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Leawood man writes of 1800s Midwest

Historical fiction novel tells stories of love, adventure, life before Civil War

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Leawood author **John H. Brown's** first book has something readers do not often expect from fiction – a local history lesson.

The book, "A Wind of Many Colors," features the Alexander Major Shipping Company, the "bogus" government set up by Missouri slave owners and territory divorces. The novel is the only book ever to be sold and endorsed by administration of Historic Oxford Schoolhouse in Leawood.

Learning history is a byproduct of reading the book, Brown said.

"I'm told it is the most fun way to learn history," he said.

Brown writes about slavery, life in the South, life on the trails and the immigrant communities that made up America before the Civil War.

Brown called writing about slavery "terribly uncomfortable," and readers will be uncomfortable reading about slavery, he said.

"You will ask yourself how a Christian nation could let this happen," he said.

The story revolves around

repeated kidnapping attempts of Mattie Purdy, which bring many characters to a frontier town called the City of Kansas. A Spanish-Italian plantation woman, a wealthy French woman, an Irish immigrant, a former slave and Purdy's wife find refuge here.

The book started with writing about these "extremely strong" women and "ended up a love story, a mystery and a swash-buckling adventure," Brown said.

Mattie's husband, John, organizes a search team to capture the mad woodsman who has vowed to kill Mattie if he cannot have her.

The novel takes place in 1859 and 1860 in the Missouri Ozarks, Colorado mining towns, Kentucky's Cumberland Pass and a Louisiana plantation. Almost halfway through the novel readers are introduced to the City of Kansas.

Brown has researched the historical events and places in his book by visiting every major place he wrote about.

He modeled the plantation after one owned by **Frances Wright** near Memphis, Tenn. Wright, an abolitionist, paid the slaves she owned a salary and

FAST FACTS

A Wind of Many Colors
By John H. Brown
420 pages
Book discussion: 7 p.m. Oct. 25 at the schoolhouse in Ironwoods Park, 147th Street and Mission Road, Leawood.
Visit www.awindofmanycolors.com.

sold them to themselves when they had earned enough.

"A Wind of Many Colors" took Brown four years to write. Two sequels are planned, and they will follow the main characters of the first book and their children as they age and grow into the present day. The next book is about a third of the way done.

"Writing is fascinating," Brown said. "Each day I sit down and write and say 'I wonder's going to happen to these people today.'"

Brown has sold 1,000 copies of his first book through a local publisher, MAJEC. He is talking to a couple of larger publishers about wider distribution and a film company about a



LEAWOOD resident **John H. Brown** wrote the historical fiction book *A Wind of Many Colors*.

Group h JoCo Mu

The American for State and Local announced the 2007 Awards of Johnson County Shawnee recipients awards, the highest honor given in the United States.

Honors went to the museum's December 8 reception, "Johnson County: A Pictorial History 1825-2005" and www.jocohistory.com.

The group hosted winners Sept. 8 banquet, hosted by History Channel.

Of the 103 candidates nominated for the 2007 awards, 72 were selected.

County Museum Kansas organization The 240-page, full-color "Johnson County: A Pictorial History 1825-2005" represents countywide history.

Johnson County Museum has one complimentary copy to each public and private in Johnson County. One copy to each Johnson County Public Library branch.

The book is \$35 at the museum at Barnes & Noble and Rainy Day Books. The museum is