



~ Part 17 ~

Reflections on a Common Theme

Local Books, Local Authors

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CLOUD COUNTY

A Woman's Voice

by Joan Nothern

Nettie Squire Sutton and husband John W. Sutton built a home in Glasco in 1910, on a lot bought at auction in 1894. In this home, shaded by a stately American elm that still distinguishes the Sutton home on Buffalo Street, Nettie Sutton recorded in poetry her response to family, town, and country. Many of her poems were published in the Glasco Sun. She published *A Book of Poems* through the Messenger Press, Minneapolis KS, dedicated to her children so they might remember her.

A Book of Poems can be found at the Glasco Library and online: Poetry of Kansas.

Nettie Sutton wrote to remember her mother, to encourage herself to be kind and always to cheer others. The power of faith, the need for faith, is woven into her work. And then Nettie Sutton's world asks more and more of her. *Woman's Suffrage* is addressed as equality in marriage.

A world at war is addressed in poem after poem. Relinquishing a son to battle, the vision of a Christian democracy, anticipating the world after war, all let a modern reader share in her expectations. Other poems capture the demands on the home front: gardens for food, the Red Cross meetings to knit socks, soldiers drafted to farm.

A 1920 poem revealed Sutton's involvement with the WCTU. Her interests turned to agriculture, noting the transition to wheat and blaming stubble for drought. Nettie Sutton pondered economic issues, wondering about wheat sold abroad leaving food too expensive for the poor here.

The writer in the little house under the elm on Buffalo Street left a window into a woman's world one hundred years ago. She died in 1933, yet she inspires a group that meets several times a year, The Nettie Sutton Poetry Society, to share poems that speak to them. They may be more like their group's namesake than they realize—choosing poetry as a catalyst for meaningful discussion.

MITCHELL COUNTY

Margaret Hill McCarter

by Linda Clover

Margaret Hill McCarter (1860-1938), author and educator, was born near Carthage, Indiana, on May 2, 1860. She taught school, before and after coming to Kansas in 1888, marrying Dr. William A. McCarter in 1890. Besides raising her family, teaching, and contributing to newspapers and magazines, she wrote numerous books. One of her more popular books is *The Peace of the Solomon Valley*, written in 1911. The book was an odd size, shaped like a legal-sized envelope, telling the story of our valley in a way that it has been listed as one of best 150 Kansas books. McCarter visited the Valley and Waconda Springs. She was a lecturer at Lincoln Park Chautauquas just a mile west of Cawker City.

The book is letters written back and forth of a love story, for the Solomon Valley as well as of a young couple meeting in our valley. Two men grew up in Vermont, attending Yale together, and came west in the 1870s. One man stayed in Kansas while the other, after finding his poor health restored from rheumatism, returned to make his mark on Wall Street in New York City. They both made good lives for their families where they had chosen to live, with both even helping each other out financially when necessary

The gentleman from New York City had a son who suffered as he had in his youth and decided that maybe a visit to Kansas would help him, also. Without telling his son that he would be visiting his old friend, he sent him off to hopefully get rid of not only his rheumatism but also his "high and mighty notions about the East and himself." As might be expected, the Kansas farmer had a son who was not interested in farming the soil but yearned to go west to the mountains and mining. Their developing relationship showed they were a little more alike than they first imagined.

There was also a daughter in Kansas who was musically inclined and felt drawn to go East to further her education and find her way in the world. The mother had died while she was young and she had willingly taken over duties as necessary in many pioneer homes. "It was the women who bore the heaviest burden here in the first years."

The city boy was surprised at how friendly the country folk were, even had nice dishes, a piano, books, magazines, and received their mail daily, much more civilized than he had expected. At first he wondered if they didn't borrow items to make their home look more habitable for him. It didn't take long for him to get over thinking the Solomon Valley was much better than Death Valley as he first thought. Naturally, he thought it was his six-month sentence out west, a "cursed crude place to thrust an Eastern chap into," even though the Indians and buffalo were no longer to be found. He was surprised that a person could see so far except on the ocean, the openness of the valley with amazing sunrises and sunsets.

The "forgotten bit of the sea" close by that the Indians called Waconda–Spirit Water–and the grove of trees just a few miles on west were visited and found to be amazing.

This sentence that he had thought would be unbearable became very hard to leave when his father insisted he was needed back in the city. He put his return off as long as possible and was overjoyed when the daughter visited the city to further her education. She decided that although she loved her time in the East, her heart was back in Kansas in the Solomon Valley.

Surprising his father, he had to tell him that he "loved those grand, open fields on the sunny plains." He learned that Waconda Springs meant to him that like "this tiny bit of the sea, left here for so many centuries, had so loved this place, so rested in the peace and beauty of the valley, sun-kissed and mist-swathed, with the tenderness of the springtime, the glory of mid-summer, the splendor of autumn, that it chose to stay here; chose to forsake the restless, storm, seething ocean that hammers forever on its shores and here to watch the unfolding of a kingdom, the life of people coming at last into their own." The young couple found their own place here in the Solomon Valley.

ROOKS COUNTY

Leo E. Oliva, Solomon Valley Historian

by Roger Hrabe

There is probably no more prolific author in the Solomon Valley than Leo Oliva of rural Woodston. Oliva, who was instrumental in the formation of the Solomon Valley Highway 24 Heritage Alliance, has a long list of publications to his credit.

Oliva grew up in the Woodston area, so his passion for the area has always been evident. After high school, Leo received his B.A. in History from Fort Hays Kansas State College in 1959. He later received his Masters and Doctorate degrees from the University of Denver. Leo went on to teach history in Texas, New Mexico, and at Fort Hays State University in Hays.

Oliva has been self-employed from 1978 to the present, taking care of his 3,400 acre farm. If that doesn't keep him busy enough, Leo is a freelance historian, owner of Western Books publishing company, an editor, as well as serving as a tour guide.

Well over 50 books, articles, essays, and other publications are part of Oliva's impressive résumé. Some notable publications that capture the history of the Solomon Valley are: *Woodston: The Story of a Kansas Country Town* (Western Books, 1985), *Ash Rock and the Stone Church: The History of a Kansas Rural Community* (Sons and Daughters of Ash Rock & Western Books, 1983), and *Stockton Heritage in Wood, Stone, and Brick: The Town and Its Historic Structures* (City of Stockton, 1985).

For lovers of Kansas forts, historic trails, and American Indian history, Leo has written publications detailing the life and times of Forts Hays, Larned, Dodge, Scott, Harker, and Wallace, the Santa Fe Trail, the journeys of Zebulon Pike, and an array of articles on the American Indian and the United States Army. He writes a weekly newspaper column on "Our Kansas Heritage" for the Logan Republican, located in the North Solomon Valley. He presents first-person performances as

Robert Morris Peck who served in the frontier army in Kansas Territory and participated in the Battle of Solomon Fork in 1857.

The Alliance owes a debt a gratitude to Leo Oliva for the work that he has done through the years, including serving as editor of our quarterly newsletter. The success of the Alliance can be attributed to his efforts.

GRAHAM COUNTY

Hill City Athletics Baseball: A Decade of Champions, 1950-1989

by Scott Parker

Scott Parker is a resident of Hill City where he has taught in the Hill City Schools for many years. In 1996 he published a book he had spent several years compiling. The Hill City Athletics were one of the state's best semiprofessional teams in the 1950s. Through news accounts in The Hill City Times, other written resources, interviews with players, supporters, and fans, Parker has preserved the story of the western Kansas team.

The book starts with the early 1887 game between Millbrook and Nicodemus, baseball's popularity in the 1920s through the formation of the team in 1949. The team joined the West Central Kansas League which included the Hays Larks (still playing today), Plainville VFW, Stockton Snafus, Loretta Blue Jays, Victoria Eagles, and Ness City. The book chronicles the team's winning season through league and nonleague games until the team disbanded after the 1959 season.