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MANHATTAN, KANSAS

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Wednesday

Jack looks back in series SRO opener

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Contributing Critic

Pretty though the limestone building is, the Riley County Historical Museum is it's not the likliest place in Manhattan that springs to mind when one thinks of lectures to large audiences.

Last night Lowell Jack was the first speaker in a lecture series sponsored by the historical society. His talk, "Eighteen Days From Boston," was delivered to an appreciative and standing-room-only audience. Over 60 persons were sitting, standing and leaning against the walls of the small entry hall of the museum. It could have been more comfortable, but it could hardly have been more entertaining nor more informative.

Jack's talk was one of a series entitled: *Riley County: Looking Backward Toward the Future*. It's coordinated by Linda Glasgow, and is funded on a matching basis by the Kansas Committee for the Humanities. Eight lectures, two a week, will be presented over the next four weeks. During that time the model airplanes hanging from the ceiling above the audience's heads will have become a familiar sight.

Jack is the manager of KMAN-KMKF radio station and has a reputation as an entertaining speaker. He started his talk with a poetic evocation of that evening, so long ago in 1855, when the Goodnow party stood on Bluemont Hill and gaz-

ed out at the lovely valley before it.

He concentrated on four areas of major concern to the community then, and now: Education in general and Kansas State University in particular, the public library, transportation, and housing.

I always seem to end up teaching in universities in towns from which the governor of the state did not come. And Manhattan is no exception. As Jack pointed out, only 15 days after the town had been organized, the first

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Jack SRO series opener

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meeting was held to discuss the founding of an agricultural school. Subsequently, Manhattan put in its bid to have the state college located in the town. But it was not to be. The then-governor vetoed the idea since he favored his own hometown as the site of the state college. He came from Lawrence.

The Manhattan Institute was formed in 1857 with the intention of promoting the sciences, literature and the arts. The institute formed the cultural and literary focus of the town until the organization of the Manhattan Library Association in 1900.

In 1903 Andrew Carnegie agreed to donate money for a free library in the town and in 1904 the library opened with 100 books on its shelves. Jack

listed some of the most avidly read books of the time: Hudson's *Psychic Law*, Flint's *Tramping With Tramps* and Hancock's *Japanese Physical Training*.

The tale of the coming and going of the railroad was told, and even more interesting, the development of the city's extensive electric trolley system was described. If you have ever wondered about the busyness of some of the intersections downtown, and even if it had never occurred to you to ask, Jack told you why. Apparently the Bluemont trolley line crossed the equally busy Fourth Street line at the intersection of Fourth and Poyntz. And that is why that intersection became the hub of downtown.

Jack mentioned some facts concerning the development of housing in Manhattan, but none was more in-

teresting than the information that the steamboat Hartford carried as part of its cargo several prefabricated houses, known as Cincinnati Houses—ready to be erected in the new Manhattan.

The formal presentation was followed by a lively discussion of old Manhattan, moderated by Harvey Hougan. This discussion elicited many a reminiscence and story, the tallest of which was the assertion that the record for laying bricks on the city's streets was held by one man who laid a street of bricks a mile and a quarter long in one day. Some of us can barely walk a mile and a quarter in a day.

The next lecture in the series will be Thursday night. Those who like to look backwards can learn about the role of steamboats in the settlement of Manhattan.