

issue was the first newspaper ever printed on paper made from the wild Kansas sunflower. Sunflowers were gathered, crushed, and pressed into paper by the Salina Paper Mill. The Salina Paper Manufacturing Co. at that time announced plans to purchase sunflowers for the purpose of making paper, emphasizing that “*there is nothing that grows upon the prairie that cannot be utilized.*”

Digging through old newspapers, my dear reader, is one of this author’s small joys. Searching archives for little treasures can be as tedious as trying to find a red petal in a sunflower field. When one of those petals catches your eye, you take note. One such note uncovered was mention of Sunflower Creamery. Many citizens to-day have knowledge of Concordia Creamery and Fairmont Creamery, but Sunflower Creamery was the first creamery in town. It was a highly successful business from 1910 - 1915 manufacturing high grade butter and ice cream, employing nearly 100 people, and creating business for local farmers. Business was booming and product quality was high,

though there were whispers of concerns about management. It was purchased by Beatrice Creamery in 1915.

One last sunflower story brings us to 1882. An article in the Concordia Republican entitled *Sunflowers and Quacks* addressed a bit of commotion raised in town regarding flower. It seems there had been statewide questions of whether it was a weed or a flower. Those on the flower side of the debate made sure the commercial, aesthetic, and medical benefits were known, while those on the weed side, made certain to bring forth that they grew everywhere, especially in poor soil and filth. Several mentionings of this argument over many articles brought a smile on this author’s face. While the “experts” fret and postured, the sunflowers stood unbothered along the fence lines, bright as ever, as if amused by the uproar of the humans who could not agree whether they were a blight or a blessing. The sunflower battle eventually fizzled out in 1903 when the sunflower was officially adopted as the Kansas State Flower.

THE INDUSTRIOUS HONEYBEE

The honeybee became our state insect in 1976. This hardworking humble bumble is one of the most important creatures on our planet.

Gary Reynolds was an ardent champion and educator on the subject of bees. He had a PhD in Honey Bee Genetics and was employed by the USDA for 12 years at the Honey Bee Laboratory in Baton Rouge. Gary knew his bees. He owned Rainbow Honey Farm in Concordia. His honey was loved throughout the community. He also founded the Concordia

Farmers Market. As a substitute teacher, he brought students honey sticks, earning the endearing name “The Honey Man.”

A 7th grade student from Coffeyville believed the state symbols would not be complete without an insect and suggested the honeybee. Concordia’s own Gary Reynolds played a large role as champion and advocate for this movement. How poetic that 2,000+ children, a 7th grader, and The Honey Man stirred the hive to make the honeybee our beloved state insect.



Lady Shirley's SOCIETY PAPERS

Season II: First Edition, January 2026

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE,
EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Dearest Reader,

This new year brings a most remarkable observation. Our beloved Republic celebrates its two hundred fiftieth birthday - a grand fête for a nation once comprised of thirteen colonies, now grown into a Union of fifty states. Kansas joined the company in 1861 as the thirty-fourth state, and Concordia - our own fair ton - made its debut a mere decade thereafter.

Already, celebrations have begun to flutter like patriotic ribbons across the land to celebrate “*America 250.*” And though our present discourse oft resembles a tempest in a teacup, let us, for a moment, lay aside the banners of party and unite beneath the grand canopy of history, celebrating the milestones that created our nation and carry us forward. For what is progress, if not the child of remembrance?

At this month’s end, January 29th, we celebrate Kansas Day. This year marks one hundred sixty-five years of statehood. Few states indulge in such spirited celebrations and fanfare of statehood as Kansas with parades, school programs, museum revelries, and community activities. This

author looks forward to what the State of Kansas has prepared for this year as we celebrate 250 years of America!

Our beloved state wears its symbols proudly. From the Great Seal of Kansas, proclaiming our motto “*Ad Astra Per Aspera*” - to the stars through difficulty, to the lovely morning song of the meadowlark, and “*Home on the Range*” every Kansas child knows by heart. Such symbols of our state were picked with care and deep with meaning. Wherever you travel throughout our state, you’ll find the sunflower and the buffalo in places of commerce, printed on textiles, and styled upon souvenirs travelers may look upon in kind remembrance. Long before these symbols became official, they inspired naming of creeks and rivers, and townships and cities, adorning our very lives.

Follow me, dear reader, as we explore a few of these symbols. Each symbol - be it the stalwart buffalo, the golden sunflower, or the industrious honeybee - carries with it a tale as enduring as the prairie winds.

*Yours truly,
Lady Shirley*

THE STALWART BUFFALO

Brewster Higley, resident of Smith County, here in North Central Kansas, is attributed to penning the words to "Home on the Range" in the early 1870s. We all know the opening line well, "O give me a home, where the buffalo roam..." How incredible it must have been for those first settlers to gaze upon such a powerful, majestic, wild animal such as the American bison in those early days! To-day, however, the thought of encountering a wild roaming buffalo might bring a different sentiment, though still mixed with awe. Such awe and admiration for the sacred creature likely led to the naming of so many things after it.

In Cloud County, this author feels inclined to mention Buffalo Township and Buffalo Creek. Buffalo Township is just to the northwest of Concordia and east of Jamestown. It was one of the 5 original townships when Cloud County was mapped. Later those townships would be broken into the 18 townships of to-day. Townships of this age are mostly used as political or governmental divisions, though in the early days they played a much heavier role in governance, jurisdiction, and in law enforcement. Each township graded their own roads, built their own bridges, and settled their own disputes. Each had a board with a chairman, trustee, property assessor, 2 justices of the peace, and 2 constables. To-day, those responsibilities are primarily overseen by the county.

Spanning a portion of Buffalo Township from the Republican River, through Grant Township (Jamestown), and flowing into Jewell County, lies Buffalo Creek and the Buffalo

Creek Valley. E.F. Hollibaugh's "Biographical History of Cloud County, Kansas" gives a beautiful description. *"The praises of the Buffalo creek valley have not been sung like those of the Solomon and Republican valleys. While not so pretentious in point of area it vies with them in beauty and fertility of soil. From some of the promontories that overlook this prosperous and fruitful valley a magnificent bird's-eye view is gained, - fields of waving grain, commodious residences and herds of fine cattle grazing in the pastures indicate its great agricultural wealth and form a rural scene of rare and exceeding beauty."*

Though Cloud County hasn't seen a roaming buffalo in over one hundred fifty years, this author ran across a telling from Phil Kizer, an early settler in the 1860s, in his own words. With the help of Clarence Paulsen and much re-reading of Phil's own words, the following story tells of a buffalo hunt gone awry.

For some background, Philip Kizer was a character. He was a broadly known alcoholic and in Mr. Paulsen's words "*a mythomaniac, but he had redeeming qualities; folks liked him, and his wife married him twice!*" Most of all, it appears the people couldn't dislike a man, though often quite drunk, who told the grandest of tales.

Phil Kizer was on one summer afternoon hunting buffalo near where Jewell would be to-day. He had a fruitful day, shooting several buffalo. As he was inspecting his labors, he became quite tired. He leaned his rifle against a bison lying nearby and sat down on him to rest. Phil hadn't done a thorough job in inspecting this kill however, as the mighty beast began to move, awoken from

his slumber. The bison hadn't been shot at all! The bull stood, unhappy to be awakened, and with his head, took Phil between the horns, and tossed him into the air. Phil landed right on the buffalo's back. His account in the Blade may take you a bit to read through, but this author thought it an intriguing puzzle to decipher. Here is his account of what came next. *"Whut to do I wuz puzzled to know. I couldn't keep my seat much longer, as I didn't have much uv any seat left. Somethin' had ter be done, an that purty quick....I began ter git ready fer a leap and took a-hold of my breeches to git 'em up and git 'em all fixed*

when lo! I felt the handle uv my huntin' knife. Strange it wuz I had not thought uv that afore. ...but I didn't, an it may be just as well now fer if I had it would not uv been a story wuth the tellin' uv, and the public would never uv been the wiser fer the readin' uv it in the Blade."

To spare you, dear reader, further details and eye strain, Phil was able to pull his hunting knife and kill the animal. He was surprised he was able to take the buffalo down, "it's mighty hard to tell jest what a feller kin do when that's a big 'mergency, and that un looked ter me like the biggest un I ever heard uv."

THE GOLDEN SUNFLOWER

In 1903, the sunflower became the state flower of Kansas. Strong and majestic, its head held high, the sunflower was a perfect choice. Because the sunflower is naturally resistant to toxins, it will grow most anywhere. The statute for the sunflower reads beautifully with meaning, "*WHEREAS, Kansas has a native wild flower common throughout her borders, hardy and conspicuous, of definite, unvarying and striking shape, easily sketched, moulded, and carved, having armorial capacities, ideally adapted for artistic reproduction, with its strong, distinct disk and its golden circle of clear glowing rays — a flower that a child can draw on a slate, a woman can work in silk, or a man can carve on stone or fashion in clay; and*

WHEREAS, This flower has to all Kansans a historic symbolism which speaks of frontier days, winding trails, pathless prairies, and is full of the life and glory of the past, the pride of the present, and richly emblematic of the majesty of a golden future, and is a flower which has given Kansas the world-wide name, "the sunflower state": therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas: That the helianthus or wild native sunflower is hereby made, designated and declared to be the state flower and floral emblem of the state of Kansas."

In 1889, the Blade reported there were petitions from across the nation to suggest a National Flower. Kansas, of course, submitted the sunflower, advocating its status as historically the oldest native flower, the largest of the American flowers - growing up to 15 feet tall with heads 2 feet in diameter, brilliant in color, and holds great agricultural and economic importance. Unfortunately, the sunflower never was adopted as the National Flower. It took nearly 200 years for a flower to be formally adopted. In 1986, the rose was selected.

Most are aware the sunflower has great economic impact. From sunflower seeds to sunflower oil, this author uncovered an unlikely product referenced in an 1893 Salina Daily Republican which merits mention. The October 31, 1893