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by MARGRET LANDIS

Connelley kept record straight

Margaret Landis



WILLIAM E.
CONNELLEY ...*Kansas
historian*

(Transcriptions are presented without changes except to improve readability.)

Editor's note: This is the 32nd in a series of "then and now" articles on places and things of interest in Kansas City, Kan., compiled by area historian Margaret Landis in observance of the 100th birthday of KCK in 1986. Much of the information has appeared in past editions of the Kansan.

William Elsey Connelley (1855-1930) has been recognized as a widely known historian, collector of early historical facts and manuscripts about Kansas and was the author of many books and pamphlets.

Wyandotte County was a chief benefactor of his work.

Connelley was born in Johnson County, Ky., March 15, 1855. He died July 15, 1930 at the age of 75. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Kansas City, Kan.

He was principally self-educated and taught in the common school in Kentucky for nine years.

Coming to Kansas in April 1881, Connelley located in Tiblow, now Bonner Springs. His first job was that of a farmhand. He attended the County Normal Institute and received a certificate to teach in the county.

He served a term as Deputy County Clerk and in 1883 was elected County Clerk and served two terms. He was the first county clerk to serve in the new Wyandotte County Court House when it was built on the northwest corner of 7th Street and Minnesota Avenue. He later was in the banking business.

In 1899, he was given a power-of-attorney to act in behalf of the remnant of the Wyandot Tribe in the Indian Territory in the sale of the Huron Cemetery for a public building fronting on 7th Street and the removal of the graves to Quindaro Cemetery.

The resident Wyandot voiced opposition to the sale of the cemetery. The building was built at another location and the cemetery was saved from being sold.

Kansas State Historical Society

Connelley became secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society in 1914. In the 16 years he was secretary, it was said, "because of his labors and the work of George W. Martin, his predecessor, the state has one of the best preserved historical records in the nation."

Among his books, works and collections are:

- Emmigrant Indian Tribes of Wyandotte County - Delaware, Shawnee, Huron (Wyandotte).
- History of Kansas - State and People.
- A Standard of History of Kansas and Kansans - (5 volumes).
- Wyandotte Folklore.
- The Journals of Abelard Guthrie and Governor William Walker (Guthrie founded the old town of Quindaro. William Walker was the governor of the Nebraska Territory and a member of the Wyandott Tribe.)
- Kansas Territorial Governors.
- Huron Place.
- Quantrell and the Border Wars.
- and much more.

It was said that Connelley's many historical and biographical volumes constitute the most authentic and comprehensive record of Wyandotte County.

A *Kansan* editorial following his death prophesized, "But 50 years hence his works will have begun to assume their proper place..."

Now, as KCK prepares for its Centennial, Connelley's works are a valuable source of information for the early history of the city. KCK PuBlic LIbrary has a large collection of Connelley's books and other works.

As the eulogy to Connelley in the July 16, 1930 issue of the *Kansan* so aptly states, "His published works, his records and mementos are a fund of historical wealth which will be drawn on for many years to come, as they have been drawn on for many years in the past."