

This Kansan Lived to Serve Others

BY JERRI IMGARTEN

A biography of a 19th century missionary, educator and entrepreneur, *To the Stars Over Rough Roads*, is an accurate, detailed depiction of the fascinating life of Andrew Atchison.

Written by his grandson, Donald F. Nelson, the book tells of Atchison's link to Kansas. Born in Zanesville, OH, and orphaned at age 12, Atchison lived with his older sister on the

Kansas Prairie near Berea, which is now Richmond.

"Andrew's life was not a prominent life, but it was a fascinating life, at the same time typically American and uniquely different," said Nelson.

Atchison earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from the newly-formed University of Kansas and began a long career as a teacher and missionary.

His passion for teaching led him to teach at the Haskell Institute, an off-reservation Indian school, and he also founded and taught at the Kansas Freedman's Academy for freed slaves.

A deeply religious man, Atchison sought to help and teach others trades, but always including Christianity in his teachings. At a point in his life, while living in Panama, he taught many trades including bookkeeping and Bible classes. He also taught West Indian children in a slum of Panama City.

"He never made much more than a subsistence income and never owned his own home," wrote Nelson. "Though he obtained

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neither fame nor fortune in society's eyes, the riches he sought were awarded only by his maker."

Atchison was a remarkably unselfish man who dedicated his life to serving others and his faith. The book is full of historical accounts of his life and excerpts from letters he and his family wrote to one another.

"Writing this biography has become a journey into my family's past, into getting acquainted with my grandparents, and, after reading scores of pages into their writings, into knowing them intimately, into understanding them, even into feeling I know how they would have reacted to a different situation," writes Nelson. "And then, I am left to marvel how different their lives were when compared to mine only two generations later."

Nelson lives in Worchester, MA, and Martha's Vineyard with his wife, Margaret. He had a notable career as a research physicist for Bell Labs. Upon retirement, he switched gears from science and research to history and genealogy. This switch had him reading thousands of family letters and eventually to writing the biography of his maternal grandfather. **KCL**

To the Stars Over Rough Roads: The Life of Andrew Atchison Teacher & Missionary is available for purchase online at www.tidepoolpress.com.

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