

# THE MYSTERY OF THE PAST

FOR YOUTHFUL READERS



THE NATIVE AMERICANS

THE BIRD CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Issue II

Designs of the  
Plains Indians  
By A. G. Smith

# The Mystery of the Past (for Youthful Readers)

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# OUT OF THE PAST

In the early 1700's many Native American tribes lived across the land. There were over 20 tribes classed as plains Indians of the northwest area of Kansas and northeastern Colorado. These tribes fought among themselves over territorial and trading rights. The U. S. Government enacted several laws that affected the Native American Indian tribes.

- 1777 – The new government of the U. S. assumed authority over Indian affairs.
- 1787 – The U. S. Constitution is adopted and Congress assumes the power to regulate commerce (trade) with Indian tribes.
- 1824 – The Bureau of Indian Affairs was created within the war department.
- 1826 – The American Fur Company began to monopolize the fur trade.
- 1830 - The Indian Removal act authorized the removal of Indians.
- 1862 - The Homestead Act.

These are only a few of the acts that directly affected the Indians.

Then the Federal Government established military forts across the country. There ensued many years of Indian Wars. The government, seeing the futility of attempting to control the Indian tribes, began to enact treaties. The treaty agreements were to be interpreted by agents sent out by the government. The language barrier created complex problems. Many of the promises made with the treaties were not fulfilled.

The white men buffalo hunters were allowed to kill buffalo for the hides, but left the carcasses to rot on the plains. This enraged the Indians because they used all parts of the buffalo from the skull to the hoofs. All of these incidents led to a sense of betrayal to the Chiefs of the tribes.

These enactments by the Federal Government, and the destruction of the way of life of the Indian tribes, led to vicious attacks on the unprepared settlers.

Sources: A Columbian Guide to the Indians of the Great Plains by Loretta Fowler and The Cheyenne by Mari Sandoz.

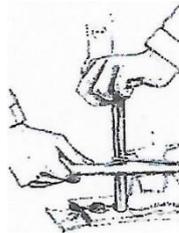
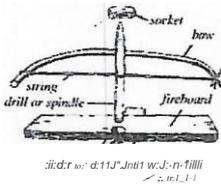
**Dorthy L. Mast**

## Bow and Drill Fire Starter

You can experience techniques used by native Americans for lighting a fire before steel was introduced. These methods can be used in survival situations today.

### Materials:

- dowel (1 1/2" x 12")
- pine or hardwood board (1" x 2" x 12")
- pine board (1" x 2" x 4")
- green stick such as willow (1" diameter x 2') shaped as shown
- length of leather thong
- grease



A bow and drill creates fire by friction.  
The drill and fireboard should be the same wood.

### Procedure

1. Round edges of 1" x 2" x 4" board so that it fits comfortably in your hand.
2. Drill or carve a 1/2 inch diameter shallow socket in the center of the piece.
3. Round one end of the dowel and sharpen the other end to a short bevel.
4. Notch the foot-piece as shown and drill or carve a shallow depression.
5. Assemble the bow and drill as illustrated. Note that the thong is wrapped once around the drill so that it spirals upward toward the handle.
6. Lubricate the head-socket with grease.
7. Place one foot on the foot-piece. Kneel so that the opposite knee is on the ground. Sprinkle tinder in the notch of the foot-piece.
8. Insert the bow and drill in the socket of the foot-piece. Insert the top of the drill in the head-socket.
9. Steady the hand holding the headpiece against the shin, while applying light pressure on the headpiece. Slowly saw bow back and forth. If drill does not turn, increase tension on the thong. Gradually increase speed until the bottom of the drill begins to smolder.
10. When it is smoking well, give 20 or so fast strokes with the bow and pull the drill quickly from its socket. There should be a small pile of smoldering punk in the notch with the timber.
11. Gently fold tinder over the smoldering punk and blow. As the volume of the smoke increases, keep blowing until the tinder bursts into flame.
12. Do not expect instant results; this technique takes practice. Using a bow and drill will not always result in a fire, but it will create a deep affection for matches.

# THE PHOTO PLACE

## THE CHEROKEE FLUTE

p. 3

The flute represents one of the many voices in Cherokee music. Early Cherokee flutes were constructed from river cane, very similar to bamboo. Unlike the modern wood varieties made from cedar and other woods, river cane did not need to be bored to create internal uniformity. However, it is extremely important to create an edge tone. An edge tone is created when air rapidly moves over a thin or flimsy obstacle to create a sound, similar to placing an index card horizontal to one's lips and blowing above and below the card's surface to create a vibrational motion and sound from the card. Saxophones and clarinets use a bamboo reed that allows those instruments to have a similar property to replicate an edge tone. Many of these flutes have a fast-air chamber which allows the air to pass more forcefully across the obstruction to create the unique sound of these flutes.

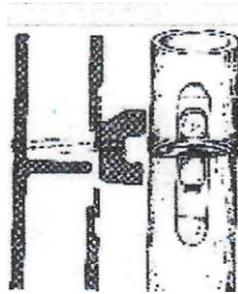


Figure 1: Model of air chamber in an Apache flute

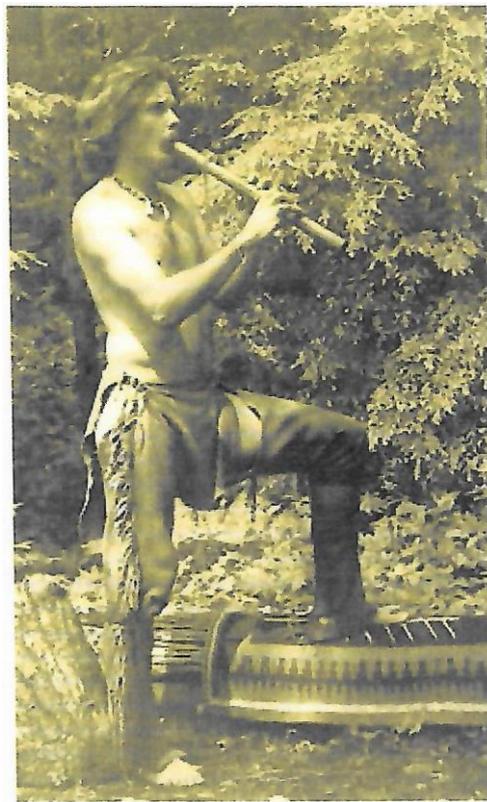
This chamber is made from another block of cut river cane and held in place by a strap of hide. Like bamboo, river cane is quite durable. The materials of the flute, unlike the materials of the metal transverse flutes, are all made from renewable resources. These materials allow the Native Americans to keep in tradition with their craft; they can only make [items] with what the Great Creator provides.

Does this mean that Cherokee flutes are doomed to be "sad"? Not likely. If anything, the keys [to which] the flutes are tuned reflect the Cherokee view of the nature of the world around them. Charlotte Heth, in her study of Cherokee singers in Oklahoma, points out that "undulating melodies and pentatonic scales are popular in hymns." There is also evidence of the first flute lessons that reveal why it is important to recreate the sound of nature:

# THE PHOTO PLACE

p. 4

"This time the Great Creator spoke back to our young warrior, 'To make beautiful music, you must learn to recognize the beautiful patterns of nature that I have given you. You must go to the center of the clearing and look at the trees that surround you. Where the trees lie low, you must play a low note. And where the trees rise higher, you must play a higher note. And where the trees are the highest, you must play your highest note. Where the trees remain at one level for a time, you must play the note longer. And where the trees change often, you must likewise change your notes often. Now go and learn to play the trees.'"



Sources: Cherokee Flute by Amanda Wright / Virginia Arts and Crafts –  
Posted on May 26, 2011. Hawk Hurst Flutes, 2011, the Internet

Connie Gene Rooney, Wanda J. Dowdy

# THE MYSTERY SLEUTH

## MANDAN AND ARIKAREE INDIANS

p. 5

When spring arrived, Indians' winter supply of dried buffalo meat was nearly depleted. Indians, eager for fresh buffalo meat, formed hunting parties comprised of strong, fit and healthy men and women from their tribes to hunt buffalo to feed their community.

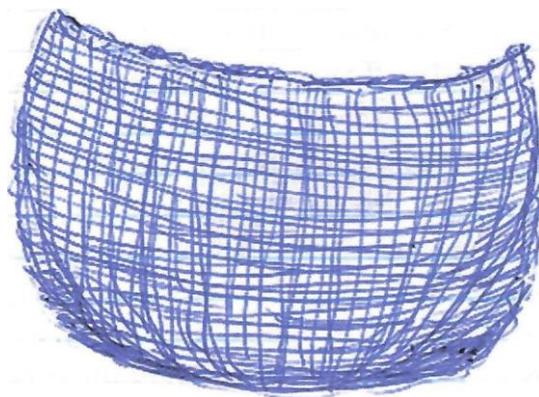
When these hunting parties crossed rivers, they crossed thick, hard ice formed above the flowing water of the river during the winter. It took many, many, many weeks of hunting to fill their community's buffalo meat supply. The number of people in their community determined the amount of buffalo hunted. The spring cold kept the meat fresh and the hides (skins) fresh. It took many weeks to process the buffalo meat into portions. Most of the bones were left for wolves, coyotes and other animals to eat.

Once the buffalo meat was processed the meat had to be transported down the river to the tribal community. By the time they were ready to transport the meat, the ice had melted and the rivers were flowing rapidly. Indians used buffalo boats to transport the buffalo meat and themselves down the river.

Buffalo boats were very large and deep, round boats that were made by weaving long, strong, soft (green) branches together. Saplings and some tall strong grasses were weaved in with the branches as fillers. The branches, saplings and grasses were tied together with long, strong strips of hide (skin), sinew from the buffalo meat and strips of bark. The inside of the huge buffalo boat was lined with buffalo skin to cover the branches and keep the water out of the boat. Skin strips and bark strips were used to tie the skins to the branches. Imagine what the size the buffalo boat would have to be to carry 3 or 4 adults and big hunks of buffalo meat!!!

Because the buffalo boats were round, maneuvering the boat past ice chunks was manageable, as the round boat turned and swerved easily in the water. I wonder if the adults in these boats got dizzy?

The Arikaree used the Buffalo Boats on the Republican River.



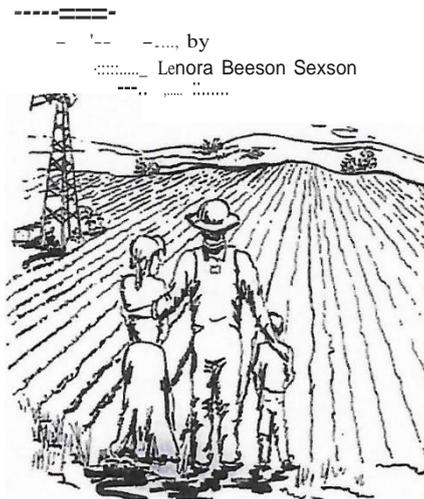
1. What was a Buffalo Boat?
2. Who used Buffalo Boats?
3. What materials were used to construct a Buffalo Boat?

Source: My own personal research from story-telling by tribe elders. Linda (Beeson) Carroll

p. 6

**KEEPSAKES**  
**THE BEESON FAMILY**  
**Book written by Lenora Beeson Sexson**

**The Beeson Family**



The Beeson Family by Lenora Beeson Sexson is a precious heirloom. Lenora takes the family from 1066 to 1994 (however Lenora has left the door open for any family member to start at 1066 and work backwards in the Beeson family history and also starting at 1944 and working forward in the family history). It is evident that the Beeson's were, and still are, 'sticklers' for documentation. We, the present generation and future Beeson family members, can be grateful for documentation of our family.

The Beeson family USA history begins in 1682, when Edward and Rachel (Pennington) Beeson from Stokes, Lancaster, England appear through historical documentation in "Irishtown" New Castle, Delaware. Lenora skillfully, through historical documentation, plots out the Beeson family's migration throughout the country.

The Beeson family Kansas history begins in 1800 and continues today. The Beeson's Cheyenne County documented history begins in 1902. Undocumented history dates are in the middle and late 1800's. Writing a book of this family's Kansas history would be an interesting and entertaining work! Maybe the newest family member, Lily Jean Beeson, will aspire to the task.

Linda (Beeson) Carroll

# THE MAP QUEST

p. 1

In the extreme northwest corner of Kansas, bordering Colorado and Nebraska, lies an unusual land formation, dating back nine thousand years. Named the *Arikaree Breaks* in recent years, the stark landscape containing loss soil, (pronounced luss) drops off into 90 foot canyons and is an impressive sight in contrast to the relatively smooth landscape proceeding it.

The hills and deep canyons are covered with many varieties of grasses, sagebrush, Soap Weed, or Yucca, and some wildflowers and brush that are found nowhere else in the state of Kansas. Rabbit Brush is one of them and it blooms dainty little yellow flowers that sway in the breeze in late August. The Native American Indians, Arickarah, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Lakota Sioux and others that roamed these hills utilized the plants in various ways. The Yucca blossoms were picked and cooked like broccoli, the spiky foliage was made into hair brushes, thread, and needles, and the roots were soaked and made into soap. That is why they are also called Soap Weeds. Other roots and herbs were used in various medicinal capacities. The sage stems were considered sacred, and a symbol of good luck and they would use them in various ceremonies.

Some roadways in the Breaks are so steep all you can see is Blue Sky, then another panorama comes into sight. Wildlife abounds, the mule deer grow huge. Hunting is a challenge. They can take refuge in the cuts and the ravines, and they can smell on the breeze which way you're coming from, then they can flee. There are Ranchers in those breaks that have mighty fine cattle, sometimes without ground water. It's been a battle, but they're a tough sort, the kind that endure. They pipe that water in just to be sure, that their stock do well in those mysterious hills. It's a beautiful piece of country that can give you a thrill.

The Breaks start in Colorado, cross Cheyenne County, Kansas, and extend into Rawlins County, so are actually about 45 miles west to east and are 2 to 3 miles across south to north.

Helene Landenberger

# POETRY OF THE LAND

p. 8

## THE BREAKS SONG

Arikaree Breaks, Arikaree Breaks,  
The Yucca is in bloom.  
The hills are aglow, and the cuts really show  
When there's not a horse thief moon.

In dawn's early light, they're really a sight,  
The grandeur is so bold.  
And when there's a haze, on one of those days,  
The beauty is untold.

For thousands of years, these hills have been here,  
Where the wind and water forms,  
All natural caves and grasses that  
wave, The morning sunshine warms.

And when the sun sets, your wishes are met,  
The evening colors bloom.  
From a lavender blue to a fuchsia hue,  
For sorrow there's no room!

Arikaree Breaks, Arikaree Breaks,  
The rarest of brush is in bloom.  
The hills are aglow and the cuts really show,  
When God hangs out a full moon,  
When God hangs out a full moon.

By  
HeleneLandenberger

## ANCIENT INDIAN TRADERS TRAIL

### Part 1

Few of us appreciate the history-related area where we reside. Old Mother Nature conspired to make it so. Far to the south of us is the Old Santa Fe Trail, fighting its way up the sandy, Indian-frequented valley of the Arkansas River. Its travelers were less interested in colonization than in trading.

Closer to the north is the Platte River with its overland trails to the Pacific, over which thousands of homemakers went to colonize the Pacific slopes. The Platte and Arkansas became famous because they opened the gateways to the West.

Our Republican River and the Smoky Hill are in between, a vacuum of sorts. Into it moved the last of the wild Indians, the last buffalo herds, the first buffalo hunters, followed by the cattlemen. Within the short spread of 12 years (1870-1882), all this gave way to the home-seeker and his family with their Bibles, barbed wire and plows.

There were any number of trails up and down the Republican and Smoky Hill and over the up-lands above them over which marched expeditions, Indian war parties, lawless raiders, and the good ones, of course. Trails brought in settlers; droughts burned the country; then the trails took the settlers back East. Even better trails - the steel tracks of the railroads - brought them back West as the rains returned and the plains blossomed.

We will mention but one here, perhaps the most interesting, and the most difficult to plot - the Ancient Traders Trail. We hear more about and know less about this trail - just a few scattered items and segments of the trail.

Coronado came up this trail. Contrary to traditional history, he was not lost on the high plains. He was following the ancient "Ladder of Rivers," that series of streams flowing eastward from the Rocky Mountains, paralleling each other after a fashion. Between the Platte and Arkansas are creeks, sinks of water, and water holes, most of them east of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Meridian, some far apart. The trail began somewhere in the deep southwest, down in the Mexican settlements, and ended we know not where, but someplace in the North. It crossed the Republican in several places, but mainly at the Forks.

Source: Sutton's Southwest Nebraska, pp. 8-9

Abstracted/Edited by Marsha C. SQUIRES Magley

Marsha Magley and Shirley Watson

# THE BOOK CORNER

p.10

## ANCIENT INDIAN TRADERS TRAIL

### Part 2

Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1804 with the Mandan Indians on the Missouri River and told of three blond, bewhiskered Indians, descendants of white traders/trappers, who were more adept at fashioning artifacts beyond the ability of all others there. Their items were traded at the Platte River Forks Fair (North Platte, Nebraska) and the men returned home with southern oddities.

What else is known about the trading fairs on the trail? Freely quoting Mari Sandoz: "It (the Traders Trail) was reported by the Ancient Totem Keeper long before the Falling Stars, even before the Horse People, those of the Burnt Thigh as the link climbing the creeks and rivers to the Pipestone Quarry of Minnesota, or another trail breaking off northwesterly to the fur dealers and to Glass Mountain (obsidian) and on and on to wherever. Exotic items and trade goods of the far South, even Mexico, have been found along its trace, and conversely, obsidian, grouse wood for making arrow shafts, and pipestone have been found at the old trading fairs in the ruins of the Apache and Comanche people."

Going southward from Benkelman, the trail forded both Republican Forks (Township 1 North, Range Line 37-38) proceeding down the west side of Big Timber Creek (Cheyenne County, Kansas) to the Heaton Crossing (north of Bird City, Kansas), where it joined the main trail, crossed the Smoky Hill River at Rose Creek, then led on to the Arkansas River and south.

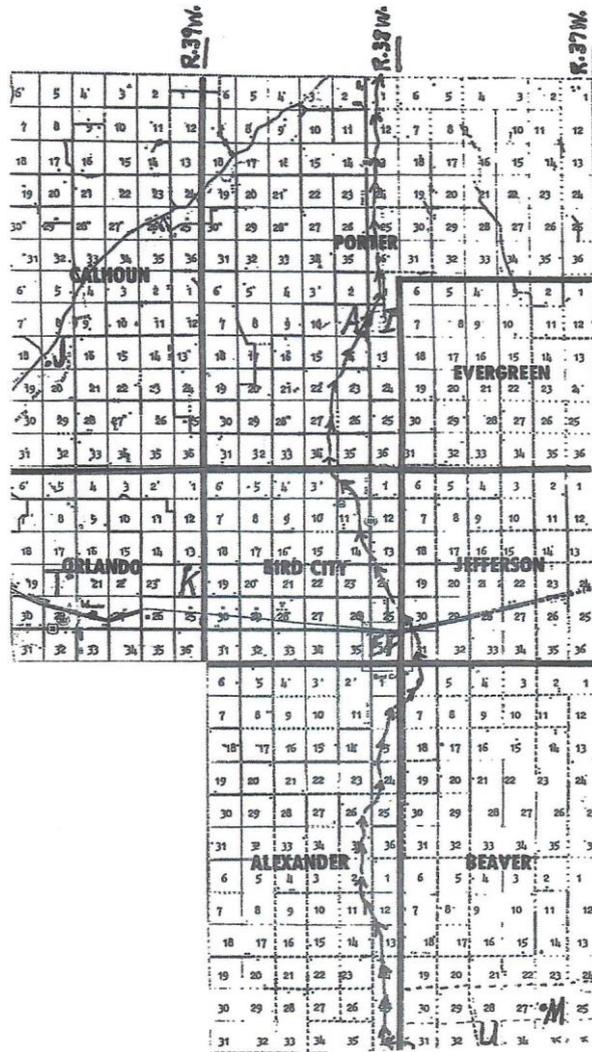
[Note: The Ancient Traders Trail later became a major north-south military road out of Fort Wallace. MCM]

Source: Suttons Southwest Nebraska, pp. 8-9

Abstracted/Edited/Paraphrased by Marsha C. SQUIRES Magley

Marsha Magley and Shirley Watson

# MAP OF THE ANCIENT TRADERS TRAIL



The map shows only the East part of Cheyenne county. The Ancient Traders Trail crosses Cheyenne County from South to North. It crosses approximately 3/4 miles east of Bird City. There is a marker on the south side of Highway 36 east of Ed Carson's home place.

This trail was originally established by Indian tribes. "A sun's journey from water to water – on ridges to observe enemies and follow the buffalo." Later used by traders, military and settlers.

Source: Abstracted from the Surveyor's notes (1873) by Simon E Matson.  
The Cheyenne, and Love Song to the Plains, by Mari Sandoz  
and Government Military Records.

Dorthy L. Mast

# ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Much of Colorado was covered by seas 600 to 300 million years ago. Then an intense plate movement appeared to cause cracking and breaking of the earth's crust that resulted in the original Rocky Mountains. These mountains eroded until a major uplift began around 60 million years ago. This formation of these second Rocky Mountains is thought to have been around the time of North America breaking away from Europe, creating the Atlantic Ocean.

Imagine that an inland sea covered the middle of America. Most of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming and Montana, parts of Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota as well as central Canada are under a shallow sea. This was the home of many kinds of strange creatures. This period lasted from about 144 million years ago to about 65 million years ago.

The fossil skeleton of a marine reptile found in Coal Oil Canyon in Logan County was incomplete. Identified as an elasmosaurus, it was missing the head and a part of the neck. There were ribs, most of the body and tail. Jerome Bussen of Wallace, Kansas, was the one who found this amazing creature in what is called the Smoky Hill chalk layer. Also found were the largest gizzard stones which had seemingly fallen together. The elasmosaurus gathered stones to aid in digestion. It is believed that the body of the creature had floated along the surface, separated and sank to the bottom. This skeleton was 46 feet long. The most complete portion of the skeleton has been placed in the Paleontology Museum in Trenton, New Jersey, so more people will have the opportunity to see it.

In life, the elasmosaurus lived about 80 and 1/2 million years ago. It weight 2000 kilograms, a short 2.2 tons, and was 46 feet long with a small, short, arrow shaped head, an extremely long neck and a short tail. Its eyes were on top of its head, probably to search for food above it. It probably stayed near the bottom in shallow water and fed on small fish. It was propelled by wing-like paddles that projected in right angles from its body.

An elasmosaurus skeleton is located in the Denver Museum of Science and Nature.

## Description



Drawing of  
*Elasmosaurus*  
*platyurus*

Source: [www.answers.com/topic/elasmosaurus](http://www.answers.com/topic/elasmosaurus)

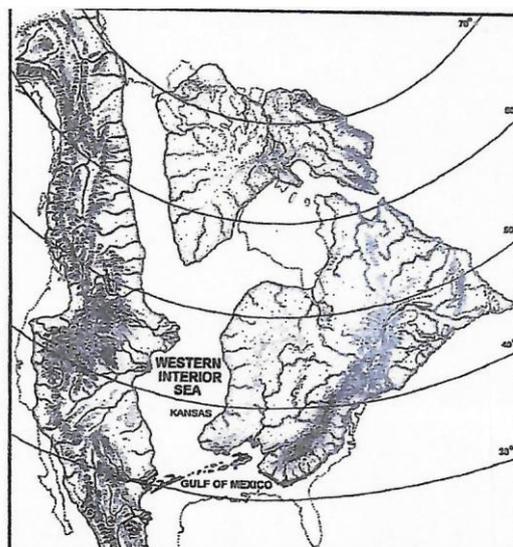
# ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

p.13

"Where did the great inland sea go?" Eventually there was an uplift that raised the sea bottom creating the Great Plains. Volcanic activity spread ash over a vast area of the sea and further uplift created an area that divided the sea into two segments with the area of Kansas and Oklahoma the first to dry out. Erosion and great dust storms brought the soil known as loess (luss) to this area. Uplift in Colorado developed the river systems on their easterly way across Kansas. Millions of years of weathering developed the hills and canyons of the Breaks of the plains.

There is much yet to learn about this fascinating area. Visit our libraries and museums. Nearly all of the area museums have displays of fossils such as shark's teeth, sea shells, bones and other exhibits. In the Sternberg Museum in Hays, you will find the famous "fish within a fish." "What can you discover?"

The answer to the first question in the last issue is "It has been estimated that the sea covering this area of Kansas was approximately 600 feet deep."



The above map shows the approximate boundaries of the Western Interior Sea during the deposition of the Smoky Hill Chalk. Present-day exposures of the chalk are located just above the "K" in Kansas. Adapted from Schwimmer, 2002 (King of the Crocodylians, Indiana University Press); base map by Ron Hirzel.

Sources: Jerome Bussen -Wallace, Kansas

Oceans of Kansas -Michael J. Everhart

Archealogy of the Great Plains -Raymond Wood

[www.Answers.com](http://www.Answers.com)

Rosemary Powell