Biographical encyclopedias have their limitations, of course, and have lost some of their cachet in this age of internet searches that turn up all sorts of information. Nevertheless, *Kansas Governors* continues to occupy a prominent place on my shelves of often-consulted Kansas history books, a spot it has held since it was first published three decades ago. It remains my always reliable, go-to source for information on the territory and state’s first fifty-one chief executives.

Dr. Homer E. Socolofsky—a proud native Kansan and without question the dean of Kansas historians at the time of his death at age eighty-three in 2005—was a meticulous researcher and respected university professor with unparalleled knowledge of and appreciation for the state’s history and heritage. In 1962, he published the first and only biography to date of publisher, governor, and senator Arthur Capper, which quite likely kindled his interest in the comprehensive work completed nearly three decades later. Although not particularly interpretive in its approach, *Kansas Governors* reflects the depth of Professor Socolofsky’s understanding and knowledge of the state’s history. His sketches of the governors contain valuable biographical information, of course—Capper, for example, elected the state’s twentieth governor in 1914, was the first one born in Kansas—but they also offer political and policy highlights of the respective administrations. Value is also added through numerous maps that show the birthplaces of all the governors and territorial and state boundaries as well as tables and figures.

During the three decades since its publication, three women and four men have served as Kansas governor, beginning with Joan Finney, the state’s first female governor. Ironically, perhaps, Finney, the state treasurer from 1975–1991, bested the incumbent Republican, Mike Hayden, in the general election to become the state’s forty-second governor the very year *Kansas Governors* was published. Finney chose not to seek re-
election and left office in January 1995 after serving a single four-year term.

Since Governor Finney, three Republicans and three Democrats have occupied the office. A Salina native and two-term secretary of state, Bill Graves was elected in November 1994 and reelected four years later. He was succeeded in office on January 13, 2003, by state insurance commissioner Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat who had served eight years in the legislature before her two terms as commissioner. Reelected in 2006, Governor Sebelius resigned in April 2009 to accept appointment as secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in President Barack Obama’s administration. When her lieutenant governor, Mark Parkinson, an attorney and former Republican state legislator from Olathe, assumed the office, he became only the third Kansas lieutenant governor to take over as chief executive upon the resignation of a governor and only the sixth ever to fill the state’s highest office. Parkinson chose not to run in 2010, and the open contest featured U.S. senator Sam Brownback and Democratic state senator Tom Holland. Brownback won easily and was reelected four years later, but he resigned on January 31, 2018, to accept appointment as ambassador at large for International Religious Freedom. He was succeeded by Lieutenant Governor Jeff Colyer who served less than a year before turning the office over on January 14, 2019, to Laura Kelly, a former Democratic state lawmaker from Topeka, the state’s forty-eighth governor.

These days, one can easily fill in the details for these seven most recent governors with a quick internet search. But for interesting and reliable information on the pre-1990 governors, I still turn first to Socolofsky’s Kansas Governors and am delighted that it is now available digitally from the University Press of Kansas.

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