

Editor's Preface

I recall my great grandmother telling of a huge "hog's-headed snake" which lived in a large hole in a bluff near Carroll's Cave in Camden County, Missouri. This snake had a head the size and shape of a hog's, and was an incredibly long creature. It made a practice of coming near the house and watching as my great-grandparents sat on their front porch in the evening. But, when my great-grandfather would go into the house for a rifle, the snake would disappear. This etiological tale, which I believed (and my great-grandmother did too) for many years, is only part of the vast quantity of snake lore from that snake-infested part of the Ozarks.

It says volumes about humankind's desire to understand natural phenomena and about the compromises that must be made with nature. In Medieval German and Russian forests, wolves were a constant threat, so the folktales are full of wolves. In the Ozarks, one lives in imminent danger of snake bite, so there are "hoop" snakes, "whip" snakes, "spreadheads," "joint" snakes, and the "hog's-headed" snake. In Kansas we have the weather and grasshoppers. The social and educational themes remain constant from culture to culture, but the specifics of time, place and subject vary widely.

Part of the business of the Kansas Folklore Society is to track down and capture such tales and other kinds of folk knowledge, craft, art and custom, and to stimulate an interest in the study of Folklore. Each year, for that reason, the Society holds a meeting to discuss what has been done in Kansas Folklore study.

This issue of *Heritage of Kansas* is the Kansas Folklore Society issue. Thus, its contents are papers delivered at the Society's annual meetings. In fact, the papers were delivered at three different meetings and are included together here because of what they say about "doing" folklore.

The first three are products of folklore research and illustrate three ways of approaching folk material. Jane Mobley's paper is built around extensive interviews; Lila Robinson's came from living among a folk group; Elizabeth Scalet's is based on "scholarly" research.

Jim Hoy's paper illuminates a neglected source of folk material. It touches Scalet's method in that it is an academic paper, Mobley's in its use of new material, and Robinson's in that it offers a method for retrieving material no longer current in our own culture (as we can study cowboy lore from magazines, so can we study pre-technology Indian culture through the Cashibo).

Hoy's paper also serves as a transition from theory to practice. The last four papers deal with teaching folklore and were delivered as part of a symposium on folklore in the classroom. These range from the theoretical to the descriptive and cover all educational levels.

Such papers as are contained in this issue may be read for a variety of reasons. We include them for what they show about the state of the art and the work of the Society.

The Kansas Folklore Society is alive and well; these papers are a result of its efforts. And while these are only a fraction of the KFS papers, they are an important fraction. If they provide our readers an insight into the Society and its work, they have done more than was asked of them.

Comments, criticisms and questions should be addressed to the editors of *Heritage*.

JHV
EKSC

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