Sun., July 16: Everybody Likes Ike

It didn't matter that I was rolling early again the next day, because I already knew the first itinerary stop in Topeka would not be open on a Sunday. In the first half of the 1900s, one of the ways white Southern politicians devised to rip off black people was the concept of "separate but equal" education. White children would go to one set of schools, black to another, but it was okay, the politicos claimed, because the teachers and supplies and facilities would be of equal quality. No doubt it will stun you to learn the theory came nowhere near reality. To quote a judge in 1951, African-Americans attended "'tumbledown, dirty shacks'"[1] in South Carolina. A high school for blacks in Virginia did not have science labs or a gym, unlike the white version. In many places, African-American schools were overcrowded even though spaces were available in white schools.

In Topeka, many students were bused long distances past neighborhood white schools to reach the four elementary schools for blacks. One of them was the Monroe School, a relatively small two-story brick building on the east side of town. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) decided to challenge the "separate but equal" doctrine, and purposely filed suit against school districts across the country for different but overlapping wrongs. Part of the reason they chose Topeka's was because A) it was *not* in the South, and B) the schools actually *were* equal. The NAACP wanted to argue separation by race ("segregation") was harmful in itself.

Beginning in the 1930s, a psychologist husband-and-wife team had devised a simple way to test how this affected black kids. Using four dolls that were exactly the same except for their skin tone, they asked black children aged 3 to 7 which dolls they wanted to play with, were nice, looked bad, or had a nice color. They also checked whether the kids recognized the racial differences, or themselves in one of the dolls. The majority of these black children gave positive ratings only to the white dolls. Segregation had taught them to hate themselves.

Eventually the four lawsuits, plus another, were combined under *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka*, which made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954. Persuaded in part by the doll study, the court agreed with the NAACP, quoting a line from the lower court ruling: "'Segregation has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law…'" The concept of "separate but equal" was dead, though it would take 20 years to get all school districts nationally into line. I know

1 Quotes are from "Brown v. Board of Education," a pamphlet from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior.

firsthand, because I was part of the first classes bused to desegregate the schools in Raleigh, N.C., in 1970. I was fine with it.

The Monroe School was one of four former African-American schools chosen by the Park Service across the country to represent the Brown decision. I looked in through the glass in the front door at an unremarkable school entranceway opening into a hallway, and a hint of the exhibits I was missing.

(Public domain; WikiMedia Commons)

That's okay, because one of the outdoor panels gave me a lovely connection to the students. It pictured an older girl who as a kindergartner was one of the kids for whom the Brown suit was filed. She was standing on the wide sidewalk in front of the building near the northeast corner, the front door shown in the background. In the photo above, her spot was a short way past where the sidewalk expands. (The panel was not yet up when that photo was taken.) Comparing the panel's pic to the expansion cuts in the sidewalk, a basement ventilation grate in the building, and the windows, convinced me the sidewalk had not been repaved since the young lady stood there. I took a moment to figure out where she was standing, stood there myself, and looked in the direction she had toward the camera. I wanted to honor her and the generations of children of color permanently harmed by idiots who thought they were superior beings simply because their skin had less melanin.

Topeka is the capital of Kansas, so of course I went to visit the capitol. My suspicion that I somehow lost some of the pictures I took on the trip reaches 99% as I type this. At the WWI museum I got fully into the mode of using the camera as a notepad, taking pictures I could use later to write up the notes. I am 99% sure I took shots of the school and the Kansas capitol and the next stops downtown, but they are not on the computer. The real problem is, I can't imagine where I went wrong. I took at least two shots of each view, in case one came out fuzzy. Most nights I transferred that day's photos to my computer and backed them up to a memory stick.

Fortunately, the fact I was able to find the photos above and below online kinda proves my earlier point about just enjoying the moment instead of constantly sticking a device between you and reality.

Not till I got back to N.C. did I realize my list of capitols visited already included Kansas. But I think I'd only done a drive-by before, because I didn't recall anything as I circled it. On the south-steps landing, plaques mark the spot where Curtis accepted the Republican nomination for VP, and where the state's governor, Alf Landon, accepted one to run for president against Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936, unsuccessfully. Another on the east steps marked where Pres. Gerald Ford gave a speech in the mid-1970s.

(Public domain; WikiMedia Commons)

Next I headed to the north edge of downtown, on the same street as last night's restaurant. Two historical sites from different eras sit across the same street, though both figure in segregation. One is Constitution Hall, the second capitol building of Kansas, used before it was a state (still a "territory"[2]). In fact, delegates drafted the state constitution in this small building. Ironically given its name, here the U.S. Constitution was blatantly ignored by the federal government, according to a set of exhibit panels outside the building.

(Cyday, CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

One of many failed attempts to prevent the Civil War, the federal Kansas-Nebraska Act, said slavery was up to the popular vote as those territories became states. So pro- and anti-slavery supporters poured into Kansas and sparked a violent civil war within the territory. For a while there were two state assemblies, both claiming to be legit, and two proposed state constitutions. The anti-slavery group ("free-staters") met here, and its position was incorporated into the final draft sent to Congress for approval. The House of Representatives accepted this version, but the Senate balked.

2 Meaning, among other things, it did not yet have voting representatives in Congress, and residents could not vote for U.S. president. Puerto Rico is still a territory today, among others.

Under pressure from Southern politicians, Pres. Franklin Pierce sent troops here. This is, I note, yet another example of Southerners trampling state's rights when those rights went against their interest in slavery. The soldiers' commander stepped into the building and told them he was there to do the saddest duty he ever had to perform. Asked if this meant he was disbanding them at sword point, he only nodded, unable to speak.

Later the building would serve as a stop on the "Underground Railroad"—not an actual railroad, but instead various routes set up by abolitionists to help enslaved people escape to Canada. The city government hired a commissioner for "transportation" whose actual job was to be a "conductor" on the Railroad. After the Civil War the street out front became part of the Oregon Trail, the set of routes used by European-American pioneers to colonize the Pacific Northwest.

Across the street was the courthouse where *Brown v. Board of Education* was first argued. As I went back to the Sage, parked in front of it, I was made curious by other cars there. A family went in, and a woman parked next to me and did so as well. It was Sunday and no signs indicated what was going on. Some mysteries in life one will never solve.

(User:Mdupontmobile, CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons)

I backtracked toward the Monroe School to visit the small, two-story brick home of John and Mary Ritchie. They were among the free-staters who moved to Kansas in 1855, and John served in both the free-state assembly and its militia. Their house, too, became an Underground Railroad "station." After the Civil War, they began buying land around them that they could in turn sell to African-Americans, since many white landowners refused to. The neighborhood, which includes the school, still appeared to be predominantly black. Outside the house I picked up a map for the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, which covers struggles over the rights of blacks and Native Americans in the region. Filled with sites I wished I had time to explore, it included, I was glad to see, one on my itinerary that we'll get to tomorrow.

Thinking myself clever for spotting an easy return to I-70 West as I was heading south toward the Ritchie House, I now took one of what appeared to be multiple entry points to head north. Only then did I realize all of them had been pointing to the same road paralleling the interstate along the edge of downtown. After traversing it a considerable number of blocks, I was greeted by what seemed a permanently closed entry ramp with zero prior warning. As there were no detour signs, I just had to head west on city streets,

passing under the interstate a couple of times, on the assumption I would eventually run into an (open) entrance ramp, which I did.

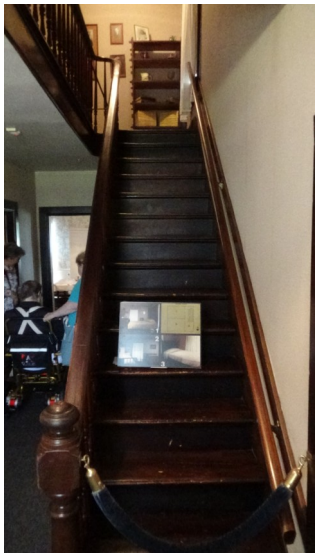
I had forgotten, and now recalled, being surprised on my first trip across Kansas regarding how rolling it is, far hillier than the view stuck in my imagination. The prairie is being restored along one stretch of 70, providing an approximation of what Native Americans and the pioneers experienced. It was hard to envision crawling across the wide-open landscape on horseback or in a wagon, covered or otherwise.

Traversing in about an hour what took them four or five days, I turned down the main drag of Abilene. After some distance I made a wrong turn that I'm glad about. I found myself approaching a massive set of grain silos supported by a multi-story, colorfully graffitoed concrete wall. Welcome back to the West, Jim. Yet another reason to turn off the GPS at times, lest you miss happy accidents.

Eventually I crossed to what once was considered the wrong side of the railroad tracks abutting the silos. There a small, two-story home covered in white clapboard stood apart on a grassy block occupied by three newer buildings. This was the home David Dwight Eisenhower grew up in. He went on to command all of the Allied forces in the final years of World War II (1939–45) and then serve as U.S. president from 1952–60. He is also one of my favorite presidents, greatly underrated in my opinion. (If you think I got his name wrong, hang on a minute.)

The gift shop where one normally buys tickets had a sign saying to go directly to the museum instead. An overly friendly volunteer seemed to notice my irritation at the wait to buy a ticket, and chose not to engage me as she did others in the line. The ticket-selling volunteer struggled against the machine, though it was unclear to me how much of this was machine-related and how much was "operator error," as we say in the tech world. Either way, the management coach in me blamed the bosses, for poor machine design choice, poor maintenance, poor training or some combination. It didn't help that one of the elderly couples in front of me—and they were all elderly couples—didn't seem to grasp the basics of buying only a museum ticket versus one that included a tour of the home. The pair also was intent on further conversation with the already struggling ticket-seller. Nonetheless, when I got to the front, I pasted on a pleasant voice (if not countenance). When he explained about the machine not working, I half-joked, "That's because I'm here." At least I was still able to get on the 10:30 tour. With some time to spare, I started the museum, then headed out to the front porch.

The house is like any number of modest turn-of-the-20th-Century homes I've been in, occupied by his family in 1898 and getting an indoor bathroom ten years later. Six boys were raised in the home, five at a time crammed into a single bedroom. As the home was donated to the government when his mom Ida died in 1946, and has been open to the public since, it looks much as it did during Ike's childhood. It felt like walking through an antique store. I stood at the base of the steps and imagined a knot of boys tumbling down the narrow stairway. Pointing at the parlor to its left, our tour guide, a white guy around my age, asked us to look at the family Bible to see if we noticed anything odd about it. It was turned to the page listing births, and when back in the kitchen he asked for the oddity, I pointed out the name's listing as "David Dwight." Ike, he explained, had pulled a Hiram Grant: learning on registration at West Point that whatever name he used would be his forever, he switched them around to indicate his preference. He has come down in history as Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower.

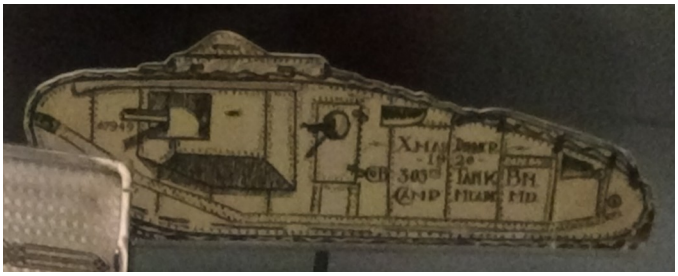


I had to ask about a safety feature I spotted in the kitchen. A clear round bar, probably Plexiglas, crossed a door, held in wooden cradles on either side. I asked if it was original, and got the suspected answer: Ida had it installed after falling down the basement steps. This made me think of Ann Lenoir, wife of a Revolutionary War figure in N.C., who fell down their basement steps in the early 1800s and broke a hip. Miraculously, given the lack of treatment available at the time, she not only survived but eventually walked again. Ida, fortunately, was not seriously injured in her fall.

Back to the museum I went. It does an excellent job of telling Ike's life story, which I emphasize because so many museums don't. The story is told chronologically, without dense text (which I would read, but turns off many visitors), and with sufficient artifacts from each phase to help anyone connect on a personal level, regardless of one's interests. A desk he used in high school is there, a chair on a pedestal with a small writing surface attached. Its placard added that his "classmates predicted he would become a history professor at Yale University." (They were close. He became president of Columbia University.) At West Point he played football. His letter sweater was on display, with an "A" for "Army." His commission as a second lieutenant upon graduation was signed by Woodrow Wilson, the World War I president.

Ike married Mamie Doud on a near homonym of my birthday, July 1, 1916 (instead of '60), in the town I was married in (Denver). Somehow a piece of their cake still exists, exposed in a shield-shaped box. In case you think electric cars are something new, at the time he sometimes drove his mother-in-law's 1914 version: top speed 20 MPH, range 100 miles. When they were stationed at Camp Mead, Maryland, Mamie admirably made the transition from wealthy family background to life in lowly officers' quarters that Ike and others renovated themselves. She found usable furniture items where she could, sometimes to Ike's disbelief. An exhibit provides an illustrative exchange that gave me me a chuckle, presumably drawn from a Mamie letter:

> "'Oh my God, Mamie, you're not going to keep that?' —Ike"
>
> "'Yes, I like it—I got it off the dump heap.' —Mamie"



At Camp Meade, Ike was second-in-command of an early tank brigade. I was delighted by the Christmas dinner menu printed in the shape of a tank of the day. Ike made an important friend there in 1920, the commander of another tank brigade: George S. Patton. Patton would go on to become the most celebrated tank leader of WWII. But his friendship could not

prevent him from getting sacked by Ike after several untoward incidents, including slapping a soldier for cowardice who was suffering from PTSD.[3]

Ike's early role in the war was as an administrator within the War Department. Much has been made of the fact the person who successfully led the Allies to victory had never been in combat himself. In fact, his first combat role was leading the campaign that retook North Africa from Germany. An unusual artifact is a hastily handwritten note from wartime Pres. Franklin Roosevelt to the Russian leader Josef Stalin, informing that clinical psychopath that Ike had been appointed to lead the invasion of German-held France. This led to one of my best moments and favorite pictures of the trip. Ike and the other Allied commanders planned that invasion, popularly known as "D-Day," around an already antique English mahogany table while sitting on (supposedly) Chippendale chairs.[4] These are now in the museum. Being that close to probably the most significant dining set in world history was enough to make tingle the spine of this history nerd.

Overlaid on the photo of Ike and the leaders behind the table hung my favorite quotation of his, also my favorite quote about project management: "Plans are worthless… but

3 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder had not yet been defined, but the concept of "shell shock" was known, and understood to be a "nervous condition."

4 Thomas Chippendale was a furniture designer and manufacturer in 1700s London. A book he published of his designs led to copycats, which led in turn to an entire style named for him.

planning is everything." (They left off the preceding words "in battle.") His point was that as soon as a plan gets put into action, reality will make it obsolete. But the planning process allows you to prepare for many of those contingencies and thus react more quickly to them.

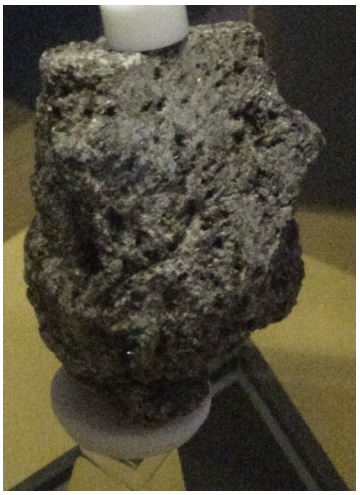
Nearby was the literally topographic map of the French coast they were invading, with the English coast they were leaving on the bottom. By "literally" I mean the land portions were physically built up to match the ground.

A surprising photo explained how fuel got to the forces after they crossed the English Channel. "Allied engineers devised a flexible pipeline," which was "unrolled from massive floating drums" and dropped to the bottom.

Far harder to look at was the picture from a concentration camp. When Eisenhower was told about them, he went to see the Ohrdruf Camp in Germany. A photo showed him viewing burnt bodies. He immediately called for reporters and government officials to see the camps, and spent the rest of his life making sure the Holocaust was believed. An exhibit quotes him to say, "'The evidence of bestiality and cruelty is so overpowering as to leave no doubt… about the normal practices of the Germans in these camps.'" I already knew he had booklets printed and distributed to everyone in the army telling about the horrors, with pictures, because I still have the one my father was given. He was a captain in charge of a Quartermaster Corps company during WWII. Although I haven't been able to confirm this, because most of his unit records were lost in a national archive fire, pictures he took suggests his unit helped clean up one camp. I defy any Holocaust denier to call my father a liar to my face.

The stunners kept coming:

- One of his staff cars, with his five-star flag. There are different levels of "general," the ranks differentiated visually by the number of stars worn on their helmet and uniform lapels. As the Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces (SCHAEF), Ike was the only "five-star general."
- I found myself moved by Eisenhower's "Eisenhower jacket" with its five stars. Ike had a minor role in developing a waist-length wool jacket that was more practical in combat than longer ones. I wore my father's for a few years as a teen, and loved its weight, cut, and pockets. (Unfortunately, I outgrew him, and thus it.) I decided while standing there that the version at right is one of the three most impactful uniforms in American military history, alongside Washington's and Grant's.
- The leather binder that held Germany's surrender documents.
- Outfits Ike and Mamie wore when he was inaugurated as president.
- A two-sided portable liquor cabinet given by Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev to Ike as president, during a Washington visit in 1959. As illustrated by the open side on display, only three of the 10 bottles were vodka, to my surprise (others being cognac, muscatel, and other wines).



- For some reason, a moon rock. I'd seen a few samples over the years, but this was the largest and the closest view, from Apollo 15 in 1971.
- A 6th Century BCE Greek helmet, given to Ike by the prime minister of that country, the first I'd seen since being in Greece.[5]
- An entire gallery of paint-by-number sets, of all things (a temporary exhibit). These became a fad in the 1950s: A line drawing of a painting, some famous, came with brushes and paint. The sections were numbered to correspond with the color to paint within the lines. As a surprise for Ike, who painted as a hobby, his secretary gave them out to government leaders and visitors, and then put their masterpieces on display in the White House. I recognized a number of the names.

Another first for me was a pair of "Rosie the Riveter" coveralls. This term was applied to the women who took over manufacturing jobs during World War II because so many of the nation's men were overseas. My mother was one briefly as a teen, though she wielded a pencil instead of a wrench on the floor of a battery plant. Her father, concerned about the black soot she started coughing up, made her quit. She was a Red Cross volunteer with her mother the rest of the war. These coveralls, worn by Alma Gibson when building bombers in Wichita, brought these women to life. They were strikingly similar to the modern ones hanging from a nail in my garage, just a lighter blue.

One pair of products seemed so modern, I didn't know what to make of them until I read the next section of the exhibit, about Ike and Mamie's son John going to West Point, too. June 6, 1944, was quite the day in the Eisenhower family: John graduated, and his dad launched the invasion of Europe—D-Day! A picture showed Mamie holding the two items now on display, small cutouts of her men in uniform, attached to cardboard and stuck in wooden holders. Today you can order custom cutouts online, but who knew you could get them in 1944?

5 It came from a place I'd been, Olympia, original home of the Olympic Games. The helmet was from the city-state of Corinth to the north, but it likely was a gift to the god Zeus at the temple there, like the one I saw in the nearby museum.

Mamie's impact on fashion was highlighted as well. Her combination of bargain-basement and designer clothes, accentuated with color-coordinated hats and shoes "custom-dyed or covered with matching fabric," became known as the "Mamie style" and was emulated by many. Those who know me will understand why I found more connection with this quotation from her than any on the trip: "An attractive, flattering hat always helps me feel my best and look my most confident."

I also found striking another quote from her husband that modern politicians should consider. Having read a book about his leadership style, I knew he called it "the Middle Way," apparently unaware this is what the Buddha termed *his* philosophy 2,500 years earlier. In his first sermon, the Buddha pointed out the extremes some people go to in the search for happiness, either immersion in a life of pleasure or abstention from all pleasure. "I have awakened to a middle way which gives rise to wisdom and leads to peace, to enlightenment, to the end of birth-and-death: to Nirvana," the Buddha said. A thousand years later the Greek philosopher Aristotle espoused something similar, the Golden Mean, arguing that in most cases the wisest course of action for any given situation in life is the middle between two extremes.

Ike's version was repeated in an exhibit: "The middle of the road is all of the usable surface. The extremes, right and left, are in the gutter." He was the quintessential "centrist" as president, probably the last man approached by both parties to run before he settled for the Republicans. (Tapping that broad appeal, one of his campaign slogans was, "Everybody Likes Ike.") Despite or due to his experience as a military administrator, he warned us of the dangers of a developing "military industrial complex" that would subsume national security interests to the drive for profit—which is exactly what we now have. Another example is his handling of civil rights. One can rightly argue he should have done more to break the evils of segregation. But when *Brown vs. Board of Education* was decided, Ike over-rode the objections of his own party and Southern Democrats to send in National Guard troops to enforce desegregation.

One last exhibit was personally unsettling. "My mother had one exactly like it," I told a bystander, pointing to a Sunbeam mixer meant as an illustration of the expanding (white) middle class under Pres. Eisenhower. I did not add it now sits in my pantry, fully operational.

Across a wide courtyard sits the Eisenhower Presidential Library. Only registered researchers can reach the archives, but there were a couple of exhibits in the lobby. One was a fake researcher table in the lobby, which was both a cute idea and familiar to me as a veteran researcher, complete with the inventory list of a box of papers.

Diagonally across the lobby, behind glass, was a section of a large tree showing its rings and that Ike was, in fact, capable of being an extremist. This tree formerly stood to the left of the 17th hole at Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, probably the most famous golf course in America as the annual host of the Master's Tournament. A placard explained that Ike, a member, "hit the tree so often that he campaigned to have it removed." However, when he suggested this at a club board meeting, as President of the United States, he was silenced by the chairman. Damage from a 2014 ice storm accomplished what the president could not.

My last stop was the Chapel of Meditation, where Ike, Mamie, and a son who died young are entombed under simple marble slabs within what appeared to be polished granite. Ike personally designed the unexpectedly modernist space, and laid the cornerstone of his own tomb while president.

Having spent far longer at the site than expected, I decided to redeem the promise I'd made to myself that I could have one fast-food lunch during the trip. A Sonic was a short distance north, where I had a tasteless grilled cheese sandwich, tots, and a milkshake while figuring out what to do next. There were no stops on the itinerary between here and the next in northwest Kansas, too far to reach today and bereft of sleeping options.

I booked a Sleep Inn & Suites in Hays and headed west, figuring I would arrive early enough to get a load of laundry done. Fortunately they had a guest washer and dryer. The young woman behind the counter was sweet, but, shall we say, not an intellectual giant. When I handed her a $20, the smallest bill I had, for quarters, she looked perplexed and said, "I don't think we have enough quarters for that." I smiled as kindly

as I could and explained I only needed $3 worth of quarters, and would take the rest in bills. She still had to go digging in the office for the quarters.

While I was waiting, a guy came in wearing a ball cap. "Is that a Durham Bulls cap you're wearing?" Yes! The Bulls are my town's minor league baseball team, made famous by a 1988 film shot locally, "Bull Durham." He was from Efland, a small community I pass regularly about 15 miles northwest of my house. He was driving to Denver to help his daughter with a move.

The clerk finally returned with the quarters. When I asked about supplies, she sold me a Tide pod and a dryer sheet for 75 cents. After my clothes were washed, a young man walked up with his laundry as I loaded the dryer. "Perfect timing," I said, receiving a grin. I'd brought my book to read as the clothes finished spinning, and after we exchanged pleasantries he asked how it was. I said it was a bit dense but still interesting, about King Richard III of 1400s England and his brothers. I'm not sure he knew who I was talking about.

I grabbed a map of town from a rack at the motel to see what it might offer. The stop proved fortuitous. All I knew going in was that Hays took its name from an Indian Wars[6] fort, now a state historic site. It was too late to get inside, but too early to wrap up my day. So I went to what was claimed to be the "Original Boot Hill." I'd encountered boot hills at other Old West towns, most notably those at Tombstone, Arizona, and Dodge City in Kansas. These house the remains of gunfighters and their often anonymous targets or bystanders. Sometimes boot hill graves were marked with amusing doggerel, but not the one in Hays, less impressive than those others because most of the bodies have been relocated to a later cemetery.

As a marker atop a small grassy slope explained. "Between 1867 and 1874 more than 80 persons were buried here. Dozens died 'with their boots on' as victims of knife, gun, or

6 The first of the Indian Wars was between the Powhatan and the first successful English colony in what now is the United States, at Jamestown, Va., in 1622. In this book the term refers to the wars between the U.S. and the Native nations of the West after the Civil War.

rope, since the days when Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill, and Calamity Jane lived in Hays City." We'll get to know each of those folks later in the trip. "The bodies of sheriffs, state representatives, and other slain citizens have rested here alongside murderers, horse thiefs, and loose women." Hickok sent two in the criminal categories here, as sheriff. I laughed at seeing one of the other names listed, George Clinton. This name is shared by one of my musical heroes, founder of the legendary funk group/groups Parliament/Funkadelic.[7]

As Boot Hill suggests, this was at one time a thriving Wild West town, growing near the fort established nearby at the end of the Civil War.[8] Later moved to the current location at the south end of town, the fort's original purpose was to protect a railroad getting built west. Then the army turned it into a supply depot for other forts in the region.

Both Hickok and Cody served as scouts for the 600 troops based here, and one of the officers assigned for a time was George Armstrong Custer, with his Seventh Cavalry. Even if you're not a history buff, you may have heard how he died in 1876: by stupidly blundering into a massive gathering of Sioux and other Native peoples in Montana, who wiped out the Seventh in the Battle of the Little Big Horn ("Custer's Last Stand"). If this sounds like the same kind of hubris Daniel Boone tried to argue down before the Battle of the Blue Licks, tragically failing… it is.

Also based at Fort Hayes was a regiment of "Buffalo Soldiers," as Native Americans referred to African-American units which served with distinction throughout the Indian Wars. NAs thought the hair of these men resembled buffalo fur.

Blockhouse and parade ground at Fort Hays

Despite it being a half-hour after closing time, no gate prevented my driving up to the edge of the parade ground and walking outside Fort Hays' four remaining buildings. To the right of the Sage were two houses that served as officer's quarters, and across the parade grounds was a guardhouse. I thought the graffiti carved into it was from denizens of the day.

7 Clinton explored different musical forms starting in the 1960s, generally with the same musicians, under the different group names.

8 Source in addition to panels on-site: https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/fort-hays/11793.

Instead everything I picked out was from later yahoos as far back as 1906. “Hey, dude,” I said to the disturbingly lifelike soldier mannequin seated outside, almost expecting an answer. To the south of the grounds were a post headquarters from 1867 that doubled as a fortified blockhouse, though never needed for that purpose.

Beyond that was a panel with a great story. Behind it had stood the post chapel, which seemed suspiciously barn-like in a picture. Seems “the officers’ wives wanted a dance hall, but army regulations prohibited the use of military labor and resources to build one. But there were no such regulations regarding chapels.” This 105-foot building was moved from a closed fort to the east. Twenty-five feet were walled off for a chapel and school, leaving 80 for use as a dance hall and theatre!

I drove a short distance west for my first encounter of this trip with buffalo, a small herd maintained for research by the adjacent Fort Hays State University. Two calves were cute, but it was not to be my best encounter of this (or any previous) trip.

Running low on road food, I was happy to come across a brand of grocery store I’d not heard of, Dillons, on the way back to the motel. It turned out to be yet another Kroger brand. Deciding I was too worn out to sit in a pricier restaurant for dinner as planned, I stopped for takeout at a Jimmy Johns’s sub shop, desperately craving veggies, which were admirably provided. I took the sub and chips back to the motel and jotted my notes.

Preparing for bed, I saw something rare these days: an old-fashioned phone book on a shelf of the bedside table.

It was the 2016 Edition, presumably the last.