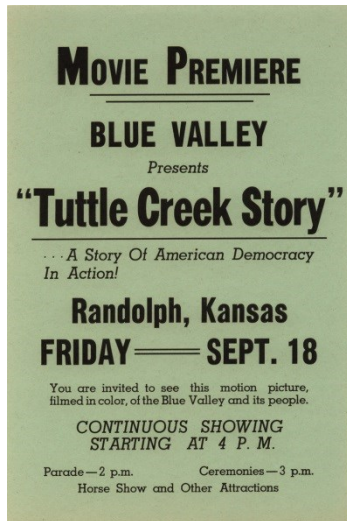


## "The Tuttle Creek Story" and the Velen Sisters

14<sup>th</sup> in the Keepsakes series, originally published March 26, 2008

Currently showing on K-State Television, Channel 8 (cable), is "The Tuttle Creek Story: Presented by the Blue Valley People of Kansas." The University Archives made its original 16 mm film of the "Story" available to Ron Frank, Educational Communications Center, to reformat for this program. The University Archives' copy was selected because its condition is superior to those located in other archives. Part of the television program includes an interview that he conducted with Cheryl



Collins, director of the Riley County Historical Museum, about the making of the film, its significance at the time, and importance to the history of the region. The University Archives and the Velen Collection (see below) are acknowledged at the end of the program. The focus of the film is the early 1950s and how the construction of a dam would destroy the existing Blue River Valley. The film was professionally filmed and produced by Charles M. Peters of Beverly Hills, California, and released in 1953. Mr. Frank provided the University Archives with a DVD version of the film and the program. "The Tuttle Creek Story" came with the Doris and Leona Velen Tuttle Creek Dam Collection that was donated to the University Archives in 2004 by Kevin Larson, a history teacher at Riley County High School. The Velen sisters lived in Cleburne, a town in the Blue River Valley

that was eventually flooded when the Tuttle Creek Dam was constructed. The sisters were key participants in a highly organized "grass roots" effort to "Stop the Big Dam Foolishness." While the Velens are not identified by name, it is assumed that they are pictured in the film. For example, included in the footage is a bus trip a group from the area took to visit Dwight D. Eisenhower in an effort to gain his opposition to the dam. Doris and Leona were active in planning this activity. Construction of the dam began in 1952 and it was



completed in 1962 after several delays. The Velen Collection is one of several in the University Archives that documents the Tuttle Creek Dam and the history of the area. The collection is significant to researchers, not only for the information it contains about Tuttle Creek Dam, but because it provides excellent documentation of the controversy between citizens and the U. S. Government, the Army Corps of Engineers in particular, over the flooding of land and communities throughout the country. The contents include correspondence with political leaders around the state and country, speeches, documents concerning meetings and events, pamphlets, scrapbooks, related material, and, of course, the film. A [description of the collection](#) is available. A related collection in the University Archives is that of [Doris H. Fenton](#). It contains material she collected during the time the dam was being considered and constructed, as well as conservation issues. These are two of the numerous collections of personal papers and records preserved in the holdings related to

“Agriculture and Rural Life” in Kansas, a strategic collecting emphasis of the Morse Department of Special Collections. Many of the archival collections are summarized at: <http://www.lib.k-state.edu/depts/spec/flyers/ag-history.html>