptable acreage was cleared for campgrounds and picnic areas. A variety of construction projects followed including building trails, bridges, simple shelters, picnic tables, outdoor fireplaces, log cabin communities, recreational lodges, places for swimming, boating and controlled fishing, and water and waste disposal systems. Improvements from the template served as the plan for Frontier Historical Park authorities in their decision as to what projects the new enrollees should work on during their time in the park.<sup>141</sup>

In the memorandum, Wirth explained the significance of state parks and why the Interior Department believed they should be regulated and protected under temporary federal authority. He believed most state parks contained highly valuable natural resources and scenic beauty, but unplanned and uncontrolled use of such areas resulted in the destruction or excessive use of the resources. State park authorities could benefit from the planning, structure, and funding provided by the Interior Department.<sup>142</sup>

Wirth felt that the popularity of the state park movement stemmed from the notion that they were directed at personal happiness and the conservation of natural resources cost the state little money when considering overall spending. Wirth believed that states that rejected the opportunity overlooked one of the largest federal aid programs ever presented in the history of the United States. Wirth wrote that state officials would be foolish to pass up the aid of the program for a long lasting asset for their state.<sup>143</sup> Once completed, a park was left in the hands of the state where it was located to be maintained

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<sup>141</sup> United State Department of the Interior National Park Services State Park Division, (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office), August 25, 1934, 1.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

and administered. According to the majority of park authorities at the time, a state park could be self-sufficient if properly managed by charging fees for overnights, weekends and vacations in the cabins, swimming, boating, fishing, and the returns from the concessions.<sup>144</sup>

On April 10, 1933, Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley received recruits for the Civilian Conservation Corps camps in Kansas. Fort Leavenworth received two thousand recruits and Fort Riley received four hundred men.<sup>145</sup> The corps area commander determined the relocation of men upon completion of training and physicals.<sup>146</sup>

While recruits endured physical conditioning and corps directors strategized the locations of the Kansas camps, the Interior Department took requests and bids from legislatures who wanted a CCC camp established in their constituency. Sixth District Representative Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy of Hays saw the opportunity as a means to improve the recently designated Frontier Historical Park.<sup>147</sup> She lobbied for the placement of a camp in Hays and was instrumental in the final decision by the Interior Department in selecting Frontier Historical Park over several other Kansas communities.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Admission fees and sales were debated; some park authorities believed that charging the public was contrary to the mission of the state park itself.

<sup>145</sup> "Forestry Workers Train in Kansas," *Emporia Gazette* (Emporia, Kansas), April 10, 1933 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/10201619/?terms=Civilian%2BConservation%2BCorps%2BHays%2C%2BKansas> (accessed March 11, 2017).

<sup>146</sup> Army officials noted that the recruits at the two forts had enormous appetites and were underweight. Fetchner directed his subordinates to, "feed 'em up," and overcome any cases of malnutrition that existed amongst the unemployed recruits. The malnutrition amongst the enrolls depicted the harsh realities of the Great Depression. Military officials reported the recruits to be high class, with good morale and eager to get started. Fetchner planned to have the men in good physical conditions before they began their transfer to camps. Recruits were well fed and endured basic training to build up their strength and improve their health.

<sup>147</sup> O'loughlin McCarthy won her election in the same year that Roosevelt won the Presidency. She became a strong advocate and active voice in the formation of New Deal agricultural policy, a cornerstone of Roosevelt's economic recovery package. During her campaign constituents in the Sixth District noted that O'Loughlin possessed three strikes against her, she was a woman, a Democrat, and Catholic.

O'Loughlin McCarthy received encouragement from Clarence Edmund Rarick, President of Fort Hays Kansas State College, who served as chairman of Frontier Historical Park Board. Rarick, along with other park board members, realized the potential that a CCC camp could have for the development of Frontier Historical Park in generating funds for improvements and upgrades.

After World War I, automobile touring grew in popularity. Advertisements aimed at potential tourists described historic sites and scenic areas of the country in great detail. Automobiles replaced popular railroad tourism due to the affordability of automobiles and the freedom they provided for travelers. Automobile enthusiasts and highway advocates argued that by constructing more roads, tourists could experience the democratic journey of self-fulfillment where they would come face-to-face with America's historic past.<sup>148</sup>

O'Loughlin McCarthy and park board members understood the growing interest in auto tourism and the need for updated amenities in the park to entice visitors to stop during their long journeys.<sup>149</sup> In the dawning age of auto tourism, it was crucial for Frontier Historical Park to remain relevant. The park board hoped that tourists would come to the site because of its historic past. Many people were interested in western history and board members believed that after the park's completion, with proper advertisement, Frontier Historical Park could attract visitors from every state. Auto

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<sup>148</sup> Cindy Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1999), 237-245.

<sup>149</sup> Marguerite Schaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2001), 132-133.



tourists could relive the glory of Fort Hays in the comfort of a scenic, shaded, and updated state park.

In July 1933, O'Loughlin McCarthy finalized plans for the location of the camp in the park. The final bid took place in Topeka where O'Loughlin McCarthy and Rarick attended the meeting along with representatives from other Kansas communities. Many town leaders advocated for a camp. While the poor economy and crippling drought of the 1930s devastated Kansas communities, civic leaders were willing to consider any solution to bring money, morale, and improvements to their area. Leaders understood that even during construction, the camps would become tourist attractions for those curious about Roosevelt's new program and for those wanting to see what their taxes funded.<sup>150</sup>

O'Loughlin McCarthy and Rarick's efforts toward securing a CCC camp in Frontier Historical Park was successful. They argued that the development of Frontier Historical Park would significantly increase the attractiveness of the region and would bring in visitors from all over the country. The Interior Department selected Hays, plus fifteen other areas in Kansas, to host a CCC camp.

On July 22, 1933, two hundred men arrived in Hays aboard two special trains specifically set aside for the relocation of the enrollees. The recruits boarded the train at Fort Riley where they had undergone their conditioning and training for the work projects ahead of them. In Hays, district administrators directed the enrollees to Frontier Historical Park to work in the areas of forestation and the expansion of the park's natural features. The Interior Department and the War Department assigned the name "Veterans

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<sup>150</sup> "Story of Development of Frontier Historical Park by Superintendent", *The Ellis County News*, July 5, 1934.

Camp 1778” to the group of men stationed at Frontier Historical Park. The departments placed Camp 1778 under the command of H. Thompson, Major of the Thirteenth Cavalry.<sup>151</sup>

The recruits that made Hays their temporary home were comprised of World War I veterans who found themselves out of work or in need of supplemental income because of the crippling economic effects of the Depression. The veterans were from towns all across Kansas to work in Frontier Historical Park. Men from cities such as Kansas City and Wichita mingled with farmers and small townsmen from Downs, Stockton, and Girard. The occupations of the men before their unemployment demonstrated the impact the Great Depression had on middle-class workers. They included janitors, cooks, barbers, truck drivers, plumbers, mechanics, farmers painters, and boilermakers.<sup>152</sup> Once enrollees settled into the natural surroundings of the wooded area along Big Creek in the shadow of the Blockhouse and Guardhouse, the new camp recalled the glory days of Fort Hays, where soldiers, scouts, and cavalrymen camped alongside the same creek.

On Roosevelt’s approval, the requirements for every state park camp followed strict rules designated by the CCC. Quarters for the enrollees consisted of barrack-type camps with a separate room or tent. These quarters allowed for ample sleeping room for all of the men assigned to the camp, with an additional room adjoining for assembly or lounge purposes. The military officers added conveniences to the living and mess

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<sup>151</sup> The other men in charge included Captain Lawrence Wilson and Fort Riley soldiers, J.J. McLaughlin and Lloyd A. Cohler. Frank English acted as steward and was in charge of the mess, Jacob Arnold worked under English as first cook. W.W. Walden worked as a supply sergeant and was responsible for the clothing check out, and bedding. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, Major Thompson and Captain Wilson were relieved of their duty, and P.A. Frederickson took over the camp’s daily operations.

<sup>152</sup> National Parks Service: State Park Division, “Roster, 1778<sup>th</sup> Veteran Company,” Civilian Conservation Corps (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933).

quarters, bearing the cost of the materials themselves. Their amenities included private baths and toilet facilities in their quarters, table cloths, napkins, and chinaware for their mess and extra food.<sup>153</sup> To provide proper facilities that met the official standards by the CCC, President Rarick ordered the remodeling of the Women's Building on the campus of Fort Hays Kansas State College into an office, supply room, canteen, and hospital for Camp 1778.<sup>154</sup> Rarick divided one of the campus horse barns in half, with one side serving as a mess hall and the other as a barracks for the men.<sup>155</sup>

Camp 1778 appeared in an issue of *Happy Days*, the official newspaper of the CCC that relayed information about the program and general entertainment for the enrollees at all of the campsites. Lloyd Kohler, a reporter for the newspaper, noted that the World War Veterans of Company 1778 were hard at work constructing a state park that, "once completed would be an everlasting monument to the daring plainsmen and the hard riding United States cavalrymen of the 1860s."<sup>156</sup>

During their stay, enrollees took their work seriously. Many experienced an overwhelming sense of pride to be among other veterans again for the purpose of achieving a common goal. While many of them had witnessed horrible tragedy in Europe, the veterans felt the same sense of brotherhood, and pride but in a much less

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<sup>153</sup> Emergency Conservation Works, *State Park ECW Handbook*, (Washington D.C.:Government Printing Office, 1934), August 29, 1934, 1-2.

<sup>154</sup>The Women's Building is present day Martin Allen Hall on the campus of Fort Hays State University.

<sup>155</sup> James L. Forsyth, *Lighthouse on the Plains: A History of Fort Hays State University, 1902-2002* (Fort Hays State University), 60.

<sup>156</sup> Lloyd Kohler, "Veteran Hard At Work in Frontier Park," *Happy Days*, 2, March 10, 1943.

stressful environment. By direction of their immediate supervisors and Dr. Rarick, the enrollees provided valuable development of the park.<sup>157</sup>

One of the main projects that the enrollees took part in included the construction and development of the Custer Island picnic ground. The grounds were located near the monument erected by the Class of 1916 to commemorate the supposed site of Custer's campground while he was posted at Fort Hays. The area quickly became a focal point for the park board and they ordered the enrollees to remove the thick weeds and brush that had overtaken the site during the last few decades.<sup>158</sup>

Enrollees took part in other projects with the goal of modernizing Frontier Historical Park to meet the standards of state parks in the 1930s. Upon the completion of the CCC's work, the park board wanted Frontier Park to be the most scenic and desirable location in western Kansas. To meet this level of expectation, the park board and the CCC administrators devised a plan to make the park unique to the area of Hays while living up to its name Frontier Historical Park. The two groups aimed to highlight the natural scenic area and the historic value in Frontier Park with new features and amenities.<sup>159</sup>

The enrollees' early work projects included preliminary weeding and clearing of brush. With the lack of significant attention until the park's official designation, the park had included few benches. Trees, grass, and weeds had taken over the area, making it

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<sup>157</sup> C.E. Rarick, "Frontier Historical Park Biennial Report," 1938, 1-5.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. Due to the timber work conducted by the Experiment Station employees who planted and cared for tree species in the park following the land transfer, the park's tree numbers rose to its peak. The dense area of trees created the aesthetic value of the wooded forest, in an otherwise tree-less area.

unappealing for visitors. The enrollees worked hard to remove the overgrowth and make room for improvements. Once they completed basic maintenance, the camp advisors ordered the men to construct one and a half miles of scenic gravel drives that allowed visitors to drive through the park. The newly graveled drives helped achieve the close experience for auto tourist that Rarick hoped to attract to the state park.

Board members believed they could upgrade the park while keeping a frontier atmosphere. New parks constructed during the period included facilities accompanying a wide range of activities and recreation for visitors. The enrollees spent a few weeks constructing a bridle path through the area as park board members wanted to encourage horseback riding through the park, to harken back to frontier days.<sup>160</sup>

To make Frontier Historical Park a comfortable and attractive area for tourists, the park board and the camp's supervisors ordered the enrollees to construct several designated picnic area that contained shelter houses. To stay true to the frontier theme of the park, the camp supervisors suggested that the buildings should be constructed from native materials. By doing so, it not only saved the federal government money, but added to the aesthetic mood of the park.<sup>161</sup>

The Army had built a number of the buildings at Fort Hays with limestone including the Blockhouse and Guardhouse. The park board and camp supervisors wanted the limestone structures to create a juxtaposition between the old and new buildings in the park. Over the course of the camp's presence in the park enrollees constructed rustic

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>161</sup> F.L. Cunningham, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Hays, Kansas Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1936,"(1936),1-9.

shelter houses and pergolas made from materials taken from limestone rock quarries in north central Kansas.<sup>162</sup>

To complement the new shelter houses, the enrollees constructed fire pits and ovens both in the shelters or in close vicinity to one another. Board members believed that the installation of the fire pits would help visitors resonate with the frontier past. With visitors able to light and maintain their own campfire, it connected them to the past and made them feel connected to the history surrounding.

The enrollees worked on other practical projects meant to enticed future visitors. The city of Hays and the state of Kansas wanted to offset the risk of flooding and the potential damage to the park and the city by constructing dams on Big Creek.<sup>163</sup> Once completed, the dams had the capability of impounding eight hundred twenty-five thousand cubic feet of water. While the main purpose of the two dams was to lower the possibility of flooding, they also retained water from Big Creek, forming a small fishing area for visitors. The damming of the creek not only provided practical means for flood control, but allowed for conservation of the water levels during drought years. It also managed the scenic quality of the water source in the park.<sup>164</sup>

The workers constructed a modern swinging bridge to accompany the dam below to add to the scenery of the park and for easy access to all sections of the park. The

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>163</sup> While President Rarick believed that the construction of the dams would lower the risk of floods, the construction did not eliminate the risk. While Hays is prone to flooding, and one of the most notable floods occurred in 1951. Following two severe thunderstorms, Big Creek swelled and overtook the dams. Widespread damage occurred to Frontier Historical Park, Fort Hays Kansas State College, and surrounding neighborhoods.

<sup>164</sup> C.E. Rarick, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Hays, Kansas Annual Report For the Year Ending June 30, 1936," (1936).

remainder of the work done by the enrollees involved the addition of modern recreation amenities to the park including swing sets and tennis courts. While these new structures did not fit the nineteenth century frontier theme, the board knew that the park would benefit from adding options for both children and adults.<sup>165</sup>

While the enrollees took part in upgrading projects in the state park, one project marked their legacy in Frontier Historical Park: The construction of a small rustic log cabin in the park. The enrollees boasted about the historic materials used to construct the cabin and felt that they were not only preserving the historic integrity of the park, but adding to its rich past. The workers used stone from the original Fort Fletcher, located fifteen miles from the park to construct the cabin's fireplace. They used the lintel stone from the first school house built in Ellis County as the central stone in the fireplace. The logs used for the structure and to finish the inside of the cabin came from nearby Big Creek, enrollees built the furniture, including tables and chairs. They also formed all of the metal hooks, hatches, hinges, and latches from hand wrought iron. They burned brands from various ranches were burnt into the outside doors, and decorated the inside doors with Indian languages and signs. J.P.Marrick, the superintendent of the worksite at Frontier Historical Park, designed the cabin that the enrollees took so much pride in constructing.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> The recreation movement in the United States became increasingly popular during the Progressive era. City and state leaders urge communities to provide adequate land and equipment for playgrounds. The recreation movement countered the crippling environmental effects of the industrial revolution. Theodore Roosevelt advocated for the construction of playgrounds.

<sup>166</sup> "Historic Materials Used, Rustic Cabin Near Hays Has Unusual Background," accessed November 23, 1933, [https://www.newspapers.com/clip/8323758/the\\_emporium\\_gazette/](https://www.newspapers.com/clip/8323758/the_emporium_gazette/).

During the active year of Veterans Camp 1778, enrollees provided valuable additions to the park through the various work projects. Many recreational structures and facilities were built for public use. The federal government spent two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to update Frontier Historical Park. One geographic region of the country stricken by the severe drought and the economic depression was granted a new public park. Veterans that were displaced by the economic downturn found hope and companionship during their time in Hays.

In an interview, Marrick reflected on the time of the camp's presence in the park and the hope for its future use by visitors. Marrick expected that upon its completion, park visitors would use the facilities in the spirit of it being, "their park," not only useful to them but as an area for common bonds. Marrick wanted those who shared a vested interest in the park to deter those who did not see value in the property and might try to damage it. He believed that Frontier Historical Park would rival any other in the state.<sup>167</sup>

Not wanting the veterans' hard work to go waste through vandalism, Marrick hoped the Kansas legislature would see fit to protect and manage the park. He proposed that the cabin could be used as museum, or by the Boy Scouts or the Boys and Girls Club of Hays. Veterans Camp 1778 members accomplished more in the one year that they were stationed in Hays than what others accomplished in longer periods of time. Their efforts took a financial burden off of the state of Kansas. The diligent and persistent work by Kathryn O'Loughlin-McCarthy and C.E. Rarick to locate a CCC camp in Hays

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.



allowed for Frontier Historical Park to transform into a modern state park that protected the natural wonders of the region and the historical integrity of Fort Hays.<sup>168</sup>

In 1934, Veterans Camp 1778 vacated Hays and enrollees returned to their individual homes with an experience of a lifetime. Upon their arrival in Hays, they had encountered a park overgrown with weeds, native grasses, and various tree species. Over the course of one year, enrollees cleared the brush and weeds, cleared out the bottom of the creek, and constructed several new features for the park. Their efforts presented western Kansas an updated state park.

Without the CCC's help and the federal government's investment the park would not have received the upgrades it had desperately needed at the time of its official opening on 1931. While state leaders offered their gratitude towards to the National Park Service for their contribution, state officials did not consider what should be done with the new Frontier Historical Park on Veterans Camp 1778's abandonment. It took the state additional decades to understand how to properly manage and maintain Frontier Historical Park.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> "Historic Materials Used, Rustic Cabin Near Hays Has Unusual Background," accessed November 23, 1933, [https://www.newspapers.com/clip/8323758/the\\_emporium\\_gazette/](https://www.newspapers.com/clip/8323758/the_emporium_gazette/).

<sup>169</sup> The development of a nationwide system of state parks carried on under the supervision of the State Park Division of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior, with Civilian Conservation Corps labor and Emergency Conservation Work funds proved to be the most significant recreation conservation trend of the recovery. As a direct result of the movement, nearly half a million acres were acquired by the states through gift and purchases for state parks and forests. Five states, Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi and New Mexico, acquired their first state park properties. Sixteen states, California, Oregon, Washington, Texas, Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Georgia, North Carolina, Maryland, New Hampshire, Kentucky, Vermont, and Kansas acquired new or additions to parks.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Where the Buffalo Still Roam

*“We must not only protect the country side and save it from destruction, we must restore what has been destroyed and salvage the beauty and charm of our cities ... Once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature, his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.”*<sup>170</sup> -Lyndon B. Johnson

The decades following the federal government’s investment and involvement in the area the park continually evolved as the legislature, the park board, and visitors from all over the country shaped the understanding of how to manage a state park that best served the people. Once the Federal Government removed the Civilian Conservation Corps camp from Frontier Historical Park in the summer of 1934, a period of one year lapsed before the Kansas legislature provided additional funding for the general maintenance and security of the park. Despite the quarter of a million dollars poured into upgrades, the state did not budget for the park’s future. The lack of foresightedness by the legislature and the harsh economic conditions of the 1930s jeopardized the park by exposing the newly completed CCC projects to the elements and the public without proper supervision.<sup>171</sup>

A disastrous flood swept through the park in late 1934. Despite the camp enrollees’ construction of two dams to stem flooding, a torrential downpour mixed with prolonged drought conditions gave way to high-rising waters that flooded the park and

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<sup>170</sup> “A Brief History of the National Parks,” Library of Congress, accessed April 19, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-parks-maps/articles-and-essays/brief-history-of-the-national-parks/>

<sup>171</sup> F.L. Cunningham, “Frontier Historical Park Care Takers Report 1935,”(1935), 3.

set back much of the forestry work completed by the workers. When Big Creek subsided it left six feet of silt on the park's land, partially covering tables, seats, and ovens, and leaving large quantities of debris and brush throughout various areas within the creek's channel.<sup>172</sup>

During the year of lapsed funding, the park lacked supervision that resulting in widespread vandalism of the park's structures. The combination of flooding and vandalism damaged nearly every structure in the park. In July 1935, the legislature approved a sum of four thousand dollars for upkeep and security of the park. The park board wasted little time in putting the funds to use. The first order of business included hiring Floyd Cunningham as caretaker, plus a patrolman, and two attendants. While the legislature slowly worked to provide proper funds for the park's maintenance, the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps deteriorated during that first year. The employees faced the overwhelming task of making repairs.

During the winter of 1935, emergency work by park employees came to an end and their general maintenance began. The workers improved and graded roads and constructed additional drives throughout the park to create more access for visitors. In the winter, workers built parking spaces so visitors could have the option of leaving their vehicles to explore the park on foot. Employees segregated the recreational and picnic areas with salvaged trees from Big Creek. In the spring of 1936, employees cleaned and repaired the tennis courts for future use by visitors. The bridle paths underwent graveling

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 4.

to make it easier on horses and to provide their riders a more enjoyable experience. Employees planted a variety of species of evergreen trees, and managed the remaining trees in the park. Workers also planted a forest nursery from seedling trees secured from the United States Forest Service.<sup>173</sup>

During the spring months, a construction company began building new bridge over Big Creek on Highway Number 1 that changed the park's entrances and allowed employees to construct new roads to conform to the change. The park board and employees believed the construction of the new bridge provided a pleasing quality and allowed for easier accessibility to the park's entrances. Employees planted a variety of trees around the new entrance to increase its attractiveness and entice more people to visit.<sup>174</sup>

In the summer months, a majority of the projects originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps underwent repairs and repainting. This included the suspension bridge, the restrooms, all of the picnic tables, and other facilities. The employees felt ashamed that the hard work of the veterans went to waste during that lapsed year. They felt it was their duty to correct the mistake made by the state for not providing proper funding to park and allowing the destruction of the park to take place.

Employees repaired the dams constructed by the camp's enrollees to offset future flood damage, but failed to eliminate the risk entirely. Wing walls ten feet long and from six to eight feet in height were constructed on both sides of the east dam. To prevent

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 6.

water from eroding around the sides, workers replaced the imitation stones and boulders on the dam with concrete. They constructed a culvert for the purpose of draining when needed, while complying with state law that required fish chutes to be placed in all public dams.<sup>175</sup>

The construction company that built the bridge left behind a number of trees, which workers used to construct rustic fences and shelter houses. This was consistent with the “frontier” theme used throughout the park. Employees expanded recreational opportunities in the park by constructing horseshoe pits and two croquet courts. These new features added to the already existing tennis courts and bridal paths.<sup>176</sup>

Aside from employee efforts to clean up the park and add new features, no laborious or expensive work took place. The state’s appropriation to the park did not allow the board to spend large quantities of money on improving area. The board ordered the employees to forego some repairs and maintenance in the park to conserve the small amount of money the state allotted to them. Due to insufficient funds, the most noticeable issue was the decision to not repair the retaining wall of the larger west dam.<sup>177</sup>

Flood waters had eroded the native limestone wall. Even as it became noticeably worse, the board lacked funds for it to be repaired. To intervene, Rarick once again overrode the state government and applied for monetary assistance from the Works Progress Administration for park projects. Rarick was impressed by the work that the

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 15.

CCC had provided to the park, so he figured he could once again return to the Federal Government for assistance. Despite his best efforts, no application was approved for additional funds during Frontier Historical Park's first operating year.<sup>178</sup>

Disappointed by the initial rejection of additional federal funding, Rarick continued to apply in hopes of obtaining money for future projects. The projects he wanted to fund included an office and tool shed; from the park's beginning the employee's tools had remained in the care of the Fort Hays Kansas State College maintenance building. Rarick wanted funding for an irrigation system to provide ample water for the many trees, flowers, and shrubs planted in the park. The installation of a water system improved the odds of the species' survival during drought conditions, and in the long run, saved the state money. Other desired purchases included a truck for routine maintenance.

The caretaker, F.L. Cunningham, wanted an updated home within the park. At the time of his employment, Cunningham and his family moved into the cabin constructed by the CCC enrollees. He complained about the residence, saying that it was neither sealed properly nor modern. The enrollees had constructed the cabin as a curiosity rather than intending it be used as a useful full-time residence.<sup>179</sup>

In the first year of operation, Cunningham gave a report on the park's visitors. He noted that they were eager to tell him how delighted they were to come across a park in western Kansas during their travels. Since it was located adjacent to the nation's cross

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>179</sup> C.E. Rarick, "Kansas Historical Park Board Minutes 1937,"(1937), 2.

country highway Federal Highway 40 South, with Kansas Highway Number 1 running directly through the park, numerous travelers and tourists from other states took advantage of its restful condition and wooded area unique in western Kansas. Cunningham noted that cars from practically every state in the country could be seen there, including Alaska and Washington D.C.<sup>180</sup>

Cunningham and the park board mutually agreed that in order to preserve the park's natural and historic features, they needed to implement a strict set of rules to forestall vandalism and create an equally pleasant experience for all park goers. The rules determined by the board applied to actions by the public while they were within park boundaries and carried the full force and effect of the law; violators were subject to arrest and prosecution. The rules included a prohibition against defacing any sign, guide post, or property. This included peeling off bark, carving or chopping trees, shrubs or plants, carving initials or other matter on any park property. Cunningham wanted these rules set into place to prevent similar instances to those that happened during the funding phase for the park.<sup>181</sup>

Other regulations included banning the possession of firearms in the park. The park board, as well as the Kansas Board of Regents, classified Frontier Historical Park as a game refuge, similar to Christian Jensen's idea. The rules strictly prohibited hunting, trapping, injuring, pursuing, or mistreatment of any bird or animal in the park. However, persons who possessed the proper state fishing license could fish with rod and line in the

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 4.

waters during daylight hours only, except by special authority. Trot-lines, throw lines, set lines, float lines, bank lines, and limb lines, were not permitted. Cunningham knew that trash collected in Big Creek endangered the aquatic life, so he personally worked to ban any form of littering in the park.<sup>182</sup>

The park board wanted to create a welcoming environment. They wanted to regulate activity in the park and create a serene place for relaxation while maintaining a connection with nature. Speed limits were set for fifteen miles for motor vehicles on park drives. Drunkenness, loud, vile or boisterous language, fighting, or immoral conduct were prohibited. Lastly, the park board of managers gave the superintendent the authority of a deputy sheriff and a deputy game protector, putting him in charge of preserving the law and order of Frontier Historical Park.<sup>183</sup>

Meanwhile, President Rarick continued his campaign to supplement the lack of funding by working closely with officials at the Works Progress Administration office. During Rarick's presidency at Fort Hays Kansas State College, the regional drought worsened. He worried that college students who did not have the means to be in school without a job would soon drop out of college. Rarick continued to apply for WPA grants to provide the students financial relief. President Roosevelt came to the aid of the nation's youth by expanding WPA programs similar to the CCC. On June 26, 1935, Roosevelt established the National Youth Administration by using funds from the Emergency Appropriation Act of 1935. At Fort Hays, as well as at other colleges and

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>183</sup> State Park Board of Managers, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Rules 1936," (1936), 1.



universities, the program did not provide enough funding and job opportunities for all students, but federal and state efforts to keep Kansas students in college continued into 1935. The NYA provided fifteen thousand dollars for ten months of the 1935-1936 school year, and an annual review determined the renewal of the grants from that point forward.<sup>184</sup>

Dissatisfied by the funding amount, Rarick argued that the WPA should allocate higher funding and priority to Kansas due to the drought's effects on the region. Over the course of four years, Rarick persuaded the federal government to distribute higher amounts of relief to Fort Hays students. People quickly noticed the students' work around campus. Rarick used the students and the funding as a way to provide extra labor in Frontier Historical Park. He allowed for a few NYA students to help with the planting and construction projects within park boundaries.<sup>185</sup>

In 1937, Cunningham took advantage of the unique opportunity to have the NYA labor available in the park, working diligently to not squander their assistance. Cunningham, the park employees, and the NYA students constructed several new picnic sites equipped with ovens for cooking, tables, and parking spaces. They graded new drives in the vicinity of both dams, thereby making the picnic spots more readily accessible. Two more croquet courts were constructed near the tennis courts to provide

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<sup>184</sup> Rarick, 10. Qualified freshman women received \$10 per month and the men \$11; upperclassmen received \$12. To the \$1,015 per month the NYA fund was added \$200 per month in state funds making enough funding available to three hundred and fifty students.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

more recreation opportunities at the request of visitors. The new park area included two new shelter houses and toilet facilities.

The NYA constructed a new areas in the park, including a small tract of about four acres southwest of the new bridge over Big Creek. This plot of ground included Chinese and Siberian Elm trees planted eight years before. Students constructed a circular drive through the area, with plenty of parking spaces. They also added a bridle and footpath, a softball diamond with backstop, stone ovens, stone entrance markers, rustic shelters, permanent benches, movable seats, playground equipment and a volleyball court. The second park was much larger and encompassed fifteen acres of land. The workers constructed four stone ovens and four sturdy tables in the park, leaving the majority of it open for walking, hiking, and other recreation.<sup>186</sup>

Throughout 1937, Cunningham and his employees worked to secure some of the already existing buildings within the park. Workers sealed the CCC cabin that Cunningham occupied to keep debris from entering. Since the camp's enrollees did not anticipate the cabin becoming a residence, they did not include many amenities for comfortable living. Cunningham added a bathroom to the upstairs section of the cabin. The park board proposed the construction of a new cabin, but due to insufficient funds, Cunningham decided fix the cabin and update the facilities.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> During this period the Frontier Historical Park staff acquired a 1927 Chevrolet roadster model pickup truck to help perform the various duties within the park. Cunningham described the truck as being decrepit but able to get the job done.

<sup>187</sup> F.L. Cunningham, "Report of the Caretaker of Frontier Historical Park for the Period from May to November 10, 1937,"(1937), 3.

Park employees secured the remaining buildings on the grounds of Fort Hays. They tore up the building's flooring and took it upon themselves to replace and repair as many sections as possible. They temporarily boarded up the windows and doors to keep souvenir hunters out. Because of its decrepit state, workers stabilized and shingled the Blockhouse. Park employees suggested that the Guardhouse become the focal point of the area, and erected historical markers for visitors to read about its glorious past.<sup>188</sup>

In 1938, fewer major projects in the park took place. However, the Federal Government continued to fund the NYA for Hays, and Cunningham continued to be grateful for the student's help. They spent much of the year maintaining the areas built by the camp enrollees. This time the Guardhouse received attention from the workers, who cleaned the building and put it into service. They tore up flooring and installed eight new windows. They constructed three doors from thick material and kept them locked when park employees were not present to protect the contents. Workers cleaned and restored the west side of the building and made it available for visitors to explore.<sup>189</sup>

By April 1939, crowds of western Kansas school children swarmed the park almost every day. Cunningham noted the new enthusiasm demonstrated by residents of Hays and nearby towns regarding outdoor recreation. Visitors used and enjoyed the park

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 15. In compliance with the park board's request for Cunningham to keep track of attendance he estimated that 200,000 persons visited the park annually. Approximately fifteen percent entered the picnic and recreational facilities, half stop to sample the well water, or to inspect the park structures. The average Sunday visitors from May to October 1937, numbered 2,475 people in 825 cars. Summer totals 69, 825 individuals. The average weekday visitors for the same period numbered 600 persons in 304 vehicles. Summer total 91, 800 individuals, total visitors Sunday and week days 160, 825.

<sup>189</sup> At spare times during the winter, the site of the Lone Grave and Post Cemetery were measured off and suggested plans for their preservation was drawn. The park boards hoped that one of the civic organizations could sponsor a movement to mark and preserve the Lone Grave since it was not on state property. Sites of Fort Hays buildings were studied and marked off as well.

in higher numbers than in previous years.<sup>190</sup> Cunningham could not explain the locals' sudden interest in the park, but was thrilled by it.<sup>191</sup>

In 1940, the Federal Government renewed the NYA grant for Hays and began new work projects. Students constructed large native stone shelter houses within the park for visitors to use for picnics and events. The shelter houses added to the rustic feeling of the park that Cunningham wanted to preserve from the earliest days of the CCC. After the shelters' completion, Cunningham noted that the public flocked to them. Guests reserved all of the shelters every Sunday, and several groups booked them for various times during the day. The new shelters and the landscaping work continued to bolster attendance by both locals and outsiders. Visitors' curiosity about the condition of the Guardhouse and the Blockhouse grew in the 1940s because more people were using the park. Cunningham pushed for his employees to continue repairing and stabilizing the buildings and added stone markers to designate the former locations of the Fort Hays buildings. He believed completing the project would bring even more visitors to explore the old Fort Hays grounds, and add a unique experience to the park.<sup>192</sup>

Cunningham's positivity and projection of a bright future for Frontier Historical Park was interrupted in 1942. The outbreak of World War II sent the United States and the world into familiar territory, especially for those still reeling from the effects of the Great War. Cunningham felt the growing darkness weighing on the visitors to his beloved

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<sup>191</sup> F.L. Cunningham, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Caretaker's Report, 1939," (1939), 3.

<sup>192</sup>F.L. Cunningham, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Caretaker's Report April 1, 1940," (1940), 2.

park, and that year Roosevelt discontinued the NYA in order to direct funds toward the war effort. Cunningham knew a day would come when the NYA would no longer be there, but he did not see war being the reason for the program's cancellation. The decision to redirect federal money and labor devastated Cunningham, who inherited the complete care for a large beautiful park, but with little help for maintenance.<sup>193</sup>

Typically, Cunningham's annual report contained excitement and optimism. With the outbreak of war, it turned dark and reflected the anxiety felt by the caretaker. He expressed disappointment that the NYA students could not return to the park. The labor once supplied by students now fell to Cunningham, who attempted to maintain the regular work routine during the day time hours. He also carried out patrol duties during the night shift. In his report, Cunningham stated that the park had outgrown the one man state.<sup>194</sup>

Vandalism and drunkenness rose in the park and, Cunningham attributed the rise in deviant behavior to the unstable condition of the world. Public anxieties were noticeable in the park, with people damaging park buildings and natural features. Cunningham attempted to stop the destruction as much as he could, but the task of patrolling it was too great for one man. He expressed dissatisfaction with the CCC cabin he continued to occupy, and hoped that the legislature would provide funds for a new

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<sup>193</sup> F.L. Cunningham, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Caretaker's Report April 20, 1941," (1941), 4.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 7.

home, but once again they denied his request. The cabin now showed wear from the years of use by Cunningham, his wife, and seven children.<sup>195</sup>

The uncertain future of the park and the high level of work related stress sent Cunningham into a deep depression. His wife remarked to the park board that her husband contemplated stepping down from his position to join the defense industry due to the working and living conditions. The board maintained that Cunningham was an asset to the park, they admired the work he completed over the years, and wanted to prevent him from leaving. The park board members knew that federal funding was gone, at least while the war raged across the world and the state was not willing to provide significant amounts of funding for park maintenance. The members needed a creative solution to continue financing the park.<sup>196</sup>

To Cunningham's disapproval, the park board agreed to allow oil exploration on the grounds of the former Fort Hays Military Reservation. Many of the members did not want the land transformed into a sea of oil wells, but lack of funding left them with few other options. The decision regarding oil exploration went to the Board of Regents who debated the issue and allowed oil companies to drill on the land.<sup>197</sup>

By September 5, 1942, oil exploration of the former Fort Hays Military was a successful venture for the park board. Companies eventually discovered oil on the reservation and placed a few oil rigs on the land. Oil workers placed these rigs so as to

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<sup>195</sup> Cunningham., 5.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>197</sup>F.L. Cunningham, " Kansas Frontier Historical Park Caretaker's Report Monday April 27, 1942,"(1942), 2.

not disturb the park's facilities and compromise its historic integrity. Oil money provided the board with enough of a monetary safety net to ensure general upkeep of the park. Cunningham was elated and relieved by the oil discovery, while also noting it was not the ideal solution. To raise more money, the park board leased forty acres of the reservation to the Fort Hays Country Club for the construction of a golf course.<sup>198</sup> Those funds allowed Cunningham to make repairs to the cabin. He dug a basement and built an addition onto the cabin. Cunningham and his wife were excited at the prospect of having more room for their large family.<sup>199</sup>

Frontier Historical Park survived on the oil money throughout the remainder of the 1940s. The primary goals of the park board and the caretaker were to keep the park in decent shape, and to attend to the many trees and plants species planted over the years. Vandals continued to be a problem, but with increased money Cunningham hired extra help to combat those who tried to damage the park's many features. The 1950s and 60s allowed for the park to enter a new phase and adapt to the expanding tourism in post-war America.

After World War II, the American people were ready to heal from the war's devastating effects. Similar to the auto tourism boom after World War I, Americans took to the road in the 1950s and 60s. During this era, Americans were able to travel quality roads and enjoy the affordability and dependability of vehicles. Park employees across the United States took advantage of the growing tourism industry, and to stay relevant,

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<sup>198</sup> The Blockhouse served as the clubhouse for a short period. The golf course remains open to present day.

<sup>199</sup> F.L. Cunningham, "Kansas Frontier Historical Park Caretaker's Report September 5, 1942," (1942), 4.

the Frontier Historical Park Board decided to increase their historic and natural attractions.

In 1952, an open letter appeared in the *Hays Daily News* addressed to the City Manager, Ben Brungardt, and the head of the Hays Chamber of Commerce John Wilkerson, the writer urged the city to take action and capitalize on Hays' historic western past. In the letter, the person describes themselves as a newcomer to Hays and a self-proclaimed "western enthusiast" who arrived in the community only to experience disappointment with the lack of capitalization of its colorful, western past. While other Kansas towns, including Dodge City and Abilene, spent money to draw tourists into their areas promising the experience of cow towns, Hays distanced itself from the western frontier image. The anonymous writer wanted Hays to step back into its past and revive its wild western heritage. The writer suggested that the Blockhouse and Guardhouse at Frontier Historical Park be converted into a museum to commemorate the role of Hays in western history.<sup>200</sup>

Acting on the letter's suggestion, the Hays Chamber of Commerce established the Old Fort Hays Committee. The group dedicated themselves to finding solutions to help the park board preserve the remaining Fort Hays buildings and promote tourism to the park. With the construction of Highway 40, the highway brought people directly to the location resulting in an influx of tourists and visitors to Frontier Historical Park. The Old Fort Hays Committee took advantage of the new wave of visitors to the area. The

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<sup>200</sup> "Hays' Colorful Past Could Lure Tourists," *Hays Daily News*, November 6, 1952.



highway divided the park with the Fort Hays buildings on one side and the natural area on the other.<sup>201</sup>

In 1955, the park board signed a lease with the Old Fort Hays Committee allowing the them to take over the operations of the historic buildings. By agreeing to the lease, the Old Fort Hays Committee took on the responsibility of the upkeep and care of the Blockhouse and Guardhouse. The committee converted the Blockhouse into a small museum dedicated to the history of Hays' western heritage, and the Guardhouse was opened upon request of visitors. The committee sold souvenirs and concessions to pay for the daily operations, with ten percent of sales returning to the State Park Board.<sup>202</sup>

During the same year that the Old Fort Hays Committee took control of the remaining Fort Hays buildings, Frontier Historical Park received a donation of two bison to be kept on the park's property. Keeping true to the frontier theme of the park, the bison exhibit consisted of a bull and cow, appropriately named Wild Bill and Calamity Jane. The two buffalo quickly became a hit among the park's many visitors. Many people that stopped at their pen had never seen a bison before, only reading about them in books. The addition of the bison was a far cry from what William Connelley envisioned as a full zoo

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<sup>201</sup> "The lease Contract between the State Park Board and the Old Fort Hays Committee," July 1, 1955.

<sup>202</sup> "Lease Contract," When Frontier Historical Park opened in the 1930s, the park board agreed that no concessions or admission fees were allowed within the park. They believed that the park should be open to the public free of charge. By signing the lease it allowed for a loop hole since the park board was no longer in charge of the buildings.

of native animals when he proposed the construction of Frontier Historical Park, but the pair captured the imagination of visitors, old and young alike.<sup>203</sup>

A division emerged regarding the responsibility and the mission of Frontier Historical Park during the 1950s. The Old Fort Hays Committee remained in charge of the Blockhouse and Guardhouse while the park board and its employees maintained the natural features of the park, including the care of the small buffalo herd. During the early sixties, the Kansas government wanted to place the park under one central authority for budgeting and efficiency. State employees decided to place the Kansas State Historical Society in charge of Frontier Historical Park.

On July 1, 1963, the legislature granted the park to the State Historical Society. The operation of the park under the 1963 law was a cooperative arrangement, but created confusion regarding the specific responsibilities of the various parties. The law granted the secretary of the State Historical Society the responsibility of administration, supervision, and control of the property. The law vested the custody and management to a board of managers. The board consisted of Dr. Morton Cunningham as president of Fort Hays Kansas State College, A.H. Cromb of Kansas City as chairman of the Board of Regents, and Paul Ward as the local representative. Subject to approval by the Board of Regents, the law stated that the secretary of the State Historical Society made all

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<sup>203</sup> “Bouncing Baby Buffalo Increases the Herd to Six”, *The Hays Daily News* (Hays, Kansas), May 10, 1961 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1377561/?terms=Buffalo%2BHerd> (accessed March 9, 2017).

necessary rules and regulations for the use, preservation, improvement, control, and maintenance of the grounds and buildings.<sup>204</sup>

After the State Historical Society took control of Frontier Historical Park proposals, the park was better marketed place. In 1965, the Kansas Department of Economic Development spent significant amounts of time and money to market Kansas as, “Midway USA,” and promoted the slogan “Playaday,” all with the goal of building an image of Kansas as something more than a place to hurry through. These slogans promoted tourism in the state and aimed to encourage people to slow down.<sup>205</sup>

Under the new direction of the Kansas Historical Society, Frontier Historical Park’s management and mission evolved. The society placed an emphasis on fully repairing the Blockhouse and the Guardhouse. In 1963, they successfully relocated one of the former officer’s homes to the park that had formally served as a private residence.. The Kansas Historical Society focused on building new modern displays for the museum and pushed for the site to remain open full time. While the natural features of the park were managed, the mission of Frontier Historical Park progressively shifted towards the preservation of the buildings at the request of the governor to promote historic tourism in the state and generate revenue. In 1967, the state opened the Fort Hays State Historic

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<sup>204</sup> “Historical Society in Charge of Fort Hays,” *The Hays Daily News*, December 12, 1965, accessed February 10, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1410656/?terms=Frontier%2BPark>.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

Visitors Center at Frontier Historical Park. This coincidentally marked the centennial celebration of the opening of old Fort Hays.<sup>206</sup>

Over the course of one hundred years, the Fort Hays Military Reservation dramatically evolved from its original intent and purpose. The initial purchase of the land by the United States Army became a backdrop for one the most turbulent periods in the Plains Indian Wars. Officers and soldiers quickly inhabited the fort and made the area their home by either living at Fort Hays or setting up camp in Big Creek's wooded terrain. The soldiers knew the reservation's natural features were unique to the region and sought to protect the natural scenery that was an oasis on the desolate plains. Following the closure of Fort Hays in 1889, the same mission to protect the trees by the military was continued in a push for a state park.

The movement to safeguard a state park in western Kansas cannot be attributed to the work of one person or group. It was a multilateral movement that took place over the course of a century. What started with strict tree protection ordinances by soldiers along Big Creek shifted to politicians who fought government bureaucracy and greed to obtain the reservation for the public. They fought against the commercial development of the land. Park advocates including Christian Jensen and Martin Allen worked to convince the citizen of Kansas that parks are a not only valuable assets to the state, but are beneficial to the public's well-being. Advocacy mixed with political zeal allowed Frontier Historical Park to thrive during times of desperation and economic hardship in the 1930s.

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

The work of Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy and Dr. C.E. Rarick secured the placement of the CCC camp that transformed the small roadside park into a modern state park. The money and labor obtained by the federal government and wisely used in the construction of the park allowed for western Kansas to possess a state park that otherwise would not have received funding from the state legislatures. In 1979, the park's mission shifted. The state leased the park located on the north side of Highway 183 Alternate to the City of Hays. City employees resumed the maintenance of the park and the small buffalo herd, while the Kansas Historical Society took full control of the Fort Hays State Historic Site.

Today, visitors from around the country and the world stop at both the Fort Hays State Historic Site and Frontier Historical Park. Tourists learn about the history of the region through professional displays in the Blockhouse, the Guardhouse, and the two officer's homes on the site. Stone markers appear along the path providing visitors an insight to the buildings that once stood there. In Frontier Park, the trees continue to grow with some dating back to the earliest days. The buffalo still roam nearby, where the decedents of Wild Bill and Calamity Jane kindle wonder in their many visitors. Big Creek still flows through the park, thanks in part to the dams constructed by the CCC enrollees and adding a unique feature to the arid region. The stone structures in the park, including the boundary markers and the shelter houses, are all relics dedicated to the work of the CCC workers and NYA students who built the park. Frontier Historical Park's landscape contains a story one hundred years in the making, with different individuals and groups seeing the potential for a state park in western Kansas.

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