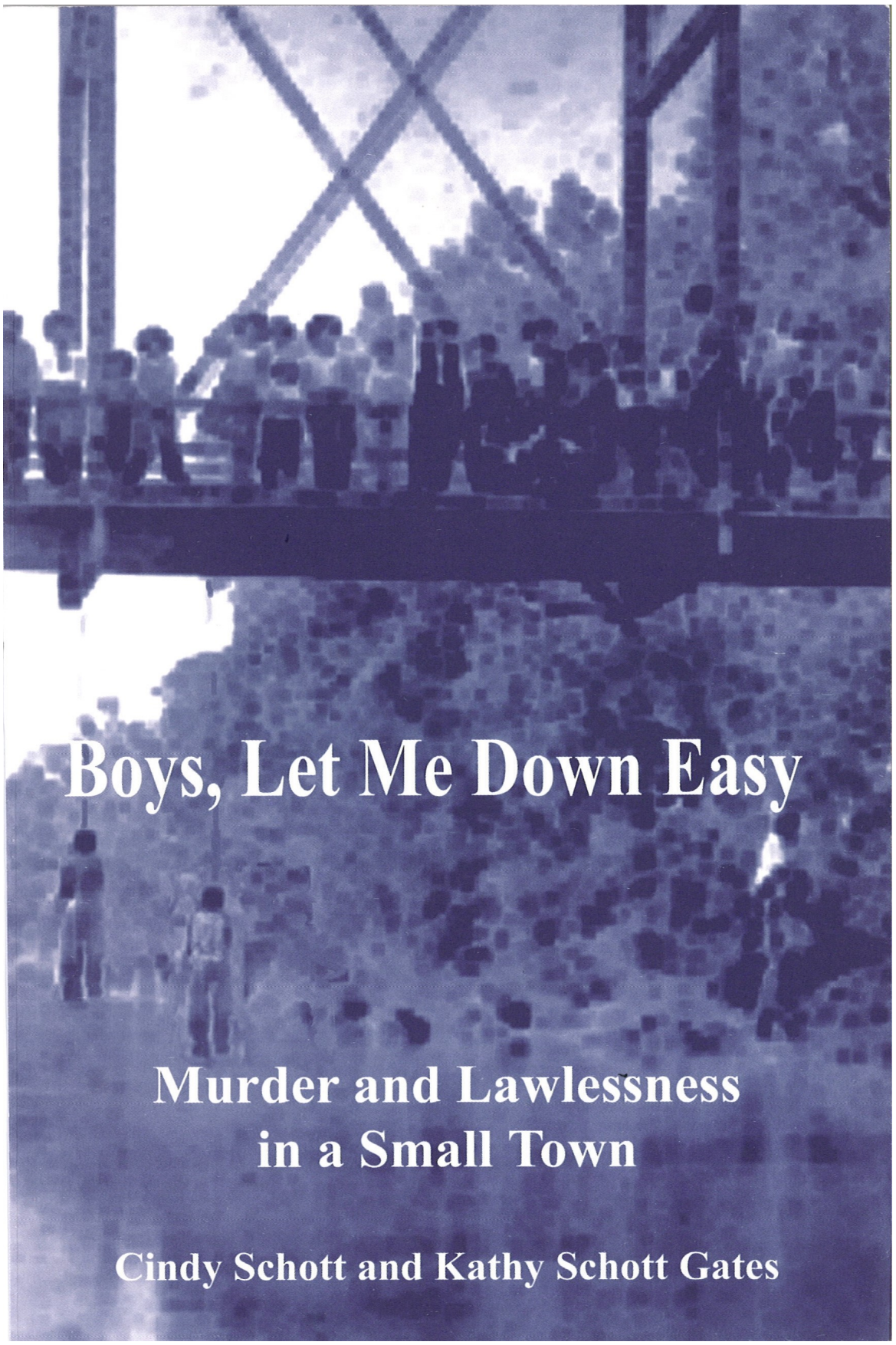

Boys, Let Me Down Easy

Murder and Lawlessness in a Small Town

Cindy Schott and Kathy Schott Gates

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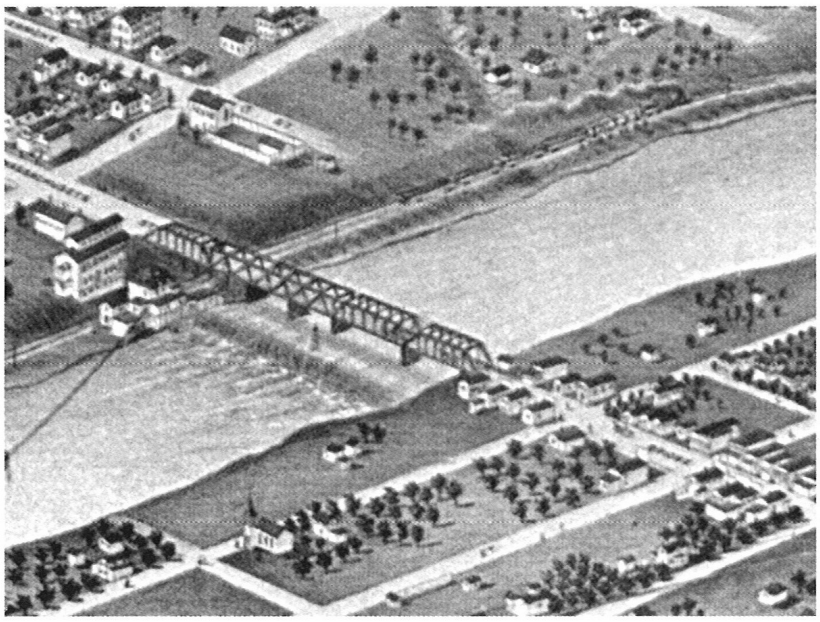

The bridge in Lawrence, Kansas as it appeared in 1880 about the time of the lynchings.

"Pete Vinegar, what did they hang you for?
Pete Vinegar, what did they hang you for?
Pete Vinegar, what did they hang you for?"

"Nothing."*

* By tradition, if you stand at the north end of the bridge and ask three times, "Pete Vinegar, what did they hang you for?" the deep voice of the ghost of Pete Vinegar comes from the river and answers, "Nothing." [As told by Justin Hill, Sr., of this childhood tradition. September 10, 1999]

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Contents

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We thank our family and coworkers (who are also our friends) for their support and encouragement during the many years it took to get this book to press. Kathy extends a special thanks to her wonderful daughter, Retta. Retta, we both love you very much!

A final thanks to our late Uncle George Kaull, who so many years ago, uttered those words that got this book started, "Why don't you write about poor old man Vinegar?"

Prefaces

My initial interest in Pete Vinegar started with my desire to write a book about the colorful lifestyles around the Kaw River, a name we locals have given the Kansas River. The name was given because of the Kansa Indians, also known as the Kaw Indians, the Native Americans who inhabited the region. I was crossing the bridge with my uncle, George Kaull, when he mentioned Pete Vinegar. "Why don't you write about poor old man Vinegar?" he asked. Then he went on to explain that Vinegar was a black man who was lynched on the bridge "about a hundred years ago." "He didn't do anything," George said.

I have always been moved by injustice, so this story piqued my interest, and I abandoned "the life on the Kaw story." I tore into my own collection of local history books, attempting to find anything on "old man Vinegar." I found a reference to his burial in Potter's Field in my cemeteries book. "Peter Vinegar," it said, "hung by a mob, June 10, 1882." From there, a story opened up that had been mostly forgotten in our city's history.

I pored over issue after issue of old newspapers at the public library, and the story about Pete Vinegar and two other men who were lynched that same day began to reveal itself after more than 110 years. How could so many people put aside their moral values and take the lives of three men without due process? How is it possible that such a story could be insulated in our city's past? I was fueled with disbelief, but as I learned more about another man, David Bausman, I realized that uncontrolled emotion had no racial bounds and no limits, by its own nature.

CINDY SCHOTT

Sis Vinegar was just 14 years old the day she ruined her life. Things hadn't been good for the impoverished teenager and her family up until that time, but things were about to become much worse.

It was a cool spring that year in 1882 and Lawrence, Kansas was a rapidly growing town with a rich history. It was here that the epicenter of the tumultuous "Bloody Kansas" years preceding the Civil War throbbed and festered. The raving anti-slavery fanatic, Reverend John Brown, had often visited Lawrence. At the other extreme, William C. Quantrill and his fellow pro-slavery marauders from Missouri burned

Lawrence to the ground and shot every man they encountered. In spite of this, the fighting spirit and the tenaciousness of its citizens allowed the city to survive and eventually prosper. That prosperity did not extend to all of its citizens, especially for most of its black population, notably the notorious Vinegar family.

One day in 1882, David Bausman, a well-to-do white man, was brutally murdered by friends of Margaret, "Sis" Vinegar. What Sis had thought would be a mere robbery turned into a violent killing that would split Lawrence in two and result in even greater tragedy. This is not the story of one tragedy, but a story of many.

It is the story of an impoverished black family and their eventual destruction unwittingly brought about by their circumstances as well as a seemingly blind and sometimes cruel community.

It is the story of the intolerance, ignorance, and fear that culminated in a mob dragging three men to the river and hanging them without due process of law. One of the men, Pete Vinegar, had committed no crime. He had simply been at the wrong place at the wrong time.

It is the story of the brutal murder of David Bausman, who had done nothing to deserve his fate. By all accounts, he was a good man and popular in his community.

It is the story of a town divided, a town that had been the center of a battle between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces that resulted in many deaths and much destruction and a town that played a major role in the famous Underground Railroad that was responsible for helping fleeing slaves. Unfortunately, it was also a town that harbored the men who became an angry, vengeful mob fueled by the fear that made them do a terrible, lawless thing.

KATHY SCHOTT GATES

Chapter One: Finding the Body

In Lawrence, it is known simply as "the bridge." It crosses the Kansas River, better known locally as the Kaw. It is located at the end of the business district downtown, the hub of Lawrence.

Some days, American Eagles can be seen flying majestically over the river, looking for prey swimming in the water below. People still fish there, despite warnings that the water is now too polluted to contain fish that are safe for human consumption. Some people take their boats to the water to canoe or fish when the fishy odor isn't too great. Homeless people camp there sometimes, for the relative protection of the concrete and steel. A few people have been known through the years to have ended their lives by casting themselves desperately into the pungent water below.

More than one hundred years ago, the bridge was the center of events that would wrench the town in two, events that would enrage and appall the citizens, and events that would inflame racist intolerance or offend decent, law-abiding people.

It was a cool spring day, June 5th of 1882, when three boys went to the river to go fishing. Down on the bank, they were about to cast their lines when one of the boys noticed something chilling. It was a hand protruding from the water—a bloated white hand, not moving. Alarmed, the boys immediately ran to some other fishermen nearby. One man stayed with the boys, while another, Al Wiggs, went to the office of the nearby newspaper, *The Lawrence Journal*, to report the incident. A coroner was summoned, and thus began another dark chapter in the turbulent history of Lawrence, Kansas. A watch in possession of the victim stopped at 9:20 PM, marking exactly the end of his 42 years. This wasn't really the beginning of the chapter. Maybe the beginning was when Margaret, "Sis" Vinegar was born in 1867. The life of Sis Vinegar was doomed from the day she was born.

On June 5th, the coroner was out of town, so Dr. Albert Fuller was summoned in his place. The body was dragged out of the river, placed on Ed Manter's express wagon, and taken to

Daily and Smith's, the local mortuary. The body was cleaned and laid out to await identification.

The man had apparently been murdered, and not the victim of an accidental or deliberate drowning. His body had numerous bruises and contusions, as if he had put up quite a struggle against his attacker. One finger was nearly severed. He had suffered a strong blow to the back of his head and numerous other gashes and cuts to his face and hands. Who had done this terrible thing and why? Those questions would not go unanswered for very long. Too many people had that knowledge and none could hold the secret. Lawrence was about to explode in turmoil and tragedy far worse than a simple murder would suggest.

Chapter Two: The Vinegars

Pete Vinegar,* Sis's father, was born in Kentucky in 1830. Kentucky was a state deeply divided by the question of slavery. Most of the black population were slaves, but there was a large population who were free. Unease about this situation prompted the owner of Pete and his fellow slaves to move to Arkansas in 1852. It is there that Pete met and married his wife, Eliza. After the Civil War, Pete moved his family to Lawrence, Kansas, where many other freed slaves, known as Exodusters, also moved.

Pete and Eliza lived in a tiny house on Delaware Street near the Kaw River. The family eventually included seven children: Archie (born in 1857), Americus (born in 1863), Margaret "Sis" (born in 1867), Dora (born in 1869), Mame (born in 1870), and twins, Richard and Joshua (born in 1871).

The impoverished Vinegars were notorious in Lawrence. They were variously known as "the Vinegar den," "the outcasts," or more sympathetically, "those poor bastards." Pete tried to earn enough money to support his large family as a handyman, but there was never enough. Eliza tried to earn some money doing odd jobs, but with her death from smallpox in 1873, the family was even worse off.

The Vinegar children could often be seen going from house to house, begging for money, food, or sometimes even just a chance to go inside and get warm. They often did not have money to buy warm clothes during the cold Kansas winters. According to an article later published in the *Lawrence Tribune* (June 14, 1882),

> If you questioned one of the forlorn, shivering, half naked little outcasts she would say, "Father doesn't earn enough to buy us all something to eat, Mother is dead, and 'Sis" can't get no pay for work. I ain't had nothing to eat since yesterday. If you can't gimme a piece of bread, just get me a little warm."

Many citizens of Lawrence remembered the poor Vinegar children this way:

> The dirty miserable little objects would offer to work and pay for cold victuals or old clothes, but their reputation had preceeded [sic] them and no one felt like trusting them to remain upon the premises, so they were ordered to get out as quickly as possible.

The cold, hunger, poverty, and fear forced the Vinegars into a life of petty thievery, burglary, and, in the case of Sis, even prostitution. It is this life of prostitution that led to her first meeting with David Bausman, and later to his death on the banks of the river.

* One historical reference to Pete Vinegar mentions his love of flowery words or verse. "Born to the purple of a house-slave near New Orleans, Mary practiced an unconscious snobbery—snobbery is commonly unconscious—and looked down on field-workers, such as Pete Vinegar, whose ear so loved a sonorous phrase that it led him to name his heir—[the child did not long survive], Americus Disgustus Dapoleon Vinegar." *Life at Laurel Town Anglo-Saxon Kansas*, chapter 1, page 41, by Kate Stephens, 1920. Laurel Town was a fictionalized name for Lawrence, Kansas.

Chapter Three: Bloody Kansas

Lawrence, Kansas was established for one reason. That reason was to stop the pro-slavery movement in its tracks.

Lawrence was named for Amos Lawrence, an officer of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Society. Amos Lawrence had visited the site and decided it was the perfect place to establish a stronghold against the westward expansion of slavery. He brought the first official immigrants to Lawrence. The immigrants at first camped on what is now known as Mount Oread, and later they built houses and businesses. The abolitionists in New England wanted to be sure that the spread of slavery would be stopped, so they sent many of their own to inhabit this new town.

In 1854, slavery was rampant in many states. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, signed by President Franklin Pierce, left the question of slavery to the individual states under a policy called "Popular Sovereignty." When a state joined the Union, its constitution would determine whether the state would be a free state or slavery would be allowed.

The state of Missouri was well established as a pro-slavery state at the time. The North, as it was then known, looked to Kansas as a challenge. Will the citizens allow Kansas to become a pro-slavery state or would they fight to make it a free state?

Many people in New England were alarmed at the possibility of another pro-slavery state. These people could not vote in Congress, but they could become an influence in Kansas. In 1854, a group of concerned people from Pennsylvania went to Kansas to make an assessment of the scene. Afterward, these men were instrumental in drawing anti-slavery settlers into the area. Some of the most vocal anti-slavery advocates settled in Lawrence.

In 1855, a major confrontation occurred when some Missourians crossed over into Kansas. Invading Missourians, called "Border Ruffians" by Kansans, were streaming across the border to vote illegally in favor of slavery. On March 30, a group

of Missourians invaded Lawrence. Because the people of Lawrence were vastly outnumbered, they put up no resistance to the illegal voting.

Skirmishes between pro-slavery and free-state men around Lawrence took their toll. People on both sides of the Kansas-Missouri border began losing their lives. Fearful free-state men built fortifications around Lawrence. The governor of Kansas eventually instigated a precarious peace treaty between the warring factions. The peace treaty was broken in 1856, when hundreds of the pro-slavery men from Missouri invaded Lawrence. In spite of the presence of the famous abolitionist John Brown and some of his men, the marauders were able to destroy the Eldridge House, which was the local hotel, and other buildings in Lawrence, including the offices and presses of Lawrence's two newspapers.

Many other skirmishes followed between the two factions. One major confrontation occurred near Baldwin, a small town not far from Lawrence. This battle, which would later be known as the Battle of Black Jack, involved hundreds of men on both sides, including John Brown and his men, who were fighting the forces of Henry Clay Pate. This battle is now considered by some historians as the first real battle of the Civil War.

Finally, after scores of men had perished on both sides, Kansas officially became a free state. The date was January 21, 1861. The majority of the people of Kansas were ecstatic and celebrated enthusiastically. Only a few short months later, the reverie came to an end. On April 12, the Civil War officially began.

The atmosphere in Kansas was especially tense because of its proximity to the pro-slavery state of Missouri. There was fear that Confederate troops would invade. Lawrence was well known as a free-state town. In addition to the strong presence of the Underground Railroad, Free-Staters, abolitionists, and freed slaves were known to populate Lawrence. August 21, 1863, marked the darkest day yet in the history of Lawrence. William C. Quantrill and a band of more than 300 men invaded from Missouri.

One of Quantrill's main targets was John Speer, who had come to Lawrence to settle in 1854. Speer had a background in

publishing, and he soon set up his own newspaper in Lawrence, the *Lawrence Tribune*.

Speer was a strong abolitionist, and his newspaper made no secret of that fact. He was persecuted by pro-slavery advocates, who destroyed his home and his printing presses. Speer managed to recover and resume publishing.

Quantrill's band departed from Missouri under the cover of darkness. They rode their horses all night, arriving in Lawrence just before daybreak. Lawrence was taken by surprise when the marauders began their merciless siege. Homes and businesses were torched, and men were shot down as they fled the burning buildings. Some men managed to hide, but many did not. Downtown Lawrence was burned to the ground. By the time the carnage was over, more than 80 businesses and at least 100 homes had been destroyed. The death toll stood at 143, with at least 30 wounded.

Quantrill's men torched the home of John Speer, but Speer's wife managed to save it by sweeping charred embers into a hole in the floor. Two of Speer's sons were killed by the raiders, but one son managed to shoot and kill the only one of Quantrill's raiders to die that day. Larkin Skaggs died at the Speer home. Speer, who managed to survive by hiding in a cornfield, soon began the process of rebuilding his newspaper and the spirit of Lawrence in helping to resurrect the town.

As Lawrence smoldered, the border war between free-state Kansas and pro-slavery Missouri continued until the end of the Civil War. Atrocities had occurred on both sides, with neither side rightfully claiming the high moral ground. Finally, the years of Bloody Kansas were over.

These incidents, among many, should have reminded Lawrence citizens of the plight of slaves and the plight of many former slaves. But their memories would prove to be short in some people's minds.

Chapter Four: Death at the River

David Bausman, a citizen of Globe, Kansas, was known to meet regularly with Sis Vinegar in Lawrence for sexual favors in exchange for money. One day on the riverbank while the two were engaged in a sexual act, David Bausman met a violent death.

Bausman, a 42-year-old farmer, was a handsome man, with blue eyes, sandy hair, a red beard, and a fair complexion. He was born in Brookville, Ohio, in 1840. Through his hard work as a farmer, he eventually amassed considerable property. He married and eventually served as a corporal in the 74th Ohio Regiment of Volunteers in the Union Army. Wounded in the Battle of Stone River, Tennessee, on December 31, 1862, he was discharged honorably with a disability pension. He resumed his quiet life as a farmer until his life turned upside down when his wife died in 1881. Desolate, he sold his property and moved to Globe, Kansas, to live with his cousin, John Studebaker, hoping to start a new life.

Earlier on the day of Bausman's death, Sis Vinegar had strolled down Massachusetts Street, the main street in Lawrence, with her friend, Jane Jackson. As they walked past the saloon, they heard a familiar whistle coming from within. Inside the saloon were David Bausman and his friends. At first, Sis chose to ignore the whistle, but a second whistle beckoned. This time, she stopped. David came out to talk to them, particularly to Sis. Few words were spoken; she and Bausman had met previously on a few occasions. An arrangement was made for Sis and David to meet later that day, down at the river. It was May 31, 1882.

Later, Sis met with her boyfriend, George Robertson, and told him about the upcoming meeting. George was familiar with Bausman and knew he had a quite a bit of money, as many other white people seemed to have. George decided he wanted to have some of it. He met with his friend, Isaac "Ike" King, and together they devised a plan to rob Bausman while he was occupied with

Sis under the bridge at the river. They shared their plans with several friends, including four children.

That evening, Bausman and Sis met as previously agreed. It was dark by the time they met, but a full moon provided ample light. As Sis and the unsuspecting Bausman began their act, Ike and George sneaked up behind them, intending to bash Bausman on the head and steal his money. They were armed with a crowbar, a hickory stick, and a hammer they had obtained from the Vinegar home. Bausman had placed his wallet on the ground and the men had hoped to knock him out, grab the wallet, and run. Bausman, however, did not lose consciousness, and he put up quite a struggle. Ike and George continued to beat him, and his failure to lose consciousness enraged them. Sis pleaded with them to grab the money and run, but to them it was now out of the question. They continued to strike blows until Bausman had breathed his last breath. After relieving Bausman of his cash, they dumped his body into the river.

There were four witnesses hiding at the river that night: the four children Ike and George had bragged to earlier. They were Charley Allen, 17; Grant Blackman, 12; Lizzie Furgeson, 13; and Dora Vinegar, 12. Charley and Grant watched from behind the icehouse and Lizzie and Dora were under the ice run. After the murder, they all met at Pete Vinegar's house, along with Ike, George, and Sis. It was a meeting that would tie Pete unwittingly to a horrendous crime and eventually seal his fate.

Chapter Five: The Hunt and Capture

It was Saturday, June 5, four days after the murder, when the body was finally discovered by the young fishermen. After David Bausman's body was dragged out of the river and laid out at the mortuary, his pockets were emptied in an attempt to find something that could help identify him, but to no avail. Eventually, John Studebaker, cousin of the deceased, grimly identified Bausman. The town was soon in an uproar.

Many people knew who the killers were. In addition to the murderers themselves and the four children who had witnessed the murder, Wright Lane (Grant Blackman's uncle), Emma Thompson (a friend of the family), and Pete Vinegar all knew. Soon, many more people knew, including law enforcement personnel. The hunt was on.

The next day, Sheriff Henry B. Asher, accompanied by his brother, Bill, and Bill Harper, went to Independence, Missouri, in pursuit of George Robertson. Tips had led them to believe he would be there. They were joined by Marshall Silvers, of Independence. They soon found George, and, drawing their pistols, they arrested him.

Robertson was returned to Lawrence by Sheriff Asher and Bill Harper. When the three men arrived at the jail, Robertson was extremely frightened by the large crowd that had gathered around the jail. He cried piteously that Ike King had done the terrible deed, not he. Robertson then tried to implicate another man, Fran Draper. Draper, as it turned out, had been in jail during the incident and his duplicity was not considered.

With Robertson locked up, Asher and a large posse went in pursuit of Isaac King. Again, tips from informants would lead them to the fugitive. Asher, along with his large armed posse, set off for nearby Eudora, Kansas, where King was thought to be hiding in the Kaw River bottoms area. An article printed in the *Lawrence Journal* the day before the capture echoed an ominous threat:

> There are many rumors afloat on the street in regard to his being shot or captured, but as yet no authoritative information on his capture has been received. There is great excitement in the city over the matter and loud talk of lynching all the principals if captured.

Around 6:00 that same day, King was found and easily apprehended. Hungry, tired, and frightened, he surrendered.

When the posse got back to town with King, once again an angry crowd was gathered at the jail. The posse rode quickly, fearful of the consequences if the angry crowd were able to stop them and engage in a violent confrontation. King was successfully jailed alongside George Robertson, fifty-three hours after the discovery of David Bausman's lifeless body.

Chapter Six: The Inquest

The outraged citizens of Lawrence demanded quick justice, so the coroner's inquest was scheduled for Sunday, June 6. The acting coroner called the room of noisy spectators to order. A jury of six men was sworn in.

Dolly Graeber, the man summoned to the river to retrieve the body of David Bausman, was the first sworn witness. His statement was brief. He spoke of helping to retrieve the body with a long boat hook and taking the body to the mortuary, where an unsuccessful attempt was made to identify it.

Charley Allen, one of the youths who had witnessed the murder from his hiding place near the icehouse, was next to testify. After stating his name and age, he testified that he had seen Isaac King and George Robertson beat Bausman to death. Charley stated that King had a stick and a hammer, and that Robertson had a crowbar. According to Charley, the victim struggled with his attackers for three or four minutes as they wordlessly beat the life out of him. Charley heard Sis trying to get them to stop, yelling at them that she already had his money.

Charley had been seen by the killers, as had the other spectators. The killers threatened all of them, telling them that if they spoke about what they had seen their lives would be in danger.

Charley continued his testimony, saying that the whole group retreated to Pete Vinegar's house after the body was dumped in the river. When they got to Pete's house, they all just stood around for a while in stunned silence. The other Vinegars came out of the house and were told what had happened. That night, Ike and George spent the night at the Vinegars'. A nervous Charley left quickly.

Charley finished his testimony stating that the next day he had visited the scene of the crime.

Grant Blackman, who was with Charley at the icehouse, was next to testify. He said that Ike and George had known that Sis was going to be with Bausman at the river. He knew that they

had armed themselves and had hidden at the icehouse, waiting for the right moment to strike. Grant affirmed that Sis had pleaded for Bausman's life, saying that the attackers should not kill him, that she already had the money. According to Grant, Sis then ran home.

Grant testified that Sis had asked the witnesses not to tell anyone, and she had attempted to bribe them each with a dollar. Grant and the others took the money, but they did not keep quiet about the killing. Grant told Emma Thompson, who in turn told Wright Lane. Grant said he heard Sis state that Bausman had some gold on him that they had not gotten out of his pockets. The next day, they went down to the river to search Bausman's body for the gold, but they could not find the remains.

Dr. Albert Fuller was next to testify. He described the condition of the body, with its various cuts and contusions. His manner was very professional, and his description in scientific terms probably was not fully understood by most of those hearing his words. But the meaning was clear. The victim obviously met a very violent death not of his own doing. He had apparently been dead when he was thrown into the river, because there was no water in his lungs.

Then Amos Bausman, brother of the deceased, was called to the stand. Amos stated that he had come to Lawrence Monday night. He recognized the body as that of his brother, David Bausman. Amos stated that Bausman was 42 years old and had resided in Globe, in Douglas County. Amos spoke of David's marriage and the death of his wife that preceded his move to Kansas. He stated that David Bausman was pretty well off financially. Amos further mentioned that David was in the habit of carrying a twenty-five-cent shinplaster [bank note]; one of which was found on his body.

Lizzie Furgeson, a witness at the icehouse, was summoned. She stated that she had been at the icehouse with Dora Vinegar. She echoed some of the other witnesses by stating that Sis had pleaded with Ike and George not to kill Bausman.

Pete Vinegar spoke next. He said simply that he hadn't heard anything about the killing until Saturday.

Wright Lane, who had refused to condone the killing and was largely responsible for fingering the killers, testified next. He said that when he first heard about the killing, he did not believe it. King's manner when Wright spoke with him about it convinced Lane that King and Robertson had indeed committed the murder.

Sis Vinegar was the last witness. The crowd grew very quiet to catch every word as she spoke. She looked pale and tired. Sis began to deny everything everyone else had said. She did acknowledge seeing the body being removed from the river, and even though it could easily be disproved, Sis said that, to her recollection, she had not ever seen David Bausman when he was alive! She accused everyone else of lying. The courtroom was filled with quiet disbelief as Sis made the outrageous statement that she would never lie. Sis's reputation would help be her undoing.

The examination of witnesses then ended and the jury soon brought in a sealed verdict. It was established that Sis had "enticed" David Bausman to the river, and while he was occupied with her, Isaac King and George Robertson had, according to a premeditated plan, sneaked up on Bausman, beat him to death, stole his money, and then had thrown the body into the river. King and Robertson had remained in Lawrence until the body was found, then they had fled.

The next day Sheriff Asher and his brother Bill arrested Pete Vinegar, father of the notorious Sis, and incarcerated him as well. Although Pete was armed with a fully loaded six-shooter, he put up no resistance. He joined Ike, George, and Sis, who had been arrested earlier after no attempt to flee. Things were about to get very ugly in town.

Dolly Graeber, front of boat, retrieved the body of David Bausman with Al Wiggs.

Chapter Seven: Preliminary Investigation

The preliminary investigation began Tuesday, June 8. It would determine if Sis, George, and Ike would be held for trial, with the Honorable Justice Neill presiding. Many people were crammed into the courtroom, " . . . eager to see the faces of the hardened wretches." [*The Lawrence Daily Journal*, June 9, 1882]

After Justice Neill read the charges, he asked Sis, George, and Ike if they had anything to say. Ike and Sis declined, but George asked for an attorney. There were several lawyers present—some recent Kansas University Law School graduates and a couple of veteran lawyers—but all refused to participate. Sis, Ike, and George would have no legal representation.

Dr. Morris, Sheriff Asher, Deputy Estes, Grant Blackman, and Amos Bausman were sworn in.

Dr. Morris described the postmortem examination, stating that the wounds were sufficient to produce death and were inflicted while David Bausman was still alive.

Amos Bausman described coming to Lawrence from Ohio, seeing the body, and identifying it as his brother.

Grant Blackman repeated essentially what he had said at the coroner's inquiry, describing how he had witnessed the killing from a mere ten feet away, in the icehouse down by the river.

Sis Vinegar was sworn in. Because she did not have an attorney, she was forced to defend herself. As she spoke, the now sweltering courtroom was deathly quiet.

Sis stated that she hadn't said anything about any gold being on Bausman's body. She continued, saying that Bausman had given her five dollars and laid his pocketbook down by his side. As she picked it up, Ike and George came from their hiding place and began to strike Bausman. Sis further stated that she had said to them, "Don't kill that man. I have his pocketbook." Sis then said she had gone home, where she later handed the money over to Ike King, who gave her five dollars of it.

Grant Blackman said, "You laid it out on the table: Three fives, three ones, and some little money."

Sis admitted that she had promised the witnesses to the murder a dollar apiece, but denied that she had laid the money out on the table. She said that she had agreed to meet Ike and George on the riverbank that night. She also said that Pete Vinegar had not been informed about what had been done.

Sheriff Asher stated on the stand that the total amount of money taken was approximately $25.

Sis resumed her testimony. She said when Pete had asked where she had been she lied and said she had been at Trotter's. She said Ike and George had made a pact to keep silent.

George Robertson asked to be examined. He said he and Ike had been crossing the river, where they met Bausman, Sis, Dora, and Lizzie. Ike and George then went to Pete Vinegar's house, where they obtained the tools they would later use as weapons. George testified that Ike had crept up behind Bausman and had begun to strike him. George said he was afraid to run because he thought Ike would kill him.

Ike was then was asked if he wished to testify, and he took the stand. His testimony was more believable than George's. Ike said he met George and Sis on the bridge, where they made plans for the robbery. Ike described the attack that took place: each man took turns striking blows on their victim, with George making the final fatal blow. As others had testified, Ike cleared Sis of any blame for killing Bausman, saying, "She ran off with the pocketbook when we first struck him." Ike said that Sis had no idea Ike and George would end up killing Bausman.

More witnesses followed, each giving information that had been previously revealed at the coroner's inquest.

The crammed courtroom then heard what they had come to hear. Justice Neill ordered that Sis, Ike, and George be held in custody without bail, to answer to the charges of robbery and first-degree murder.

In 1882, someone could be indicted and convicted without counsel. Sis, Ike, and George never had a chance.

Chapter Eight: Boys, Let Me Down Easy

Friday evening, trouble was brewing. Many people felt that no trial could bring justice. The death penalty was available in Kansas at the time, but it was always commuted to life in prison by the governor, and it seemed that everyone in Lawrence was well aware of that fact. Newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and editorials all helped inflame the citizens of Lawrence to the boiling point. The self-righteous and fearful people wanted blood.

Two reporters for *The Lawrence Daily Journal* who were on the street that day overheard a group of men nearby talking about a possible lynching. The reporters quickly realized that the group intended to attack the jail before morning. The reporters met Sheriff Asher in front of Willard's Barber Shop and told the sheriff what they thought would take place. Oddly enough, Asher did not seem to place much confidence in what the reporters had said. [Dreadful Scenes. The Execution of the Murderers and its Lesson. *The Daily Tribune*. Sunday, June 12. John Speer, Editor]

Meanwhile, the group on the street was growing in size and slowly turning into an angry mob. The reporters quietly retreated, and one of them went to the jail.

The mob convened in front of the jail. Some of the men wore scarves over their faces. Others smeared their faces with wood ash in a crude attempt to conceal their identities. A few made no attempt at all to disguise themselves, knowing their participation in the terrible deed would never be revealed by their cohorts in the murderous brotherhood. They mingled restlessly as their numbers grew, until there were at least three hundred men. Many of them were armed with rifles, sledgehammers, crowbars, or whatever was handy when the decision was made to join the angry mob. In their minds, they were out to see that justice was done. They had four long, heavy ropes. There was going to be a lynching.

Inside the jail, George, Ike, Sis, and Pete were petrified with fear, knowing the rickety jail could provide no protection. The lone jailer, Deputy J. P. Estes, who was outside of the jail, could not stand up to the inflamed mob alone. Sheriff Henry Asher and Undersheriff William Campbell were stalwartly defending the jail and its prisoners from the inside. Estes did not want the jail destroyed, so he sent the reporter who was there to his home to fetch the keys that had been stashed there in anticipation of a lynching. By the time the reporter had returned though, the mob easily gained entrance, using their crowbars and sledgehammers. They streamed into the small jail.

A travesty of justice was about to occur. Racism and fear would rule in a town that been founded on principles that belied what was about to happen.

A quick decision was made to spare Sis. She remained in her cell, sobbing, as the three men were dragged from their cells. Ike and George begged for their lives and repeatedly told the attackers that they were innocent. Robertson had been on his knees, praying futilely when his cell was breached. As he was being led out, he said, "Oh Lord, have mercy on my soul." According to witnesses, he begged for mercy all the way down to the river, and each time received the reply, "What mercy did you show to the poor devil who fell into your hands?" By the time the reporter returned with the keys he had fetched from Deputy Estes' wife, the prisoners were already being led out, the jail trashed.

Pete Vinegar was quiet, but fearful. He was used to a long life of suffering, and he seemed resigned to his fate. Ropes were hung around the men's necks as they were being dragged down to the river.

The Lawrence Daily Journal reported the next day, "Vinegar followed without a word except a protest that he was innocent."

George Robertson was the first to go over the bridge, then Pete Vinegar, followed by Ike King. Ike's last words were, "Boys, let me down easy." He got his wish. He was lowered slowly over the bridge. George and Pete died instantly. Ike died more slowly,

of strangulation. [Law in Their Own Hands. How the Lynchers Did Their Work. *The Lawrence Daily Journal.* June 11, 1882]

The mob dispersed and left the three men dangling from their long ropes at the now sullied bridge.

In the morning the bodies were cut down and arranged in the jail yard. Hundreds of people passed by to catch a glimpse of the men felled by the great mob.

Douglas County jail

Chapter Nine: The Coroner's Inquest. The Lynching Victims

Richard Morris, Douglas County Coroner, convened his inquest on June 10, the morning after the lynchings.

William Campbell, Undersheriff of Douglas County, was first to testify. He had been at the jail the previous night and spoke of what he had witnessed. He stated that he knew the parties and had seen them alive around 1:00 or 2:00 that previous night. He heard the sheriff order the crowd home. He saw the jail being broken into. He saw the crowd stream in and eventually seize the prisoners. He also witnessed the actual lynching and stayed until the crowd left, then helped pull the bodies up.

Although Lawrence was a small town and most people knew each other, Campbell would not positively identify any of the participants. He admitted that one or two of the voices seemed familiar, but he used the excuse that because they were masked, he couldn't be sure. Campbell did venture that he thought one of the men might have been David Kennedy, the blacksmith, adding that even this admission was not positive. Campbell apparently did not want his testimony to lead to any convictions.

Sheriff Asher testified vaguely in much this same way, but did say he thought he recognized one of the voices as that of David Kennedy, who was giving commands to the others. After rambling on for a few minutes, repeating much of what Campbell had said, Asher admitted that he may have seen some men he knew, but claimed he could not now remember. This was the day after the lynching. He seemed to have a remarkably short memory!

John Jinkins, a black man who was confined to the jail, courageously testified that he knew some of the men in the mob. He recognized the voices of Charlie Apitz (the proprietor of a local hotel), David Kennedy, and Tob Miller. According to Jinkins, Apitz seemed to be a ringleader and he reassured Jinkins that he would not be hurt.

A few more witnesses testified, claiming they were unable to recognize anyone.

Sam Strode, who was incarcerated at the jail during the time it was invaded, had a better memory than most of the white men who had testified. He identified Charlie Apitz, Dewitt Ludington (bartender at Ludington House), and Tob Miller.

Deputy Estes was last to testify. He implicated Apitz, Miller, Kennedy, and Ludington, and thought he recognized Jerry Hollister, the bridge watchman.

In spite of the testimony, no one ever stood trial for the lynching, even though literally hundreds knew who the perpetrators were. Lawrence had good, decent people, but they were asleep in their beds when this terrible thing happened. None of the mobsters ever came forward. They had to live with their secret for the rest of their lives. If it weighed on their consciousnesses at all, only they would know.

Chapter Ten: The Incarceration of Sis

Sis went to the federal prison at Lansing, Kansas. As predicted, the liberal governor of Kansas had remanded her sentence to life in prison, rather than execution. John Waller, a black lawyer from Lawrence, began his attempts to get her released. He wrote letters to many people, including the matron of Lansing Prison, S. A. Kyle. The text of her response follows:

Mr. Waller,

Yours of the 25th came to hand yesterday. You said you would make application to the Board of Pardons for Maggie Vinegar and that you wanted me to tell you how her conduct had been. While she has been here I can say that her conduct has been good, she has been a very good girl. And as to her reforming I can say that she has reformed greatly since she came here. And I think if she should get out she will be a different person altogether from what she was before she came here.

I believe she will conduct herself as a lady in the future. As to her health I don't think it is much better but I think if she should get out she could get something to help her.

Her age you wanted, she was 21 last April.

I do sincerely hope that she may be free again. I believe I have given you all the information that's required. I would gladly do anything to help release Maggie, for she is a good girl.

Very Respectfully,
S. A. Kyle

Continuing his efforts to get Sis freed, Waller wrote a letter to the State Board of Pardons that was quite lengthy, outlining what had happened at the river years before. He stated that the evidence did not warrant a murder conviction, that Margaret had begged for the life of Bausman.

Sis Vinegar was afflicted with tuberculosis while she was confined in prison. The warden determined that she was better off where she was. Reluctantly, Waller eventually had to agree with what the warden had said in his letter responding to Waller:

> Sis Vinegar is very low with consumption [as tuberculosis was then commonly called] with but little prospect of even being up again. She is well taken care of and has comfortable quarters in the Female Department. Unless she has friends that CAN and WILL take care of her she is better off here than she would be turned out upon the cold characters of the world. She has been an excellent prisoner, industrious and obedient, and worked faithfully as long as she was able.
>
> John H. Smith

Sis soon succumbed to her illness. She was 21 years old.

Chapter Eleven: Aftermath

After the lynching, Sheriff Asher's ability to defend those put in his charge was being discussed in the community. Asher had his defenders as well as his detractors. The two local newspapers did not lack for editorials and letters to the editor on the subject:

> Hitherto he had sufficient confidence in their law-abiding inclinations to believe that they would not create a breech [sic] of the peace. He had faith in himself that he could reason them out of the commission of any overt act. He had taken all of the precaution that seemed necessary to him . . . [*The Lawrence Daily Journal*, June 13, 1882]

The black people of Douglas County petitioned the state legislature not to reappoint Asher because " . . . he let an innocent colored man be taken from his charge and hung by a mob when [Asher] was sheriff." [*The Lawrence Daily Journal*, October 22, 1882]

In his own defense, Asher said that he did not really believe that there would be an attack. He further said that he had been at the jail the night of the lynching, but he claimed that all was quiet and that he left that evening and went home to bed. He did this in spite of the warning from the *Journal* reporters earlier that day.

An editor's note from the *Journal* defended Asher, "[The] statement of the sheriff ought to satisfy everybody that he did everything in his power, and was not unmindful of what appeared to be nothing but a street rumor."

Was Asher a coward? Or was he just out of touch with what was going on around him? In spite of these doubts, Asher was given the reappointment.

John Speer, the deeply compassionate editor of *The Daily Tribune*, often used his paper to speak to the people of Lawrence

about issues that were important to him. Speer felt very strongly about the horrendous incidents that had torn the city apart:

> We felt that a great calamity has befallen our city . . . We know, however, that a horrible crime has been recently committed and that it was preceded by other crimes . . . Usually Lawrence is a city as orderly, as law-abiding as any in the Union.
>
> Let us hope that good may result [from these incidents]. That the lessons of the last few days may make an impression and not be forgotten. That the wicked may be deterred, and the good taught lessons of moderation and justice, tempered with humanity and mercy. Let no word be said to stir up strife. We are slumbering on a volcano. If every man will be calm, patient, moderate in expression of ideas, the storm of indignation and the spirit of vengeance will settle down into undisturbed peace, and harmony will again prevail.

The aftermath of the tragedy reverberated around the state. The Reverend Dr. Richard Cordley was the pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Lawrence. His home was burned in 1863 during Quantrill's raid. Cordley came to Lawrence in 1857 and lived there until his death in 1904. This gentle man spoke of his horror at what had happened [*Annals of Kansas, 1885–1925*, volume 1, p. 407. Kansas State Historical Society. Topeka, Kansas. 1954]. Cordley wrote a letter to the editor of the *Journal*:

> To the Editor of the *Journal*:
>
> I have been reading your account of the terrible tragedy which has just disgraced Lawrence and the State. A gentleman who has great admiration for Lawrence said when he read the dispatch, he would rather it had happened anywhere else in the State. For Lawrence stands for Kansas, and the best in Kansas, and this terrible deed will

> go abroad to our shame. The murder of Bausman was shocking beyond expression. But this is worse. For it involves a score of criminals instead of three-and compromises the good name of a hundred-fold more.
>
> You speak of "taking the law into their own hands." There was no law about. It was simply the violation of law, and that the law was murder . . . The blood of every law-abiding citizen should tingle with shame, and his face blush with horror at such a deed. [On the Lynching of the Murderers of Bausman—The Daily *Journal*. Thursday, June 15, 1882]

The *Journal* published an article soon after the incidents that contained comments from various papers across the state. Some of the sentiments were quite alarming:

> The lynching at Lawrence, at 1 o'clock in the morning, of the three fiends incarnate, who had rivaled the Bender gang in the bloodthirstiness of their crime was of course outside the pale of law and not to be palliated; but if ever there was justification for lynching it certainly existed in this instance—Leavenworth Times

> The Lawrence lynching reported in the *Journal* proves that there is even in the city of law and order a determination to instill into the minds of would-be murderers a wholesome fear of swift vengeance—*Kansas City Journal*

> The three murders of the unfortunate Bausman at Lawrence early yesterday morning indicates that the people of the historic city are human after all. The murder was as unprovoked, brutal, cold-blooded and deliberate as is recorded in the criminal annals of the State, the victim being decoyed by a harlot to a secluded spot where King and Robertson beat him to death and threw him in the river. It is strange, yet a fact, that the most horrible and

unnatural crimes are committed in communities which pride themselves upon their refinement and intellectuality. In the matter of lynchings, too, Lawrence is entitled to the cake, three at a time being more than any other Kansas town can boast of—*Topeka Capitol*

Lawrence had a lynching on Friday night, the victims being three colored men, Vinegar, Robertson, and King. They were guilty of the murder of a man named Bausman. Lawrence is the last city in Kansas that would be expected to be the scene of a "vigilante" exhibition, but for one we are not surprised at it. There has been a criminal element among the people of Lawrence for years, who by their repeated crimes, have at last provoked an irregular but righteous retribution. The family of Vinegar have been the terror of Lawrence for years, but some light sentence in the police court has been the limit of the punishment until at last, emboldened and hardened, they ventured to incite and execute a cruel murder, and one of the family has met the just penalty. The moral is that there should be a distinction made between occasional and habitual offenders. Sentences should be cumulative, increasing with each repeated offense. The system would have landed all the Vinegars in the penitentiary years ago, and saved fifty men the trouble of hanging Pete Vinegar—*Atchison Champion*

There are bounds beyond which human nature cannot be controlled, and the best illustration of this fact was demonstrated at Lawrence today. That fact that men are not hung in our State, but sent to the penitentiary for life does not appear at times to be a punishment commensurate with the crime, and no power can protect such criminals from the passions of the people. We deplore

> mob law under all circumstances, but if there ever was a case that was justifiable this is one of them—*Leavenworth Press*

[Lynching. What Others Think of It. *The Lawrence Daily Journal*. June 11, 1882]

These people seemed not to know that Pete Vinegar had murdered no one.

There was a town meeting to discuss the possibility of bringing the members of the lynch mob to trial, but very few who knew anything were willing to speak out. Some of the "best citizens" wanted to let the matter drop. H. Fuel, in a letter to the editor of the Journal, said, " . . . we have defeated every man for office we knew to be in the mob, by voting against him." [Some Timely Remarks. *Lawrence Daily Journal*. October 16, 1882]

It is rather ironic that the statement "every man we knew to be in the mob" is contained in the letter. If they KNEW who was in the mob, why not try them in a court of law? Perhaps the citizens of Lawrence hoped that hiding this incident in the past would make it go away.

The members of the lynch mob were never tried for their crimes. It appears that the principals in the mob did not remain in the Lawrence area for very long afterward. Their names, along with the tragedies of 1882, have mostly faded from Lawrence history.

The words of John Speer remind us, "Of this much we may be sure, ignorance and idleness mean murder, drunkenness and desolation of all sorts. And this may we remember, we are our brothers' keepers." [John Speer. The Lesson of It. *Lawrence Tribune*. June 14, 1882]

Sheriff Henry Asher

Chapter Twelve: Lawrence Today

"We have tomorrow bright before us like a flame." [Langston Hughes, whose boyhood home was Lawrence, Kansas]

Lawrence was founded strictly for political reasons. The purpose of its origin is a noble one, to prevent the expansion of slavery and provide a haven for freed slaves. Lawrence was a well-known stop in the Underground Railroad for runaway slaves. Turmoil, violence, and death were factors in Lawrence's early history, but it has evolved into a beautiful, vibrant city.

In the aftermath of Quantrill's raid of 1863, the determined survivors started rebuilding Lawrence, this time using mostly bricks and native stone to build sturdier structures that would not easily succumb to destructive forces. Many of those sturdy structures exist to this day. Local historical preservation groups are responsible for saving much of Lawrence's past.

Lawrence is home to two universities—The University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University.

The University of Kansas (KU) was originally chartered as a university in 1855; the Kansas Legislature voted its approval eight years later. Unfortunately, the year was 1863, the year that Lawrence was sacked by William Quantrill. That, and the ensuing Civil War, delayed its opening until 1866. There were 55 students in that first class. Today, KU has more than 25,000 students. KU's performing arts center, the Lied Center, has been named one of the top ten U.S. University Presenters, according to *International Art Manager* magazine. Dr. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball, is buried in Lawrence, where he lived and coached the Kansas Jayhawks basketball team for many years. Ironically, he was the only coach in KU history to have a losing record! Today, KU's basketball is consistently ranked among the best in the United States. KU is also ranked academically as a major research university, centered around the KU Natural History Museum and the KU Medical Center. The campus is acclaimed as one the most beautiful in the country and is the focus of many of the community's

cultural and intellectual activities. For these reasons, many KU students choose to stay in Lawrence after they graduate.

Haskell Indian Nations University is known as the only inter-tribal university for Native Americans in the world, representing more than 150 tribes.

Visitors to Lawrence would do well to stop by the Visitor Information Center, located in the old Pacific Union Depot. The center provides information about the many special events and accommodations found in and around the city. One of their brochures describes some interesting facts about Lawrence:

> Lawrence is named by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of its "Dozen Distinctive Destinations."
> Lawrence is rated #15 in *The Best Small Arts Towns in America*, by author John Villani.
> Lawrence is ranked #12 by the National Endowment for the Arts among cities in the U.S. with the largest percentage of artists in the work force.

Today in Lawrence there is a memorial to that gentle abolitionist, John Speer. The memorial, developed by the Lawrence Preservation Alliance, is in Hobb's Park, near where the Speer home once was.

Lawrence has risen like the phoenix above the ashes. According to an ancient Chinese proverb, it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. Today, that candle burns brightly in Lawrence. We have today AND tomorrow brightly before us like a flame.

Addendum

General Information

Allen, Charley—Charley was a seventeen-year-old boy who witnessed the murder of David Bausman.

Asher, Bill—Bill was the brother of Henry B. Asher, Sheriff. He helped capture George Robertson.

Blackman, Grant—Twelve-year-old Grant was with Charley Allen and witnessed Bausman's murder. He was the nephew of Wright Lane.

Ferguson, Lizzie—Lizzie was a thirteen-year-old friend of Dora Vinegar and witnessed Bausman's murder.

Graeber, Dolly—Dolly was a river- and fisherman who retrieved the body of Bausman from the river.

Harper, Bill—Bill captured George Robertson with Sheriff Asher.

Jinkins, John—John was confined at the jail during the time of the lynching. He and Sam Strode came forward to identify participants of the lynching.

Justice Neill—Acting Coroner

Knittle, Alfred—County Attorney

Lane, Wright—Wright was the uncle of Grant Blackman and husband of Emma Thompson. He confronted Isaac King about the murder of Bausman.

Marshal Silvers— Silvers was a marshal from Independence, Missouri, where George Robertson was captured.

Matthews, Skip—Skip was visiting Pete Vinegar at the Vinegar house during the time of the Bausman murder.

Stephens, N. T.—N.T. was the judge at Sis Vinegar's trial.

Strode, Sam—Sam was confined in jail during the time of the lynching. He identified participants of the lynching.

Thompson, Emma [alias Em Ellis and Emma Lane]—Emma was the wife of Wright Lane.

Tremper, H. S.—H.S. was the defense attorney for Sis Vinegar

Wiggs, Al—Al was a fisherman who helped Dolly Graeber retrieve Bausman's body from the Kansas River.

Places mentioned in inquests:

City Hall

County Jail

Bailey and Smith—local mortuary
Eidemiller's Icehouse—Near the scene of the murder. Witnesses of Bausman's murder were hiding under the ice run.
Groat's Saloon
Kansas [Kaw] River—The scene of the lynching.
Kimball's Flume—foundry
Leis' Corner—Jane Jackson saw David Bausman under the gas-light at this corner [where he whistled at Sis Vinegar].
Weiman's—Cigar manufacturer, 70 Massachusetts Street
Willard's—Barbershop, 62 Massachusetts Street

Jurors mentioned in newspaper accounts of the Bausman murder trial [some may have been law students]:
Crosley, Frank
Dunnan, E. G.
Jones, Ensley
Manter, Ed—Hack driver
Miller, Dr. V. G.
Quick, Henry

Part of a posse of around one hundred men who captured Isaac King in Eudora, Kansas:
Clark , Sidney—Attorney
Gray, William—Barber [black man]
Gross, James—Barber [black man]
James, C. C.—Constable [black man]
Williams, Allen—Route Agent [black man]

The men identified at the inquest as being participants in the lynching:
Apitz, Charlie C.— Proprietor of Central Hotel
Hollister, A. Jerry—Bridge watchman
Kennedy, David—Blacksmith
Ludington, DeWitt—Bartender and part owner of Ludington House [Eldridge House]
Miller, Tob.—Commercial travel agent

Witnesses referred to at the lynching inquest:

Alden, George—George may have participated in the lynching.

Anderson, Charlie—Black man who worked at J. R. Good's

Asher, Henry B.—Sheriff

Bowman, George

Campbell, William M.—Under-sheriff

Clark, N. S.—Owned livery stable, Glathart and Clark

Estes, J. P.—Jailer, Deputy Sheriff

Fricker, George—Omnibus agent with Lawrence Transportation

Griffith, I. D.— Special insurance agent

Grout—Saloon owner

Jinkins, John—Confined to the jail during the time of the lynching

Haynes, Homer W.—Painter

Hughes. S. L. (Lou)—Travel agent

Meade, F.—[No additional information]

Mitchell, A. William—Proprietor of Durfee House. He may have participated in the lynching.

Moak, Art J.—Owned Moak Brothers [grain dealers]

Morris, R.—Coroner

Officers Armstrong and Harbaugh—Searched Pete Vinegar's home for evidence

Paul, Robert—Guard at penitentiary

Prentice, C.T.K.—The Marshal who searched the Vinegar home for evidence.

Rushmer, Gort—Watchmaker and jeweler at H. J. Rushmer and Sons

Smith, George—Justice of the Peace and attorney

Strode, Sam— Confined to the jail during the time of the lynching. With Jinkins, identified participants in the lynching.

Thatcher, Chas.—Editor of the *Lawrence Journal*

Young—[No additional information]

The following is one of the many poignant editorials penned by John Speer. Well over 120 years later, this is a timeless message for all of us.

THE LESSON OF IT

[LAWRENCE KANSAS TRIBUNE, June 14, 1882]

The shocking and repulsive character of the loathsome "Vinegar" den that has recently been turned inside out in our city ought not to be a surprise to any person who has resided in Lawrence during the last ten years. At least eight years since when the Vinegar children were all young they might have been seen any morning going about from house to house asking for something to eat. If you questioned one of the forlorn, shivering, half naked little outcasts she would say "Father doesn't earn enough to buy us all something to eat, Mother is dead, and `Sis' can't get no pay for work, I ain't had nothing to eat since yesterday, if you can't gim'me a piece of bread just let me get a little warm." All this and much more, many a citizen of Lawrence can remember about these vagabond children. The dirty miserable little objects would offer to work and pay for cold victuals or old clothes, but their reputation had preceded them and no one felt like trusting them to remain upon the premises, and so they were ordered to get out as quickly as possible.

Now then, given this quantity of hunger, cold, homelessness and childish helplessness, leave it alone to look after itself, and what right has any one to suppose that the result will be other than deceit, theft, murder and all possible kinds of depravity. And if in addition the idleness we add, as in the case of the Vinegar family, the dreadful factor of inherited evil tendencies, and the further complication of race disadvantages, we have a situation from which we may be certain the worst possible will result, indeed the matter for surprise is, that worse and more of it has not come about long before this.

The shocking murder that has just been perpetrated in our very midst is only another reminder of the truth that men must learn sooner or later, that they must not merely attend to their own affairs, or rather, their neighbors affairs are their affairs too.

The great social problems of the age, ignorance and poverty, are perhaps too appallingly large to grapple with, as a whole, but each citizen can interest himself concerning the condition of the poor, the ignorant, and the unemployed of his own town.

The great evil, out which so many of the other evils grow, is idleness. If ten years since the city of Lawrence had seen to it that the numerous members of this Vinegar family had been set to work, if the poor little hungry mouths of the smaller children had been supplied with wholesome food, and the pitiful little bare limbs comfortably clad, who supposes that we should have had now with us all the horror and the expense of this murderous event.

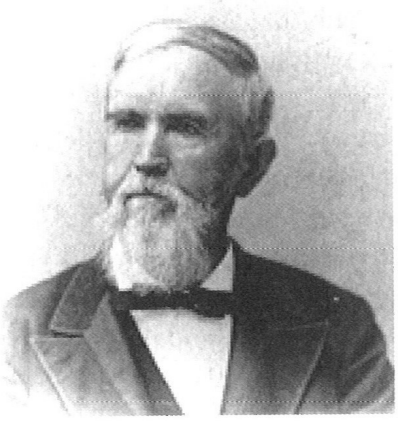
Of course the problem of how to deal with the desperately poor and the ignorant is not easily worked out, nevertheless it might be done, and to just such cases must the attention of cities and towns be turned before any citizen can perform his whole duty to his own home, his own wife, his own children or his own person. To plan, and to provide employment for the unemployed, is the work above all others to which the patriotic, spirited citizen ought to give attention. More important than any other sort of enterprise for the building of the city's interest, more important than the erection of showy public buildings, more important than the thousand and one things which are constantly receiving aid and attention from the business men of a town, is this matter of furnishing employment and seeing to it, that cold and hunger do not steal in and demoralize the weaker and unfortunate ones. And perhaps if men began to plan for all this, the difficulty would not be so great, for, right hand in hand with all the other improvements in a town might go the attention to the unemployed classes. The erection of buildings, the improvements of streets would, furnish the work which men should be compelled to perform.

Since work, as well as education, is so essential to the welfare of society, why not make it, as well as education, "compulsory".

For all the pain and the honor that the citizens of Lawrence have experiences within the last few days, the best citizens are responsible. They are only reaping the inevitable, the legitimate harvest of their own neglect and incompetency during the last ten years.

Politicians, business men, ministers, teachers, men and women of Lawrence how seriously will you take this question into consideration and how carefully will you work out the result of your conscientious thought about it. It is too late to undo the dreadful past, but it is not too late to see to it that next winter shall not find one little cold and hungry child, black or white, in our beautiful city. It is not too late to begin to see to it that the youthful depravity which is being let alone in our midst is not let alone until one morning you wake up and find your own home desolate, your carefully reared daughter or your son robbed, murdered or ruined.

Of this much we may be sure, ignorance and idleness mean murder, drunkenness and desolation of all sorts. And this may we remember, we are our brothers keepers.



John Speer

John Speer was born on December 27, 1819 in Kittanning Pennsylvania. He was one of the first pioneers of Lawrence, Kansas and the editor of the first Kansas newspaper, the *Kansas Pioneer* that premiered on October 18, 1854. The name was eventually changed to the Lawrence *Tribune.* [*Pictorial History of Lawrence, Kansas,* David Dary & Steve Jansen, p. 19].

The *Tribune* was sacked by Quantrill's men, and two of Speer's sons were murdered during the raid of 1863 [*Annals of Kansas,* Kansas State Historical Society, volume 1, p. 448]. He made fearless attacks on slavery, often endangering his own life. He was influential in making Kansas a free state and was a member of the Free State Territorial Legislature. He died in Denver on December 17, 1906.

"LAWLESS NEGROES"

[From the *Kansas City Times* and *Western Recorder*]

"There is going to be a regular war some day between the whites and blacks of this city," a well-known businessman of Lawrence, Kan., yesterday declared.

"What is the cause of the ill feeling?" was asked.

"Well, you know there has always been a very large Negro population in Lawrence, and it seems to be on the increase. Among this population is a class of worthless men who won't work and whose time is spent in petty thieving, and sometimes worse crimes are committed by them. There have been innumerable instances of Negroes following young girls and women home, and insulting them whenever they found them alone after dark. This has caused a general feeling of indignation to prevail against the whole class and some day a regular war will follow some outrage committed by them. You remember the Bausman murder last year. That was a most horribly atrocious affair, two Negroes having pounded the man's head in a horrible manner, then robbing him and throwing the body into the river. A notorious prostitute named "Sis" Vinegar had enticed the old man behind an icehouse on the banks of the Kaw. He was drunk, and while in the arms of the woman, the two Negroes slipped up behind him and struck him over the head with an iron bar. He yelled to them that he would give up and begged them not to kill him, but they continued to hammer him until his head was crushed to a jelly, when they took his money, $200 if I remember rightly, and then threw the body into the river. The men were arrested a few days after, and subsequently confessed the murder. A mob formed a night or two afterward, broke open the jail and three men were left hanging from the bridge.

We came very near having another hanging there last week, and had the case been a little stronger against the Negro he would have swung sure.

The Negro's name is Frank Strode and it is believed that he made the attempt to commit an outrage upon a 12-year-old daughter of Col. Theodore Wiseman. He had been hanging around Col. Wiseman's residence during the day, and had made indecent proposals to the girl, offering her money and other inducements. Col. Wiseman and his wife were away from home and the Negro knew it. So during the night he went to the house and tried to break in. The inmates were aroused and the Negro bid a very hasty retreat, not, however, before he had been recognized. The officers were informed of the affair, and Strode was put under arrest. When the circumstances became known, a number of the boys collected and it was strongly urged by some that Strode should be strung up. Owing to the fact that he had not actually offered the girl any violence it was finally decided to let the matter drop. When Col. Wiseman returns, however, I shouldn't be at all surprised to hear of his killing the Negro.

In such occurrences as these that keep the public indignation aroused and unless there is a sudden and thorough reformation on the part of our Negro population there will be a war one of these that will startle the entire community.—Lawrence Correspondence, KANSAS CITY TIMES.

Whoever wrote the above is a fool and little apprehends the trouble he is about to cause this city. A man who would advise a mob or a riot is no conservator of peace. There is no reason that this community should be further disgraced. We are sure that Strode, who is in the hands of the authorities, will be punished to the fullest extent and penalty of the law. No harm has been done to the little girl; no violence has been committed. We have no sympathy for Strode or any other man who would make such a dastardly attempt to the person of any girl or woman. It is a mistaken idea for a mob of hot heads to assume that every colored man who is charged with a crime in this community must be taken from jail and hung. Another case of the kind which happened here about a year ago, when old Pete Vinegar against whom there was

no charges was taken from the jail and hung, will never occur again in the history of Lawrence. We know whereof we affirm. It is known by the citizens of this place what the editor of this paper has done for the interest of law and order. We stand here now to advocate it, but we will not advise the colored people of this city and county to hold up their hands while a set of law-breakers ruthlessly murders them. If all the colored men are to be charged with the crimes committed by the scoundrels of any race, then let the colored people stand together when the hour which the Times correspondent advises shall come. We say, once for all, that no more colored men will ever be taken from the Lawrence jail and hung. We speak thus, plainly and seriously. No one desires to see a riot in the Athens of Kansas, but a riot is inevitable should there be an attempt to mob another colored man in this city. We have remonstrated and done what we could to preserve the dignity of the law and the good name of the city, and now patience has ceased to be a virtue. The jail must not be disturbed. Strode must await the sentence of the law; should there be an attempt to disturb the jail, it will be the signal for a wanton and inhuman slaughter, a riot, such as will disgrace the name of the city for all time to come. As to colored men following white girls in the night, the example is set by white men who should respect their homes too much to be caught in company with colored prostitutes. But these white men are following this class of colored women almost every evening of the week. They stand on the street corners and whistle and beckon at them. Our sympathy is with the little girl, even though the vile hand was not laid upon her. We know Major Wiseman, and there is not more thorough gentleman in this city than he. He has a just right to defend his fireside. But we do not believe that the Major would do a thing that he thought would widow a single innocent wife, or orphan a single little one. Shall this whole community be clad in sorrow on the account of the attempted crime of one man?

[Western Recorder, 1883-1884]

LAW AND ORDER

Let Peace and Good Will Prevail

A meeting of the colored men of the city was called for last evening at the courthouse. Like a great many other things this call was construed to mean, by many persons, just what it did not say. Many a man who wanted to attend did not dare to; all sorts of rumors were afloat. At a few minutes past 8 o'clock Rev. H. R. Pinckney called the meeting to order and nominated John L. Waller for chairman, which was adopted.

Mr. Waller on taking the chair thanked the meeting for the honor conferred, especially of presiding over a body of men who had met with the watchword of "Law and order;" the highest duty of an American citizen was to preserve law and order; we were all law makers. As he came to the court house he met a friend who said, "Don't go to the court house; your life is in danger;" he answered to that gentleman, "If I come to such a pass that a peaceable lot of colored men cannot hold a meeting in the interest of law and order, I think some of the white citizens will help us to hold it." He advised all to unite in helping to make the city quiet, and hoped not another day would pass till every man should feel that his home and fireside was safe from assault; in your speeches denounce nobody, and pray that no such occurrence shall again disgrace our city; let the past be past, and the future take care of itself; let us rest in the hope that peace shall soon be restored.

Mr. Gray moved that Rev. H. R. Pinckney act as secretary.

Rev. H. R. Pinckney moved that a committee on resolution be appointed which was adopted. The chair appointed the following: H. R. Pinckney, Allen Williams, William Gray, James Gross, C. C. James.

In the absence of the secretary, C. C. Thacher was made secretary *pro tem*.

Hon. Sidney Clark was present and was invited to make a

speech while the committee was deliberating. He said at all such times as this conservatism was the strong advice. He was glad to see the spirit of good order and peace that was advocated here tonight.

Waller was next called and tried to plead the "baby act," in other words he said they had a bouncing boy at his home and that he was anxious to get hold of him. How much more Waller would have said in praise of that boy and his own quiet home, we could only guess, for the committee on resolutions entered and summarily sat down on his baby with the following:

WHEREAS, The excitement of the past few days occasioned by the foul and willful murder of one David Bausman, by Isaac King and George Robertson, has marked a period in the history of Lawrence, as touching its reputation, and fair name; and

WHEREAS, This heinous crime as committed has produced an erroneous impression which misrepresents the position of the respectable, and law-abiding citizens of color; therefore

Resolved, That the colored citizens of Lawrence and vicinity, in mass meeting assembled, hereby express their detestation of the horrible murder committed, and their public approval of the prompt arrest of the offenders.

Resolved, That we point with pride to the assistance rendered by colored men in the capture of the murderers, and especially to the brave conduct of William Harper, one of our colored citizens, who himself captured George Robertson and delivered him to the sheriff.

Resolved, That the murderers having been promptly apprehended, and in possession of the civil authorities, we believe that they were entitled to a trial, and sentence in due course of law—a fundamental right guaranteed by both our state and national constitution, however heinous or aggravating the offense.

Resolved, That the law abiding citizens, we view with alarm the spirit of lawlessness, which under the garb of upholding and purifying law, often violates the first principle of justice, and we hereby declare our belief that the true policy for the suppression of crime is the prompt and faithful execution by the civil authorities of every law upon the statute book.

Resolved, that we recommend to the colored people of this city and vicinity, to abstain from all expressions tending to increase the present excitement in the public mind.

Mr. Gray moved to add the following that was also adopted unanimously:

Resolved, that the statements of the newspaper correspondents of the Leavenworth Standard, Kansas City Journal, Kansas City Times and Topeka Commonwealth, reflecting upon the colored people of this city are false in every particular, and wholly unreliable as to the facts in the case.

Mr. Asher, Mr. Speer, Mr. C. C. Jones, Mr. Williams and others addressed the meeting and all advocated peace and harmony.

The effect of this meeting cannot but be good. If there has been any inclination to draw the color line, if this meeting does not abolish it, then the men who attempt to again draw it are unworthy the name of men. Only the spirit of good will prevailed last evening, and only the spirit of good will should meet it. Let us have peace.

[LAWRENCE DAILY JOURNAL, June 12, 1882]

LYNCHING

The increasing tendency to deal with criminals in a more summary manner than that of the law, is a subject that should have the careful attention of all thoughtful and order-loving citizens.

It is a common current apology, that men fear that justice will not be meted out to the criminals by the court, that the lax administration of the laws and the frequent failures to convict, are the causes at the bottom of the recent numerous lynchings. There is doubtless a grain of truth in this, but it is by no manner of means the sole or moving reason for mob violence. The cry for blood does not come from those who are most concerned that the ends of justice be served. The hooting, howling mob is made up of those whose sensibilities are so blunted, and whose animal natures are so easily aroused that the shocking spectacle of a struggling ghastly victim is, for the time being; a gratifying excitement. There are certain human beings with the bloodhound instinct so largely developed in them that they are seldom happier than when in hot pursuit of a victim.

Let one observe the keen relish with which certain persons narrate the details of the chase and capture of a fugitive, notice with what zest and energy some of the laziest of men will perform hard labor and endure great fatigue in order to ferret out an offender, notice the added interest which life takes on when a community has some criminal sensation on hand, and who can doubt but that other causes, than the failure of courts to convict, underlie the clamor for swift justice.

The man, who in cold blood takes the life of a fellow being, commits one of the most dreadful of all crimes and deserves a punishment that is, if possible, adequate. But, even leaving out of the question the horrible danger of lynching an innocent party, is the taking of life an adequate punishment. At least one essential purpose of punishment by civilized people is not met by it, it is

not reformatory, it is only revengeful. There is only the brief agony, which certainly does not meet the case, even so far as revenge is concerned. A far more torturesome punishment could be meted out by allowing the criminal to live and suffer. The plea then is made that society must be protected, and the life of the criminal must be taken in order to warn others of like murderous intent of their own sure fate. It would be well if an inquiry, as thorough as possible, might be instituted to determine how far the criminal classes are restrained from the commission of crime by the fear of punishment. A large proportion of crimes are committed by men while under the influence of liquor or while inflamed by anger or hate. It is doubtful if the thought of punishment or the weighing of consequences enter at all into consideration under these circumstances. Nothing save the immediate presence of retributive authority would restrain men while under the influence of their aroused angry passions. Then, as to that other grade of criminals who plan and perpetrate their work with deliberation, it is doubtful if they are of a nature to be intimidated. Their absorption in their purposes and their low plane of development make it quite probable that they neither give little thought to the after consequences of their deeds, nor would they feel keenly the disgrace and the misery of detection.

But granting that the swift, sure punishment, the taking of life for life does or would intimidate and keep down, somewhat, the list of crime, the fact remains, that the familiarization with deeds of violence blunts the sensibilities and lessens the abhorrence of the taking of life. The intimidation of a few men who might otherwise murder is dearly brought, if, at the price of creating a coarser type of manhood. If it shall become so much a matter of course that the stringing up if the right thing to do, there must inevitably obtain a harder, more careless temper, which, in its turn will commit murder because it will be so fit to do so, by reason of the slight thing it seems to be to take life.

Enough careful, pains-taking thought on the part of our legislators and public educators, as to how to obtain strict justice through the courts and thus fully secure society from further depredations from known criminals, would certainly be productive

of good results and ought to convince people that governments are strong enough and great enough to provide for the life-time incarceration of murderers. The occupation of our legislators in such questions as this ought to be considered of pretty nearly as much importance as the absorbing questions of party patronage and the management of the machine. If legal taking of life were utterly done away with, the clamor for blood would largely cease and then the rising generations would never associate the taking of life with any other than that of the awful character of the murderer. The double horror of the contemplation of the murderers character, and further horror of the death of the victim, would eventually lead to a more general refinement and an increased sensibility, which would instinctively look upon the taking of life of a fellow-being as a thing so awful, so solemn, that the cruel hands of a brutal mob would not be allowed to strangle it.

[LAWRENCE TRIBUNE, June 14, 1882]

Lawrence Daily Journal
June 1, 1882
Page 4

IS IT SUICIDE?
A Discovery Which May be Serious

On Decoration Day, early in the morning, a farmer crossing the bridge had his attention attracted to a common playing card pinned up against one of the timbers of the combination span of the bridge. There were also a number of cards lying beneath it on the floor. The farmer approached and took the card. It was a seven spot of hearts, somewhat dirty and worn, but what fixed the attention of the finder were the following words written across the face of the card in an ignorant appearing hand:

"The owner of this card lies in the bottom of the river. Lost my all with these. *Unknown.*"

The farmer put the card in his pocket and also those lying on the bridge and took them home, in the evening brought the one having the writing upon it to Marshal Prentice. The marshal examined the card but could find nothing upon it that would disclose the identity of the suicide, if suicide it was. The marshal told the farmer to bring in the other cards and it is possible that when he does so some clue can be found. In the meantime the matter remains a mystery. Has some poor unfortunate, disheartened by the loss of his last cent over the green cloth, desperately resolved to cancel his life, and hurled himself headlong into the boiling, seething waters of the Kaw, as they rush dark and murky into a dull and ominous roar over the dam below, or did some boy, in idle sport, write the inscription on the card and pin it up in playfulness?

Is there even now a lifeless human form being constantly hurled against the rocks and held victim by the ever returning current?

Who can tell? It is quite possible that the card may simply be a boyish trick, but it is also possible, nay almost probable, that another victim of the persecutions of the "draw" has sought to obliterate his misery by death.

An expert who examined the card while in the possession of the marshal pronounces it to be of a peculiar style and make, and says there is probably not a deck like it in the city, and that it was undoubtedly brought here by some stranger. It is also stated that some stranger lost about one hundred and seventy-five dollars at cards some time Sunday night, although where it was at is not known.

These facts would favor the theory that it was really a suicide. No word has been received nor no notice appeared in the papers of the finding of any floater along the river below here, but even in case of a suicide by jumping from the bridge that fact is not surprising for the under-current would hold the body down close to the dam for a long time after death, perhaps for several weeks, perhaps longer. While developments in this mysterious case are being waited for it might be well for some of the fishermen at the river to make some search for the body of the drowned man, if, indeed any man has been drowned.

Dear Ms. Schott,

I see that you have joined a swelling number of white middle-class women who want to champion the causes of American minority males. Your warmth and loving compassion for Pete Vinegar, a man who died long before you were born, is truly an inspiration for us all. But don't you think that David Bausman's friends and family loved him too, in this case to the point of killing his killers? White people are ruled by animal passion just as black people are. The death of a Caucasian is just as traumatic as the death of a negro. True, David Bausman was probably wrong to have had sex with Margaret Vinegar, if he indeed knew that she was engaged, and I can understand Isaac King's jealous rage. However, Margaret Vinegar probably consented to it. Furthermore, smashing Bausman's skull in with a piece of iron was a gross overreaction. You wouldn't want somebody to do that to you, Ms. Schott, would you? The subsequent lynchings were the direct result of this crime. Why do you believe that King and Robertson merely intended to rob Bausman? Was he rich and had gold-lined pockets? Did they smash his head in so that they could extract his gold fillings? Was not Bausman a human being too? How do you know Pete Vinegar had nothing to do with it?

We historians sometimes have to remind each other that attitudes, values, and beliefs change over time. The said event occurred on June 9, 1882. Today is May 29, 1996. The event is already one-hundred and fourteen years old. The widespread break-down of the family unit began in the mid 1960's. Family ties were still quite strong in 1882. Family members tended to act in unison much more than they do today. It is possible that Pete Vinegar may have indeed played some sort of role in it. However, the facts are probably lost in time.

If the three lynchings back in 1882 is such a pressing issue today, Ms. Schott, then why doesn't an African-American historian take it upon himself/herself to investigate and generate literature

on the topic? They are protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution just like you and I are. I don't think they need you to speak for them. In addition, the book, *Boys, Let Me Down Easy*, may inflame racial tension and lead to an event that happened in Michigan a few years back. A group of black youths who had just seen the movie (It was just a movie!) "Mississippi Burning" assaulted a white person at random and nearly killed him. This now brain damaged person is a true victim of racial discrimination. True, African-Americans often suffer cruelly at the hands of law enforcement officials and some less than high-minded white citizens, but I fear that your upcoming book will portray white males as fire-breathing demons and black males as happy-go-lucky victims of white hatred.

An Angry White Male

Index

The Authors

Cindy Schott and Kathy Schott Gates are twin sisters, born during the 1951 flood in Lawrence, Kansas. They have long shared a love of history, especially Kansas history. Few people outside of Kansas realize what a rich history we have here.

Cindy became interested in the story of the lynching about 20 years ago. As she did her research, a story began to unfold that was tragic, shocking, and sometimes heartwarming. Three years ago, she drew her sister into the project. Kathy subsequently wrote the book, and with the help of Cindy and many rewrites and additions, brought the manuscript to its present state.

Kathy and Cindy have written numerous articles for their high school newspaper, as well as articles for the Allen Press company newsletter. Kathy had an excellent teacher, Mrs. Carol Garcia, for fourth grade. Mrs. Garcia encouraged writing and had the young students write essays, short stories, and poetry. Mrs. Garcia planted a love of writing.

Although the lynching has been mentioned briefly in local books about Lawrence, there have been no books about it. Most current information available about the lynching is thanks to Cindy's efforts to provide the information to the Douglas County Historical Society. Before Cindy researched the incident, virtually nothing was available detailing the event. Kathy and Cindy feel that this is a story that must be told.

"Another case of the kind which happened here about a year ago, when old Pete Vinegar against whom there were no charges was taken from the jail and hung, will never occur again in the history of Lawrence." [*Western Recorder*, 1883]

"There were at least 300 men around the jail. The spirit of vengeance was rife among them, and they only wanted a leader." [*The Daily Tribune*, June 12, 1882, John Speer's editorial]

"A crowd tried to get down to the scene of the hanging, but so perfect was the arrangement of the vigilance committee that not a man, friend or foe could get near. As the vigilantes came back this crowd cheered them lustily. Most of the men were masked, though a few were simply blacked." [*The Daily Journal*, June 10, 1882]

". . . where her father, against whom there were *no charges*, was taken from the county jail and hung without any visible resistance on the part of those whose duty it is to hold *inviolate* the lives of those committed to their keeping." [*Western Recorder*, April 1883]