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The Burden of Western History: Bleeding Kansas, Collective Memory, and the Reunification of
the American Empire, 1854-1913

by

Matthew G. Stewart

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Introduction: Making, Unmaking, and Remaking the Nation in Kansas

“Why Osawatomie? This is where it started!” So read the declaration of editor Kevin Gray in a December 7, 2011 opinion piece for the *Osawatomie (Kansas) Journal* in response to the previous day’s visit and speech on the nation’s economy by President Barack Obama. By choosing Osawatomie, President Obama invoked the memory of Theodore Roosevelt, who on August 31, 1910 announced his plan for an insurgent “New Nationalism” to protect ordinary citizens from what he characterized as excessively influential corporate interests. Obama’s explicit purpose for choosing Osawatomie may have been to evoke Roosevelt’s connection to average Americans. But the symbolic weight of Osawatomie, as Gray pointed out, ran much deeper. The town had briefly been the home of John Brown, the radical abolitionist so closely tied to the extralegal violence of the territorial era known as “Bleeding Kansas” and so polarizing for the nation as a rehearsal for, or indeed, preliminary outbreak of the Civil War.

The goal of this dissertation is to explain the origins and significance of Civil War memory in Kansas. Of course, the Civil War in Kansas began in 1854 with the bloody, remorseless clashes between proslavery and free soil settlers—what was known as Bleeding Kansas—and continued through the end of America’s Civil War in 1865. This project explains the unlikely and ironic development that transformed the place where the United States so violently and painfully fell apart into a premier symbol for national unification in the decades after the Civil War. After nearly ninety years of American imperial growth under the federal republic that ultimately failed to create unity among its disparate peoples, Kansas became a laboratory for managing the politics of difference for two generations after the Civil War.

At the heart of this transformation were the challenges of expanding and maintaining a U.S. imperial state. Kansas was a cockpit of imperial conflict; it was where the antebellum empire of Manifest Destiny broke down. Kansas was a site that manifested not “destiny,” but the tensions that all empires face. Here is the definition of empire: an expansionary state that must undertake a simultaneous project of incorporation and differentiation. At once, leaders of empires seek to create and impose unity among the various peoples living under their control and seek to amplify differences that justify their continued, “natural” rule. This tension between the need for unification and necessity of differentiation was the contradiction that bedevils all imperial states.¹ From this perspective, the U.S. was an imperial state from the founding of the republic, and the long 19th century was an era of ebbing and flowing challenges and rebellions of various kinds to that imperial state. The early federal and antebellum state was able to survive and expand through often difficult compromises, shared local and national autonomy over legislative matters and law enforcement, and a territorial system that incorporated new white

¹ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 5-9.

populations and preexisting sovereignties into a unified polity that at the same time excluded Native Americans and subjugated black slaves. Indeed, this dissertation joins two historiographies, those of the Civil War and American empire, by treating the Civil War as the most dramatic moment of many involving the evolution and devolution of the American imperial state.

A sketch of this process of imperial evolution and devolution might look as follows. In the first two decades of the 19th century, Louisiana had been a successful test case for incorporating a demographically disparate region into the United States polity.² The territorial ordinances that incorporated the “old Northwest,” including the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois successfully limited the growth of slavery in a manner that failed during the 1819-1821 debate over the legal status of slavery in Missouri.³ Although slavery was prevented from spreading to the North and West, territorial incorporation beyond the Appalachians also began a decades-long process of unequal treaties, displacement, and imperial wars against Native groups who were not given the benefits of American citizenship. The crucial years of 1845-1848 brought new territorial gains west of the Mississippi River and similar incorporative challenges and even crises for the United States as it added Texas, the Mexican

² Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 4. Kastor argues, “And in the end, the laboratory of Louisiana validated nationhood itself. The chaos that seemed everywhere in 1803 gave way to signs of regional stability, racial supremacy, and political integration by 1820. Louisiana was hardly calm, of course, for political and racial unrest remained a feature of daily life in the decades that followed. Yet in comparison to the white resentment, nonwhite violence, foreign intervention, and domestic disunion that so many predicted in 1803, Louisiana seemed particularly well connected to other states and territories.” Another key regional example of the difficulty of enforcing unity within a growing empire, as well as competition between competing empires, can be seen in William C. Davis, *The Rogue Republic: How Would-Be Patriots Waged the Shortest Revolution in American History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).

³ See Eugene Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1967).

Cession, and a large portion of the Pacific Northwest after settling the Canadian border dispute with Great Britain.⁴ The settlement of Kansas Territory so hotly contested between proslavery and free soil settlers marked a rupture point in this already tenuous history of managing the continental growth of the American empire. The Dred Scott decision undermined the already flawed doctrine of popular sovereignty, negated efforts to compromise over the expansion of slavery, and further mobilized the newly formed antislavery Republican Party.⁵ The fractious electoral contest of 1860 and resulting secession movement quickly spurred the onset of the greater Civil War that had started in Kansas. Events such as the Dakota War of 1862, the struggles that culminated in Wounded Knee, and the Wilmington Insurrection of 1898 suggest that these violent contests over the unification of national political authority and the management of political difference continued through the long nineteenth century and had implications for the incorporation of both Native Americans and African Americans in the imperial project.

To think in this way about the histories of the Civil War and American empire—two topics usually not brought together—affords a new perspective on both and allows us to consider the collective memory of Native American and African American history in the same conceptual space. And intriguingly, the integration of these two distinct histories allows us to think of the eruptive violence of Bleeding Kansas, with its existential stakes and urgency, as something that would have looked very familiar to white settlers in Ohio and Indiana in the 1790s, Georgia in

⁴ See Elliot West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009). In his book, which addresses the United States' war with the Nez Perce in 1877, West argues for a new periodization of Reconstruction beginning in 1845. This "Greater Reconstruction" term encompasses the period of these new western land acquisitions and invites a comprehensive treatment of westward expansion, slavery, the Civil War, and its aftermath.

⁵ Burbank and Cooper, 266.

the 1820s and 1830s, and Florida in the 1830s and 1840s.⁶ This, one might say, is what violence at the borders of the imperial nation-state looked and felt like.

The West, and particularly Kansas, were unmistakably tied to the history of slavery and racial subjugation that defined and burdened America's development as an empire. An overarching aspect of the expansionary continental events of the nineteenth century was the complicated quest for what can be called imperial embodiment. This difficult goal meant binding the nation together for an imperial project, creating geographic, political, cultural, and legal order, institutions and practices, and adherence to them out of the constant disorder of imperial expansion.⁷ As events in previous decades had shown, the United States had been only somewhat

⁶ For violence in 1790s Ohio and Indiana, see Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For a discussion of the violence, as well as the legal process pertaining to the course of Indian removal, see Lindsay Robertson, *Conquest By Law: How the Discovery of America Disposessed Indigenous Peoples of their Lands* (New York: NY: Oxford University Press, 2005). For the process in Georgia specifically, see John Andrew, *From Revivals to Removal: Jeremiah Evarts, the Cherokee Nation, and the Search for the Soul of America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992) and Ronald Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975). For the deeply troubling issues surrounding the Second Seminole War, see Daniel Scallet, "This Inglorious War: The Second Seminole War, the Ad Hoc Origins of American Imperialism, and the Silence of Slavery" (2011). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 638 and Cameron B. Strang, "Violence, Ethnicity, and Human Remains during the Second Seminole War," *Journal of American History* Vol. 100, No. 4 (March 2014): 973-994.

⁷ See Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2-20. Maier addresses the question of whether or not the United States can properly be called an empire, a term which many scholars have been reluctant to use in the American case. While stopping short of calling the U.S. an empire, he argues that it has behaved as one in many instances. His working definition of an empire is "a form of political organization where social elements that rule in a dominant state create a network of allied elites in regions abroad who accept subordination in international affairs in return for security in their position in their administrative unit" p. 7. This might not seem immediately applicable to the U.S. during the era of continental expansion, but Maier argues that the "Manifest Destiny" ethos has often permeated historical analysis of the U.S.,

successful in achieving this goal of embodiment during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indian wars and a lack of a coherent Indian policy were part of the problem, but more divisive was the issue of slavery, which pitted white Americans squarely against each other based on their ultimately incompatible versions of national expansion.

As the United States looked to incorporate lands west of the Mississippi River, many citizens adhered to a belief that the nation could be what Thomas Jefferson called an “empire of liberty,” that is, both expansionary and, at the same time, able to preserve and expand the liberty of the free white citizenry and of all peoples. Jefferson’s theory of “diffusion” further justified such expansion by claiming that the dispersal of slaves into the West would weaken the institution due to the spreading out of a finite number of enslaved laborers over a vast area that gradually became geographically unsuitable to plantation style labor. Debates over the Tallmadge Amendments, which sought to restrict the expansion of slavery into the new state of Missouri, had been a great referendum on the theory of diffusion. Some leaders argued that low slave populations in new areas would lead to state emancipations as it had in New York and New Jersey, and perhaps an eventual end to slavery, while others believed that creating new avenues for the expansion of the slave empire was necessary for the institution’s survival.⁸ A belief in

meaning that North American territory was teleologically assumed to be part of the future nation and that targets of expansion like the trans-Mississippi River West were not really “regions abroad” but rather within the domestic sphere. Maier, like Amy Kaplan, recognizes the existence of imperial frontiers “where acts of violence accumulate” (p. 9) as well as the ways in which attempts to manage the politics of difference not only shape nations’ behavior toward subjugated areas but also domestic life in the metropole. p. 10-11.

⁸ See William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume 1: Secessionists at Bay 1776-1854* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 144-153. Freehling argues that southern slaveholders may have argued for diffusion in a disingenuous attempt to invoke Jefferson’s theory for possibly ending slavery while shrewdly realizing that banning slavery or allowing for gradual “emancipation” in new areas would strengthen it where it already existed. Slave owners in places with a time limit on slavery would simply sell their human property just before the emancipation date. If the Tallmadge Amendments had been passed, this would have likely been

diffusion lingered, especially in the minds of those troubled by slavery but hoping for a passive solution. But that would change by 1854, when the national political imagination came to be centered sharply on Kansas. Now, diffusion gave way to a moment of almost revolutionary clarification and urgency. Allowing or banning slavery in the new territory would set the tone for the direction and purpose of the entire American empire. The tensions of the eastern states were not going to ease or dissolve in the West; they were manifesting themselves wholeheartedly. The urgent project of western expansion became *embodiment*, demonstrating how imperial contradictions of creating unity and managing difference could be resolved, or contained and embodied, in a people, with institutions, with a coherent sense of a unified past, present, and future, and with a shared polity confirmed by blood sacrifice. Events in territorial Kansas were propelled by this quest for embodiment, and the rest of the United States experienced this visceral trauma with its quests for embodiment when the war spread to the rest of the nation. Kansas's position at the forefront of this sea change from "diffusion" to "embodiment" as the governing framework for expansion made its residents acutely aware of their role in shaping imperial American nationalism through the lens of their regional collective memory.

For free soilers and abolitionists, the hated Kansas-Nebraska Act and its surrounding controversy became a call to resist actively the presumed continued growth of the proslavery American empire. In Chapter One, I will expand the definition of "Bleeding Kansas" and explain the multifaceted traumas therein. Kansas and the West—or its version of the West--were not free from the burden of a traumatic history of slavery, subjugation, and imperial growth.⁹ By trauma,

the fate of Missouri slaves who had been born after the state was admitted to the Union and then supposedly freed at age 25 in 1845, at the earliest.

⁹ See C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, 3rd ed., (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 17-20. When C. Vann Woodward sought to identify the core aspect of southern identity, he chose its unique history as a defining characteristic. Unlike

I have in mind what Juliet Mitchell calls “a breaking through of protective boundaries in such a violent (either physical or mental) way that that the experience cannot be processed: the mind or body or both are breached, leaving a wound or gap within.”¹⁰ Bleeding Kansas at its core was exactly about that kind of trauma, the attempted intentional penetration of protective boundaries and the experience of such violation on the part of the violated. This was precisely the kind of experience that each side wanted to inflict on the other. If trauma is considered in this way, then collective memory can be seen in a profound sense as a conversation and a contestation about how to fill the gap produced by such boundary violation.

Modern western United States historical narratives often portray the West as something set apart from such traumatic struggles of slavery and race. In this way, those histories treat the West as removed from the burden that was inscribed in that history and so important to the development of the modern North and South.¹¹ But in fact, in Kansas, these traumas, and the

the rest of America—yet similar to much of the rest of the world—the South experienced scarcity, want, poverty, frustration, failure, and defeat. In addition, Old World problems like slavery dominated the region for its first eighty years and, at the time of Woodward’s writing, had plagued it for another century. Such was the burden of history that the South had to bear. The possible expansion of slavery into Kansas and the West threatened to inscribe the state with this unfavorable burden, making it a foreign entity within the larger American polity. Resisting this possibility gave Kansas and the West its own burden, which was embraced in ways that I will describe in this work.

¹⁰ Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Inc., 2003), 9.

¹¹ Michael McGerr, “Is there a Twentieth Century West?” in William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), 248. Historians appropriately struggle with the idea of the western “myth,” an origin story which has often centered on the image of rugged individualism, the geographically shifting frontier experience, and contentious responses to government intervention. See Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 12-17 and Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) for a discussion of the western myth in late 19th and early 20th century popular fiction. While many historians in previous generations celebrated the triumphal “victory narratives” of William “Buffalo Bill” Cody, novelist Zane Grey, and late 19th century historian Frederick Jackson Turner, more recent studies have sought to deconstruct the myth or stress common western themes of conquest and

remembering and forgetting of them, were fully present. They became the basis for a kind of regionally-based nationalism that I identify, as did 19th and early 20th century Kansans, as the “Kansas Spirit,” a distinct vision of western U.S. nationalism, history, and possibility. The idea was a creative fiction distilled from high-minded abolitionism and Western “pioneering” that became fully embodied by the likes of John Brown and other free state settlers who willingly practiced extralegal violence in the name of masculine, yet morally sound imperial growth. While often forgetful or dismissive of their own contradictions and questionable tactics, free state settlers at least created a version of American nationalism that allowed for the eventual—if still provisional and tentative—acceptance of African Americans into the national polity after emancipation.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act may have had the unintended consequence of spawning the free state movement, Bleeding Kansas, and the Civil War. But the matter of Indian removal complicates this Kansas-Nebraska to Civil War narrative and reminds us how struggles over “removals” and “incorporations” of free state and slave state settlers and Indians took place at the same historical moment. All were contemplated in the 1854 law establishing Kansas Territory. All were responses to the challenge of embodying American empire in Kansas, of creating and managing difference in that new American world. Before, during, and after the Civil

environmental depletion. See Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 36. Limerick thoroughly argues that a history of conquest best describes the western experience, showing that “pioneers” were trespassers and the mission of spreading Christian civilization long masked the dark side of expansion. Limerick’s work is valuable for its conquest framework, as is Richard White’s for his explanation of the influence of territorial administration on westerners’ relationship with the federal government. See Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 155-169. Kansans’ memory was certainly shaped by its own history of myriad subjugations and its brief, contested territorial period that stood apart from many other frontier regions.

War, government policies towards Native Americans influenced white Americans' notions of civilization and trained them to create enemy "others" and deal with them harshly. In either version of American imperial expansion, free soil or proslavery, Native Americans—who were familiar with imperial struggles for territorial control and managing difference within subjugated areas of their own—ended up on the losing end of both lived experience in Kansas as well as historical memory.¹² Natives who wanted to preserve methods of land control that included common, non-individual ownership ran counter to the northern, southern, and Bleeding Kansas version of imperial embodiment. The traumas of Bleeding Kansas helped create a regional nationalism that could imagine black incorporation, but also and at the same, a consensus opinion was enshrined among whites across the political spectrum that continued to view Native Americans as permanent outsiders.

The source materials that I use to analyze the traumas of Bleeding Kansas are problematic in several ways. I have heeded historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot's admonition that silences are potentially just as revealing as elaborate record keeping or acknowledgement in the archives.¹³ An important set of sources for this dissertation comes from compilations of local histories published many years after the actual events. The first ten years after the end of the war mark a period of "silence," a lacking in historical remembering as people who lived through the wartime experience generally concentrated on rebuilding rather than reliving the recent trauma.

¹² Burbank and Cooper, 262-265.

¹³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 49. Trouillot observes, "Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. There is no perfect closure of any event, however one chooses to define the boundaries of that event. Thus whatever becomes fact does so with its own inborn absences, specific to its production. In other words, the very mechanisms that make any historical recording possible also ensure that historical facts are not created equal. They reflect differential control of the means of historical production at the very first engraving that transforms an event into a historical fact."

However, local and state anniversaries, and especially the United States Centennial in 1876 caused many cities and counties to undertake efforts to preserve their local histories during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Newspapers would publish requests for people to share memories or other useful information that would be compiled and published in book form either locally or in a large city like Chicago. Much of the information in such works consists of statistics or biographies of local residents, but sometimes there are useful comments in which residents reflect on their place in historical memory.

Primary sources held by the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) have also been crucial to my study. Collections in the KSHS are exhaustive, but it should also be noted that the institution was founded with the main purpose of preserving the *free state* version of the state's past. The organization began in 1875 out of the Kansas Editors' and Publishers' Association. Local newspapers donated much of their archival material with a highly developed sense of the importance of telling a particular story about Kansas's past. During the early years of the organization, the Topeka *Daily Commonwealth* ran a story about it claiming, "Day by day the men who made Kansas free are passing away. The last witness will soon be called to testify, but in vain. The story was a brave one, and it should be read and known to the last generations of men."¹⁴ Trouillot claims that commemorative events are particularly problematic because they sanitize the otherwise messy lives of historical actors and aid in the process of myth-making.¹⁵ The creation of unifying free state narrative is no less complicated due to the silencing of contradictory opinions such as proslavery narratives. Recollections of traumatic experiences gathered for commemorative events or local histories and archives may not be accurate due to the intense pressure of the remembered situation or the passage of time. However, awareness of

¹⁴ Topeka *Daily Commonwealth*, January 30, 1881.

¹⁵ Trouillot, 116.

the environment and filters that ultimately effect sources make this work—a study of the creation and function of collective memory—all the more valuable.

The evolution and eruption of Bleeding Kansas into the larger Civil War and the beginning of the wartime freedom struggle are the subject matter of Chapter Two. During the war, Kansans continued to suffer the traumatic home invasions and border violence that had marked the territorial period. Having entered the Union in January 1861, at the same time that many southern states were seceding, Kansans believed that their state played a special role in the war as a unifying symbol in the face of national disintegration. Another crucial characteristic of Kansas was its geographic position next to a slave state, Missouri, which made it an attractive destination for enslaved people taking emancipation into their own hands. While many Kansans were not excited about the arrival of African Americans, enough white leaders steeped in the free state ethos made a confident argument that a state created out of the traumas of sectional violence should at least find a way to accommodate blacks and serve as an “asylum of liberty” if they could be productive citizens. The presence of so many blacks in Kansas prompted a lively statewide debate over their potential use as soldiers in the war, and black Kansas volunteer regiments were at the forefront of the eventual move to create officially recognized black fighting units into the United States Army. Through this service, which included heavy action on the western frontier, blacks became incorporated into most formulations of the regional nationalist idea of the Kansas Spirit and provided an example of how the new United States emerging out of the war could manage the politics of difference. Although racism persisted on a local and national level, fighting units remained segregated, and blacks were not allowed to be commissioned officers, military service provided a substantial tie to the institutions of the postwar imperial state and fostered greater national attachment and unification. Many white

Kansans came to accept people of color in the Kansas polity as part of the process of nation building that the war had sanctified, the process of national embodiment.

The Civil War provided the rest of the nation with an opportunity to experience what had been happening on its western border since 1854. Americans more generally became part of the tangible, visceral experience of sacrifice and sectional violence that Kansans knew well. Through time, that shared memory became fused with and legitimated a call for greater African American incorporation as national citizens. The economic success of the state of Kansas, which had stagnated during the violent and uncertain war years but grew rapidly and needed workers afterwards, helped create a more welcoming environment. By contrast, the Civil War did not have the same effect on policies regarding Native Americans, even though some of them had fought for the Union as well. This is particularly evident in the experiences and writings of postwar governor Samuel J. Crawford, whose attitude towards black soldiers changed while commanding a unit of them during the winter of 1863-4. Comments in his autobiography showed that blacks, like whites, could be trained to function in the institutions of the bureaucratic imperial state and sacrifice their blood for the nation.¹⁶ However, after resigning his governorship, Crawford went on to rejoin the army and fight “savage” Indians that he believed were unredeemable in the West. The dynamic is not unlike that evident in the careers of Northern generals William T. Sherman, Philip Sheridan, Oliver O. Howard, and others, whose Civil War (and in Howard’s case, Reconstruction) actions in support of blacks readily morphed into anti-Indian campaigns in the postwar era.

White officers’ writings about their experiences with black regiments heavily influence this chapter. Recreating the lives of black soldiers is difficult, much like efforts to describe the

¹⁶ Samuel J. Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties* (Chicago, IL: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1911), 107-8.

lives of enslaved people. White officers were often boastful and sought to create a certain historical image for posterity that justified their actions and amplified their importance. They were also eager to interpret the words and actions of black soldiers through their own lenses, sometimes dismissively or through racist characterizations. Taking these facts into account, though, it is still possible to argue that Civil War Kansas, and the energetic participation of both black and white soldiers in the conflict, set the stage for a kind of appealing regional nationalism that resisted more restrictive trends in collective memory that I will explain in detail.

Kansans could not have developed and promoted the so-called Kansas Spirit without powerful social, political, and economic structures in place to aid them. Chapter Three will analyze the political economy of Kansas after the war, which included rapid population growth, massive capital investments in agricultural production and transportation, and the entrenchment of Republican Party hegemony in political institutions. Not content to go about their postwar business quietly, Kansas energetically sought to promote itself as the national center of commercial and industrial agriculture, and by extension, the moral center of the new nation. Railroad promoters and local developers courted each other, promising lucrative returns on investments in road projects that would facilitate the growing cattle industry and bind the bicoastal nation.¹⁷ Railroads like the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe (ATSF) funded memorial events through loans, donations, and discounted fares in order to attach their name to the burgeoning Kansas Spirit. Binding the nation together through massive imperial projects like transcontinental railroad building were imagined by Kansas boosters to provide another form of imperial embodiment by bringing the regional nationalism of Kansas to the entire country. Miles of railroad tracks laid, rather than slain bodies in Civil War battlefields, were now the major

¹⁷ See Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).

evidence of imperial presence on the Kansas frontier. This fusion of the moral and economic aspects of railroad building provided seductive opportunities that other outlets for investment in this area of the Bloody Shirt—the 1870s—could not match.

Success in such areas as agricultural production and railroad construction seemed to justify the state's efforts to stop slavery and grow as a semi-inclusive free-soil empire. In the early to mid 1870s, the United States entered what I call the Centennial moment, in 1876 and several years following in which Americans focused special attention on their past, present, and future. Strengthened by their recent growth and ongoing Republican political dominance, Kansans created their own institutions of collective memory like the KSHS, which took the lead in efforts to promote the state to a larger audience. Large spectacles like the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and its local follow-up, the Kansas Memorial or Old Settlers' Reunion of 1879, provided an opportunity for Kansans to shape the collective memory of the past through the needs of the present, a process which Maurice Halbwachs—whose framework has influenced many historians—discussed at length. He explained that societies could have collective memories—apart from any specific individual memory—that relied on present-day institutions that helped preserve, retell, and refine that memory, which can be useful in managing the politics of difference.¹⁸ Imperial embodiment was aided by collective memory rooted in the institutions, rituals, and social interests that Halbwachs identified in his writings because it bound diverse people together with a similar sense of their common past, present, and future.

As a version of regional nationalism and collective memory, the Kansas Spirit resisted a trend in Civil War memory that was fully articulated after the Centennial moment, a mounting directive for Americans to forget that the Civil War was a conflict over slavery and its expansion

¹⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory, Edited, Translated, and with an Introduction by Lewis A. Coser* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40.

into the West. Recent studies of Civil War memory have examined this phenomenon well. As historian Nina Silber describes it, “forgetfulness, not memory, appears to be the dominant theme in the reunion culture.”¹⁹ For the sake of reconciliation, the North gradually accepted a romantic version of the Civil War as a contest between two equally principled combatants, although the North preferred to think of itself in the masculine role in the remade partnership of sections. David Blight addresses the monumental task of postwar reconciliation and argues that it “could not have been achieved without the resubjugation of many of the people whom the war had freed from centuries of bondage.”²⁰ Silber and Blight both concede that the “Lost Cause” was not a universally accepted version of the Civil War. They point out that veterans’ groups such as the Grand Army of the Republic, former abolitionists, and African American leaders such as Frederick Douglass rejected the Lost Cause and continued to shape the memory of the war in their own image.²¹ I argue that Kansans were able to create a viable nationalism out of their collective memory of fighting slavery during the extended “bleeding” era that remained strong, even as the Lost Cause grew in opposition to it. Though not necessarily or always as inclusive as Douglass and many former abolitionists would have wanted, this kind of nationalism exhibited more of an attempt to manage difference inclusively rather than forget that differences between northerners and southerners existed. Most of all, the *Kansas Spirit* acknowledged legitimate arguments for black citizenship.

¹⁹ Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 4.

²⁰ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

²¹ See also Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Abolitionists Remember: Antislavery Autobiographies and the Unfinished Work of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Jeffrey examines abolitionist autobiographies and commemorative events like reunions to trace their lasting commitment to the emancipationist cause after the war. She concludes that dissolving antislavery societies was a mistake, and the abolitionists who continued to argue for fully carrying out the emancipationist promise largely fell on deaf ears.

The Kansas Spirit made sense as a basis for postwar nationalism because it seemed to provide a sense of confident unity and moral certitude in a country searching for such elusive satisfaction. In contrast to other sites of western imperial violence and violations, Kansas offered a visible model of how such a history could be turned into stable, thriving institutions and racial interdependence.²² The state's attempt to promote itself as a moral leader for the rest of the country at national events strengthened the idea of the Kansas Spirit, and the idea grew to recognize the historical contributions of black soldiers and migrants as African Americans appropriated it for their own purposes. Black Kansans acted upon their own collective memory of their state's past, as it became a popular destination for "Exodusters" seeking a way out of the oppressive postwar South after Reconstruction.²³ As with the response to the arrival of newly freed people during the Civil War, the reaction of white Kansans to the arrival of the Exodusters was mixed. Overall, though, Republican leaders like Governor John P. St. John and other shapers of collective memory realized as a result of the constructive presence of the Exodusters in

²² For examples of other western imperial stories that did *not* result in such inclusive forms of imperial embodiment through collective memory, See Elliot West, *The Last Indian War*. West gives a vivid, detailed description of the subjugation and near annihilation of the Nez Perce in Idaho, 400 of whom were taken as prisoners of war and relocated to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas during 1877 and 1878 before being moved once again to Indian territory, pp 295-9. Susan Lee Johnson, in *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), argues that there was a brief period of nonwhite opportunity for social mobility that was quickly eroded by the imposition of white middle-class norms. Howard Lamar, in *Dakota Territory 1861-1889: A Study of Frontier Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1956) renewed interest in western history but concluded that proponents of statehood were not interested in radical, or even progressive ideas for social reform and became reliant on the federal government in contrast to the supposed rugged individualism that the West was supposed to embody, pp. 45, 53. Kansas provides quite the contrast, both in its shorter, tumultuous territorial experience and its self-conscious shaping of collective memory for the purpose of imperial embodiment.

²³ See Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).

Kansas economic and political life that the state had a chance to carry the burden of its past in a more positive, accommodating way.

The published words of speakers at large memorial gatherings and press coverage of such events and speakers are fascinating for their bluster, melodrama, and energetic morality. It is important to note the omissions and erasures in sources that also took place in the making of the Kansas Spirit. Speakers usually dismissed the Native cultures that occupied the area prior the white settlement, as well as the violence and subjugation that accompanied that process. They also were reluctant to acknowledge their own adoption of extralegal violence in securing Kansas for the free state cause. Many speakers, referring to the popular song, pointed out that John Brown's soul was marching on, conveniently forgetting the souls that he and his followers had dispatched in the name of eradicating slavery from the West.

The Kansas Spirit was not a monolithic consensus, but rather constantly debated, refined, and reworked as contemporary needs to invoke the past changed. In Chapter Four, I will explain how, in the 1870s and 1880s, a challenge to Republican hegemony emerged in the form of the loosely conglomerated political movement known as Populism. Even though they sought to unseat Republicans from their perceived stranglehold over American politics and business, Populist insurgents struggled to claim the mantle of Kansas memory to support their own aims. Republicans, they argued, were disconnected from the will of the nation and its recent history, only interested in building and protecting monopolies while exploiting agricultural and wage laborers. Populists claimed that *they* were the party in the late 19th century most interested in continuing to fight enslavement in the way that the newly embodied Union had during the Civil War. To them, free state settlers who bravely took action against a moral evil were proto-Populists who would never trade in the gains from their blood sacrifice in protection of the

Union's institutions for the practices of the modern Republican Party. In response, Republicans claimed that Populists were anarchical misfits and continued to wave the "bloody shirt" of Civil War sacrifice, haughtily arguing that the party was formed to fight slavery and win the Civil War and therefore deserved its place at the head of government after succeeding in the endeavor. The election of 1892 even saw the Republicans run an African American candidate, Blanche Ketene Bruce, a nephew of the former U.S. Senator from Mississippi Blanche Kelso Bruce, for state auditor, but he lost to the Populist candidate.²⁴ Clearly, both sides believed that ownership of, and association with, the Kansas Spirit's potential to provide an embodying narrative that would animate potential new voters or keep old ones.

In the midst of this debate between white Republicans and Populists, black citizens of Kansas continued to argue for recognition and inclusion in the state's collective memory and improve their own conditions. Many black voters felt a disconnect with the business-oriented Republican party of the Gilded Age, yet could not stomach the attempted fusion with Democrats late in the century. In Kansas, at least, blacks achieved success in creating or expanding institutions like Quindaro University, a former freedmen's school that was established during the Civil War and developed into an industrial arts school similar to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, and black chapters of veterans associations like the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR).²⁵ During the 1890s, former black Kansas soldiers and their white officers received Congressional recognition and widespread historical recognition for their deeds. This recognition, in the face of the rising tide of "progressive" segregation, is particularly notable.

²⁴ KSHS website. www.kshs.org/kansapedia/blanche-ketene-bruce/11996. Accessed July 14, 2014.

²⁵ Roger D. Cunningham, *The Black Citizen-Soldiers of Kansas, 1864-1901* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 53. Cunningham writes that there were at least six black veterans members of the GAR in Kansas. A few black soldiers joined white GAR units, but it was more common for former USCT members to have their own organizations.

The efforts of blacks themselves—as well as Populists—to be included in the Kansas Spirit shows that the formation of the idea was not simply an act of gracious, idealistic, powerful whites, but rather an active and emotional process negotiated between the many groups in the American empire. Even as these disparate groups negotiated the meaning of the past and its application to the present, they seemed to agree that national unity was a worthwhile goal, especially in light of emerging violence and foreign imperial exploits.

Chapter Four, “Who Owns the Kansas Spirit?” encompasses the ongoing conversation between white Republicans, Populists, and black citizens. This exchange emerges in writings and speeches of key Kansas Populists who criticized the Republican-dominated system and Republicans, like the famous Emporia, Kansas newspaper editor William Allen White, who answered back. One of the main social structures created during this time was the Kansas Day Club, a Republican organization geared towards younger party members—many of whom were too young to remember Bleeding Kansas—that was formed in 1890 in response to electoral defeats. Speeches and writings from this club are particularly rich because of the members’ eagerness to delve into the realm of memory in order to argue for continuity between the fully embodied past of collective Civil War memory and present. The state Republican Party was in a moment of stark crisis, and the words of its members glow with a desire for national reincorporation under Republican leadership. As is the case with Chapter Two, the discussion of black soldiers is limited by the fact that most writings about the experiences of the fighting units were produced by white officers who petitioned Congress for recognition. However, the strong accolades given to the black fighting units, although long delayed, clearly show such political and military memories of black exploits figured quite centrally in the definition of the Kansas Spirit.

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a resurgence of national Republican control under President William McKinley and his successor, Theodore Roosevelt. Kansas had elected two Populist governors during the 1890s and sent a handful of Populists to the U.S. House of Representatives, but they were all defeated at the polls by 1901. The transition era from Populism to Progressive Republicanism also witnessed the United States' involvement in the ambitious imperialist undertaking of the Spanish-American War and the management of the new territories gained from that conflict. Chapter Five addresses the appeal of the Kansas Spirit to turn-of-the-century Progressive imperialists like Theodore Roosevelt and the ongoing shaping of this form of regional nationalism.

With the Spanish-American War and other foreign military actions, the United States acquired new foreign territory that included Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and the Philippines and became more deeply involved in an imperial project of embodiment that had been developing since the country's founding but changing since the Civil War.²⁶ The management of this new territory again revealed the contradiction of empires that Cooper and Burbank identify between Americans' search for unity at home and abroad by touting the spread of liberal political and economic principles to these *new* areas, and their justifications of rule with white supremacist reasoning in tandem with segregationist policies and violent repression that underscored a

²⁶ See Amy Kaplan *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 96-8. Kaplan provides a thorough analysis of Theodore Roosevelt's actions during the Spanish-American War and the crisis of masculinity that spurred it. She claims that embodiment was an especially pressing goal as the United States focused its attention on overseas territorial exploits that were sometimes concrete but in other ways part of a general goal of "informal empire." The disembodied nature of the overseas imperial project led to embodiment through the use of literal male bodies, which imperialists like Roosevelt recognized as vital to America's New Nationalism. Hence, his advocacy of the character-building exercise of military service or some other form of the "strenuous life."

politics of difference.²⁷ However, most Americans had little awareness or knowledge of these subjugated nations as the imperial project became a more disembodied, bureaucratic endeavor with little connection to early twentieth century white Americans' shared history and experience.²⁸

Given these circumstances and the characteristics of the American empire by the early 20th century, the regionally-based nationalism of the Kansas Spirit offered much as a unifying tradition. Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War had been tangible, lived experiences that created a visceral loyalty to the nation through shared sacrifice in the name of a higher cause. Using the Kansas Spirit as a frame of reference for the new imperial project reminded Americans of this more fully embodied past and also allowed Progressive imperialists like Roosevelt to mask the contradictions of empire. In the same way that inventing the Kansas Spirit had omitted or softened, yet been predicated on the extralegal violence against Native Americans and other enemies during mid-19th century imperial growth, the early 20th century version of the Kansas

²⁷ Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and The Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 121-2. Kaplan, in *The Anarchy of Empire*, pp. 126-141 argues that even black military service in the Spanish-American War failed to gain them equality in representations or collective memory. Theodore Roosevelt himself told a version of the Battle of San Juan Hill in which the black soldiers were hesitant to fight and were moving to the back of the battle line until Roosevelt shamed and threatened them. This contradicted black newspaper accounts which stated that the black troops had simply been ordered to a different position rather than retreating out of innate cowardice, as Roosevelt had implied.

²⁸ See Kelly Loughead, "Embodying Empire: Constructing Imperial Identity in Dime Novels and Congressional Debates, 1865-1901," Washington University in St. Louis Senior Honors Thesis, 2013. Loughead explains in detail the uncomfortable realities Americans faced at the end of the Civil War, as the United States Army transitioned to full time Indian fighting and then extracontinental missions like the Spanish-American War. Popular literature like dime novels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century allowed writers to reshape the past and present into more familiar portrayals of individual and militaristic triumph over enemy others like Native Americans and cruel, overbearing Spaniards.

Spirit served as a lesson for American imperialists justifying or forgetting unsavory tactics in the name of the embodied nation.

Another reason the Kansas Spirit appealed to Progressive Republicans was a qualified racial inclusiveness. Chapter Five includes my analysis of William T. Vernon's invitation and speech to the Kansas Day Club in 1905. Vernon made a clear case for the connection between black liberation, John Brown and the Kansas Spirit, the Republican Party, and the recent "liberation" efforts of the United States army.²⁹ Vernon's visit, like Theodore Roosevelt's White House dinner with Booker T. Washington a few years earlier, allowed nationalist Republicans to claim adherence to an inclusive, unified form of imperial growth while still ignoring many of the contradictions of Jim Crow America, such as the supposedly "progressive" idea of racial segregation.³⁰ Indeed, despite being impressed with Vernon, Governor Hoch refused to veto a bill later in 1905 that would have prevented Kansas City, Kansas schools from becoming segregated.³¹

The christening of the USS *Kansas* in 1905 combined collective memory, race, gender, and progressive imperialism. This new ship, part of Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" that toured the world as a "goodwill" show of American strength, was dedicated by breaking a bottle of water as a show of Kansas's commitment to temperance. The water, however, allegedly came from the "John Brown Spring" near one of his old residences on the Missouri-Kansas border, and raises the question of the degree to which Kansans associated John Brown and Bleeding Kansas

²⁹ *Addresses Delivered at the Fourteenth Annual Banquet of the Kansas Day Club. In the Rotunda of the State House Topeka, The Thirtieth of January 1905.* (Clay Center, KS: The Press of the Times, 1905), 57-9.

³⁰ See Deborah Davis, *Guest of Honor: Booker T. Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and the White House Dinner that Shocked a Nation* (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2012).

³¹ C.M. Moates letter to Governor Ed Hoch, February 21, 1905. KSHS, Governor's Records, Hoch, Box 20, Folder 3.

with the new imperial project. While seemingly incongruous at first glance, the episode seems altogether fitting, given the appeal of the symbols of Bleeding Kansas to Progressive Republicans searching to deploy regional nationalism to embody the American empire.

The final episode that I revisit and analyze in more detail in Chapter Five is Theodore Roosevelt's "New Nationalism" Speech, presented at Osawatimie, Kansas. Seeking support for another presidential run in 1912, Roosevelt used the Kansas past and the Civil War as a framework for attacking the modern problem of concentrated wealth. Here, Roosevelt clearly identified with the emotional, energetic, moralistic and, most of all, masculine actions of free state fighters like Brown, yet reminded his audience that the Kansas Spirit also needed bureaucratic efficiency to be usefully applied on a national scale. He was clearly interested in using the lessons of the past to achieve real, concrete, fully-embodied attachment to the nation and beckoned his audience to do the same. Kansas, the economic and moral success story of the New West, seemed the perfect place to make this plea.

Chapter Five draws upon speeches at large events and newspaper coverage of them. I consider both the surface and sometimes hidden meanings of the historical actors' words. Vernon could be characterized as a rather conservative figure trying to curry favor with the established political powers of Kansas until we uncover the radical implications of his remarks. The USS *Kansas* episode could be interpreted as mainly a temperance debate until we look for connections between John Brown and early 20th century imperialism. And Roosevelt could have been seeking a solid, middle American audience, yet he chose John Brown's hometown, the date of his famous battle against proslavery Missourians, and enlisted the help of the consummate definer of the Kansas Spirit, William Allen White, to make his speech. These events make it clear that regional nationalism defined through Kansas memory remained a salient rhetorical and

unifying force for many decades after the Civil War. It had a revolutionary and violent text or subtext that often had to be yoked or subordinated to claims of American liberal nationalism—an always uneasy marriage of past and present.

As a final, concluding analysis to this project, I will add a brief examination of the Women's Kansas Day Club's (WKDC) role in connecting Kansas memory to the themes of imperial growth, trauma, inclusion and exclusion, and the importance of the home. The Kansas Spirit could be usefully used to render concrete and immediate the abstract rhetoric and remote structures of empire because it connected people to shared, visceral experiences of an earlier era; it hit home. That home, in the new, trans-Missouri West, had been contested in the American imagination as a place that could somehow save the nation, create secure homes, and work out the tensions of the North and the South while at the same time imperially subjugating other groups of people and denying them homes. The inherent contradictions of this endeavor began the process of unmaking the nineteenth century Republic through a war that later grew exponentially and reshaped a nation that had never quite known the embodying power of blood sacrifice until the Civil War. Kansans never forgot the power of reminding the rest of the nation of that sacrifice, even when the national collective memory of the war seemed to omit aspects of the war, especially black emancipation. Through constant debate and refining of collective memory through the regional nationalism of the so-called "Kansas Spirit," Kansans argued that the full embodiment of the Civil War era struggle would not be lost, but remain just as powerful to new generations seeking to expand the American empire, manage differences among disparate peoples, and create unity to the institutions that would be employed to achieve that project.

Chapter 1:

The Multifaceted Traumas of Bleeding Kansas

On the night of May 24-5, 1856 John Brown and his followers carried out the most infamous single act now associated with the Bleeding Kansas era. Outraged by the recent sack of Lawrence that he arrived too late to prevent and exasperated by the Free State movement's unwillingness to resort to violence, when necessary, Brown led a group of men on a mission to punish the proslavery settlers near the Browns' Osawatomie settlement in Miami County. What soon became known as the Pottawatomie Massacre, due to the victims' residence along Pottawatomie Creek, consisted of Brown's group moving stealthily from home to home, briefly interviewing the men at each site, and hacking to death with broadswords the ones deemed a threat to the Free State cause. The Pottawatomie Massacre changed the nature of the contest over Kansas's future regarding the existence of slavery, and its moral ambiguity has been debated

ever since.³² Five settlers, James P. Doyle, his adult sons William and Drury, Allen Wilkinson, and William Sherman, met their violent end that night, and their mutilated corpses served as a grim signal that imperial expansion into the West presented the possibility of unmaking a nation that was desperately in search of a unified project.³³

The Pottawatomie Massacre certainly deserves a central place in the story of Bleeding Kansas due to the pivotal political role it played as a turning point in the sectional controversy. One might see the significance of Pottawatomie as a traumatic event not only for the victims and their families, but for a national political culture that privileged law and reason and now had to engage the implications of proliferating deadly violence. That said, it is my goal to expand the meaning of this term “trauma” by defining the multifaceted traumas that were associated with this era of imperial expansion. The deepest and most disturbing traumatic dimension of Bleeding Kansas was rooted in the idea and experience of annihilation, or imminent threat of the breaking

³² See Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 2004), 107-112. Etcheson argues that Brown’s actions were a detriment to the Free State cause because they caused a general escalation of the violence and the outbreak of a guerrilla war. She acknowledges, however, that defenders of Brown admired his willingness to take action in the face of a perceived threat. Robert E. McGlone’s recent work *John Brown’s War Against Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) assesses the arguments that Brown had good reason to believe, based on interviews while disguised as a land surveyor, that Free State settlers were in immediate danger from the men that were killed in the Pottawatomie Massacre.

³³ Rita G. Napier, “The Hidden History of Bleeding Kansas: Leavenworth and the Formation of the Free-State Movement,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* Vol. 27, No. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2004): 54-56. Napier’s article shows how moderation and unification were increasingly untenable goals in 1855. She analyzes the editorial work of Mark Delahay, a Leavenworth newspaper editor who urged settlers to support the existing Democratic Party and popular sovereignty rather than break away and form a single issue faction dedicated to establishing slavery in Kansas Territory at any cost. Though he had imaged, and specifically argued that (white) people from all regions and backgrounds would be welcome in Kansas, proslavery extremists eventually attacked Delahay’s printing office and threw his press in the river.

through of protective boundaries that would lead to a subjugation to a foreign entity.³⁴ A crucial element of such annihilation was the dismantling of identity, both collective and individual, and the fear of it.³⁵

The concepts of trauma and annihilation so defined, help to set the stage for an appreciation of the various conflicts that took place in Kansas, including but not limited to the conflict over slavery. The full ensemble of struggles I have in mind included those between competing Native American groups over the region that would become Kansas in the first half of the nineteenth century, pre-territorial settlement of military and missionary whites, Natives and new settlers after 1854, and of course, between pro and antislavery settlers. These conflicts, considered together, often featured acceptance of violent destruction of homes and bodies as the favored strategy for settling ideological or commercial differences. Such violence, of course, was not an invention of the Bleeding Kansas era. Recent scholarship has begun to show how the

³⁴ See Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 15-39. Painter's first essay in this collection, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Coast Accounting," engages "trauma theory" and attempts to measure the far-reaching effects of the violent institution of slavery on both white and black Americans. This essay is useful for its explanation of the traumatic aspects of slavery (violence, submission, and unquestioned obedience) that permeated not only the institution of slavery, but a large portion of American homes regardless of race. This does not diminish the traumatic nature of Bleeding Kansas, however, as victims of home invasions, forced removals, and other violence certainly did not take such incursions for granted and were often left wounded in various ways.

³⁵ Scholars have assessed the effects of trauma across disciplines, particularly as it relates to soldiers and their relatives' adaptations to postwar life. See, for example, Eric T. Dean, Jr., *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) for a comparative study of psychiatric evaluations of Civil War and Vietnam soldiers. In Joy Damousi, *Living With the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Grief in Postwar Australia* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), the author collects oral histories of soldiers' wives to describe personal and national reactions to the traumatic experience of participating in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. For a significant study of the twin traumas of slavery and war, see Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) Feimster assesses the impact of violence and the threat of sexual violence on two women in particular: Rebecca Latimer Felton and Ida B. Wells.

violent conflicts of this era and the psychological fear induced by the threat of violence shaped race relations and gender identity.³⁶

In the Kansas context, it is necessary to distinguish between three different levels of subjugation and dismantling of identity that could often merge into each other. Indeed, both the threat and practice of overriding boundaries was what made Kansas so alarming. First, entire peoples were often directly targeted for annihilation. Second, attacks on what Kansans hoped would remain inviolable family household space, even in the midst of settlement and political upheaval, represented a particularly intimate version of trauma. Third, the violence and trauma of Bleeding Kansas threatened no less than an imminent loss of selfhood for individual settlers when accepted boundaries between the civilized self and the savage “other” were breached.

Attempts to eliminate opponents seen as enemy others were undertaken in multiple cases in Bleeding Kansas. This occurred first in the expulsion of Native groups from their previous lands to Kansas. Between 1825 and 1850, twenty-five different tribes signed treaties with the U.S. government that resulted in relocations to Kansas. Tribes like the Delaware had originated on the East Coast and been moved previously before arriving in Kansas in 1829.³⁷ Then, in the 1850s, many of these same Native Americans were removed from Kansas—a second removal for these peoples—by united white settlers backed by the American government. During and after this process, white settlers split over their adherence to the expansion of slavery. Northern whites sought to subjugate southern whites—and often free blacks—in the name of expanding a free

³⁶ See Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel, *Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender, and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); also see Feimster, *Southern Horrors*.

³⁷ “Indian Removal Policy,” KSHS. www.kshs.org/kansapedia/indian-removal-act/16714. Retrieved March 4, 2013.

soil empire. Southern proslavery whites in turn wanted to rid the region of free soil northerners while continuing to subjugate blacks in an expanding empire constructed upon slave labor.

Violations of the boundaries of autonomous intimate spaces like the home proved a particularly traumatic experience for Kansas settlers. When the term “intimacy” is attached to violence, it implies a kind of visceral familiarity between adversaries. This familiarity is visible in cases of neighbors who recognized, relied on, perhaps even felt affection for, and nonetheless attacked each other, perhaps in violation of relationships and ties. Home invasions performed by intruders on both sides of the slavery issue represented a particularly acute and dramatic assault on the ability of the paterfamilias to protect his dependents.

The sexual aspect of intimacy provides one way to examine a third kind of trauma associated with Bleeding Kansas, which is the possibility of the loss of selfhood when attacking enemy others. Encounters between different groups of people, for example, resulted in a number of marriages across racial lines and mixed race offspring. This complicates the popular strategy of labeling enemies as foreign “others” when they could be, quite literally, kin. In this world of mixing and blurring of boundaries, campaigns of exclusion—anti-Indian, anti-black, and anti-Northern or Southern settler—also raised the excruciating possibility, or even necessity, of exterminating one’s kin, that is to say a part of oneself.

The process of shaping collective memory of traumatic processes like eliminating enemy groups or invading intimate spaces reveals another threat to selfhood in the fallout of Bleeding Kansas. The accounts of violence in this era, often written decades after the events, are revealing not only for their remarkable detail, but for the ways in which their own ideological needs—and the wounds of those traumatized—shaped the narratives. “Local” histories, such as A.T. Andreas’s voluminous *History of the State of Kansas* (1883) and Noble Prentiss’s textbook-style

History of Kansas (1899) present a triumphalist version of the past which celebrates Kansas's contribution to the ongoing expansion of human freedom and seek to establish stability in the collective memory. When the information in these kinds of works is read against the grain, however, stories inflected with self-righteousness often enter into a terrain of indeterminacy that betrays a deep anxiety and blurriness about whether the civilized self has been subsumed into the savage other. At these moments of intrusive violence, there was actually a stark undoing of the very foundations of a self-consciously civilized and righteous self, and moral distinctions could be rendered inoperative. Traumas, large and small-scale, could seem to merge so that in remembering them, Kansans believed their identity was at stake, in an existential sense.

The dimensions of these multifaceted traumas are visible first in the expulsion of Native groups from their previous lands to Kansas. This forced migration to the newly formed Kansas Territory was actually a *second* removal experience for many of the residents. Just as they had been treated as a barrier to unbridled white expansion into the former Northwest Territory in the first decades of the 19th century, the same groups, after being removed to Kansas, were blocking a crucial corridor for railroads that would theoretically allow the new continental empire to realize a tangible sense of full embodiment through a unified attachment to that project. The story of this removal is often excised from narratives of Bleeding Kansas, but it is important to preface an understanding of the continued, post-1854 fraud and expropriation of land that occurred during the territorial era.

Before the Kansas region became a target of primary importance to white Americans, it witnessed a contest between established Native groups that included the Kaws (Kansa), Osages, and Pawnees. Beginning in the late eighteenth century and throughout the early nineteenth century, eastern tribes such as the Iowas, Missouri Sacs, Shawnees, Delawares, and Kickapoos,

who had been more deeply influenced by exposure to Europeans and Americans, moved into the region. Better weapons and greater immunity to European diseases like smallpox made the new Native settlers able to fight off the older residents of the region.³⁸

Official land cession negotiations and movements of eastern tribes into the Kansas region began in 1825 when William Clark, the former co-leader of Jefferson's imperial Corps of Discovery, secured permission from the Kaw and Osage to give up their lands and make way for the Delawares, Piankeshaws, Weas, Peorias, and Miamis, who all gave up their eastern claims. Some Potawatomis scouted out new locations in Kansas on official government visits during the John Quincy Adams administration, but the great new Native migration to Kansas began in earnest during the Jackson administration, especially after the white settler paranoia that resulted from the Black Hawk War of 1832. Clark persuaded leaders of the Prairie and Vermillion Kickapoo to move to Kansas late that year. Many of the Potawatomis agreed to leave their territory in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana in exchange for land just across from the border from northwest Missouri, but the agreement was amended when Missouri decided to annex the region. Some Potawatomis moved to Iowa, some joined the Kickapoo near Fort Leavenworth, and others moved further south along the Marais des Cygnes River.

One holdout group in Indiana, led by Chief Menominee, claimed that the treaty negotiations were fraudulent and deceptive, with permission received through the use of liquor or outright ignoring of his wishes. Although Chief Menominee predicted that President Van Buren "would not by force drive me from my home, [or] the graves of my tribe and children, who have gone to the Great Spirit," Old Kinderhook sent troops to escort the group to Kansas on August

³⁸ Joseph B. Herring, *The Enduring Indians of Kansas: A Century and a Half of Acculturation* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 13-14.

29, 1838.³⁹ The Sacs and Iowas, according to historian Joseph B. Herring, had a “much less traumatic” experience in the cession process, agreeing to move during meetings with Clark at Fort Leavenworth in September 1836.⁴⁰ One could say the Civil War era dramas of home invasion in Kansas had its root in these forcible evictions of what might be called the “first removal” that loomed in *these* Kansans’ recent past.

Although the Natives who were bribed, induced, or forced to go to Kansas were often told they were coming to a permanent home, developments of the 1840s and early 1850s would make that an ever more shaky promise. During the 1840s, the area was part of a vast central plains region that stood as an obstacle to cross country travelers en route to Oregon, California, Utah, or destinations in the future American Southwest. Soldiers deployed to the front during the Mexican War often crossed the territory from 1846 to 1848. Travelers often stopped, rested and resupplied at Fort Leavenworth, founded in 1827 and taking on greater importance as the eastern end of the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. The growth of the fort paralleled the early wave of Indian relocation from the old American Northwest. Fort Scott (1842) and Fort Riley (1853), as well as the various Indian missions that had been established on new reserves, provided points of white and Native contact and established settlement footholds in the territory. Scattered entrepreneurs made a living by operating ferries for overland travelers or doing business with Indians, with or without permission from the American government. The view of Kansas to embody “the West” was yet to come.

³⁹ Herring, 18-25.

⁴⁰ Herring, 25.

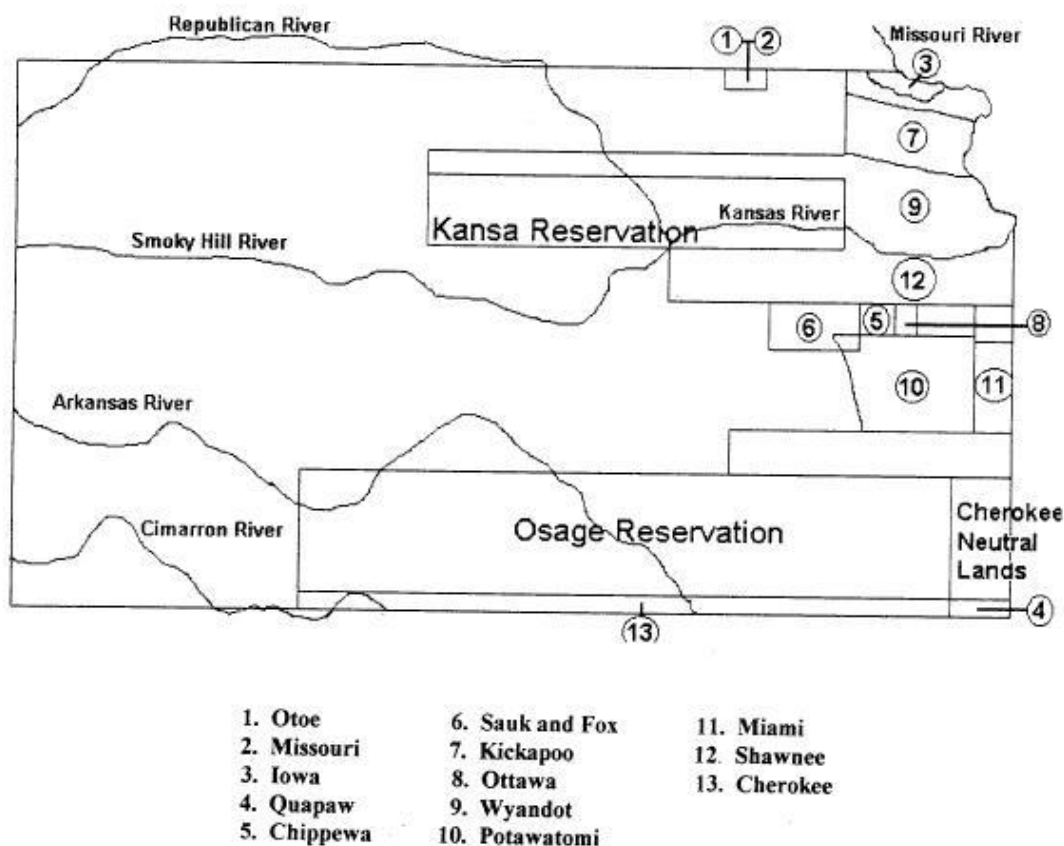


Figure 1: Map of modern Kansas showing land reserved for Native groups in 1846, prior to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which resulted in severe reductions in land holdings and a second wave of removals for many Kansas Indians. Emporia State University. Center for Great Plains Studies. www.emporia.edu. Retrieved July 17, 2014.

The Kansas region was also significant in the expanding American empire for its potential as a central rail route. Thomas Hart Benton, a U.S. Senator from Missouri known for his imperial boosterism and property-seizing shenanigans as a real estate attorney, was intent on making St. Louis a future western railroad hub. On May 6-7, 1853, he gave speeches in the Missouri border towns of Kansas City, Westport, and Independence in favor of building a Pacific railroad that would run through Kansas.⁴¹ In February 1853, a report showed that a private company was planning to build a railroad bridge over the Platte River to ease the journey of

⁴¹ Louise Barry, *The Beginning of the West: Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West 1540-1854* (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 1150.

California travelers, of which there had been many by 1853. The California gold rush and boom heightened the significance of Kansas as a conduit to the West. The army appropriations act for 1853-4 included \$150,000 to be set aside to employ a portion of the corps of topographical engineers and others to make explorations and surveys “to ascertain the most practicable and economical route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.”⁴² Although the first transcontinental route would eventually be built through the future Nebraska Territory due to the rise of Chicago’s prominence and the failure of St. Louis to complete its own railroad, plans were certainly in progress to secure Kansas’s importance to the construction of a continental empire before it was an organized territory.⁴³ Benton’s vision for Kansas was part of a cosmopolitan dream of a passage to India—not yet as a place where American empire would coalesce.⁴⁴

One way that Benton attempted to engineer the development of the Kansas region in his own image was by misrepresenting Native ownership with the help of Shawnee-Wyandot Abelard Guthrie and a mapmaker named Mr. Eastin, who produced a map that did not show specific boundaries and claims of the eastern tribes who had arrived from 1825- 1847. The map created a rift between Benton and Bureau of Indian Affairs director George Manypenny, who at the time supported existing Indian land claims and believed that he was tricked into sanctioning the map. Benton responded to Manypenny’s criticism by negatively casting him as a tool of rival

⁴² Barry, 1141-2.

⁴³ Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 71-79. Arenson includes a poignant account of the Gasconade railroad disaster, a famous crash during the first train trip between St. Louis and Jefferson City, Missouri on November 1, 1855. The failure of this project, along with territorial strife and the Civil War, prevented construction of a direct line from St. Louis to the Kansas line until after the war.

⁴⁴ See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950).

Missouri senator and rising proslavery ideologue David R. Atchison. Benton claimed that the two were conspiring to prevent free soil settlement of the region while they hatched a proslavery design for the West.⁴⁵

The conflict between Benton and Manypenny showcased how regional politics, which would be deeply influenced by the forthcoming Kansas-Nebraska Act, were intertwined with the Native lands issue. In the coming year, however, it seemed that perhaps the slavery issue was not as immediately important as proving that white settlers had the power to squat on Indian lands illegally. There existed a strong school of thought, adhered to by prominent policy makers such as presidents Jefferson and Jackson, that contended that Indians and whites simply could not live together. Given the choice between protecting the rights of Indians or white settlers, most Americans were greatly offended if an official like Manypenny chose the side of the foreign “other.”

In addition to the racial bias against the possibility for Indians to create viable homes in Kansas, commercial interests often made white officials reluctant to perform their duty to offer a semblance of protection for Natives against squatters. A popular strategy for squatters and land speculators involved invading Native lands like the Delaware Trust, making rudimentary “improvements,” demanding protection from political enemies (like “border ruffians”), then sitting and waiting for an overwhelmed Indian Bureau to clarify the claims. Waiting only enhanced white claims to the land, since early possession was increasingly accepted as proof of righteous ownership. Squatters were also reinforced by numerous other squatters doing the same thing. This process was also aided by “executive indecision” and “military inaction,” in the words of historians H. Craig Miner and William Unrau. Both elements can be traced to

⁴⁵ H. Craig Miner and William E. Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), 8-9.

speculation on the part of soldiers, such as those at Fort Leavenworth who were legally obligated to expel white squatters, and commercial interests of politicians like Kansas's first territorial governor Andrew Reeder, who "speculated in half a dozen territorial towns that were located on Indian land."⁴⁶ These conflicts of interest almost invariably led to biased, selfish decision making and rulings against Native Americans.

Another intriguing vignette that shows how some people thought of Kansas's present and possible future importance is that of the supposed election of a U.S. congressional delegate in the fall of 1853. On September 20, a political meeting took place at Kickapoo village that nominated Rev. Thomas Johnson of the Shawnee Methodist Mission to be a territorial delegate. The meeting also resolved that Congress should organize the "Nebraska" territory as quickly as possible, although not without the prior extinguishment of Indian land titles.⁴⁷ Since most of the participants in this meeting were affiliated with the Indian mission system, it is likely that they wanted to have a say in how the land would be redistributed and the fate of Natives in the area. After the October 11 election, Rev. Johnson and a man named Hadley D. Johnson both claimed victory and traveled to Washington, DC, where they both tried to take a desk in the House of Representatives. According to Johnson's memoirs, the two would-be delegates were "incontinently bounced" from the House of Representatives" and "relegated to the galleries."⁴⁸ The self-ascribed importance and presumptuousness of the men foreshadowed later Kansans' bold attempts to draw national attention to the West.

While it is not surprising that the Johnsons were not seated, considering the men were elected by a territory that did not yet exist, it shows that the region was quickly evolving from an

⁴⁶ Miner and Unrau, 15, 22.

⁴⁷ Barry, 1179.

⁴⁸ Barry, 1184.

obstacle or a passageway to points west, to a destination. Overland traveler and publisher George S. Park commented to this effect during a trip from Parkville, Missouri to Fort Riley (near present day Junction City, Kansas) during October 1853. He wrote, “This is the centre of a country belonging to the U.S., on the direct central route to the great States and Territories lying west of the Missouri, a region of unsurpassed fertility, and the most picturesque and beautiful scenery.” In the same account, Park said that the soldiers at Fort Riley did not have orders to drive settlers off United States lands, only to prevent trespasses on Indian lands. He continued, “We saw Pioneers making claims, and met others who had axes, and full equipments to make claims. They were all highly pleased.”⁴⁹ Identifying the land as fertile and pointing out the cooperation of soldiers and squatters showed that the region was no longer only being passed through, but rather part of a larger plan for America’s expansionary imperial future. Even the euphemism “pioneer” invites readers to forget illegal incursions of settlers and focus instead upon the bravery and energy required to master new lands.

The arrival of squatters complicated the situation in Kansas greatly. Squatters and settlers increased the urgency of negotiating new land deals with the existing Indians in the Kansas region. Most narratives about the Kansas troubles in the territorial period, more concerned about the forthcoming sectional violence, do not take into consideration the removal or reshaping of Indian land ownership that occurred at the same moment that the settlement rush began. While the story of the slavery and free soil contest begins to dominate the way scholars assess the region in 1854, it is crucial to understand how the problems of slavery and empire coincided. On March 24, 1854, the Office of Indian Affairs released a statement on the number of Indians in eastern Kansas. According to this report, there were a total of 17,550. The largest group was the

⁴⁹ Barry, 1183-4.

Osages at 4,941. Pottawatomies numbered 4,300, Sac and Fox of the Mississippi were 2,173, Kansa stood at 1,375, and Delawares 1,132.⁵⁰ Of course, classification and knowledge such as that represented by this census is not free from power relationships. The census was almost certainly part of a plan to decide what kind of concessions would be necessary to manage native populations and open their lands for white settlement.

One of the main Indian management policies of this era involved convincing Native groups to give up collective land claims in exchange for much smaller, individually-held allotments of land. In the spring of 1854, as Congress debated and negotiated the details of the Kansas-Nebraska Law, representatives of the various Native groups in Kansas trekked to Washington, DC to work out new land ownership agreements. On April 21, 1854, representatives of the Iowa, Sac and Fox of the Missouri, and Kickapoo tribes went to Washington with Indian agent Daniel Vanderslice. According to an account by Indian trader Benjamin Harding, “As soon as Vanderslice left, many [persons] flocked over [from Missouri] and made their claims by laying a foundation for a cabin and writing their names on a tree nearby, and now [May 27] there is not a grease spot left unclaimed within my knowledge; and still claim hunters are passing daily. After thus locating their claims most of them go back and are now awaiting the results of the treaty.”⁵¹ It appears that these squatters had a mixture of confidence in government support of their attempts to “release their creative energy” through early action and a healthy contempt for treaties concerning Indian land ownership.⁵² On May 8,

⁵⁰ Barry, 1196.

⁵¹ Barry, 1202.

⁵² See James Willard Hurst, *Law and the Conditions of Freedom in the Nineteenth Century United States* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), 6. Hurst asserts that the purpose of the legal order in the nineteenth century was to “protect and promote the release of individual creative energy to the greatest extent compatible with the broad sharing of opportunity

Reverend Jotham Meeker of Ottawa Baptist Mission wrote, “Learn that many White families are breaking over the rules of the Government, and are actually settling and opening farms within from 12 to 15 and 25 miles from us.” Meeker also commented on June 1 that word had reached the area about the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and that there were a lot of squatters in the area. By June 17-18, there were whites settling along the Ottawa boundaries and selling liquor to them.⁵³

The treaties negotiated between the various Native groups and the U.S. government usually did not provide for complete extinguishment of land ownership or removal of the people living there. For example, when the Delawares ceded their lands on May 6, 1854, they kept a tract of 275,000 acres, “39 sections previously sold to the Wyandots,” as well as their interest in the Delaware “outlet,” with compensation to five chiefs of \$10,000 split into \$250 annuities.⁵⁴ The treaty seemed fair on paper; when paired with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act later that month, Indian lands should have been safe unless specifically altered by new treaties.⁵⁵ However, while there was a legal statute preventing settlement on Indian lands dating back to 1807, squatters were accustomed to being rewarded for their exploits, and they came to expect, and received, the aid of government officials. Interior Secretary George C. Whiting wrote in response to squatting on Delaware lands (the land that would soon become the city of Leavenworth), “Indeed, so frequently has Congress enacted laws for the protection of persons who have settled on the public lands, prior to such settlements being authorized by law, that the

for such expression.” Because of this, squatters could expect to be supported for their actions over speculators and especially Indians.

⁵³ Barry, 1212.

⁵⁴ Barry, 1212.

⁵⁵ Miner and Unrau, 13.

Act of 1807 has long since been lost sight of or regarded as obsolete.”⁵⁶ The growing empire ostensibly reproduced democratic institutions in the West, but majority rule most often resulted in de facto denial of nonwhite land interests, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act furthered this process.

George Manypenny responded to the Delaware land debacle by writing, in part, “With reservations dotting the eastern portion of the Territory, there they stand, the representatives and remnants of tribes once as powerful and dreaded as they now are weak and dispirited.”⁵⁷ In this statement, Manypenny foreshadowed the long-enduring story of white conquest of Native peoples, which centered on the notion of disappearance and withering, which is implied heavily by the word “remnant.” In reality, however, numerous concrete, intentional policies were implemented by the U.S. government to speed that supposedly passive “disappearance.”⁵⁸ His choice of the term “dispirited” seems particularly fitting, and though his connotation is meant to show weakness, there is a connection to the sentiment expressed by Chief Menominee in 1837 about the spiritual trauma of separation from homeland and family members.⁵⁹ To be “dispirited” in a Christian context would mean eternally separated from God—in essence, condemned to Hell—so Manypenny’s description of the effects on the Natives was in no sense trivial.

⁵⁶ Miner and Unrau, 15.

⁵⁷ Miner and Unrau, 15.

⁵⁸ See Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Rockwell’s main point is to emphasize the massive bureaucratic and logistical effort of the U.S. government necessary to undertake its evolving Indian policy through phases of pacification, removal, and containment.

⁵⁹ The pairing of the works by Miner and Unrau and that of Herring showcases a scholarly conversation about how to discuss supposed Indian “disappearance.” Miner and Unrau’s work is thoroughly detailed regarding the policies of the U.S. government that exploited and manipulated Native groups during this period. Herring presents his work as a corrective, focusing on the Natives who resisted the pressure to leave Kansas after the establishment of the territory.

One cannot help wondering how the United States government identified “chiefs” or other representatives willing and able to sign these land deals. The practice of finding leaders who would sign agreements favorable to the U.S. government had been a key disagreement that had led to the Black Hawk War in the early 1830s, and it was also a problem among leaders of the Prairie Band and Vermillion Kickapoo, who implied that permission was given by leaders who did not follow the wishes of the tribe at large.⁶⁰ In one of the Kansas land cessions, white missionary David Lykins, who was called an “adopted” member of the tribe, was included among the signing party when the Kaskaskias and Peorias and the Weas and Piankeshaws ceded their lands in Washington, DC. Considering his inclusion in the “Native” signing party, it is not surprising that the treaty included 640 acres set aside for the American Indian Mission Association to create the Wea Baptist Mission.⁶¹

So what is the connection between squatters, Indian land cession, and Bleeding Kansas? Indian removal was central to the physical shaping of Bleeding Kansas and the construction of the narrative of westward expansion. The long-accepted story of the “disappearing Indian” took shape in early histories of Kansas. A.T. Andreas’s extensive compilation of local histories, statistics, and biographies, published in 1883, is particularly telling. He described the Natives as the “half civilized and half-disheartened tribes, retiring or retreating before the ceaseless flow of the mysterious tide of civilization.” Andreas would have had readers believe that the process was natural, as a reference to the “ceaseless flow” of the “tide” suggests. By labeling it a natural process, it relieved the responsibility from white settlers for the active role they took in driving most of the Indians from Kansas. Perhaps Indian removal seemed benign to historians like Andreas because of the lack of widespread territorial violence between Natives and white settlers

⁶⁰ Herring, 19.

⁶¹ Barry, 1218.

compared to other frontier regions like Ohio, Georgia, and Florida in earlier decades. Later, he privileged the struggle over slavery as the more important human conflict, writing, “They in time, were swept from the field, to clear it for a momentous conflict between the two opposing systems of American civilization, then struggling for mastery and supremacy over the Republic. In Kansas the war was begun; and there the first victories, presaging the full triumph of Liberty, were won.”⁶² Although he recognized the free state cause as the more righteous one, he identified both free soil and slavery as “systems of American civilization” that superseded the concerns and the lives of the “half civilized” Natives. With this characterization, it makes sense that the conquest of the Indians would be easily imagined out of the historical record.

Noble L. Prentis’s turn of the century *History of Kansas*, which long stood as the official textbook for the state’s public schools, was even more dismissive of the Native past, to the extent of bordering on contempt. Though written with an often celebratory tone regarding emancipation and the incorporation of black migrants into Kansas, in his assessment of the prehistory of the state, he wrote, “The story of (Indian) wars, and huntings, and migrations, has little interest to civilized people. When they moved away from Kansas and from the earth, they left nothing except mounds of earth, rings on the sod, fragments of pottery, rude weapons and ruder implements. They fought each other, disputed possession with the wild beasts, were stricken down with fell diseases, but their history never became of interest or importance to the world,

⁶² A. T. Andreas. *History of the State of Kansas. A full account of its growth from an uninhabited territory to a wealthy and important state; Of its early settlements; Its rapid increase in population and the marvelous development of its great natural resources. Also, a supplementary history and description of its counties, cities, towns and villages, their advantages, industries, manufactures and commerce; To which are added biographical sketches and portraits of prominent men and early settlers.* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883. Reprinted, 1976), preface (unnumbered).

because they did nothing for the world.”⁶³ In this striking passage, Prentis echoed Andreas’s categorization of the Natives as uncivilized, erased the intentionally managed dispossession of Native lands by whites in 1854, ignored the close ties between whites and many of the Kansas Indian groups, and showed that there was nothing left intact from the process. “Fragments” of pottery imply a broken, lost culture, much in the way that George Manypenny identified only “representatives” and “remnants” of the eastern emigrant tribes as surviving the second removal. The near annihilation of the actual people, certainly, as visible nations, made their annihilation from memory easier.

The evidence of the past was all around the Kansas settlers. It was in the names of the lands opened for settlement by the Indian land cessions, such as the Delaware Land Trust, the Cherokee Reserve, and the Shawnee Mission. It was in the intertribal violence that sprang up before, during, and after the organization of the territory and the fallout from those conflicts. In a history of outlying Waubensee County published in 1901, there is an anecdote about an Indian conflict during the Civil War. The county historian Matt Thomson wrote that in the spring of 1863, about 1,400 Kickapoo warriors camped on the present-day site of William Horne’s orchard on their way to fight the Cheyennes. When they returned, there were many sick and wounded. Thomson wrote, “The Kickapoos buried several Indians near the spring and on several occasions since that time, in plowing, William has turned up such gruesome relics as skulls and other parts of bodies that were buried too near the top of the ground in 1863.”⁶⁴ As with other histories discussed earlier, Thomson’s refers to Indians only as remnants or fragments. In this case it is “parts of bodies” that, while a curious “relic” of an earlier era, do not call for any kind

⁶³ Noble L. Prentis, *A History of Kansas* (Winfield, KS: E.P. Greer, 1899), 31.

⁶⁴ Matt Thomson, *Early History of Waubensee County, Kansas, with Stories of Pioneers Days and Glimpses of our Western Border* (Alma, KS: Matt Thomson, 1901), 321.

of serious discussion about Indian removal or the Kickapoo conflict with the Cheyennes. This treatment of Native American history also shows how remembering blood sacrifice in the name of creating a unified national past and attaching people to a common present and future was denied to Native Americans who had had territorial struggles not unlike the ones white settlers would have with each other in the coming years.

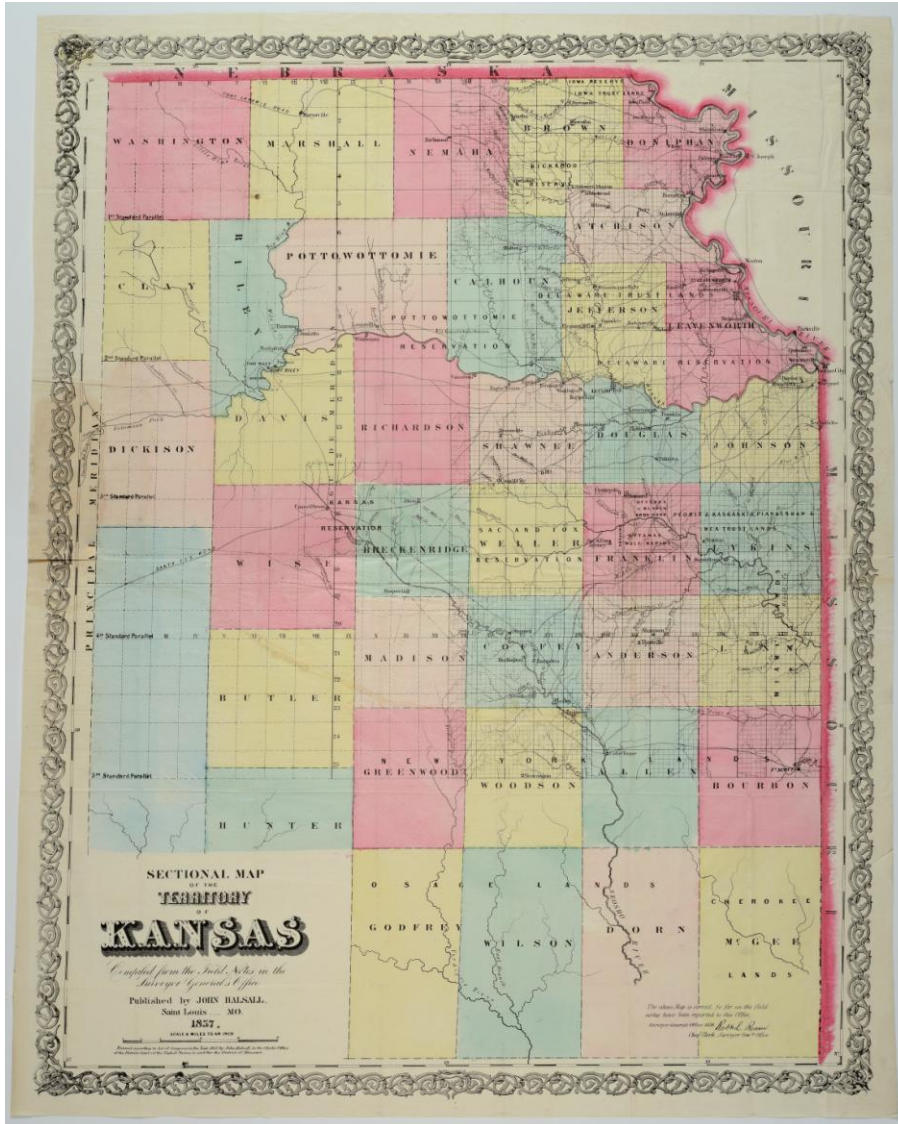


Figure 2: John Halsall's 1857 Sectional Map of Territorial Kansas, showing establishment of first five bands of counties and smaller divisions of land. Lines are inscribed over Native American land holdings. Locations of forts, missions, and trails are identified. Wichita State University Libraries. Department of Special Collections. A Collection of Digitized Kansas Maps. specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/maps/. Retrieved April 29, 2014.

Squatting, by definition, implies a kind of precarious existence, or risky extralegal means of procuring a home. From the observations of outsiders, it appears that the early settlers who invaded Indian lands without permission were the same ones who were quite willing to resort to violence to protect their new possessions. In fact, a long history of American Indian removal and frontier violence helped prepare squatters to endorse violence and annihilation of an enemy other in order to protect their property; the taking of land is not a far step from the taking of bodies. In local historian William Ansel Mitchell's account of a kidnapping and home invasion undertaken by proslavery settlers, the witness commented that "the frenzied mob surrounded the house of a free-state man and committed outrages that were worse than any ever recorded against savage Indians." They found a family in the house, including a sick young man with his parents and sister attending him. They mixed all the medicines together and made the sick man drink it, then beat the dad senseless with the butts of their rifles. The witness added, "The crimes that followed are too foul for record."⁶⁵ Whoever was telling this story must have believed that there was a degree of extra seriousness attached to outrages worse than those committed against Indians. In other words, outrages against Indians were at least understandable, if not justified, due to the "savageness" of the enemy, whereas outrages against whites showed a complete disregard for human civility.

The first squatters' associations were formed within a week of the passage of the Kansas Nebraska Act. Public meetings at Westport and Independence, Missouri were held on June 3 and 5, 1854 with the intention of protecting proslavery settlers. One of the very early free state settlers, the lawyer Samuel N. Wood, recalled in his memoirs, "The Pro-Slavery men from

⁶⁵ William Ansel Mitchell, *Linn County, Kansas: A History. Written to give and preserve the more intimate knowledge of incidents of world-wide importance and marking an epochal period in the history of the human race* (Kansas City, MO: Campbell-Gates, 1928), 59.

Missouri had met in Kansas and adopted a code of squatter laws, and the whole Territory seemed staked into claims. They had a register of claims, with an office at Westport, Missouri. One law of this remarkable code provided that Nebraska was for the North and Kansas for the South. One provision was, that every white-livered abolitionist who dared to set foot in Kansas should be hung.”⁶⁶ On June 10, three miles west of Fort Leavenworth, in Salt Creek valley, about 300 people met to form a “Squatters’ Association” for the regulation and protection of land claims. Among the numerous resolutions passed were “(1) That we are in favor of *bona fide* squatter sovereignty. (8) That we recognize the institution of slavery as already existing in the territory, and recommend to slaveholders to introduce their property as fast as possible. (9) That we afford protection to no Abolitionists as settlers of Kansas territory. (10) That a ‘Vigilance Committee’ of thirteen be appointed by the chairman to decide upon all disputes in relation to claims.”⁶⁷ The idea of a formal squatters’ association with legal statutes is interesting, considering the ways in which squatters flouted existing laws which were meant to prevent them from jumping Indian land claims. Considering the prevailing attitude toward the Natives as an uncivilized other, which shows through in the legal and de facto removal process and the historical record, it is not surprising.

These kinds of statements, with all of their bombast and vitriol, have captured the imagination of scholars as evidence of a deep chasm between pro and antislavery settlers. While this was true in many cases, it is also important to remember how the long history of the Indian removal process prepared settlers for a “no quarter” treatment of their perceived enemies. Historian Kristen Oertel has shown how the “defense of whiteness” animated conflicts in Bleeding Kansas and contributed to an imperial subjugation of peoples. As it pertained to native

⁶⁶ Barry, 1220.

⁶⁷ Barry, 1226.

groups, Oertel writes, “missionaries, Indian agents, and settlers agreed that removal to reservations and/or ‘civilization’ and total assimilation via intermarriage with whites would best serve both Indian and Anglo needs. Because some Indians refused to change on their own, they would have to be exterminated, moved, or physically infused with white blood.”⁶⁸ The language of annihilation through various means flowed freely and interchangeably through the contest over westward imperial expansion as white settlers increasingly sought to create a fully embodied nation in Kansas and, at the same time, manage the ever present differences among peoples.

It is altogether fitting that the squatters who formed the protection company considered slavery to be legally entrenched from the signing of the Kansas Nebraska Act. Missionaries and soldiers sometimes had slaves migrate with them and perform labor during the pre-territorial period.⁶⁹ Leander Kerr, for example, served as the chaplain of Fort Leavenworth from 1842-1859. A slave owner who also employed slaves from other Missouri owners, Kerr wrote a 36-page “lecture” called *Slavery Consistent With Christianity*, which first appeared in 1840. The pamphlet was updated in 1842 and 1853, the latter having a seven-page introduction that included “a notice on the ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ Movement in England.” The lecture was described by the author as “a public defence [sic] of the Institution of Slavery on the word of God.”⁷⁰ Chaplain Kerr remained a controversial figure during the Bleeding Kansas era of 1854-58.⁷¹ His stance as an outspoken supporter of slavery while serving as religious leader of a western fort provides evidence of a *proslavery* attempt to give the West full embodiment by sanctifying slavery’s attachment to associations and institutions of average citizens.

⁶⁸ Oertel, 133.

⁶⁹ Oertel, 39.

⁷⁰ Barry, 1171.

⁷¹ Barry, 460.

As to how Kansas fit into the picture of nationalistic American growth in the 1850s, we must remember that the battle over Kansas Territory's status as free or slave was not simply an organic outcome of westward expansion. The decision to make Kansas a battleground was a conscious one undertaken by Southern imperial strategists in a period of diminishing opportunities to expand the borders of the American slave empire. Southerners in the national government tried to get official support for filibusters to take over countries outside of the borders of the United States. Though he eventually exceeded his support and was executed in Central America in 1860, William Walker had set the standard for audacious filibustering missions when he and a group of proslavery adventurers briefly "liberated" parts of northern Mexico in 1853. Just before the organization of the Kansas territory, John Quitman tried to organize a group of southern filibusters to conquer Cuba and incorporate it into the American slave South. President Franklin Pierce did not think he had the political capital to pursue two missions to expand slavery, so he chose to concentrate on continental expansion via Kansas.⁷² Kansas became an all but apocalyptic symbol to all sides in what was perceived as a new political world of consolidation that had replaced an earlier one of relative boundlessness.

Understanding the way in which Kansas became a contested site for the expansion of slavery helps to preface the desperation that marked the Bleeding Kansas era. As I stated earlier, the Kansas-Nebraska Act transformed the region from an obstacle to a destination for white American migrants. Americans who had an interest in the "new West" strove to re-imagine Kansas as a new potential center to the growing continental empire. Controlling that center in the name of slavery or freedom made the contest crucially important to the immediate future of the United States.

⁷² David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1976), 185-9.

By saying this, I am arguing against two aspects of the conflict that could detract from the significance of this moment. First, it is true that the “body count,” to borrow a twentieth century term, of territorial Kansas violence was not overwhelming. It was certainly miniscule in comparison with the forthcoming Civil War battles that would kill and disfigure thousands in a single day of fighting. Though the people of the Bleeding Kansas generation would witness these horrifying scenes, they, of course, did not know that the Civil War would expand to such an unimaginable extent. My argument is that Bleeding Kansas was traumatic due to the intimacy of its violence, the contradictions that the need to subjugate peoples in order to rule Kansas posed for American freedom, the persistent worry that the quest to embody empire in Kansas could lead to disunion and collective and individual annihilation, and the long life of this early phase of the national conflict in American memory. In other words, Bleeding Kansas came to symbolize a turning point in American history for those who witnessed it, and collective memory of the era served a means for addressing the wounds created by it.

As a corollary to this argument, I contest the characterization of Bleeding Kansas as mainly a struggle over land acquisition that had little to do with the slavery or sectional issues.⁷³

⁷³ This interpretation is implied by David Potter in *The Impending Crisis*. He argues, “The great anomaly of ‘Bleeding Kansas’ is that the slavery issue reached a condition of intolerable tension and violence for the first time in an area where a majority of the inhabitants apparently did not care very much one way or the other about slavery. The evidence is clear that an overwhelming proportion of the settlers were far more concerned about land titles than they were about any other public question. . . . Thus, the issue of slavery was perhaps not the basic source of division between the ‘proslavery’ and ‘antislavery’ parties in Kansas. But if it was not crucial in producing friction, it was certainly crucial in structuring and intensifying the friction,” 202-203. Nicole Etcheson’s work on Bleeding Kansas urges scholars not to ignore slavery, certainly, but she frames the conflict as one over the rights of free white men and their differing interpretations of the legacy of American freedom. In a roundabout way, however, the battle over slavery in Kansas resulted in the eventual expansion of liberty to African Americans. Gunja SenGupta’s *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) cites northern antislavery

Had there been no sectional struggle over the settlement of the West, there would have been no Kansas-Nebraska Act with its inherently problematic stipulation of “popular sovereignty.” While it is true that not all settlers were pro or antislavery zealots who came to Kansas purely to secure the area for their own cause, I believe the long life of the conflict in the public imagination is enough to justify the primacy of that conflict as the driving force behind Bleeding Kansas. There were moderates in Kansas and many settlers who did not particularly care about slavery, but the centrality of that issue forced these moderates to adopt a more extreme position after exposure to violence or threats of violence.⁷⁴ This need for moderates to choose sides in Kansas after spring 1854 was what defined the political situation there as revolutionary.

In order to demonstrate the degree to which Bleeding Kansas was framed as a traumatic struggle, recollections and firsthand accounts are especially useful. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that recollections were produced to tell a certain version of events, often years after they happened. Even if there are inaccuracies, these stories are still instructional for demonstrating how collective memory is shaped through the present needs of historical actors. For example, Franklin G. Adams, who migrated to Kansas as a settler in 1855 and became heavily involved in the free state movement, was particularly interested in preserving his own and other memories of the period. His experiences during Bleeding Kansas inspired him to take an active role in the formation and management of the KSHS twenty years later, in 1875. In his reminiscences late in life, he recalled that the summer of 1856—probably the bloodiest year of Bleeding Kansas—was one of bitter political strife, when the “proslavery element in and around Leavenworth were especially active in their efforts to drive the free state settlers out of that

as a key national motivating factor, but it was the free soil version of antislavery rather than Garrisonian abolitionism that drove northern outrage.

⁷⁴ Napier, 54-57.

locality—at times not stopping at downright murder to accomplish this result.” He went on to describe how settlers disembarking from steamboats arriving in Kansas were interrogated about their beliefs on the slavery issue and not allowed to land if they had free state sympathies. These same people were also frequently robbed of their possessions and put on a steamboat headed out of Kansas Territory.⁷⁵ In these instances, it did not seem to matter whether settlers had strong feelings about the slavery issue or simply wanted to settle and build a new home. The inquisitors on shore forced the settlers to choose a side immediately.

Daniel R. Anthony was a free state settler from Massachusetts who arrived with the help of the New England Emigrant Aid Society, fought in the Civil War with strong abolitionist sentiments, and spent many years as a newspaper editor and elected official in Leavenworth. He was particularly interested in preserving the memory of Bleeding Kansas, even briefly serving as head of the Kansas Historical Society, and he wrote several stories about the early days of Leavenworth. He shared one story about a man named David Peterson, who arrived in Anthony’s hometown of Leavenworth in 1856. On a trip from Ft. Riley to Kansas City, his wagon train was overtaken by Jefferson Buford’s proslavery gang. The wagon was permitted to leave, but Peterson and another unnamed man from Michigan were taken prisoner. Peterson’s parents were “abolitionists of the most uncompromising type” and not knowing any better, he made this well known to Buford’s gang. The unnamed Michigander was taken out of the wagon, and the captors tried to force him to sign a paper. Buford then ordered the man to be shot and his body dragged away from the road. Peterson recalled hearing “the poor wretch pleading for his life.” Afterwards, Anthony wrote, “Peterson was subjected to every indignity, from which he bears the scars to this day. He was knocked down and beaten, his left side and hip being horribly

⁷⁵ Franklin G. Adams collection, Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) Folder 1.11, 6

bruised, his jaw broken, and his face stamped all out of shape.” The young man was taken to Westport where he was placed in a log cabin and expected to be hanged the next day, but to his luck the guards got drunk and Peterson was able to escape out the chimney of the cabin.

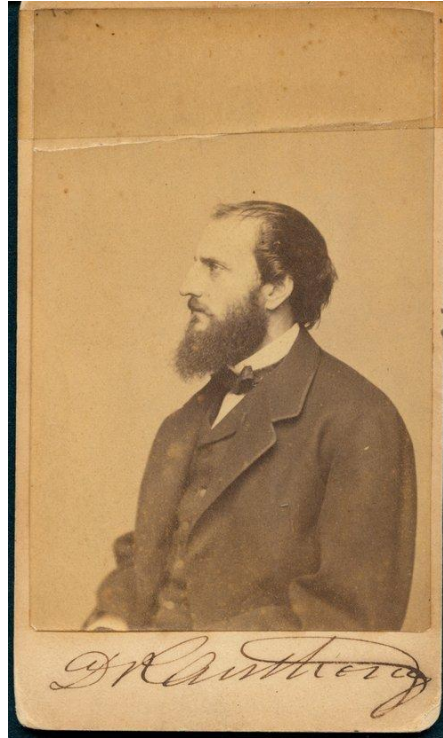


Figure 3: Daniel Reed Anthony (1824-1904). He came to Kansas Territory in 1854 as part of the New England Emigrant Aid society and had a long, successful career in newspaper editing, publishing, and politics. Serving in the Civil War, he was relieved of his duty for refusing to allow slave owners to reclaim their human property in Union camps. In later years, he helped shape and maintain the emancipatory element of the Kansas Spirit. He was also the brother of suffragist Susan B. Anthony. Kansas State Historical Society. Kansas Memory. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/221895>. Retrieved April 28, 2014.

Anthony placed this event within the expansionary context of the time, comparing the behavior of the ruffians to the Natives Americans in Kansas who had recently been targeted for removal. He wrote, “After enduring great hardships he managed to reach the village of the Wyandotte Indians. The untutored savages proved kinder than their white brethren who made pretense to civilization. They kept Mr. Peterson secreted, dressed his wounds, fed him and nursed him until he had recovered.” Peterson returned to Northern Illinois, as he preferred it to

Kansas “as it was in the border ruffian days.”⁷⁶ Anthony, the brother of suffragist Susan B. Anthony, was famous for his strong opinions, and in this case he was keen to point out the contradictions of the local and national struggle over Kansas. Whether or not he believed that the Wyandottes were “untutored savages,” they served as a means for inverting the narrative that white American settlers told themselves about the virtuous players in the imperial game.

The William Phillips episode, which also occurred in Leavenworth, showed how enemies wanted and needed to create an enemy “other” as they struggled over the new territory. Phillips was famously tarred and feathered, sold at a mock slave auction to a black man for a few cents, and rode out of town on a rail by a proslavery mob thinking they were ridding the town of this now visible foreign element. Disobeying the banishment, however, Phillips returned and became the target of “Bloody Monday” in September 1856, which was a plan to drive all of the free state settlers out of Leavenworth. A Leavenworth resident named Henry J. Hunt described what happened in a letter from 1888. He wrote that a mob led by the proslavery sheriff Green I. Todd came to Jared Phillip’s house, where he was boarding and protecting his brother William. When William saw the mob outside, he went right out the front door to face it. “He carried his rifle in his hand,” Hunt wrote, “but before it had been the means of sending a single ruffian to a waiting hell, a volley of slavery bullets had stretched brave William Phillips dead upon the porch—shot down like a dog, the victim of lawless malice.” Jared Phillips stayed in the house, and Sheriff Todd leaned in the window and shot at him, the bullet hitting his arm and requiring amputation. Hunt explained, “And for years after Jared Phillips carried around the mute reminder of the most brutal act which ever disgraced humanity.”⁷⁷ The tragic events surrounding the Phillips brothers are remarkable for both antagonists’ willingness to cast the other side as subhuman, be it through

⁷⁶ *The Daily Times* (Leavenworth) August 16, 1881.

⁷⁷ *Leavenworth Times*, February 5, 1888.

tar and feathering, the ensuing mock slave auction, and Hunt's revealing comment that Phillips was "shot like a dog." Sheriff Todd violated the putative sanctity of the Phillips home and the ability of these men to define and defend the boundaries of their domestic space by leaning in the window to shoot Jared, leaving him, like no few other victims of Bleeding Kansas violence, disfigured and emotionally scarred.⁷⁸

Another free state resident, Pardee Butler, had multiple run-ins with the proslavery element of Leavenworth and became acutely aware that there were people determined to exterminate the opposition. In a series of articles about the Bleeding Kansas era written in 1881, Butler tried to recreate the violent atmosphere in the town. He reprinted portions of the proslavery *Squatter Sovereign* from July and August 1855. One article called its readers to action, explaining, "We cannot feel safe while the air of Kansas is polluted with the breath of a single free-soiler. We are not safe; and self-preservation requires the total extermination of this set. Let us act immediately, and with such decision as will convince these desperadoes that it is our fixed determination to keep their feet from polluting the soil of Kansas."⁷⁹ This statement is particularly telling because it pairs the necessity of exterminating enemies with the existential panic of self-preservation or annihilation, as the stakes of the moment. This theme is common in this era of expansion on the violent boundaries of empire. Repeatedly, as the United States grew and encountered or created "others" not deemed to fit into a particular conception of the nation, an inability to accommodate or accept the other became stark.

⁷⁸ See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the South Carolina Low Country* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1995) for a detailed discussion of antebellum southern thought regarding definitions of public and private space and the inviolability of the male-controlled domestic domain.

⁷⁹ *Atchison Weekly Champion*, June 11, 1881.

Of his own expulsion from Kansas on August 16, 1855, Pardee Butler wrote that a few ruffians came into his office and demanded that he sign a list of resolutions about punishing and exterminating abolitionists. He refused it and went outside, where a mob was gathering. They asked again if he would sign, and he said no. He explained later that he wanted there to be witnesses to whatever happened. After standing on a stump for about two hours debating the content of the resolutions, he got tired of it and said the time for talk was over. A caucus of the mob went off to decide what to do with him. Some favored hanging him, but a dentist from Lexington, Missouri named Peebles said Butler was not an abolitionist. "Gentlemen," Peebles said, "you must not hang this man. He is not an abolitionist. He would not steal our niggers." Peebles argued that Butler was a free soiler who intended his attacks on slavery to be kept within legal means; therefore he did not deserve to die. In order to make an example of him and expel him from the territory, they decided to send him down the Missouri River on a raft.

When Butler returned to Leavenworth, he was luckily not shot on sight as William Phillips had been. This time, he was captured by a mob of South Carolinians who proposed to hang him, but they were stopped by a "Virginia gentleman" who convinced the others to commute the sentence to 39 lashes and tar and feathering (with cotton substituted for feathers). The whipping was cut out of the punishment and Butler was ridiculed and sent out of town again. He remembered, "One little Sharp-visaged, dark-featured, black-eyed South Carolinian, as smart as a cricket, and who seemed to be the leader of the gang, was particularly displeased. 'Damn me,' he said, if I am come all the way from South Carolina, and have spent so much money, to do things up in such a milk and water style as this."⁸⁰ This anecdote appeared in an 1881 newspaper during a time when statewide prohibition of alcohol was a popular topic, so the

⁸⁰ Atchison *Weekly Champion*, June 25, 1881.

characterization of the South Carolinian disparaging the “milk and water” business of lenient punishment makes the implicit argument that proslavery settlers were immoral for their stance on temperance as well as human bondage.

Clearly, an important aspect of the Bleeding Kansas traumas was that of extralegal mental and physical violence, as well as revenge. Many of the famous incidents during this period reveal the deeply-divided, often contradictory character of American expansionary society. Settlers murdered each other in the name of “law and order.” They assaulted homes, families, and women while purporting to uphold notions of honor and chivalry. The most well-known single event of the era was the Pottawatomie Massacre. This planned murder, which resulted in the deaths of five proslavery settlers in late May of 1856, brings many of the key issues of Bleeding Kansas into sharp relief. Primarily, the involvement of John Brown made the event stand out. Brown’s enigmatic personality fascinated people at the time and after his later exploits at Harper’s Ferry, his actions in Kansas spurred further inquiries. But it is important to remember that John Brown of 1856 was not the national figure he would become in 1859. In 1856, he made a name for himself through intensely local, intimate encounters. Several of John Brown’s sons had preceded him in coming to Kansas. His son, John Jr., had formed a self-defense organization called the Pottawatomie Rifles, and the elder Brown’s arrival and appointment as “Captain” of the group heightened the intensity of the antislavery struggle.

Samuel Shively, who lived with his parents in the “immediate neighborhood” of the Browns and their victims during the Bleeding Kansas years, shared a detailed account of the Pottawatomie killings in a speech to the KSHS in 1903. The way he remembered it, in a manner that villainized free state enemies from decades earlier, during the days preceding the massacre, the proslavery settlers became quite bold in their threats and violence against their rivals. After

Brown's group had gone to Lawrence to fend off the potential sackers, they received messages that "their women had been threatened by the most vicious of the proslavery men." A young woman named Mary Grant was, in her own words, threatened by "Dutch Bill" Sherman, who was later killed by Brown's group. John Grant, Jr. was a member of John Brown's "Pottawatomie Rifles" and was working in the fields with his father when Sherman approached. Mary was twenty-three years old and described as "one of the best-looking and best-educated girls on the creek; the family [was] from New York."⁸¹ Sherman, "with a whisky bottle with a corn-cob stopper and an immense butcher knife in his belt," apparently came to the Grant household and drunkenly said to John and Mary's mother, "Old woman, you and I are pretty good friends, but damn your daughter—I'll drink her heart's blood."⁸² From this, we can see the close ties between perpetrators and victims of the Kansas violence and threats to male household heads' ability to protect dependents. The Grants were not randomly selected by Sherman, but rather familiar neighbors who on some level had seemed to share an affinity.

The Grant-Sherman episode is emblematic of some of the contradictions brought about by the Bleeding Kansas trauma. The most obvious one is the puzzling willingness to kill the daughter of a "pretty good friend." On a deeper level, however, Sherman breached protective boundaries by invading the household and taking advantage of the fact that Mary's father was ill and unable to protect his family; too ill even to use a shotgun placed by his bedside. The description of Sherman's "immense butcher knife in his belt," which he would presumably use to

⁸¹ "The First Two Years of Kansas," An Address by George W. Martin, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, (Topeka, KS: State Printing Office, 1907), 22.

⁸² Another version of this story claims that Sherman's threat was, "I will cut your head off so quick that you will see your own heart's blood." See William E. Connelley, *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, Vol. 1* (Chicago, IL: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), 579.

slice open Mary's body and "drink her heart's blood" presents a particularly grotesque combination of intimate contact and implied sexual violence.⁸³

Shively recalled that the entire Pottawatomie affair was fraught with familiarity, claiming, "a great many of the free-state settlers on the Pottawatomie were from Missouri and other slave states, and well knew the men and methods they had to deal with. The free-state men there, too, were Westerners, and had that Western disposition not to take any more than they had to."⁸⁴ There are claims that Brown was acting preemptively based on covert interviews he had performed with proslavery settlers who had arrived with Jefferson Buford. He supposedly went to their homes disguised as a surveyor and asked the men what they thought of the Browns. When he found out that the men planned to eliminate the Browns in the near future, he felt justified in ordering their extermination or others who had aided them. Shively's account seems to corroborate this possibility. He shared an anecdote about a notice seen by John Brown's brother-in-law Orson Day in a shop in April, 1856 which read, "This is to notify you that all free-state men now living on the Marais des Cygnes and Pottawatomie must leave the Territory within thirty days or their throats will be cut.—LAW AND ORDER."⁸⁵ Day expressed his lack of consent with the order to the shop owner, who was in full support of the throat cutting, as that was how they did it in Texas.⁸⁶ This deeply personal threat—one must physically subdue enemies in close contact in order to cut their throats—was far from legal or orderly and further illustrated the inversion of conventional norms within the traumatic parameters of Bleeding Kansas.

⁸³ W.A. Mitchell, 70.

⁸⁴ W.A. Mitchell, 72.

⁸⁵ W.A. Mitchell, 73.

⁸⁶ Connelley, 579.

Regarding the particulars of the Pottawatomie Massacre, Shively claimed that the free state people near the Doyles (the first family killed) on the Pottawatomie were in hiding when Brown's party went on their mission. They went to one residence to ask directions to the Doyle home, but the resident was gone into hiding, perhaps anticipating preemptive or retributive violence from either side.⁸⁷ Next, they went to the actual home of the Doyles. Shively claimed that Brown's original intention was to capture the proslavery settlers and hold a trial, but James P. Doyle tried to run away and was shot by the elder Brown. Two of James Doyle's sons, William and Drury, were also killed. Matilda Doyle told the congressional committee sent to investigate the Kansas troubles—whose findings are sometimes referred to as the Howard Report—that Brown's men would have killed her 16-year-old son John if it had not been for her emotional pleading.⁸⁸ After Brown was tried and convicted, Matilda sent a letter that was apparently read to him, in which she wrote: "You can't say you done it to free our slaves. We had none, and never expected to have; but it has only made me a poor disconsolate widow with helpless children. While I feel for your folly, I hope and trust you will meet your just reward. Oh, how it pained my heart to hear the dying groans of my husband and children!" She added a postscript explaining that her son John was now grown up and wished to be in Charlestown (Virginia) to view the execution, and would be willing to place the noose around Brown's neck if

⁸⁷ McGlone's biography shares the information that Salmon Brown claimed that the party was driven away by a rifle barrel that was shoved through a small gap in the wall of the first cabin. His work is thorough in its assessment of disparities among the accounts of Pottawatomie. He agrees, overall, that the Browns were responding to a tangible threat, calling the incident "the climax of local quarrels, a preemptive strike in a clan vendetta" 128.

⁸⁸ McGlone, 118. See also *Kansas Affairs, Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Troubles in the Territory of Kansas*, 34th Cong, 1st Sess., 1856, H. Rept. 200, serial 869.

Governor Wise would allow it.⁸⁹ This request never came to fruition, however, and the deep sense of loss that Matilda Doyle experienced likely plagued her for life.

A man named Allen Wilkinson, who was a minor political official and a local postmaster during the time of the “Bogus Legislature,” was the next person killed by Brown’s group. Shively explained that Wilkinson “would often misplace the mail and destroy the newspapers belonging to free-state men.”⁹⁰ Before taking her husband out of his home and killing him, Mrs. Wilkinson claimed that the Brown party asked her where they might find Thomas McMinn, who had sat on a proslavery jury.⁹¹ The final house that Brown and his men visited was that of Henry Sherman, who was not home. Mrs. James Harris was at the house and greeted the visitors warmly, as she was expecting to be cooking for some of Jefferson Buford’s men. Once she found out who the men really were, she fled to warn Henry Sherman and a man named George Wilson. The Brown party questioned James Harris and decided to spare him, but ended up killing Henry Sherman’s brother, William Sherman, who had recently threatened to drink Mary Grant’s blood.⁹²

In a statement justifying the entire set of actions, Shively stated, “This was the first free-state victory. It was turning the other cheek. It protected the home and families and saved the lives of many free-state men. From this time John Brown became known to every one—admired by friends and feared by enemies.” He added, “No armed ruffians from the South ever came to that settlement again,” implying that by using home invasion tactics in the name of self-defense,

⁸⁹ *The Liberator*, Vol. 29, No. 50, December 16, 1859.

⁹⁰ W.A. Mitchell, 73.

⁹¹ McGlone, 118. McGlone explores other possible outcomes of the night of the Pottawatomie affair. He refutes Samuel Adair’s account of the event which claimed that Brown’s group was enacting retributive justice in the vein of “an eye for an eye.” McGlone believes that McMinn and Henry Sherman were marked for death, which the group left open the possibility of killing others if they were deemed a threat during brief interviews.

⁹² W.A. Mitchell, 75.

Brown acted out of commitment to a higher good.⁹³ One of the traumatic elements of this vignette is that way that notions like “law and order” and “turning the other cheek” could again be inverted to embody their opposites in an environment like Bleeding Kansas. Home protection became home invasion. A promise to slice the throats of political enemies if they did not leave the territories was hardly rooted in any kind of law or order. Nor was a preemptive killing of political enemies representative of “turning the other cheek,” which would seem to imply nonviolent resistance and forgiving one’s enemies. This is the kind of inverted logic that emerged from the existential panic of survival in an imperial border, where violence in a holy war became a kind of ultimate self-affirmation, transcending all contradictions. Shively also demonstrates how attempting to shape collective memory into a positive experience could be a response to the gap left by traumatic territorial episodes.

James M. Montgomery, the famous Jayhawker, was understandably a target of the opposition during his residence in Linn County, which bordered Missouri. Local historian William A. Mitchell wrote a series of stories in 1895 about “Historic Linn,” the site of so much border strife. Beginning with an anecdote from a Mr. Sibbett, who had interviewed John Brown and then spent the night with Montgomery and his family. The house had one room and a comfortable bed on the main floor. Trying to be polite, the guest offered to sleep in the loft, but Montgomery said they had never slept there, “and showed Sibbett that the wall had been perforated with bullets which had also gone through the bed in search of Montgomery.”⁹⁴ This anecdote provides an example of the threats to the intimate realm of the people involved—although not as intimate as face-to-face encounters. In this case, the bullets penetrated protective

⁹³ W.A. Mitchell, 73-6.

⁹⁴ *La Cygne Journal*, April 1, 1895.

boundaries, becoming home invaders and seeking out Montgomery and his family in their most private spaces while also creating a figurative broken home.

Home invasions were terror inducing tactics that were regular features of the institution of slavery along with other traumatic actions like rape and brutal physical punishment. In her courageous account of these aspects of slavery, Harriet Jacobs detailed the aftermath of the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831, during which white residents of Edenton, North Carolina were mustered into militia-style groups, then set loose on black homes, ostensibly to root out evidence of future rebellions. Jacobs explained, “The dwellings of the colored people, unless they happened to be protected by some influential white person, who was nigh at hand, were robbed of clothing and everything else the marauders thought worthy of carrying away. All day long these unfeeling wretches went round, like troops of demons, terrifying and tormenting the helpless.”⁹⁵ Similar tactics were employed in Bleeding Kansas in order to intimidate and subjugate enemy others.

The 1858 Marais des Cygnes Massacre also provides a strong example of the period’s traumatic dimensions. The chief plotter of the massacre, Charles A. Hamilton, a Georgian who settled on the Kansas-Missouri border, was described as a man “who had sixteen negroes and lived in a pretentious manner. He had a race track and entertained the neighboring gentry with racing.”⁹⁶ Frustrated by the settlement of free state families in the border region, Hamilton amassed a group of supporters—who had been driven out of the Fort Scott area by

⁹⁵ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself, with Related Documents, Edited and with an Introduction by Jennifer Fleischner* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), 88-89.

⁹⁶ *La Cygne Journal*, April 12, 1895.

Montgomery's Jayhawkers—to ride into the Marais des Cygnes region on May 19, 1858.⁹⁷ Much like the John Brown raid two years earlier, Hamilton seemed to have some specific targets in mind while leaving room open to capture extra victims or let some potential victims free. One of the first people Hamilton's group captured was Rev. B. L. Read, who shared his account of the episode in a letter written January 18, 1859. According to Read, the group traveled the area, taking some men from their homes and others along the road. Eli Snyder and others at his home were able to fend off the attackers with rifles, wounding Hamilton and at least one other man in the process.⁹⁸

Another unsuccessful kidnapping took place at the home of Samuel Nichol.⁹⁹ According to local reminiscences, when Hamilton's gang approached Nichol's house, Hamilton dismounted, and with two revolvers and armed sidekicks he walked into the room where Mrs. Nichol sat sewing. They demanded Mr. Nichol, but she told them he was away, which was true. Hamilton apparently refused to believe it, though, and one of his men began climbing up into the loft to search, and in doing so knocked a heavy clock down on the Nichols' baby girl in a cradle. Mrs. Nichol screamed in alarm at this, to which gang member Aaron Cordell responded by putting his revolver against her and said 'Howl, damn you, howl!'¹⁰⁰ The Nichol family was no stranger to home invasions; it was reported that Samuel had been targeted during the Clarke raid in 1856.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Edward E. Leslie, *The Devil Knows How to Ride: The True Story of William Clarke Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders* (New York: NY: Da Capo Press, 1996), 20.

⁹⁸ *La Cygne Journal*, July 5, 1879.

⁹⁹ Sometimes spelled "Nickel" in the records.

¹⁰⁰ *La Cygne Journal*, May 31, 1895.

¹⁰¹ *La Cygne Journal*, April 12, 1895.



Figure 4: Artist John R. Chapin’s rendering of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre in May 1858. Eleven free state settlers were forcibly taken from their homes and marched to a ravine where they were shot at close range by Charles Hamilton and his followers. Many of the followers had been driven out of the area by the Jayhawker James M. Montgomery, and they sought Hamilton’s aid in planning a revenge mission. Kansas State Historical Society. Territorial Kansas Online, 1854-1861. www.territorialkansasonline.org. Retrieved April 28, 2014.

After forcibly captivating a few more men, for a total of 11, the men were ordered to march, halt at a ravine, descend into it, and form a line shoulder-to-shoulder. Hamilton ordered his mounted men to take aim, but the affair was paused when a man named Samuel Brockett, who had allegedly killed a free state man named Isaac Denton earlier, refused to carry out the orders and left the party, saying he would not have anything to do “such a God damned piece of business.”¹⁰² Hamilton allowed Brockett to leave and then ordered his men to fire. Read recalled that all of the men fell at the same time. Some were killed instantly and some were wounded. Austin Hall was not hit but fell with the others, and upon seeing the “hue of death” on the face of William Colpetzer, decided to feign death, which he did successfully. Seeing that not all of the men were killed, some of the Hamilton gang entered the ravine and shot those still living once

¹⁰² *La Cygne Journal*, July 5, 1879. See also Harvey R. Hougen, “The Marais des Cygnes Massacre and the Execution of William Griffith,” *Kansas History* Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1985): 78-9.

again. Read claimed that a man named Hullard told the assassins to put their pistols in the ears of the undead and pull the trigger. Amos Hall miraculously avoided death a second time when his would-be assassin fired point blank into his cheek, nearly severing his tongue. Even this shot was not fatal, however, and Hall spit out the bullet after the ordeal.¹⁰³

Further illustrating the trauma suffered by loved ones, some of the captured men's wives provided accounts of their thoughts and actions on that day. Mrs. Read followed the Hamilton party at a distance after she learned that her husband had been taken. Samuel Brockett told Mrs. Read that she should not fear for her husband's life. She went to the Colpetzer home where three wives of captured men had gathered. Mrs. Robinson said that the Hamilton party told her husband that they only wanted to talk to him, and Mrs. Colpetzer said that the men had told her that her husband would not be hurt. Mrs. Read continued to track the party and heard the gunshots that killed and wounded the men. Before discovering the victims, she had face-to-face encounters with some of the Hamilton gang, who sheepishly gave back the Reads' pony and evaded her questions pertaining to the whereabouts of the men. She finally found the group of victims and recognized her husband's voice among them. She recalled, "When he raised up his head, blood was oozing from his mouth and running from his wound profusely. O, what a sight! Eleven strong men shot down by the ruthless band of pro-slavery ruffians, and there they lay in the grass among the rocks, the hot sun beating down on their poor, mangled, bleeding bodies."¹⁰⁴ Death on a distant battlefield or hospital was common after the Civil War expanded to a national conflagration, but scenes such as this in the early phases of the conflict presented family members with the shocking experience of viewing their mutilated loved ones personally in mass

¹⁰³ *La Cygne Journal*, May 31, 1895.

¹⁰⁴ *La Cygne Journal*, July 12, 1879.

executions that violated Victorian conceptions of a good death, and the proper care for the body at death.¹⁰⁵

Mrs. Read was certainly traumatized by the scene she witnessed in the bloody ravine, notably in the way that she commented on the desacralization of the human body through the reduction of “strong men” to “poor, mangled bodies.” She comforted herself somewhat in empathetic sentiments for the women whose husbands were dead, but she also connected the episode to the larger national trauma that bred the Marais des Cygnes affair. She commented, “I thought of those poor wives and children who had yet to learn the fate of their husbands and fathers, and I thought, too, of those poor slave mothers and wives, who have their children torn away from them by the ruthless hand of the oppressor. O slavery! How much sorrow and anguish dost thou cause!”¹⁰⁶ These commentaries are notable for the way that they foreshadow a kind of empathetic acceptance of former slaves in Kansas after the war due to a recognition of common blood sacrifice. It is also notable that Mrs. Read gave this account in the midst of the great exodus of freed people from the South who were finding their way to Kansas that same summer, showing perhaps that troubling memories might be made less burdensome by accommodating new black residents in Kansas.

The wife of William Stillwell, one of the five men killed in the massacre, returned to Kansas in 1897 and visited the Marais des Cygnes, by now a well-established “site of memory,” with M. M. Stearns, who recorded her reminiscences of the event.¹⁰⁷ She remembered that

¹⁰⁵ See Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 3-31.

¹⁰⁶ *La Cygne Journal*, July 12, 1879.

¹⁰⁷ See Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux des Memoire,” *Representations*, No. 26 (Spring, 1989): 22. In the course of distinguishing between memory and history, Nora claims that memory has increasingly been minimized and reduced only to specific “sites.”

settling in the area came with a high degree of danger, “for war was in the air and forever a threat of the ‘Wolves of the Border’ and their depredations.” Her worst fears came true when her husband was taken on the morning of May 19th, and she claimed, though not a spiritualist, that she heard a wail in the air above her not long after. “Ah, my poor Will,” she said, “and yonder his mangled body fell, as near as I could learn, at the time I heard that wail. Oh! The days I had to live through, the kindness of strangers; the last look at the dear face, for they brought him to bury at Mound City for my sake. How vivid the memory of it all.”¹⁰⁸ Like Mrs. Read, Stillwell was indelibly struck by the image of the “mangled body” of her husband as a tragic reminder of the nation’s own violent rupture that was rehearsed in Bleeding Kansas.

The Marais des Cygnes Massacre also had a deep influence on John Brown. After the killings, he stepped up his efforts in the area to liberate slaves across the border in Missouri. His famous “parallels,” a written statement that appeared in the Lawrence *Republican* in January of 1859, were a response to the fact that while he liberated fourteen slaves and the perpetrators of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre kidnapped eleven and killed five men, the state of Missouri and the federal government made no attempt to seek out the perpetrators of the massacre but put up a cash reward for Brown.¹⁰⁹ Through his missions across the Missouri border, he wrote, “eleven persons were forcibly restored to their natural and inalienable rights,” with only one person killed, and the whole weight of the Missouri government and a promise of the Kansas governor to capture the perpetrators in this “dreadful outrage” had been issued.¹¹⁰ Even though Brown had a valid point in his negative assessment of the American justice system—he had saved eleven people while Hamilton and his men had captured and planned to kill eleven—it was precisely the

¹⁰⁸ Linn County *Republic* (Mound City, KS) May 28, 1897.

¹⁰⁹ Prentis, 84

¹¹⁰ W.A. Mitchell, 223.

same lapse in judicial enforcement that allowed him to get away with the Pottawatomie killings two years earlier.

A man named Arvoy Thomas lived in Linn County and was part of a relief party that came to the aid of the Marais des Cygnes victims. He was described as so poor that he was barefoot and did not have enough clothes even for the warm summer weather. The proslavery people tried to bully Thomas out of the area; a man named Hayes, who claimed to be a justice of the peace, trumped up a charge that he owed \$40. A proslavery posse came to visit and decided to take his yoke of cattle. Mitchell explained, “Just at this juncture, Mrs. Arvoy Thomas appeared with a kettle of boiling water and a dipper and a liberal application of it soon sent the posse away without the cattle.” Perhaps embarrassed at having his wife defend the home and property, Arvoy Thomas decided to go settle the matter face to face with Hayes. The self-proclaimed lawman was “celebrated for his profanity and his assaults on people with a big Bowie knife. As Thomas approached him at (the town of) Brooklin to settle his account, Hayes began abusing him and finally said he would ‘cut the heart out of the abolitionist,’” Thomas then pulled a knife of his own and said if he wanted to settle it that way, he would oblige. Hayes backed down and in the spirit of compromise they decided on a \$2 fee and no more posse visits. Soon after though, Thomas got wind that his enemies were once again after him, and he took his family and left forever.¹¹¹

Another episode of a home invasion and threat to the intimate domain showed that gender roles could be inverted in Bleeding Kansas. Pardee Butler related a story from Atchison County of an abortive raid on the home of Caleb May in the summer of 1856. The group of about forty ruffians got close but heard the home was defended, so they left. Some of the party then showed

¹¹¹ *La Cygne Journal*, May 31, 1895.

up at the home of Archimedes Speck and demanded to be let in. Jim Adkins of Atchison said he was there to see Speck, and thinking it was a neighbor named Adkins, the women prepared to let him in. Mrs. Speck said, “There are only three women of us here alone, and when we have time to dress ourselves, so we can be seen of strangers, we will strike a light.” In the mean time, the door was barricaded with chairs and tables. While changing, Miss Martin (her brother had gone with Mr. Speck to help defend Caleb May’s house) screamed that her arm had been wounded. When a lamp was lit, it was discovered that the open windows were full of bayonets, one of which had wounded Miss Martin. Despite this, the women still opened the door for Adkins. He tried to force his way in, but Mrs. Speck grabbed his sword and got it halfway out of the scabbard, and he gave up his revolver. When he looked under the bed, Mrs. Speck said, “You may be very sure my husband would not hide under the bed, and send his wife to talk to such a man as you are.” Adkins came back with some others to get Mr. Speck, but again, they could not defeat his wife. They tried to take a Sharp’s carbine, but as Butler tells it, “Then Mrs. Speck went to her bed and took out a shot gun, and leveling it at Adkins, said: ‘Put that gun down, sir, or I will shoot you.’ Putnam interposed, and offered to give a receipt for the carbine; ‘No, it must be left.’”¹¹² Mrs. Speck’s statements and actions show that she wanted to stand up for her husband’s patriarchal role while at the same time taking on the masculinist role of the defending the household. Not only was she willing to resort to deadly violence, but she called out her invader for his own breach of the laws of civility.

Bleeding Kansas was just a beginning to the national trauma of the Civil War. In this relatively short period, however, Americans came face to face with the contradictions of their growing empire. While some people were quite willing to countenance extermination of the

¹¹² Atchison *Weekly Champion*, August 13, 1881.

enemy other as a method of self-preservation, others likely realized that such actions truly threatened their own self image. This was no doubt the case for Samuel Brockett, who refused to shoot the captured men in the ravine. Some of the witnesses speculated that Brockett was a Free Mason and refused to shoot when he saw William Stillwell put up his hands in a Masonic sign of panic or emergency. It was also recorded that Dr. John Peter Hamilton, brother of the massacre's leader, was the one who shot Stillwell. In this era, the decision whether to kill one's neighbor, indeed, one's "brother," in the name of self-preservation could make for a traumatic experience.

Even though the extreme, cyclical violence associated with that era had been quelled by the end of 1858, securing freedom was hardly a foregone conclusion in Kansas. The larger Civil War would, from the Northern perspective, provide the opportunity to carry through the promise of expanding a continental empire free from slavery, but that would be balanced by the risk of breaking up the country. The multifaceted traumas of territorial Kansas were transformed and expanded as the nation at large struggled over whether it would have a unified or separate future. Either option potentially necessitated a massive blood sacrifice. In this violent struggle, Kansas had a special role due to its short but potent history. The imperial contest over Kansas and the West continued to be waged during the war, and the legacy of related subjugations was quite apparent. Indians who had experienced removals had to choose sides, and while some fought with Kansans for the Union cause, more fought against Kansans for the Confederacy. Kansas attracted many self-emancipated blacks who believed that the state would give them an opportunity not only to live freely, but to fight directly for the preservation and expansion of a free Union. And of course, the bitter memory of the home invasions and border struggles would continue to seethe and explode in episodes of intimate retaliatory violence throughout the Civil War. Kansas began to fix its place in recent American memory as a place of intense traumatic

struggle. How its residents and new arrivals would manage that effects and memory of that struggle remained uncertain.

Chapter 2:

Bleeding Kansas Begets a National Blood Sacrifice in Pursuit of Homes

Even before Kansas officially joined the Union as a free state on January 29, 1861, there were state leaders who boldly claimed that the wounds of the recent traumatic past had been overcome. When William Seward, who had famously challenged proslavery southerners to a contest of wills over the settlement of Kansas Territory in 1854, visited Lawrence in late September 1860 to campaign for Abraham Lincoln, Charles Robinson welcomed him to a “Kansas Free to grace your triumph, with a Constitution adopted by her people without a strain of slavery to mar its beauty.” He continued, “The clouds that have so long darkened our political horizon are fast dispersing southward, and victory is marching upon victory throughout the entire north.”¹¹³ Though Robinson anticipated that struggles over slavery would mature into a larger national conflict, he believed that Kansas at least had been secured from the threat of

¹¹³ Charles Robinson’s Speech Welcoming William Seward. Lawrence, Kansas, September 26, 1860. KSHS. Territorial Kansas Online, 1854-1861. www.territorialkansasonline.org. Retrieved June 21, 2009.

expansionary slavery. The “occasional collision of arms in Kansas” that he mentioned briefly had given way to more peaceful commercial pursuits such as agriculture and husbandry, a familial-based economic system with strong ties to secure homes.

Despite Robinson’s early attempt to argue to the contrary, the multifaceted traumas of Bleeding Kansas did not disappear with the state’s acceptance into the Union. Even with slavery nominally dead in “free” Kansas, the traumatic aspects of the territorial period were reshaped by wartime conditions. Various groups continued to struggle with the threat of displacement and homelessness while simultaneously fighting for the continued existence of the United States. Border raiding and home invasions became more widespread during the war, and with greater intensity. Whereas the Pottawatomie Massacre and the burning of Lawrence’s “Free State Hotel” had drawn great attention during the spring of 1856, larger breaches of protective boundaries such as William Quantrill’s sack of Lawrence in 1863 showed that intimate violence and revenge became an increasingly popular method for physically and mentally traumatizing enemies.

The enduring legacy of Bleeding Kansas in the Civil War was also apparent in the extent to which Kansans proved their mettle as the newest free state by sacrificing more Union soldiers than any state by percentage of population. This statistic, often-repeated by Kansans in later years, was a testament to their commitment to the northern cause. This commitment to take up arms and potentially sacrifice their own blood was shared by Kansans already present at the beginning of the war and those who were drawn to the state during the war. John Brown, Jr., for example, continued the work that his family had begun during the 1850s by gathering fellow antislavery soldiers in Ohio and Michigan and coming to Kansas intent on destroying the institution by enlisting in the Union army. The Civil War in this way contributed to the preexisting notion that Kansas played a special role as a moral guide for the rest of the nation and

bore a responsibility to follow through on the tenuous victory over proslavery enemies during the territorial period.

It is important to recognize the multiple possible outcomes and imperial dimensions and implications for Kansas's Civil War experience. The state was undeniably a borderland throughout the war, with only 107,206 residents in 1860 and 140,079 in 1865, with most of those residing in its northeastern corner.¹¹⁴ Most of western half of the state had not been organized into counties. The formation of the present border between Kansas and Colorado—Kansas Territory had stretched to the peaks of the Rocky Mountains—had not occurred until Kansas became a state, and the mere definition of that line did not give white Americans instant control of the vast western plains region, as mid-Civil War battles with Native Americans on the plains showed. As a mid-19th century imperial borderland, Kansas was often viewed through the lens of a civilizationist hierarchy, where those who could potentially control the area imagined themselves as civilizers and enemies as savages, in a shared dynamic that transcended circumstances of race, ethnicity, or national loyalty. The breakup of the Union into two nations during the Civil War complicated the subjugation and future colonization of the West. Both the Union and the Confederacy sought to control the fate of the region while fearing and resisting domination by a tyrannical foreign entity. Historian Eve Trout Powell explores a similarly complicated triangle of colonialism between Great Britain, Egypt, and the Sudan, a state which Egyptian nationalists imagined as being within their sphere of influence until Egyptian power was superseded by the British in the late 19th century.¹¹⁵ Like the Sudan, the American West was viewed as a prize ripe for the hegemonic influence of either imperial southerners or imperial

¹¹⁴ Andreas, 306.

¹¹⁵ Eve Trout Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 68.

northerners. Both white northerners and southerners imagined themselves as the ideal dominant group in the West, and the Civil War played a large role in determining how less powerful groups of people like blacks and Native Americans would be included or excluded from that future.

As the war evolved from a contest nominally to preserve the Union into a remorseless crusade against slavery, Kansas became acutely important for recently enslaved African Americans who sought the state as a new home to exercise freedom and, for many men, to fight directly for a revolutionary Union victory. These aspects of the war marked a profound expansion of the meaningful issues that had been raised during the territorial era. When Kansas Territory had been organized in 1854 and settled shortly thereafter, the majority of free state settlers had imagined that statehood should be realized with a provision for excluding free blacks.¹¹⁶ By 1861, the congressionally ratified version of the state constitution had abandoned the call for black exclusion and provided the opportunity for newly-arrived black residents to make a claim for their own home in the West. While there were key white leaders with abolitionist sympathies who welcomed and praised the new arrivals for their success in this endeavor, blacks often met strong resistance from white leaders who clung to a deeply-entrenched belief that free blacks would be better off if they were removed from the United States and given a chance to realize the blessing of civilization in a colony of their own, preferably in a tropical climate. Put simply, black Kansans during the Civil War faced the possibility of death at the hands of Confederates who vowed to take no black prisoners, as well as the prospect of being removed from the Union they had fought to sustain by white leaders trying to enforce unity in the new empire. Their success in the face of such adversity added an

¹¹⁶ Napier, 53.

element of biracial unity to the “Kansas Spirit” that was born in the territorial era. The moral triumph of the free state cause received further ratification via the Union victory in the Civil War and would be invoked and shaped as a kind of regional nationalism and a call to action on other issues in later generations.

A vestige of the territorial period that continued to cause problems for both perpetrators and victims during the war was the issue of Indian removal. Kansas statehood and the concurrent onset of the war forced a reckoning between white government officials and the various Native American groups still in Kansas. As the Union dissolved and the loss of life mounted, Kansas Indians were being assessed for their adaptation to “civilized” lifestyles. Leaders and other tribe members who were willing to acculturate to European styles of dress, agriculture, language, religion, and education and accept individual allotments of land in exchange for giving up the large majority of previously held lands were usually allowed to remain in the state. “Uncivilized” adherents to older customs were forced to leave. Even holdouts like Mississippi Sac and Fox leader Mokohoko and his small group of followers, who were largely accepted by their white neighbors in Osage County, were forced to move to Indian Territory in 1886 after long battles with the postwar government. Like black Kansas U.S.C.T. troops, Kansas Indian troops were used in the Union army, but their sacrifice did not become an integral part of the Kansas Spirit and translate into a solid argument for a home in the state in the way it did for blacks. Setting such struggles side by side showed the ongoing problem of traumatic expurgations and removals of people in a growing empire wrestling with the problems of unification *and* managing the politics of difference. The tenuous claim to civilization maintained by the dominant white officials was often blurred in the removal process much like other attempts to create order out of the chaos of Civil War Kansas.

William Seward's aforementioned visit to Kansas included stops in Lawrence, Atchison, and Leavenworth. At these places, he drew large audiences, both for his prepared statements and in at least one case, an extemporaneous speech. Seward's remarks represented a deep engagement with Kansas's recent history and continuing importance to a nation staring down the possibility of disunion. In Lawrence, he said that it was the fulfillment of a great desire of his to see Kansans "in their own homes and in their own houses." Securing a homeland was on the minds of his audience, and Seward knew it. He reminded listeners that the pivotal battle between freedom and slavery had been fought in Kansas, adding, "If you had been false, slavery would have swept along through the Indian Territory, Texas, and the whole of the country, including the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean."¹¹⁷ Two days later, in an impromptu speech from a hotel balcony in Leavenworth, Seward again reflected on Kansas's importance to the American empire, emphasizing the new state's position halfway between two oceans and looking forward to a future when the United States would be the sole power on the North American continent.¹¹⁸ To an audience in Atchison, he went so far as to stake his own reputation to the success of Kansas, which was then in the midst of a yearlong drought. He said:

I have faith in the complete success of your system, and in the prosperity and development of the State of Kansas; I have it for the most obvious reason, that if Kansas is a failure my whole life has been worse than a failure; but if Kansas shall prove a success—as I know it will—then I shall stand redeemed, at least in history, for the interest I have taken in the establishment of civilization on the banks of the Missouri upon the principles and policy which you have laid down.¹¹⁹

Seward's speech is rich with the foundational tenets of the "Kansas Spirit," a long-lasting, yet malleable idea that Kansans were leaders on national, moral issues beginning with the state's

¹¹⁷ *The Campaign of 1860 : Comprising the Speeches of Abraham Lincoln, William H. Seward, Henry Wilson, Benjamin F. Wade, Carl Schurz, Charles Sumner, William M. Evarts, &c* (Albany, NY: Weed, Parson, and Co., 1860), 51-2.

¹¹⁸ *The Campaign of 1860*, 46.

¹¹⁹ *The Campaign of 1860*, 47.

active stance against the expansion of slavery. With the proper moral grounding, Seward argued, material success would follow. To illustrate this point, he claimed that Missouri had weakened its power by favoring slavery over freedom, thereby setting up Kansas to guide the development of the West.

Seward's use of the idea of redemption is particularly notable, for it implies forgiveness for past wrongdoing. Dating back to the revolutionary era, the United States had opportunities to settle the slavery issue, and Seward wryly recounted how a long list of compromises had "settled" the problem but in reality exacerbated it. And though it was still unclear how the problem would ultimately work out for the entire nation at the time of his speech, Seward argued, "I think you will find that the whole battle was settled to the deliverance of Kansas, and that henceforth Freedom will be triumphant in all the territories of the United States."¹²⁰ From the small to the large scale, for Kansas and for Seward personally, there had to be a larger good that justified the violence and struggle over the establishment of a free Kansas and would probably be necessary to eradicate it from the whole country. He was willing to accept that it might not be during his lifetime, but in history and memory he imagined that he would be redeemed.

For all of his talk about establishing a homeland free from slavery, Seward also implied that there were limits to the inclusiveness of his vision. To his audience in Atchison, he remarked that it seemed strange that six or seven years earlier, Kansas was in danger of being controlled by those who would prefer to "resign a portion of this continent so great, a soil so rich, a climate so genial, to the support of African negroes instead of white men." He went on to say that Africans belonged in Africa, and that Kansas was meant for those of European descent who

¹²⁰ *The Campaign of 1860*, 53.

needed freedom from oppression. Arguing for a historical unity of white people, he explained, “We are all exiles directly, or represent those who were exiles—all exiles made by oppression, superstition and tyranny in Europe. We are of one family, race and kindred, all here in the pursuit of happiness—all seeking to improve our condition—all seeking to elevate our character.”¹²¹ Seward’s words were carefully tailored to an audience who had a close relationship with migration and pursuit of a stable home. It was also an audience that probably harbored uneasiness about the meaning of emancipation in Kansas since it was positioned next to a slave state. Seward creatively sidestepped the likelihood that recently emancipated people would find unity in their own identity as exiles and seek a place like Kansas as a home. It soon became clear that this would be the case, and the larger Civil War would make it possible.

For many Kansans, the Civil War presented an opportunity to promote their state as an example of how to pursue the war vigorously and morally. An early example of this occurred when a group of men took it upon themselves to form a “Frontier Guard” to protect Washington, DC after the outset of the war, from April 18 to May 3, 1861. The brainchild of James H. Lane, the band intended to keep Washington and President Lincoln safe before regular Union troops could arrive.¹²² In reality, the gesture was not practically necessary and was more likely an attempt to curry favor with Lincoln as he made future wartime appointments and decisions, but it still conjured an image of valiant home protection that had been so difficult during the territorial period. The choice of the name “Frontier Guard” is particularly significant and deliberate, given the participation of so many Kansans. It suggested a binding of the fortunes of the new West and the nation’s capital and made an argument for Kansas’s centrality to the war cause despite being self-consciously on the “frontier.” Those who comprised the group must have believed that their

¹²¹ *The Campaign of 1860*, 48.

¹²² Prentis, 96-97.

rugged, masculine, and indeed, fully-embodied frontier experience made them especially suited to define national service and that securing their homeland could now be best achieved by participating in adventures far from it. The Frontier Guard became a highly visible public display of the proactive stance that Kansans would take in creating a narrative which bolstered their image of spirited self-sacrifice.

The Frontier Guard was an early example of how many Kansans saw themselves as intensely involved in the war effort. During the war, the state was given a quota of 16,654 volunteers to fulfill, and it sent 20,097.¹²³ Kansans' frequent invocation of the statistic that proportionally they had more men killed in the war than any other state had the effect of anchoring the collective memory about Kansas's role in the war and the nation well into the 20th century. Just as the trauma of Bleeding Kansas had prepared residents for an especially active role in the Civil War, the sacrifice during the war itself served as a unifying touchstone in later causes.

John Brown, Jr. personified how the crusade over the settlement of Kansas during the territorial era shaped the state's potential role in the Civil War. He believed that the war was an opportunity to fulfill its emancipatory promise, ridding the entire nation of slavery after free-staters had stopped the advancement of the slave empire in the 1850s. He had had direct experience with the trauma of Bleeding Kansas, having been imprisoned and driven to the brink of insanity under the laws of the "bogus" territorial legislature. He then experienced the loss of his brother Frederick, who was murdered in Osawatimie. Early in 1861, he had tried to plan a trip to Haiti in order to get first hand information for free blacks living in Windsor, Ontario about the viability of emigrating there. Later that year, he turned his attention to raising a group of

¹²³ Prentis, 96.

volunteers willing to follow him to Kansas and enlist in the Union army. Brown's eagerness to go to far-flung extremes to fight slavery and find a home for free blacks was paired with a deep concern for the well-being of his own family. Even though he had left Kansas after the territorial period, he must have believed that returning there to complete the unfinished business of securing freedom was rooted in the same desire to protect his family in an abstract sense by eradicating slavery from the nation.



Figure 5: John Brown, Jr. (1821-1895). He was the oldest son of the famous abolitionist John Brown. After participating in free state activities in territorial Kansas, he returned during the Civil War to lead a group of antislavery soldiers. "John Brown and his Family." The Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. University of Virginia. www2.iath.virginia.edu/jbrown/family.html. Retrieved May 15, 2014.

Although he was limited by the fact that many men had already joined the army by the time he started recruiting, Brown persevered in his search for ideologically sound allies. Like his father, he was a man of action and expressed frustration at "men of words instead of deeds." In a letter to his wife, he wrote, "None of course but fighting abolitionists will join me. Of these, only a small percentage are fit for Soldiers." Brown considered going to northern Michigan to recruit Indians to join his company as scouts. He had been informed that there were "several thousand

Indians” at a place called Pent-Water and “many fine men among them who are willing and anxious to enlist but no one would take them.”¹²⁴ Brown did not comment on whether the Indians were eager to enlist because they believed in abolitionism, but it seems likely that he would have inquired about their feelings on the subject before agreeing to take them. The recruitment of Indians for the antislavery Union case would have provided a telling glimpse into the possible expectations for national incorporation, or lack thereof, of Indian soldiers.

Brown spent his time in Civil War Kansas eager and willing to fight but burdened by health problems and what he believed to be a conspiracy to keep he and his men out of the action. In March of 1862, he complained when command of all Union soldiers in the region was give over to General Thomas Halleck, saying:

We are now in the Department commanded by that proslavery Gen Halleck who refuses to allow fugitive slaves to come within his lines. . . . Almost every one has some opinion to express, but the general belief is that since Gen Halleck does not like our Regiment that he will either put us where we can't hurt slavery, or drop us out of the service among the other Calvary Regiments which have been ordered to be mustered out.¹²⁵

Brown and his men initially thought they would be sent to Texas, but instead got word that they were going to be sent to New Mexico. This he blamed on Halleck and General Denver, all the while lamenting that John C. Fremont (who had brashly declared the abolishment of slavery in Missouri against the wishes of Lincoln) had been removed from duty in that area. In April of 1862, Brown commented that Col. Charles R. Jennison, the famous border raiding “Jayhawker,”

¹²⁴ John Brown, Jr., letter to his wife, December 12, 1861. KSHS, John Brown, Jr. Collection, No. 833.

¹²⁵ John Brown, Jr., letter to his wife, March 18, 1862. KSHS, John Brown, Jr. Collection, No. 833.

and Lt. Col. Daniel R. Anthony tried to resign because “violent proslavery men” had been appointed over them in the region.¹²⁶

Brown’s experience is a useful reminder of the continuing influence not only of slavery, but the memory of Bleeding Kansas as a motivator for future behavior. He and his men could have enlisted in many other northern states but believed that they could best fight slavery by going to Kansas. Perhaps the example of another of his father’s famous actions, direct slave emancipation, made Kansas an attractive destination—a kind of continuation of Brown’s Vernon County, Missouri raid of 1858. John Jr. spent at least some of his time in camp planning to rescue slaves. In late January 1862, he got word from a recently emancipated black man that his enslaved wife and kids were about to be taken by their master to the South. Brown organized and armed a rescue party of 8-10 blacks to make the nine-mile rescue journey. He also sent William Partridge with his team “to help bring anything away the slaves would need to set up house keeping on their own hook.”¹²⁷ Brown was able to imagine an inclusive Kansas to a greater extent than many white leaders, although the progress of the war created new opportunities for blacks to make their own claims to a permanent place in Kansas.

Throughout the strife of the territorial period and even in the early years of the broader Civil War, it was difficult for most white Kansans to foresee, let alone accept a biracial homeland in the new West. Charles Robinson, in his July 4, 1855 oration in Lawrence that urged new settlers to steel their resolve against enslavement by “foreign legislative bodies,” used history and common “Anglo-Saxon blood” to justify preserving freedom for white people. He

¹²⁶ John Brown, Jr., letter to his wife, April 17, 1862. KSHS, John Brown, Jr. Collection, No. 833.

¹²⁷ John Brown, Jr., letter to his wife, January 26-7, 1862. KSHS, John Brown, Jr. Collection, No. 833.

said that Missourians complained that the Underground Railroad would be established in a free Kansas and threaten to take slaves out of Missouri. In answer to this, he warned, “We say then, officially, that up to the present time not the first rail has been laid of this road in Kansas; but the workmen are in readiness, and will commence operations with a will if our affairs are again interfered with by foreign intruders. If the people of Missouri make it necessary, by their unlawful course, for us to establish freedom in that state to enjoy the liberty of governing ourselves in Kansas, then let us accept that issue.”¹²⁸ In 1855, then, Robinson appeared reluctant to advocate actively bringing new black residents to Kansas. Continued “interference” during the territorial period and after the outbreak of the war brought Robinson’s warning ever closer to reality. John Brown, Jr. wanted to fight for both the Union army and continue to organize emancipation forays into Missouri territory. But it was the direct participation of blacks themselves in emancipation and soldiering that carved out an opportunity for a homeland in the new state of Kansas and made an argument for a role in the Kansas Spirit as well.

In the late summer of 1863, Daniel R. Anthony, now the antislavery mayor of Leavenworth after his stint in the Union Army, was asked to make a report on the status of runaway slaves in Kansas. He approximated that there were 5,000 in Kansas, and more were continuing to come, adding that if slavery had been abolished in Missouri, not so many would seek Kansas as a destination. His assessment of the viability of the new population was that their “deportment” was good, and they “support themselves.” And, in a welcoming tone, he wrote, “I am of the opinion that one hundred thousand sound healthy negro men and women migrating to this state or even more would provide a vast benefit to our state—the past year the fugitive slaves from Missouri have raised a larger crop of corn in Kansas, also grain of all kinds—than Kansas

¹²⁸ Frank W. Blackmar, *The Life of Charles Robinson, the First State Governor of Kansas* (Topeka, KS: Crane & Company, 1902), 409.

has raised in the past eight years.” Also, to make the point that he was not alone in his assessment, Anthony claimed, “The white inhabitants are well disposed towards the negro and would welcome all that come.”¹²⁹

Anthony’s claims mark a dramatic departure from the early attempts of free state leaders to exclude black migrants from Kansas Territory. The black residents of whom he spoke were more than abstractions in a theoretical contest over the expansion of a particular labor system into the West. They were also not helpless fugitives needing white benevolence in order to survive, but were rather quite capable and contributing greatly to the development of the new state. This development should not be surprising after examining the parallel story of the Kansas black soldiers who made a name for themselves by volunteering and sacrificing to make a home for themselves.

In order to begin examining the connections of the Kansas’s black soldiers to such wartime matters of exclusion and inclusion, it is helpful to recall the fighting at Island Mound on October 28, 1862, the first Civil War battle that included African American soldiers. Ethan Earle, the company’s white captain, wrote:

A young soldier of Co. F had three balls shot into his body—two of those now remain in his body & he also has a ball shot through his right elbow completely shattering the bones and joint. The soldier got into camp with his gun; he said to me, “Well captain, they didn’t get my gun.”¹³⁰

The courageous wit of this unnamed soldier understates the great significance of this moment.

Considering the difficulties that African Americans had endured in order to gain permission to

¹²⁹ Daniel R. Anthony to Commission, Leavenworth, KS, August 30, 1863., AFIC Records, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹³⁰ Ethan Earle, 1st Kansas colored volunteer regiment, 1863-1865. KSHS, MS 1319. For future references, page numbers are given when Earle numbers his pages. No page number means none was given.

fight in the war, coupled with the extra perils faced by black soldiers on the battlefield, it makes sense that this soldier would consider maintaining possession of his weapon at all costs, in the face of such suffering, as a deep moral victory. Furthermore, this soldier and others in the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry (later 79th USCT) were establishing a place for themselves and others in the West and the nation at a time when many white people on the home front, including some of their own commanders, wanted to see them leave and not return. Even as they began to be accepted into the regular army, black soldiers faced the doubly unnerving possibility of sacrificing their bodies for the Union while simultaneously being imagined or literally forced out of it by “Negrophobic” state legislatures.

The involvement of black soldiers who consisted mainly of recently emancipated slaves made the Civil War in Kansas undeniably a war of liberation as soon as freed people started arriving from across the Missouri River and places further south. The black Civil War in Kansas was at its core a continuation of the work of the Browns and their black collaborators. These soldiers created the groundwork for residents’ later argument against the “Lost Cause” version of the Civil War that downplayed the significance of its emancipatory promise. Blacks and Native Americans played a notable role in the western Civil War, demonstrating that the expansion of the American empire into the West would be more than just a contest between pro and antislavery whites.

Ethan Earle, a white Bostonian who came to Kansas in 1857 to fight against the slave power, kept the most detailed record available of the formation and fighting of the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteers. His version of the story differs from other versions that give most of the credit to James Lane, a former Indiana Democrat who came to Kansas during the territorial era and switched his affiliation to the Republicans. Often labeled an opportunist, Lane is usually

credited with giving Kansas blacks the opportunity to enlist in the military. Before he came to support this measure, however, Lane proposed moving recently emancipated African Americans to South America, in his opinion more suited to nonwhite races. Historian Ian Michael Spurgeon found this wholly in step with Lane's support of black exclusion when he helped to frame the Topeka Constitution in 1855.¹³¹ This position was similar to that of Missouri's Frank Blair, a U.S. Congressman who emancipated his slaves in 1859 and was a leading colonizationist in the region.¹³²

As with other like-minded northerners during the Civil War, Lane fought an internal struggle between a deep belief in the inferiority of nonwhite peoples and a devotion to the Union cause that meant winning the war by any means necessary. Sending freed people back to their former masters meant aiding the enemy. Using the freed people against those who had enslaved them had the potential to speed the defeat of the enemy. Lane was tentative, but with the help the hundreds of black volunteers willing to fight and a committed handful of abolitionists, plans to let black soldiers fight were finally put into action.

According to Earle, Lane hindered the establishment of the regiment more than he aided it. Although he did ask President Lincoln for permission to raise a black regiment, it was not for altruistic reasons. Lane believed that whites should not bear the sole brunt of the war's death and destruction.¹³³ A similar attitude was shown when the 60th United States Colored Infantry was formed in Keokuk, Iowa. Perhaps as a way to avoid the pressing question of how to manage

¹³¹ Ian Michael Spurgeon, *Man of Douglas, Man of Lincoln: The Political Odyssey of James Henry Lane* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 221.

¹³² Walter Barlow Stevens, *Missouri, The Center State, 1821-1915* (St. Louis, MO: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915), 34

¹³³ Dudley Taylor Cornish, *Kansas Negro Regiments in the Civil War* (Topeka, KS: State of Kansas Commission on Civil Rights, 1953), 6-11.

racial difference after the war, there were many who believed that sending black soldiers off to die was a good way to save white lives.¹³⁴

Earle was much more of a believer in equal opportunity and treatment for blacks, and he was understandably critical of Lane's ideas for managing the politics of difference. Concerning the destiny of blacks, he wrote, "General Lane's ideas about the Negro were, that they ought to be enfranchised at some future time where it would be done with safety, but the two races could never live in harmony and equality together; one or the other must rule; he would therefore, have the Negroes used as Servants to the white men, during the war, and then colonize the entire colored population in a state or country." He added that Lane's sentiment was "well known to the educated and intelligent colored people" because he had spoken to white Wisconsin troops about his plan for each white soldier to have a black servant. After the war, Earle remarked, "The colored people of the southwest, after having done so much to preserve the union, thought it a great injustice to drive them out of it."¹³⁵ The unwelcome overtures that these residents felt could not have been altogether surprising, however, as plans to exclude black settlers had been in the works since the territorial period.

Statements like this put black military service in the West in the context of the various possibilities that could have been realized during and after the Civil War Kansas era. Perhaps raising units of black soldiers was part of a larger colonization scheme. Lane and Samuel C. Pomeroy, Kansas's other charter U.S. Senator, both expressed a desire to see blacks moved away from whites in order to develop separately. In a letter to a fellow senator from October 1862, Pomeroy wrote:

¹³⁴ Schwalm, 110.

¹³⁵ Earle, MS 1319.

I can state the difference between myself—and my radical friends. They want freedom of the Col'd Man—and are satisfied with that. I want for him something more than *that*—To be a *free laborer*—and *only that* is not his manhood. I want for him the *rights & enjoyments*—of a *free man*—Can he secure them with the white Man—What are the teachings of 250 years of history! . . . I am for the Negro's securing his rights and his *nationality*—in the clime of his nativity—on the soil of the Tropics—and God speed the day!!

Pomeroy promised that he had gathered 13,700 applications and permission from the “Government of New Granada and of the Central Gov. of the U.S. of Columbia” but was being “suspended by (Secretary of State) Mr. Seward.”¹³⁶ Clearly, both Lane and Pomeroy were trying to manage difference by finding a solution to the “problem” of “what shall be the destiny of the col'd Races on this Continent?” that in the words of Pomeroy, would satisfy free labor constituents. The rapid movement of formerly enslaved people into Kansas after the start of the war brought the question from theoretical to manifestly practical territory.

This vignette also invites a deeper analysis of the Northern politicians' competing strategies for colonizing groups of nonwhite peoples. Pomeroy wondered at the fate of the “colored *races*” of the continent, not just blacks. Kansas, of course, had been the destination for relocated Natives in the pre-territorial period, and many of these people experienced a second removal from Kansas afterwards. These ongoing displacements created a special situation in Kansas during the Civil War in which both Natives and blacks negotiated their position within the nation against the possibility of being removed from it. Meanwhile, white settlers fretted over threats of violence posed by the war itself and on the frontier of the expanding western empire and their own fear of displacement.

¹³⁶ Samuel C. Pomeroy to Sen. Doolittle, Oct. 20, 1862 in Duane Mowry, ed. “Negro Colonization.” From Doolittle Correspondence. In *Publications of the Southern History Association* (Washington, DC: Southern History Association, 1905), 402-3.

Pomeroy and Lane took slightly different stances in separate Senate debates pertaining to the extinguishment of Indian land titles during the Civil War. Pomeroy drew a distinction between “Christian Indians and heathen Indians,” recommending that the “wild” ones be removed from Kansas while “the half-breeds, and those who adopt the customs of civilization, and have their lands in severalty might become citizens, and live among us.” Lane agreed that there were Indians who conformed to different levels of civilization, but he preferred that they all be removed, saying, “The result will be that the civilized and the uncivilized Indians will go together, and go gladly, in order that they may be saved from destruction.”¹³⁷ Of these two strategies, Pomeroy’s seemed to allow for more flexibility, implying that being a person of color did not preclude one from living with whites.

Perhaps white leaders like Pomeroy could be convinced that actions like serving the Union as a soldier would give blacks a claim to citizenship. He had only been a recent convert to believing in colonization prior to angling for an appointment from President Lincoln as an official in a black removal plan in Central America, and his adherence to colonization based on climatic racism softened after the war during debates over the potential annexation of the Dominican Republic.¹³⁸ Lane, who committed suicide in 1866, was not likely to have viewed black military service as a path to full citizenship.

President Lincoln had to perform a delicate balancing act when it came to emancipation policies during the war. The famous preliminary “Emancipation Proclamation” of September, 1862, issued after the horrifically bloody battle of Antietam and intended to make the war a more

¹³⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 3rd Session 507 1863.

¹³⁸ Nicholas Guyatt, “America’s Conservatory: Race Reconstruction, and the Santo Domingo Debate,” *The Journal of American History* (March 2011): 981. See also Michael Vorenberg, “Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer 1993): 32-34.

firmly moral cause, only applied to states that had rebelled and seceded from the Union. In border slave states that did not secede, such as Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, Lincoln needed to determine how best to maintain the tenuous loyalty. This was not a concern of other Unionist leaders.

According to Ethan Earle, slaves in Missouri not only knew about John C. Fremont's unauthorized proclamation of their freedom, which he gave on August 31, 1861, but acted upon it, with many leaving for Kansas in search of protection or employment from the Union Army. Although Lincoln replaced Fremont and made a new proclamation to reverse the exodus, many blacks continued to find their way into Kansas, especially during the winter of 1861-2 when the Missouri River froze.¹³⁹ Earle claims that the threat of being returned to their masters caused "great consternation among the colored people and much anxiety with the people of Kansas as to what they could do with them." When he suggested that the men could be used as soldiers, it was received by army officers "with utmost contempt and violent opposition," to the point that they declared that "if the Union had sunk so low that 'niggers' must be made soldiers to save it, it was not worth saving, and they would leave the army, as they would never submit to the degradation of the army, and disgrace the country, by allowing the 'nigger' to wear its uniform and use its arms."¹⁴⁰ This is the kind of sentiment that John Brown, Jr. must have witnessed while waiting for orders in his Kansas army camp. Such were the revolutionary implications of the Civil War, where military service was linked to citizenship and civic duty, and nonwhite soldiers could expect to claim a place in the American polity by fighting in its wars. To the South, considering

¹³⁹ Richard B. Sheridan, "Charles Henry Langston and the African American Struggle in Kansas." *Kansas History* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter 1999-2000): 273.

¹⁴⁰ Earle, MS 1319.

blacks as anything but property meant a declaration of war. For many northerners, having blacks exercise the right to fight for the Union must have seemed equally alarming.

Despite the opposition, Earle persevered, receiving recruiting help from prominent local African Americans William Mathews and Charles Henry Langston. Langston had achieved a measure of fame for his role in the sensational rescue of a runaway slave named John Price in Oberlin, Ohio during the days of the Fugitive Slave law. He would go on to be a prominent figure in Kansas politics until the late 19th century, though he split from the Republican Party in his later years because he believed that it failed to follow through on the emancipatory promises of the Civil War.¹⁴¹ Mathews joined the regiment under the assumption that he would receive an officer's commission, but he left when he found out that this could not happen. Earle also established a line of communication with an enslaved black preacher in Missouri who passed information to his congregation about times and places where they could find safe passage across the Missouri River into Kansas. Aware of the revolutionary implications of his project, Earle commented on a face-to-face meeting between some of his recruits and their former masters, writing, "you can imagine the surprise and disappointment on seeing their slaves transformed into United States soldiers."¹⁴²

Even with this transformation, there seems to have been great reluctance to outfit and arm the soldiers properly. In describing the regiment's training, Earle wrote that it was difficult to obtain weapons, and when they finally got some from Ft. Leavenworth, they were in such bad condition that they would fire successfully about one out of the five times that a soldier would attempt to shoot. This deepened the suspicion among the enlisted men that they were meant only

¹⁴¹ See Nat Brandt, *The Town that Started the Civil War*. (New York: Dell, 1990), 250-1. Brandt mentions that Charles Langston went to Kansas to work with freed people, but does not discuss his role a recruiter in Kansas.

¹⁴² Earle, MS 1319.

to be used as servants and laborers in the army. In response to this concern, Col. James M. Williams assembled the men and produced a fiery speech, saying that they should have new U.S. muskets when the regiment was completed and went south. He also told the men to tally bills for their former masters in order to get compensated for years of labor, and that in three weeks he would march them out to Missouri, demand payment in gold, and if they had no gold, he would take any property he could find to pay them.¹⁴³ This anecdote provides further evidence that the 1st Kansas Colored played a special role in the war as a unit comprised mainly of former slaves, and it suggests that a promise of financial remuneration for years of bondage and incorporation with national institutions may have motivated the men. Here was the nascent “Kansas Spirit” in its most radical form, carrying the philosophy of Brown’s “parallels” into a vernacular theory of war as slavery reparation.

Precariously free in their new state, African Americans initially became an unwanted element in their new home. Based on the exclusionary attempts made by white leaders in Kansas and other parts of the West, this was probably not unexpected. The delicate process of creating a meaningful and memorable public display against this backdrop of exclusionism was evident when the black soldiers prepared to depart for duty. As a show of solidarity, the black civilian residents of Leavenworth provided the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Regiment with a homemade flag. Earle remembered, “We marched through the city of Leavenworth, Kansas, under this flag, on our way to the far Southwest frontier. The parting salutes given us were: ‘Sneezing and jeers,’ / ‘good by Nigger, good riddance.’ Writing in 1873, he contrasted this with the treatment nine months later of the Massachusetts 54th Volunteer Regiment, which “was received in Boston with

¹⁴³ Earle, MS, 1319, 6.

the highest military honors, and it departed for the South, with the prayers, blessings, and plaudits of the people.”¹⁴⁴



Figure 6: Flag of the First Colored Kansas Infantry. Recorded on it are the battle sites of Island Mound, Cabin Creek, Honey Springs, and Poison Springs, as well as the battles of Sherwood, Prairie Deanne, Jenkins Ferry, and Camden. The regiment predated the more well-known 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, experiencing great success at the Battle of Honey Springs, but suffering devastating losses at the Battle of Poison Springs. “Cool Things – First Kansas Colored Infantry Flag.” Kansas State Historical Society. Kansapedia. www.kshs.org/kansapedia/cool-things-first-kansas-colored-infantry-flag/10125 Retrieved April 13, 2014.

Several items in this poignant scene and Earle’s comments point to the unique western elements of the 1st Kansas Colored. First, the comments of the Leavenworth residents suggest that they did not expect, nor wish the black soldiers to return. They may have seen the march to the “far Southwest frontier” as a permanent solution to the problem of their presence in Kansas. If the soldiers died or did not return for other reasons, an expurgation or even a colonization of

¹⁴⁴ Earle, MS, 1319.

sorts could arguably have taken place. Second, it is understandable that the 1st Kansas Colored would first be sent to Indian Territory, the destination (in addition to Kansas itself) for other unwanted ethnic groups for a decade preceding the Civil War. Finally, Earle's comparison to the Massachusetts 54th also contradicts D. R. Anthony's account of the extent to which blacks were accepted as an established part of the community by the white public. Most likely, both opinions existed, and each man focused on a particular side. What is clear is that there was much work to be done, both for black soldiers and civilians, that was necessary to achieve an accepted place in the nationally defining, contested West.

The 1st Kansas Colored made one of the large arguments for acceptance through its fighting record. This unit had more enlisted men killed than any other Kansas regiment (156) and lost even more (165) to disease. Its greatest success was the Battle of Honey Springs on July 17, 1863, in which it defended Fort Gibson in Indian Territory. The soldiers fought alongside both Indian and white troops, holding their own line while keeping a line of Colorado soldiers from collapsing during Confederate Texan artillery fire. Militarily, this was important for driving the Confederates out of Indian Territory and opening a western path toward taking Fort Smith in Arkansas.¹⁴⁵ Recalling this battle, Earle claimed, "When the Colorado regiment was at Fort Scott

¹⁴⁵ Maj. Michael E. Carter, "First Kansas Colored Volunteers: Contributions of Black Union Soldiers in the Trans-Mississippi West," Master of Military Arts Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (Leavenworth, KS: 2004). Carter explains in detail, "The performance of the First Kansas Colored Infantry Regiment at Honey Springs was pivotal in the decisive victory. The engagement marked the first time the regiment faced field artillery fire. Located directly across from the Confederate's light howitzer battery, the regiment not only held fast their lines, but prevented the Second Colorado from being outmaneuvered and overrun. Though possessing three times as many artillery pieces as the Confederates, it was nonetheless the hand-to-hand combat of the infantry that prevailed against Colonel Cooper's force of nearly six thousand men. The composure and resolve of the First Kansas Colored was also tested when Colonel Williams was wounded and forced from the battlefield. Without wavering, the black soldiers continued fighting and responded well to the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Bowles,"

and on the way to the fight, they treated us with much contempt, but after this fight and the rescue of their men, they would always say, ‘If we are going into a fight, give us the niggers.’¹⁴⁶ The use of the racial slur shows the limits to accepting black soldiers fully, but the statement also implies that attitudes could slowly change with tangible encounters and shared sacrifice.

Samuel J. Crawford, the future Kansas Governor who commanded the 2nd Kansas Colored Volunteer regiment (later 83rd U. S. Colored Infantry) underwent a similar transformation after initially being skeptical of leading black soldiers. In his memoir, he stated directly that he preferred the cavalry to the infantry and a white regiment to a black regiment. He also reluctantly accepted the task of training officers and inexperienced enlisted men, but he found that the Confederacy’s “Black Flag” proclamation to execute summarily black prisoners and white officers in black regiments made his men take their training more seriously.¹⁴⁷ After several successful engagements with the 83rd, Crawford boasted that the report of the Inspector General of the army to the Secretary of War “paid my regiment a compliment of which any officer of the army, in time of war, had a right to feel proud.”¹⁴⁸ The fact that Crawford was nominated for governor and elected shows that commanding a black regiment must not have hindered his reputation and that black military service was a successful endeavor in the minds of Kansans.

After the high point of the success at Honey Springs, the 1st Kansas Colored would experience its lowest point, the Poison Springs massacre, on April 18, 1864. Previously, a small group of soldiers from the 1st had been ambushed during a foraging mission and become painfully aware that the Confederate government’s promise to execute black soldiers—the

¹⁴⁶ Earle, MS 1319, 20.

¹⁴⁷ Crawford, 102.

¹⁴⁸ Crawford, 138.

“Black Flag” order—would be kept. In this small engagement at a place called Rader’s Farm, the bodies of fallen black soldiers were beaten and mutilated, and one of the two black POWs was shot. Colonel Williams of the 1st Colored displayed a commitment to equality by executing a Confederate prisoner, which he claimed stopped the practice of killing POWs.¹⁴⁹ At Poison Springs, in Arkansas, 438 black soldiers were ambushed, resulting in an astounding 117 deaths. This accounted for more than half of all battle deaths for the regiment during the war. Earle claimed that the Confederates did not take any prisoners; instead, “All the colored men in the Regiment, wounded and left in the field, were killed by the rebels.”¹⁵⁰ When the battle was over, Confederate soldiers allegedly roamed the battleground saying, “Where is the First Nigger now? All cut to pieces and gone to hell by bad management.”¹⁵¹ Clearly, the 1st Kansas Colored was targeted for retributive violence that exceeded the already life-threatening risks taken by all soldiers in fighting the war.

¹⁴⁹ James M. Williams Papers, KSHS Collection 545, see p. 5 of typewritten account of his experiences in the 1st Kansas Colored.

¹⁵⁰ Earle, MS 1319, 25.

¹⁵¹ Carter, 89.



Figure 7: Map showing location of Honey Springs battle site in Indian Territory and Poison Springs battle site in southern Arkansas. The 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry served admirably, in the opinions of their white officers and white regiments who went into battle with them. “First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry.” americancivilwar.com/colored/1st_Kansas_infantry_colored_troops.html. Retrieved April 12, 2014.

As stated earlier, Earle realized the revolutionary significance of the Civil War as an opportunity to explore bringing about more equality between the races. His company dug out a hillside and used the space for a school while they wintered at Fort Scott in 1862-3. As he described it, “all were students and all were teachers; when one had learned his letters, he would teach them to others. . . . For this school, I labored to make all understand their duties and obligations as Soldiers and as Citizens.”¹⁵² Earle also displayed his higher sense of purpose by consulting with and then leading his own company against a mutiny in another company when a soldier was unfairly imprisoned. The episode further illustrates the complicated nature of black military service, in which soldiers fighting for their freedom had to submit to military authority, much in the same way that slavery itself required submission.

Illustrating the challenges of submission to army (and white) hierarchy, Earle wrote about how the adjutant of the 1st Kansas Colored claimed to like black people and said that he turned

¹⁵² Earle, MS 1319, 9.

down a position in the white army to come fight with the black soldiers. However, he was cruel and often pulled “pranks” on unsuspecting black soldiers by getting them to break army protocol and then punishing them with degrading tasks like wearing humiliating signs on their backs or marching back and forth holding a heavy wooden log across their shoulders. One day, after baiting a soldier into an argument with an “impertinent comment,” the adjutant received a response that was “not very complimentary to his ‘hinglish blood,’” for which he gave the black soldier a blow with his sword. When the soldier responded with a punch, he was arrested, but twenty men from one of the companies rescued him and refused to turn him over. The white officers were driven out of the company, and the mutineers maintained loaded weapons with fixed bayonets. Earle claimed that he was summoned to help, but he would only do it if his men agreed. He explained to his men that their reputation and freedom depended on the mutineers giving up, and that if they did not, he would be the first one killed. The show of force, which included Earle’s forty-six men facing down eighty-five mutineers, was successful at the last minute, and twenty mutineers were arrested. The fate of the arrested men was not disclosed, but Earle spun the story in this 1873 reminiscence to show that black soldiers were as heroic and brave as any others, as long as they were brought to understand their duty.¹⁵³

The literal battle for homes in Civil War Kansas took place most dramatically and intimately when William Quantrill invaded Lawrence on August 21, 1863. The scale of the destruction, both to property and life, far surpassed any violent event of the territorial period. Even though, by this time, Americans had witnessed the immense loss of life in Civil War battlefields, Lawrence was notable for its face-to-face assaults on homes and families. Though

¹⁵³ Earle, MS 1319, 10.

the perpetrators of the raid were often cast as inhuman, they were at least in some cases familiar with their victims.

Lawrence expected an attack. According to a contemporary account of the massacre by Rev. Richard Cordley, a Lawrence resident, local militiamen were often called upon to defend the city in response to presumed threat, only to return home to derisive neighbors when no attack materialized. When Quantrill's men arrived at dawn on the morning of August 21, they took by surprise a warning-weary town with a cache of weapons locked uselessly in its armory.

Cordley's account is rife with evidence that the attackers targeted specific people and were willing in most cases to destroy the most intimate spaces of townspeople's residences. One of the first people killed, when a small group of marauders broke off from the main body and entered his yard, was Rev. S. S. Snyder, "a prominent minister among the United Brethren." Cordley speculated, "He held a commission as Lieutenant in the Second Colored Regiment, which probably accounts for their malignity."¹⁵⁴ If this account is correct, it shows that involvement with the black soldiers of Kansas invited retributive violence not just on the battlefield, as the experience of Col. James M. Williams showed, but also back home. Later in the account, Cordley explained that black residents of Lawrence escaped harm better than the whites because they expected the invaders to act the way they did. He wrote, "Many (whites) who could have escaped, therefore remained, and were slain. For this reason the colored people fared better than the whites. They knew the men which slavery had made, and they ran to the brush at the first alarm."¹⁵⁵ Perhaps these people had heard of the regular Confederate army's order to fight under the "Black Flag" and knew they would be given no quarter, especially from informal guerrilla fighters.

¹⁵⁴ Andreas, 321.

¹⁵⁵ Andreas, 322.



Figure 8: An artist's depiction of Quantrill's attack on Lawrence that appeared in the September 5, 1863 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. At dawn, Quantrill and approximately 300 Confederate followers attacked the town, killing almost 200 people while burning and looting it. Kansas State Historical Society. Kansas Memory. www.kansasmemory.org/item/208418. Retrieved April 10, 2014.

The few locals that tried to mount a resistance to Quantrill's band did not fare well. Levi Gates lived a mile outside of Lawrence and brought his rifle to town when he heard the commotion, supposing there would be a united defense. Instead, after getting off merely one shot, he was overrun by invaders who "came upon him and killed him, and after he was dead, brutally beat his head to pieces." County Clerk George W. Bell chose not to heed the plaintive cries of his family as he went to defend the city, saying, "They may kill *me*, but they cannot kill the principles I fight for." After an unsuccessful attempt to rally other residents, he cast aside his weapon and hid in the rafters of an unfinished house with a friend. A "rebel" entered the house and began shooting at the men. Bell apparently recognized the rebel as an "old acquaintance who

had often eaten at his table.” This familiarity was discussed between the two men, but it was not enough to spare Bell, however, as he and his friend were marched out the house and shot point blank by a group of Quantrill’s men. To follow up on the killing, the rebel who knew Bell went to his house and told his wife, “We have killed your husband and we have come to burn his house.” Though the fire was set, Bell’s wife and six children, now without a husband and father, were able to extinguish it.¹⁵⁶

In a similar scene, the wife of murdered newspaper editor J.C. Trask begged to keep her wedding ring, but the “heartless fiend” she requested this of replied, “No matter,” and “snatched the relic from her hand.” Stopping short of killing wives and children represented a degree of restraint on the part of Quantrill’s men, but burning homes and ridding them of their male head of household, even to the extent of robbing a wedding ring, certainly had a deliberate, long-lasting impact on the memories of survivors.

Charles S. Glead, a well-known orator, was called upon to relate stories of the raid during a 50th anniversary reunion of survivors in the year 1913. He shared some of the same anecdotes as Cordley and added others. He too noted the special trauma associated with the Lawrence murders that happened in plain sight of family members. In one case, he said, “G. H. Sargent and Charles Palmer were shot. Sargent was not instantly killed. His wife fell upon his prostrate body. A murderer placed his pistol over her shoulder and sent a bullet into her husband’s head.” In another case, two black preachers named Stonestreet and Oldham were murdered, “the latter in the presence of his daughter.” A twelve year old boy was shot and killed in blatant violation of the order not to kill women and children. And in another instance, “Judge Louis Carpenter was pursued through his house and mortally wounded. His wife and sister threw themselves on his

¹⁵⁶ Andreas, 322.

prostrate body, but were thrust aside enough to permit the final shots.”¹⁵⁷ The inclusion of women on this unofficial battlefield suddenly changed their role into that of would-be protectors of men, much in the same way that they had assumed that role during territorial era home invasions. This upending of family roles may have been precisely the sort of dehumanizing havoc and trauma the invaders of Lawrence sought to wreak.

Cordley’s account of the destruction of Lawrence reveals a deep struggle to describe the horror of the scene. He chose particularly gruesome episodes to convey the mayhem. Gen. Collamore, the mayor of Lawrence, died while hiding in a well near his house when burning debris covered and suffocated him and a fellow citizen. A bedridden German immigrant named Allbranch was carried out of his home by his family and killed before their eyes in his bed when rebels ordered everyone out so they could burn it. The day after the raid, as residents scrambled to bury the dead and piece together their shattered lives, one woman could be heard wailing and when discovered, she was seated in the ashes of a building “holding in her hands the blackened skull of her husband, who was shot and burned in that place.”¹⁵⁸ The sacrifices of families in Lawrence were not greater than those who offered male relatives as soldiers in the regular army, but the fact that they did not expect civilian male residents to be slaughtered, and especially did not expect to encounter or have to try to care for their mutilated bodies, must have made the experience nearly impossible to bear.

Left with little to rationalize the Lawrence raid, Cordley cast the invaders as inhuman. In a strategy well-practiced since the contest for Kansas had begun, free-staters portrayed the proslavery element as being on par with, and in many cases worse than Indians. At one point, Cordley wrote, “It is doubtful whether the world has ever witnessed such a scene of horror—

¹⁵⁷ Lawrence Daily *Journal-World*, August 21, 1913.

¹⁵⁸ Andreas, 322.

certainly not outside the annals of savage warfare.”¹⁵⁹ Later, though, responding to the Allbranch killing, Cordley judged the act to be “a species of cruelty to which savages have never yet attained.”¹⁶⁰ From these statements, as well as Cordley’s earlier observation that black residents expected this kind of brutality when they heard that an attack was imminent, it is clear that Quantrill’s men were not presented as aberrations or extremists within a civilized proslavery population, but rather perfect examples of all proslavery men. The logical extension of this claim was that such men had no right to determine the development of the West because they were not even as civilized as its “savage” inhabitants.

The association of proslavery men and Indians as savage was a running theme during the Civil War. In 1861, residents around the town of Trading Post, the area that had been targeted by Charles Hamilton in the Marias des Cygnes Massacre, were told that Hamilton was coming back “with four hundred Indians to kill off all settlers at one swoop.”¹⁶¹ George W. Clarke, who performed raids against free state settlers during the territorial period, was employed as an Indian agent at Ft. Scott before his bushwhacking days, which suggested the possibility of other Confederate-Indian alliances.¹⁶² Clarke was suspected of having killed Thomas Barber in late 1855 and at one point charged with a connection to Hamilton’s murders. Though he never went to trial, he left the area in 1858, believing that he was “the worst persecuted man in Kansas.”¹⁶³ If nothing else, the fear of Hamilton’s return with “four hundred Indians” showed that free state settlers believed that proslavery raiders would slip beneath the standards of civility by teaming up with Indians.

¹⁵⁹ Andreas, 322.

¹⁶⁰ Andreas, 323.

¹⁶¹ W.A. Mitchell, 179.

¹⁶² W.A. Mitchell, 199.

¹⁶³ George W. Clarke, Letter to Samuel J. Jones, June 2, 1858, available at <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/90579>. Retrieved May 26, 2014.

Despite ongoing problems with Indians on the frontier, there were significant numbers of Natives who were willing to fight on the side of the Union army. In Kansas, three Indian regiments were formed, mainly out of refugee Seminole and Creek Indians who were displaced by the Confederate Indian leader Stand Watie along the southern border of the state. Col. William A. Phillips had success adapting military orders to these Indian volunteers, and they served in the southern Kansas-Arkansas-Indian Territory region during the war, sometimes even alongside black soldiers. Ethan Earle did not hold the Indian units in high regard. He wrote, though probably misinformed, “There were no Indians enlisted, and no attempt made to enlist any. The Indians were worthless as soldiers; the only advantage to us was that it kept them from going over to the rebels.” He added that the Cherokee and Creek nations were divided, but the majority of the members were for the Union, while the Choctaws were “wholly for the rebels.”¹⁶⁴ In another account, A .T. Andreas’s compilation of Kansas history, the Indian soldiers as a whole did “faithful service,” but the final word on Indian military service reads, “No official report of the Indian regiments being made, the record of their service is relatively meager, the special part they took in the various engagements while connected with the ‘army of the Frontier’ not being mentioned in the histories of the other regiments.”¹⁶⁵ The murkiness of Indian relations with the U.S. government is a product of the multiple ways different Native groups responded to the war. The lack of unified “Indian” actions comes out in the historical record, but it is also apparent that Americans strove to classify Indians all together (or at least into categories of civilized and uncivilized), as government policies over removal often did.

Some Kansans who enrolled in the military spent a significant portion of their time patrolling western borderlands rather than actively fighting Confederates. The 11th Kansas

¹⁶⁴ Earle, MS 1319, 17.

¹⁶⁵ Andreas, 208.

Regiment was formed out of Waubensee County residents late in the war, and this unit spent much of its time trying to protect telegraph lines from being cut by Indians in Colorado Territory, which bordered Kansas. One local historian commented on the atmosphere in Waubensee Country during the war, writing, “Those were lonely days—when Indians were oftener seen than white men. They were getting restive, too. They knew the war was going on and rumors of an uprising had reached the ears of the anxious settlers. It was but a few miles to the Pottawatomie on the north and the Kaws were uncomfortably close on the other side.”¹⁶⁶ This anecdote serves as a reminder of the North’s dual purpose of maintaining a unified nation while also securing its multiracial interior for further imperial growth.

Other evidence makes a strong case that Indian removals of the territorial period did not represent a complete conquering of the West for white settlers. Multiple mentions of ongoing anxiety about Indian attacks foreshadow the problem of shaping the memory of such events in historical memory. In Lyon County, unofficial home guards were formed during the war to protect residents against bushwhackers like Sterling Price as well as Indians.¹⁶⁷ In Marshall County, a settler by the last name of Changreau reportedly had his sister kidnapped by Kaw Indians who whipped her to death while she was tied up. The local historian who relayed this story added that during the war, “Apprehensions were felt that the Indians would extend their devastations to the older settlements, depleted as they were of able-bodied men, from enlistments in the army.”¹⁶⁸ Jewell County was first settled by whites in 1862, but the area was abandoned until 1866 amid fears of Indian violence, which was particularly bloody between the Pawnees

¹⁶⁶ Thomson, 149.

¹⁶⁷ Andreas, 846.

¹⁶⁸ Andreas, 915.

and Sioux.¹⁶⁹ In Republic County, all but one settler left during the “great Indian scare” of 1864. One local historian synthesized the era triumphantly, however, claiming, “During the war the Indians were very savage, and made many raids upon the settlers. They all proved futile; the frontier did not recede, but steadily advanced, until the Republican River became the boundary line.”¹⁷⁰

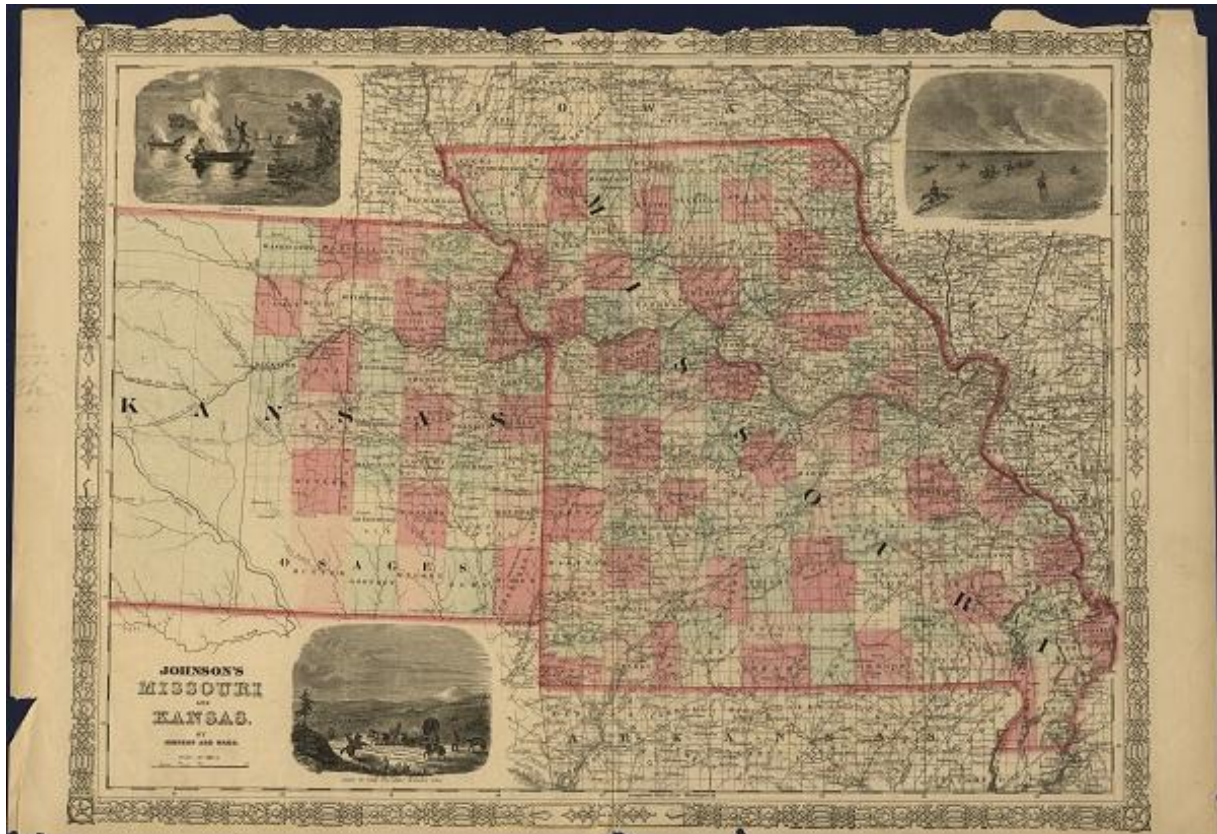


Figure 9: Johnson’s 1860 Map of Missouri and Kansas. This shows the degree to which Kansas counties had been organized on the eve of the Civil War and the frontier line between white settlement and Indian occupied lands in the West. University of Missouri, Kansas City. Miller Nichol’s Special Collections. The Labudde Special Collections Blog. <http://library.umkc.edu/blog/speccoll/node/32>. Retrieved July 15, 2014.

Emma Forter’s history of Marshall County also identified 1864 as an important point in removing Indian influence over the region. She wrote that the home guard “saw plenty of evidence of Indian warfare and depredations, but they met no Indians. However, the presence of

¹⁶⁹ Andreas, 967.

¹⁷⁰ Andreas, 1032.

armed troops had a wholesome effect on the Indians, and a cessation of the worst depredations ensued. It was several years before the Indians came to believe that they were not the owners of the land and that murder and pillage were not justifiable.”¹⁷¹ Clearly, this treatment of the process shows a kind of engineering to make a moral statement about relative levels of civilization displayed by the whites and Natives.

These accounts reveal a particularly myopic view of the first decade of Kansas’s existence as a territory and state. Not only does it present the removal of Indians as a banal matter of simply getting them to “believe” that they no longer could claim ownership of the land, it shows a kind of inversion of the “murder and pillage” that white settlers perpetrated against each other but blamed Indians for in historical memory. Whites could undertake violent missions, but while some actions could be justified, no violence on the part of the Natives could ever be accepted because they did not have a claim to the civilization narrative. Forter implied as much when she described the early settlement of Marshall County. She wrote, “The German, Irish, Swede, Dane, and Swiss came and conquered. The adventurer from the South who came to usurp became a citizen.”¹⁷² When it was whites from Europe or the South coming to the West, “conquering” was an action to be admired and “usurping” only a temporary goal, not something that showed an innate barrier to greater advancement as a race.

With the end of the war, new questions arose that pertained to the special nature of Kansas’s participation in the conflict. Kansans took it upon themselves to re-construct their state’s image, finding inspiration in some aspects of the “bleeding” era and Civil War while downplaying or forgetting others. The participation of black and Native American soldiers was

¹⁷¹ Emma E. Forter, *History of Marshall County, Kansas. Its People, Industries, and Institutions. With Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and Genealogical Records of Many of the Old Families*. (Indianapolis, IN: B.F. Bowen & Co., Inc., 1917), 53.

¹⁷² Forter, 56.

one of these contested areas of memory that mirrored the fight for acceptance in the West. Those who would have preferred to exclude blacks from the territory from the beginning or see them leave as soldiers and not return would not support remembering their sacrifices in the historical record. However, just as the soldiers took it upon themselves to join the army and fight for a nation that tentatively accepted them, they and many of their white officers continued to use their service as an argument for their inclusion. The shortcoming of most studies of nonwhite soldiers is that they end when the war ends. This study will take up the process of shaping contested memories over the traumatic territorial and Civil War era as Kansas tried to shape its own memories about the recent past and present them in an instructive way to the renewed postwar nation striving to attain a new sense of fuller embodiment as it resumed the project of imperial expansion in earnest.

Chapter 3:

The Kansas Spirit of the American Reunion

When Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, effectively ending the Civil War, Kansans at home or stationed across the western war front had to take stock of their position in the nation and decide a course of action. For most soldiers, this practically meant being mustered out of service and returning to or establishing a home in the still young state. In terms of reconciling their recent experience, however, the deeply emotional and visceral experience of fighting in the Civil War and in the war that was American slavery had to be somehow set aside or distilled into meaningful memories that would animate participants and those who were influenced by them. Over time, Kansans more often chose the latter course, addressing the gaps and wounds of the traumatic past through collective memory. This chapter traces and contextualizes the development and engineering of a useful postwar collective narrative about Kansas's territorial and Civil War experience that eventually evolved into a regional nationalism known as the "Kansas Spirit."

Samuel J. Crawford, given leave by the Union Army to serve as Kansas's governor when elected in 1864, undertook the complicated task of finishing out the war and mobilizing his adopted home state for postwar pursuits. In his memoir, Crawford portrays a rather calm transition from war to peace for former white adversaries, writing, "Soon the survivors of the lost cause were homeward bound," and "the brave (Union) survivors of the bloodiest war of modern times resumed the peaceful pursuits of life." "Rebel bushwhackers, outlaws, and sneak thieves generally along the eastern and southern borders of Kansas . . . were handled without gloves," wrote Crawford, "and peace was speedily restored."¹⁷³ In addition to capturing and punishing wartime marauders, Crawford's immediate postwar goals included securing loans from eastern banks for the cash-poor state, establishing a state capitol building and penitentiary, recording the actions of Kansas soldiers for posterity, and creating an immigration society to lure settlers from other parts of the country.¹⁷⁴ Clearly, the 30-year-old governor was determined to preside over an expected period of rapid population, economic, and institutional growth that seemed like it would flow naturally from a victorious war effort.

All was not as smooth and peaceful as these seemingly mundane aspects of state building implied, however. One of the most notable aspects of the postwar years in Crawford's memoir is the painstaking descriptions of the "Indian troubles" that plagued Kansas. So important was defeating the various Native groups that challenged white control of the state's sparsely settled regions that Crawford resigned his governorship on November 4, 1868 to lead a group of Kansas soldiers as they joined the 7th U.S. Cavalry. Crawford's experience provides a glimpse at the struggle to reconstruct homes after the war while fighting to consolidate a fractured nation with an uncertain identity. He believed his calling to be fighting Indians for the sake of the West and

¹⁷³ Crawford, 222-3.

¹⁷⁴ Crawford, 227.

the new nation. Others, no doubt influenced by similar attitudes about Indians and the need to reconstruct postwar American identity, undertook the great project of reshaping collective historical memory about the recent past.

This chapter examines the formulation and operation of the regional nationalism represented by the Kansas Spirit in its early stages as a self-conscious product of collective memory. In its formative stages, in Kansas schoolhouses and newspaper offices, the idea could be characterized as a kind of collective memory emerging from the intersection of what historian John Bodnar calls “vernacular” and “official” culture.¹⁷⁵ The strong elements of vernacular culture within the early formulations of the Kansas Spirit helped to anchor the state’s residents to their version of postwar America during the “Centennial moment,” believing that their sacrifices during Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War—as well as their central geographic position—made them especially suited to be a model for the rest of the nation. Towards the end of the 19th century, some places and symbols associated with the Kansas Spirit became useful as part of a more official memory, which is a more top-down effort by political and economic leaders to enforce unity by contriving a harmonious version of the past that is applicable to the present-day needs of the state. The Kansas Spirit was never tied to a specific set of events or a concrete narrative, and this allowed for both vernacular and official appropriations. Throughout this ongoing conversation between vernacular and official sources, the Kansas Spirit retained much

¹⁷⁵ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-14. Bodnar characterizes vernacular cultural expressions as originating from diverse groups of people with specialized interests who were often directly involved in events that are being shaped in public memory. Official culture, on the other hand, is promoted by military, political, and economic leaders. It is usually interested in “social unity, the continuity of existing institutions, and loyalty to the status quo,” 14. Although Bodnar is most interested in twentieth century examples of his formulation, there is definite applicability to the creation of public memory in late nineteenth century Kansas.

of its salience as a tool to remind Kansans, and Americans, of the possibilities of a more moral, inclusive imperial state.

I will pay particular attention to Kansas's participation in two large and related commemorative events—the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and the 1879 Kansas Memorial or Old Settlers Reunion near Lawrence—as well as contemporary works written in response to the impulse to preserve local history. With the recent collapse of the national imperial state, especially at its borders, the stakes of the Reconstruction era were quite high. It represented a moment of self-reckoning and consolidation as Kansans sought to move forward. As I argued in previous chapters, Kansans contended with a severe threat to the moral high ground that animated free state settlers and Union soldiers in a slavery war and a Civil War that sometimes required them to practice inhumane tactics scarcely distinguishable from those of their enemies. Moving forward, these people had to know who they were, and a key element to this question was being able to refine and control the narrative of the past.

To Kansans and their various audiences, the multifaceted traumas of the territorial and Civil War period were recast as a kind of character-building exercise that formed the basis of the Kansas Spirit. Many times over, “seeing the elephant” of sectional violence in Kansas was presented as a chance to show manly fortitude and change the tide of history away from slavery and towards freedom. However, it is interesting to note the degree to which the creators of historical memory acknowledged their loss of morality in the pursuit of a just cause. Usually, the justification was made quite easily, but at other points, there was a visible tension. Another conscious tactic used in creating collective memory of this era was to shift the location of Kansas in the popular imagination from a western outpost, a periphery of indeterminate lines between “civilization” and “savagery,” to an agricultural and moral center of a new postwar American

empire. The Kansas Spirit, as it became firmly attached to the antislavery crusade in the young, vibrant, central state of the west and the victory of “civilization” over “savagery,” was able largely to accommodate African Americans in the imagined great western future, but it was not so willing to accept “unassimilated” Native Americans.

Early in the Reconstruction period, Kansans seemed almost wholly united under not just the Republican Party, but the radical wing of it. When Senator James H. Lane refused to override President Andrew Johnson’s veto of the Freedman’s Bill, many Kansans turned against him. During a trip west to try to regain support, Lane distraughtly shot himself through the head, dying ten days later, an act many suspected was related to his political frustrations. With the charismatic Lane out of the picture, Governor Crawford shrewdly moved his position towards the radical end of the political spectrum, as he now had room to maneuver. Though he still garnered criticism from some staunch radicals like Daniel R. Anthony, Crawford was able to gain a relatively easy re-election in 1866. His biggest blunder, though inadvertent, was replacing Lane with Edmund Ross, who famously cast the tiebreaking vote preventing Johnson from being removed from office after his impeachment.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, inter and intraparty fighting did not occupy as much of Crawford’s time as negotiating land deals for settlers, railroads, and Native Americans. Guided by the belief that Indians should be removed because they did not improve the land and kept others from doing so, Crawford tried to get favorable judgments to get white settlers to the new state.¹⁷⁷ When he perceived a threat at the borders, he reverted to military tactics, rejoining the army and perpetuating the exclusion of Indians from the Kansas future.

¹⁷⁶ Mark A. Plummer, *Frontier Governor: Samuel J. Crawford of Kansas* (University Press of Kansas, 1971), 80-109.

¹⁷⁷ Plummer, 85.

Creating, reshaping, and preserving the Kansas Spirit in collective memory required an institutional framework suitable for the undertaking, and the Kansas Historical Society, founded in 1875 out of the Kansas Editors' and Publishers' Association, was a leader in this endeavor. As Maurice Halbwachs explains, "Collective frameworks are . . . precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society."¹⁷⁸ The KHS was not founded simply to collect materials and individual recollections. It was clear from by leaders' political activities that they believed the free-state cause was the driving force in Kansas, U.S. Western, and American history. The long-serving secretary Franklin G. Adams was an ardent free-state man who faced down armed proslavery settlers in Leavenworth in 1856. The KHS, which became a branch of the state government and thereafter known as the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) in 1879, would have a hand in promoting the state's legacy in local and national events up to the present. Though it became a branch of the official state government, the founding of the KSHS out of a local editors' club and its focus on preservation of free state Kansas history helped it remain largely a representation of vernacular culture.

The newly emergent desire to promote the Kansas Spirit and the young, energetic, moral, and commercially available state that produced it, spawned the state's participation in the 1876 Centennial Exposition. The Kansas Centennial Planning Commission boldly insisted that its state have its own building, rather than sharing space in a common exhibition hall with other state displays. Although the Kansans ultimately had to share their building with Colorado, an even newer state whose eastern half used to be part of Kansas Territory, they began a trend that was copied by other states. The willingness of Kansas not only to participate, but to strive to be the

¹⁷⁸ Halbwachs, 40.

most intricate display at the Exposition stands in sharp contrast to states who carried the burden of the Civil War with great bitterness, such as those in the unreconstructed South. One particularly icy example of lingering negativity about the outcome of the war was apparent in this statement of Rufus K. Boyd, Alabama's Secretary of State, whose official response to the Centennial Planning Commission was to write:

Rich in patriotic virtue, inherited from a brave Revolutionary ancestry, but poor in money; plundered and robbed by an alien government—by force imposed, against the will of the people, as expressed at the ballot box; struggling against a public debt of thirty millions of dollars, created by a corrupt and venal Legislature composed of citizens of other states and negroes, aided and upheld by the military arm of the Federal Government; Alabama could only contribute this expression of her patriotism in recognition of the heroic virtues of the Fathers of the Republic, and her devotion to the greatest principles of constitutional liberty.¹⁷⁹

The visceral bitterness of Alabama about the recent war shows that bringing together all of the states in a national exposition was a difficult proposition. Understandably, the Exposition commission wanted to avoid references to the war in state displays, but the Kansans found ways to link their free-state past to the big event. Internal communications, for example, reinforced the message that the victory of antislavery led to Kansas's present prosperity. Senator William Peffer, in a message to the Kansas legislature encouraging it to approve \$25,000 for the Exposition, made his case by tying the past to the present and using Kansas as metaphor for the embodiment of morality and justice:

Kansas is one of the youngest children of the republic. She is a type of Americanism. On her soil began the great conflict which fixed the destiny of the nation. Her troubles have always enlisted the sympathies of the world around her, and the life-blood of the public heart flows freely to heal her misfortunes. Here will be an opportunity to make some recognition of the consideration with which she has been treated, and to prove by actual demonstration that when she grows older her granaries and larders will always be full.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ *Kansas at the Centennial. Report of the Centennial Managers to the Legislature of the State of Kansas.* Topeka: George W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1876.

¹⁸⁰ *Kansas at the Centennial*, 205.

The latter part of the statement, while seeming at first incongruous, was made abundantly clear by the designers and builders of the Kansas display. Photographs show walls and tables covered with the best of Kansas's agricultural wares, shipped in after the year's harvest specifically for the grand re-opening of the Kansas-Colorado building in mid September. A Boston newspaper even commented upon the reopening, "Bleeding Kansas"—it is not her wounds that have reopened, but, thank God, her Centennial State Building."¹⁸¹ In this statement, there appears an implicit understanding that the wounds of Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War could be healed by remembering the state's agricultural success.



Figure 10: Photograph of the Kansas and Colorado Building at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. The building was recognized as one of the finest of the state exhibition halls. It was closed briefly in the late summer of 1876 in order to ship in fresh products from the Kansas harvest. Part of the new display included a model of the U.S. Capitol and a seven foot reproduction of the Liberty Bell, both of which were covered in Kansas corn, millet, and other agricultural products. The Kansas Collection: Kansas Historical Quarterlies. www.kancoll.org/khq/1974/74_3_cover.htm. Retrieved May 1, 2014.

¹⁸¹ *Kansas at the Centennial*, 282.

It seems likely from the literature and other materials that visitors to the Kansas display were beckoned to make the connection between overcoming the free-state struggle and agricultural abundance. The report of the Kansas Centennial Board to the governor also invokes the American legacy of liberty, but in a completely different way than the Rufus K. Boyd statement above. As the commissioners told the story, Kansas had to make the choice between freedom and slavery and “boldly chose freedom.” Not only this, but Kansas “secured to Liberty a larger meaning, and to Humanity a higher future. Henceforth, in the light of our interpretation, Liberty is no longer for a race alone, but for all mankind. Kansas, political daughter of Jefferson, gave to Freedom its new and better birth.” This past position of leadership in the march of freedom was used as a justification for Kansas’ prominent position at the Expo. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence would not be complete without Kansas, the fulfillment of Jefferson’s promise, figuring prominently as “a Priestess of Liberty that she is,” and “dispensing the blessings and hospitalities of her own household.”¹⁸² Appropriating Jefferson as the father of Kansas was a shrewd strategy of shaping the collective past. It turned a southern slave owner, often heralded by secessionists and state’s rights advocates fighting to preserve and expand slavery, into a figure who would posthumously give his blessing to the Union victory and universal liberty.

The presence of Kansas at the Centennial had a profound effect on those who viewed the spectacle. Statements from outsiders were meticulously compiled and included in the official Centennial report, in a special section titled “What Others Say.” The most influential story, reprinted from a Philadelphia newspaper, contained a speech from Col. John Forney, who changed his political loyalty from the Democrats to the Republicans as a direct response to

¹⁸² *Kansas at the Centennial*, 215.

Bleeding Kansas in the 1850s. In the speech, he made connections between Kansas's struggle to make itself and the nation free, as well pointing out the moral wrongness of the South. Forney roused his audience to an excited state by recalling the dramatic past and meaning of Kansas to the nation and to himself. He stated, in part:

A tide of memories rushed through my mind as I took in the dazzling scene. Kansas was the field on which the first modern battle was fought in favor of the Declaration of Independence. [Great cheering.] Kansas was the key that unlocked the tremendous future. [Cheers.] Kansas was the magician that solved the hard problem of human slavery. [Cheers.] Kansas was the apostle that liberated the white-party slaves of the North and the black chattels of the South [cheers], and to Kansas I owe my own emancipation from the thralldom of slavery in our politics. [Cheers.]¹⁸³

Forney was not shy in his praise of Kansas and the Republicans, nor was he unwilling to cast aspersions on the South for starting the conflict “when the attempt was made to force slavery on the people by incredible violence and fraud. [Cheers.]”¹⁸⁴ At a time when Reconstruction was coming to a negotiated end and emancipation was being swept away from the collective memory of the war, Forney reminded listeners that Kansas was at the forefront of the liberation struggle and stood as a great example for the nation. Reading the report, it seems like the words of others were the perfect vehicle to convey the real message that the Kansans wanted to say explicitly.

Although the effects of speeches can be difficult to quantify, Forney clearly made a name for himself among Kansas promoters and potential new migrants for his bold statements about the regenerative power of the state's past. His speech, and the overall success of Kansas's self promotion at the Expo generally, left Kansans wanting to showcase themselves to the nation by hosting their own signature event. Such was the environment that bred the Old Settlers' Reunion of 1879. One of the main speeches given at that meeting was John Forney's aptly named “The Lesson of Kansas,” which chided the South for not following Jefferson's spirit of equality as it

¹⁸³ *Kansas at the Centennial*, 291.

¹⁸⁴ *Kansas at the Centennial*, 291.

was expressed in the Declaration of Independence. The Kansas Spirit counteracted the “Lost Cause” view of the war that began not long after open hostilities ceased, gained strength throughout the age of “Redemption,” when white southerners extinguished postwar black political gains, and coalesced into a dominant *national* narrative by the turn of the century. It is not surprising, then, that formerly enslaved citizens of the Old South would seek a place that counteracted the Southern version of the war and American history.

1879 was a particularly eventful year for Kansas. The aforementioned Old Settlers’ Reunion took place amid a statewide debate over the merits of prohibition, and, more directly related to Civil War memory, this was the year that witnessed a large influx of African American migrants from the Deep South that Nell Painter identifies as “the most remarkable migration in the United States after the Civil War.”¹⁸⁵ Spurred by promotional leaders and deteriorating conditions in post-Reconstruction Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee, The meeting, which was held at a site called Bismarck Grove on September 14-15, was designed to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Kansas’s organization as a territory. Local reunions had been held in other parts of the state, but this event sought national recognition like none before or after. By this time, Lawrence had become what Pierre Nora would call a “site of memory,” a place that conjured images of proslavery depredations like the 1856 sacking and 1863 Quantrill’s raid.¹⁸⁶ At other times, the Marais des Cygnes, Pottawatomie Creek, and the town of Osawatomie served as similar sites ripe for appropriation and manipulation. Keeping with the spirit of graciousness in victory, the reunion was not designed to be ostensibly political, but, as one Topeka newspaper editor commented, “to expect that a reunion of settlers who had something to do with Kansas in

¹⁸⁵ Painter, 184.

¹⁸⁶ Nora, 22.

1854-60 would not include talk of those times would be absurd.”¹⁸⁷ From the speeches, songs, and newspaper coverage of the event, it is clear that the meeting was meant to be a celebration of the free-state triumph over the forces that would have made Kansas a slave state.

The coincidental Old Settlers’ Reunion and black exodus from the South were both catalyzed by the Centennial end of Reconstruction and put the “Kansas Spirit” to the test. The moral surety of stopping the spread of slavery was central to this regional nationalism, but could it be applied to a fuller realization of black civil rights? The Exodus from the South to Kansas was revolutionary and unprecedented, furthering Kansas’s reputation an “asylum for liberty” and a home for the persecuted people who had been at the center of the territory’s creation and the Civil War. White Kansans were now face to face with the people they believed that they were instrumental in freeing. Though not as accepting as they could have been, I argue that many of the promoters of the free-state Kansas past realized that there was a historical obligation to give the new arrivals a fair opportunity to establish a home in the new West.

The records of the 1879 Old Settlers’ Reunion reveal the influences on the participants of all the above-mentioned contemporary events and issues. The organizers and speakers also were keenly aware of their unique western, yet central position in the nation and history and often framed their comments through this realization. Most often, they viewed the West as the deathbed of slavery and congratulated themselves for displaying the manhood and fortitude to save the nation and turn the tide of human history by making a stand against it. Some of the old settlers also added a western spin to their view of the American scene, offering an interpretation of a traumatic past of racial and civil strife that differed from the mood of reconciliation urged by

¹⁸⁷ *Topeka Commonwealth*, August 23, 1879.

both North and South at this time. This is particularly notable in the face of waning opportunities to preserve a national, emancipationist version of the Civil War and American reunion.

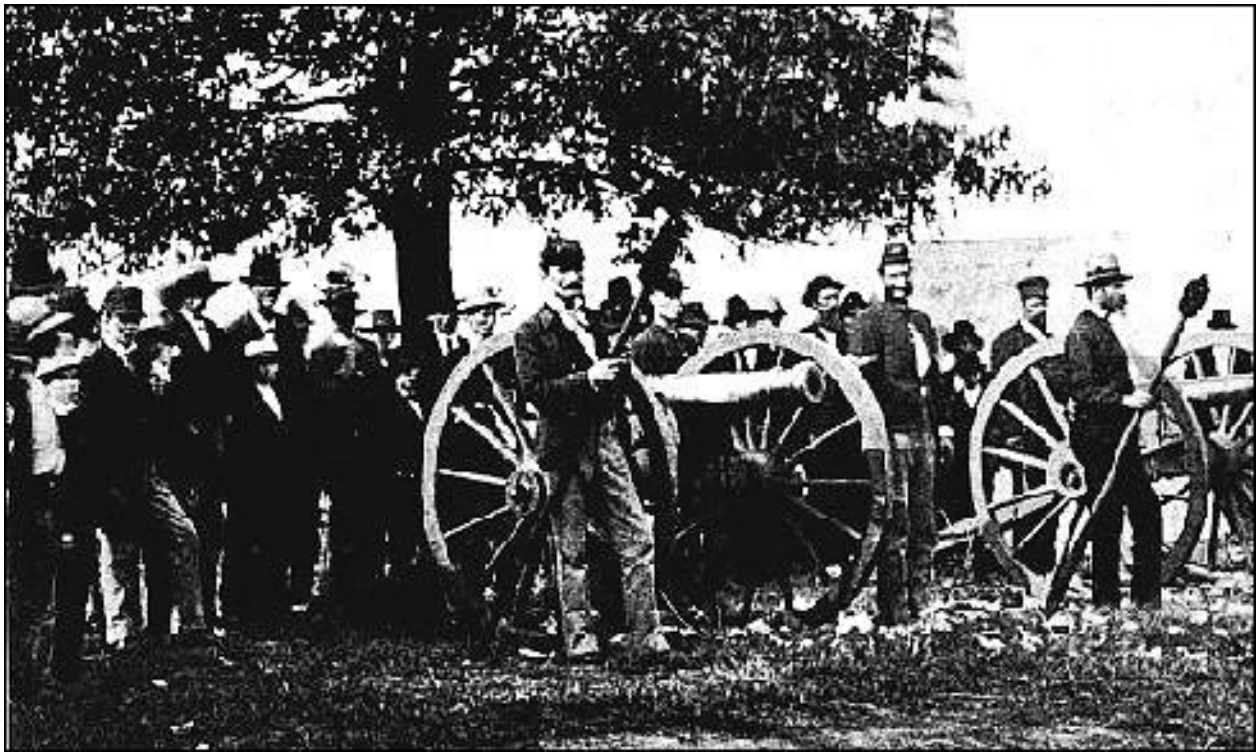


Figure 11: Photograph of meeting attendees preparing to fire the Topeka and Leavenworth cannon during the 1879 Old Settlers' Reunion at Bismarck Grove near Lawrence. The site of the reunion was used by both whites and blacks for many gatherings, including temperance meetings and Emancipation Day celebrations. In Jim L. Lewis, "Beautiful Bismarck: Bismarck Grove, Lawrence, 1878-1900," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Autumn 1969): 225-256. Available at <http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-beautiful-bismarck/13197>. Retrieved April 13, 2014.

Some of the most notable attendees of the 1879 meeting included Kansas's first governor and early settler Charles Robinson, current governor John P. St. John, Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad founder Cyrus K. Holliday, Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of the Interior John P. Usher, Civil War General George W. Dietzler, who was arrested by a proslavery posse in 1856 and commanded the Army of the Border in defeating Confederates at the Battle of Westport, and New England Emigrant Aid Society leaders and contributors Edward Everett Hale and John M. S. Williams. Poet Walt Whitman, the venerable interpreter of the war's effect on the nation's collective being, attended but was physically unable to address the crowd. President Rutherford

B. Hayes, free state town namesake Amos Lawrence, abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier, and John Sherman, who was part of a committee sent to Kansas by Congress in 1856 to investigate electoral fraud and civil violence, were invited but sent letters of regret that they were otherwise occupied. Attendance during the two-day affair is estimated at about 25,000.

Looking back from the perspective of 1922, William Allen White, the longtime editor of the Emporia, Kansas *Gazette* remarked, “When anything is going to happen in this country, it happens first in Kansas. Abolition, Prohibition, Populism, the Bull Moose, the exit of the roller towel, the appearance of the bank guarantee, the blue sky law, the adjudication of industrial disputes as distinguished from the arbitration of industrial differences—these things came popping out of Kansas like bats out of hell.”¹⁸⁸ Although the “old settlers” of the 1870s and 1880s could not have known about the later ideas and events, they believed that they belonged within this moral tradition and practice that White later identified. Senator John J. Ingalls compared the “prolonged and most distressing” struggle of the abolitionists to the recent efforts of prohibitionists to secure a dry amendment. His words likely resonated in the ears of people who had attended the temperance rallies at the same site the year before and three weeks before the 1879 reunion.

For all of the references to temperance and other moral causes, the overwhelming theme of the event was antislavery—the attempt to show that the old settlers saved the nation and altered the course of history by stopping the advance of slavery in the West. Charles Robinson, the first state governor of Kansas and first speaker at the meeting, reminded the audience of the importance of determining Kansas’s status as free or slave. He cited an editorial in the Charleston *Mercury* written not long after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act claiming that

¹⁸⁸ Walter Johnson, ed., *Selected Letters of William Allen White 1899-1943* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1947), 2.

Kansas was the “turning point in the destinies of slavery and abolitionism. If the South triumphs, abolitionism will be defeated and shorn of its power for all time. If she is defeated, abolitionism will grow more insolent and aggressive, until the utter time of the South is consummated.”¹⁸⁹

Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad president Cyrus K. Holliday asserted that the Kansas settlers “had both the manliness and courage to accomplish . . . what Congress had not the manliness nor the courage to do.” He later added his belief that historians would “assign to Kansas, and to the brave sons and daughters of her early territorial days, the honor of having turned the current of human affairs and human government into the channel of universal liberty.”¹⁹⁰

In these words, a desire to reclaim masculinity from the proslavery side in collective memory is clearly apparent. During the territorial era, proslavery border ruffians were portrayed as overly masculine, hard-drinking savages who raped or threatened to rape the feminine West. Charles Sumner had implied as much in his famous “Crime Against Kansas” speech that led to his being assaulted. In addition to their antislavery stance, both Robinson and Holliday had firsthand experience with the masculine activity of western pioneering. Robinson had passed through Kansas in 1849 on his way to California and returned to lay out the site of Topeka with Holliday and the financial backing of the New England Emigrant Aid Society.¹⁹¹ The success of their enterprises in business and politics radiates in their bold claims that Kansans had showed the manly fortitude to save the nation.

¹⁸⁹ Charles Robinson speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

¹⁹⁰ Cyrus K. Holliday speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

¹⁹¹ William W. Cone, *William W. Cone's Historical Sketch of Shawnee County, Kansas, including an account of the important events in the early settlement of each township* (Topeka, KS: The Kansas Farmer Printing House, 1877), 5-6.

Other dignitaries who did not witness firsthand the founding of Kansas had ample praise for those who staved off the advance of the slave power. Poet John Greenleaf Whittier, in reply to the invitation to attend, placed Kansas in the highest regard for “fortitude, self-sacrifice, and heroic service to freedom,” concluding that “its baptism of martyr blood not only saved the state to liberty, but made the abolition of slavery everywhere possible.”¹⁹² John J. Ingalls, who did not arrive in Kansas until 1858, remarked to listeners that “the terrible trials through which you were called to pass were probably necessary to save the Republic from stagnation and death.”¹⁹³ Each of these statements makes direct reference to bodily salvation, showing that many of these figures believed the West would be regenerative for the postwar nation as it faced the future rather than an extension of the old ways of the East. In Kansas, the world had found a model for ending slavery, and in that experience of blood sacrifice, the West gave the United States an opportunity to realize a fully embodied, unified future.

It may be tempting to dismiss the statements of these men as engaged in pandering and hyperbole, but it is important to consider their face value as well. The speakers and other leaders who experienced the struggles of early Kansas took their place in history quite seriously. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, which nullified the Missouri Compromise of 1820, re-opened the West to slavery, and the free-state settlers risked life and property as they competed with proslavery forces.¹⁹⁴ At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, each state was allowed to make a display to tout its achievements. Historian Heather Cox Richardson acknowledges that these

¹⁹² John Greenleaf Whittier letter. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

¹⁹³ Ingalls speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

¹⁹⁴ See *Report of the Special Committee appointed to investigate the troubles in Kansas, with the views of the minority of said committee*, U.S. House of Representatives, (Washington, D.C.: C. Wendell, Printer, 1856).

exhibits were prohibited from making political or “offensive” references to the Civil War.¹⁹⁵ William Cone, who compiled a historical sketch of Topeka and the rest of Shawnee County for publication in 1877, recognized the same kind of pressure that was exerted on the Centennial exhibitors and refused to discuss anything related to Bleeding Kansas or the Civil War. Although he touted his work as containing important events in each of the county’s townships, he wrote, “The political history of this county in the three following years (after 1855), should be written by some competent and impartial writer, who would give each party equal space, and an equal chance to state their individual views upon the political questions of those early days.”¹⁹⁶ Even though he claimed in his introduction that he was unbiased and did thorough research, he was clearly uncomfortable producing any materials that could spark old sectional fires.

The same insecurity with such topics is apparent in some of the reunion speakers. Holliday prefaced his comments on fighting the slave power with a warning that all reference to political topics should be avoided on such an occasion.¹⁹⁷ Robinson likewise offered a conciliatory “right hand of fellowship” to “our former proslavery antagonists” and claimed that it was time to close the “bloody chasm.”¹⁹⁸ The event’s organizers also invited at least one of these former antagonists (who later became a Republican and joined Holliday to form the A.T.&S.F Railroad), Benjamin F. Stringfellow, but he declined, adding the off-color quip that he wished there was some kind of Underground Railroad that he could use to escape his bondage from work duties.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Heather Cox Richardson, *West From Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America After the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 173.

¹⁹⁶ Cone, 6.

¹⁹⁷ Cyrus K. Holliday speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

¹⁹⁸ Robinson speech, KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

¹⁹⁹ B.F. Stringfellow letter, KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

Whether or not they had reservations about reopening the wounds of the antislavery struggle, the reunion invitees *did* make political speeches that pinned the blame for America's near ruin on the slave power and further solidified Kansas's attachment to emancipationist collective memory and a nation that would honor that memory. They were equally adamant about using the occasion as a means for history to record and people to remember the sacrifices made in antislavery pursuits. Cyrus K. Holliday, as noted earlier, believed that "historians" would be crucial to preserving Kansas's role in creating universal liberty. Daniel R. Anthony was quite aware that he was fighting a battle in the realm of collective memory. He argued, "Let us see to it that history records the truth. Do not allow history to record a lie. Let it not be forgotten that twenty-five years ago the army, the navy, the courts, and the whole power of the national government and its appointees were invoked to make Kansas a slave state. No Federal judge or other official dared disobey the commands of the slave power."²⁰⁰ There is no suggestion to let bygones be bygones, forget the past, or remember the equal sacrifices of both sides in Anthony's words. Charles Robinson was equally passionate about Kansas's early free-state settlers securing a favorable place in the annals of history. He stated, "How this contest was waged, how this small number with three hundred miles of hostile territory between themselves and their sympathizers, managed to defy the usurpations and usurpers and baffle the federal officials

²⁰⁰ D.R. Anthony speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1. See also Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, which introduces its discussion on the 1856 sack of Lawrence by claiming, "On Wednesday, May 21, all was ready for the grand consummation to which all previous work had been tended, and for which the Administration, the United States Senate, the Court, and the Territorial Governor, the Southern States, and the Law and Order (proslavery) party of Western Missouri and Eastern Kansas had wrought unitedly, to wit, the silencing of the Free-state press, the destruction of the Free-state organization, and the vindictive chastening of Lawrence, as the citadel of insubordination against the laws they sought to force upon an unwilling people," 130. Clearly, this 1883 portrayal of the events favors the free state version of Bleeding Kansas. It is one of many examples that downplays or justifies free state violence and demonizes the proslavery "law and order" side.

history must record.”²⁰¹ His comment about closing the “bloody chasm,” mentioned earlier, was added almost as an afterthought, perhaps with the intention of not seeming too biased. These men were clearly battling a national impulse to forget the moral stakes of the Civil War that were plainly visible in other kinds of historical writing and memorialization.

Historians today may think it odd that people could believe so strongly in the ability to achieve “Truth” or create a “correct history” of any event or era. The old settlers may have had a firmer attachment to the possibility of accomplishing this, but they must have also realized that the struggle to shape the memory of listeners and readers required constant vigilance. This was an era of reconciliation.²⁰² A branch of Liberal Republicans had broken away from the rest of the party in the early 1870s in part because they believed that “bloody shirt” rhetoric and continued disfranchisement of former rebels was detrimental to national progress.²⁰³ With this movement finding sympathetic ears in Missouri, Kansans who had spent a decade fighting slavery sympathizers and rebels based in Missouri likely felt pressure to revive, preserve, and refashion the cause that brought them to the West.

The 1879 Old Settlers’ Reunion serves as a window into the shaping of western public memory of the fight against slavery and the intersection of vernacular and official culture. One reason relates to the western theme of making a world anew, but with the obligations of the past adequately remembered. The New Englanders who spoke or otherwise commented on the event supported the view, mentioned earlier in the discussion of Robinson and Holliday, that the West was a place to regenerate the nation in the name of morality. Edward Everett Hale, a founder and

²⁰¹ Charles Robinson speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

²⁰² See David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001) and Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

²⁰³ Richardson, 110.

financial backer of the New England Emigrant Aid Society, argued that Kansans did not migrate to secure freedom. They already had it in the places they came from. He claimed that they came “for other men’s children” and “the future of the whole country” with the goal that “the advance of slavery should at last be arrested.”²⁰⁴ Here we can see Hale putting a rhetorical spin on the past that tells people how to think of the West, turning it into not just a place of freedom or open land but the final bulwark against slavery and the beginning of a new, nationally unified society. The West was not free from the burden of slavery; its experience of slavery and Civil War was shaped into a formative lesson.

Several of the main speakers on the first day of the meeting made reference to Kansas’s special connection to African American freedom and encouraged residents to follow through on what they started. John P. Usher, who had been Abraham Lincoln’s Secretary of the Interior and was present at his deathbed, was then serving as mayor of Lawrence. He stated:

A people, having borne the lash for 200 years, toiling unrequited under the stings and pains of the lash, near two thousand miles away, having turned the yoke of their oppression, cast about to find some land where they could enjoy equal rights with their fellow men, and of all places on the face of the green earth, Kansas was found to be the haven of refuge.²⁰⁵

He went on to claim that the impulse to rescue a “timid creature from its relentless pursuer” is not human but inspired by God, thereby solidifying Kansas’s place as an asylum of liberty. Touting the lure of “equal rights with their fellow men” seems particularly welcoming in this early post-Reconstruction period.

Charles Robinson also bound together Kansas’s record of moral reforms, Civil War sacrifice, and opportunities to share in the legacy, stating, “Where do temperance, virtue,

²⁰⁴ Edward Everett Hale speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

²⁰⁵ Charles S. Gleed, ed. *The Kansas Memorial: A Report of the Old Settlers’ Meeting Held at Bismarck Grove, Kansas, September 15th and 16th, 1879* (Kansas City, MO: Press of Ramsey, Millett, and Hudson, 1880), 21.

morality and religion find more cherished homes? Where does education shower her blessings more kindly, or more profusely upon rich and poor alike, and upon the children of all nations, races, colors, creeds and sects?”²⁰⁶ As a follow up to this declaration, Robinson made the argument that this was a logical result of Kansas offering more soldiers for the war effort than it had registered voters. The moral example of Kansas, “occupying the grand central position in the Union,” he said later in his address, would someday be a leader of the nation, and “a hundred States shall revolve around her and strive for the honor of saluting her Queen.”²⁰⁷ Emancipation and equal opportunity were not to be forgotten as results of the war; they were potential cornerstones of a vibrant, growing nation of *100 states* led by the example of Kansas.

One of the reunion invitees, former white New England Emigrant Aid Society organizer John M. S. Williams, discussed black rights in the post-Reconstruction era through the frame of Kansas abolition. He praised the early settlers for being people of ideas, as well as for their willingness to use Sharp’s rifles to obtain their right to vote, “(a right) which . . . was persistently attempted to be withheld from them, by the same tyrannical power, which now overrides the personal liberty of our colored brethren, in a large part of the former slave districts (and who) are now forced to flee to obtain the privileges which your state so opportunely affords.”²⁰⁸ Although Williams declined the invitation to attend the reunion, the fact that the recent U.S. representative from Massachusetts was invited shows that his comments on the current status of freed African Americans would have found at least some welcoming ears.

Daniel R. Anthony, by 1879 a Leavenworth newspaper editor, also mentioned the current African American exodus during his speech at the settlers’ meeting, telling the audience that

²⁰⁶ Gleed, 26.

²⁰⁷ Gleed, 27.

²⁰⁸ John M.S. Williams letter, September 3, 1879. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

Kansas was large enough to accommodate plenty of new people. It is accurate to claim that Kansas and the West offered opportunities for advancement and freedom to those who may not have had it where they were. Many of the Exodusters believed that Kansas was the promised land, based partially on the “Kansas Fever” myth that they would be given free transportation, land, and supplies, but also on what they knew about Bleeding Kansas, John Brown’s attack on proslavery settlers, and the black volunteer regiments that served in the Civil War.²⁰⁹ Scholars have determined that Kansas was not the imagined paradise for black migrants, and that the majority opinion of white settlers was that of free-soilers in the states that gave Kansas much of its population.²¹⁰ They wanted free labor, but they did not want black free laborers living near them.

Anthony’s response to this concern incorporated a certain level of confidence that seemed particularly fitting to the West. In an effort to make the exodus less threatening to whites, he told listeners, “The exodus from the south may send a few thousand colored men into our State, or for that matter the whole negro population of the South, but our State is so large that if they were well scattered you would hardly be able to find one of them.” He was confident enough in the ability of Kansas to sustain a large population that he even promised that all of the immigrants in eastern cities could be placed in Kansas and not be within speaking distance.²¹¹ What Anthony seemed to be offering is a western mixture of opportunity and exclusionism, a kind of response to the concerns of both free-soilers and nativists who feared immigrants. He did not go so far as to say that blacks and other immigrants are not welcome in Kansas, but he also did not imagine them as being wholly integrated into the social fabric. Anthony seemed to be consistent with his

²⁰⁹ Albert Castel, “Civil War Kansas and the Negro,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April, 1966): 138. See also Painter, *Exodusters*, 177-8.

²¹⁰ Castel, 126.

²¹¹ Daniel R. Anthony speech. KSHS Collection 626 B. Old Settlers History. Box 1.

statement about black migrants in Leavenworth during the Civil War, whom he touted as good workers and able to find a home in Kansas.

A policy of spreading black migrants so thinly across the state that they could hardly be found recalls Thomas Jefferson's theory of diffusion, in which he believed the West would provide enough space to preserve a yeoman empire and constantly-weakening slave system simultaneously.²¹² Slavery had been defeated and colonization had been seen by most to be impractical, but Anthony showed that the human effects of emancipation remained and proposed that Kansas could be a site of conditional accommodation, if not an ideal asylum of liberty. Although Anthony was not as adamant as Williams about giving blacks their rights, he would later follow his sister Susan B. Anthony and support female suffrage in Kansas municipal elections, thereby enacting a version of the spirit of Kansas activism that William Allen White described.

John P. St. John, Kansas governor at the time of the Exoduster migration and Old Settlers' Reunion, took it upon himself to create a Freedman's Relief Association (KFRA) and spent large amounts of time justifying his aid to the new black population. By mid-summer 1879, almost 7,000 black migrants had arrived in Kansas, with many needing immediate assistance since they had sacrificed nearly all of their possessions to make the trip. On June 26, St. John created a written statement and addressed it "To the Friends of the Colored People," asking for donations to help with immediate relief efforts such as clothing and shelter, as well as long term projects like helping to finance loans for black migrants to obtain land in various parts of the state. The organization, he wrote, had "two controlling motives." The first was the spirit of humanity, and the second "was to maintain the honored traditions of our State which had its

²¹² Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 186.

conception and birth in a struggle for freedom and equal rights for the colored man. She has shed too much blood for this cause to now turn back from her soil these defenseless people fleeing from the land of oppression.” Here, St. John clearly links the blood sacrifice of the territorial era and Civil War to a continued quest for black rights. He even labels the war a struggle for freedom *and* equal rights for the colored man in a time when the emancipatory aspect of the war was fading from national collective memory.²¹³

Still, relating to what Anthony promised about diffusing the new migrant population, St. John and the KFRA seemed interested in spreading the black population to sites in various rural counties rather than welcoming them to permanent homes in Topeka, the headquarters of the KFRA and site of its temporary relief barracks. During the KFRA’s first year, donors contributed approximately \$150,000, with a portion of it used to help secure 20,000 acres of land in Waubensee, Graham, Morris, and Hodgeman Counties for the black migrants. The KFRA pragmatically stated that most of the migrants were agricultural workers and altruistically wanted them to secure their own farms, but the description of these settlements as “colonies” and their locations being 50-200 miles from Topeka implied a certain level of separation from the already established white towns and agricultural lands.²¹⁴

Two years before the exodus, the African American town of Nicodemus had been established in Graham County, Kansas and by 1879 had reached its highest population of 600-700 residents. The first wave of settlers, faced with difficult agricultural conditions and a lack of capital, had to petition Governor George T. Anthony and various private charities for aid, and several white Kansans supported that effort. At the time of the exodus, however, Nicodemus was facing its own hardships and its new town leaders decided to stop seeking government relief for

²¹³ Andreas, 291.

²¹⁴ Andreas, 292.

fear of attracting poor Exodusters who would tax the town's resources. Although it shied away from the Exodusters and the KFRA, Nicodemus represented another possibility for black settlers to create an asylum for liberty in Kansas, albeit a tenuous one.²¹⁵

At the Old Settlers' meeting, St. John urged listeners not to "blot out or mar a single page or line of the grand history of Kansas, in behalf of freedom, but rather let us, remembering the sacrifices of her early martyrs to human liberty, keep our doors in the future as they have ever been in the past, without regard to politics, religion, race, condition or color, open to every human being willing to obey our laws, and put forth an earnest effort to better his condition and make for himself an honest living."²¹⁶ St. John was certainly influenced by a sense of Christian charity in his efforts to make sure the southern refugees would not suffer. But he also overplays the welcoming openness of Kansas's "grand history," which, as previous chapters have explained, included efforts to ban free black settlers, not to mention the intense exclusionism of the antislavery battles. Still, St. John deserves recognition for linking the Kansas Spirit to the contemporary exodus, and he appeared to follow through on his comments at the reunion.

In an 1880 speech in Chicago, St. John carried the message of acceptance outside of his home state, paving the way for African Americans to establish institutions. Here, he made a pitch for racial equality, saying, in the paraphrasing of a newspaper writer:

He remembered that of the 150,000 white emigrants into Kansas 100,000 were poor men; that to the bone and muscle and brain of poor men Kansas owed her glorious position as a state; that at Osawatomie the tree of liberty was planted by old John Brown, whose soul was still marching on; he has seen it actually demonstrated that corn planted and hoed by colored men grew as rapidly as that planted and hoed by white men, brought as much

²¹⁵ Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, "The Settlement of Nicodemus: Its Origins and Early Promotion," in *Promised Land on the Solomon: Black Settlement at Nicodemus* (Kansas U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 1984), 7-9.

²¹⁶ Glead, 32.

money; he remembered that corn was wealth, and a bushel of corn was worth a ton of race prejudice, and he said, 'Let them come.'²¹⁷

There was opposition to the exodus, of course, but from the press coverage, it appears that people were more afraid of the burden on the public coffers imposed by potentially penniless immigrants than they were intimidated by their color. This was perhaps understandable during the late 1870s, a time of economic stagnation. The implication in speeches of St. John and others was that the Exodusters were welcome as long as they were willing to work hard and assimilate.

African American political meetings at the time reveal a nuanced reaction to the Exodusters and the white majority Republican Party. In a late October 1879 meeting in Lawrence, Charles Henry Langston commented on the city as a site of memory and the importance of collective memory to the present. He said:

I have been talking to the people of this country for nearly forty years, but I never once thought of having to come to Lawrence—a city that has twice been burned—the birthplace of liberty, to tell colored men to be Republicans. For God's sake, if you don't vote the Republican ticket, what will you vote? No party is perfect. There are things which the Republican party has done that it ought not to have done, and it has left undone other things which it should have done, but it is righteous before God, beside the Democratic party.²¹⁸

One might think that African American citizens like Langston would be critical of the Republicans for not doing enough to aid the Exodusters, but—like the leaders of Nicodemus during this time—his attitude towards the migrants was mixed. At a Colored Men's Convention held in the Senate chamber of the Topeka State Capitol in April 1880, Langston, who presided over the meeting, was concerned that the Republicans, to which the blacks had always been faithful, were ignoring them and not sharing on the disbursements that came along with political power. He said that St. John had only been elected by a 9,000 vote majority in the last election,

²¹⁷ Topeka *Daily Capitol*, December 14, 1880.

²¹⁸ The Topeka *Daily Journal*, October 28, 1879.

and with 25,000 black voters, they should be able to impose their political will on the state and even find black candidates to run. In their slate of resolutions, they were cautious in advising more migrants to come. They condemned the conditions of the South that were pushing them out, but they warned them that they should not come unless they had the financial means to do so. The Colored Men's Convention wanted to make sure that the relief association did not encourage pauperism but rather helped migrants get settled on land and start growing crops and being productive citizens.²¹⁹

It was this sentiment of conditional accommodation and racial uplift that led to the establishment of Quindaro University, to which the Kansas State Legislature appropriated \$10,000 for a manual arts building in 1885. The school, which mirrored Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in many ways, educated black students from Kansas and many surrounding states. As the *Topeka Daily Journal* opined during talks of founding such a school, "While Kansas is leading off in every worthy reform, let her not forget that at her door lies the responsibility as well as the privilege of seeing that education is brought within the reach of *all* her citizens."²²⁰ This editor linked Kansas's involvement in other reforms like temperance and women's rights with an obligation to stay in that vein and provide a means for educating black citizens. While not using the exact words "Kansas Spirit," the writer followed a now established style of argument created by the Centennial and Old Settlers' Reunion. Kansas's commitment to the emancipationist vision of the war was central to the "Kansas Spirit," which would evolve into emphasizing moral issues like temperance and anti-monopolism later in the nineteenth century. This idea would be used to promote the growth of the state and, in the case of the black

²¹⁹ *Topeka Commonwealth*, April 13, 1880.

²²⁰ *Topeka Daily Journal*, January 8, 1881.

migration from the South in 1879-1880, lead the state to accommodate a population that had its own claims to the legacy of the war.

A neglected aspect of the Kansas story is its rapid change from a frontier prior to 1854 to the center in an expanding nation after the passage of Kansas-Nebraska Act and the ensuing attention paid to the region. When the 1855 “bogus legislature,” elected fraudulently by Missourians who came to pass proslavery laws, drew a map and divided the eastern half of the state into counties, there were entire counties created in the middle of Indian lands that white people had no permission to settle. The expansion of America’s continental empire and the racial encounters therein would serve as a rehearsal for America’s later expansion into the imperial arena in the late 19th and early 20th century. Throughout this process, Kansans continued to shape their past into a lesson for the nation. Emphasizing and reemphasizing the centrality of Kansas during the Centennial moment helped solidify the geographic and moral importance of Kansans to themselves and outsiders.

The importance of shaping collective memory through present concerns in the form of written historical revision is apparent in the local history preservation movement that swept the United States during the Centennial moment. In the preface to his review of the first twenty-one years of the history of Jackson County—which was originally named Calhoun County after the famous nullifier John C. Calhoun—Ward S. Hoaglin, a local lawyer, noted that “Congress passed a resolution recommending the several counties of the United States prepare a history, for the purpose of preserving such incidents and record as might be of interest in the future.”²²¹ It makes sense that the United States government would solicit such works, considering the

²²¹ W.S. Hoaglin, *Jackson County, Kansas, with Map and Geographical Location. Containing Incidents of its Early Settlement and Progress for Twenty-One Years*. (Holton, KS: Recorder and Express Book and Job Rooms, 1876), preface.

upcoming Centennial. Many local histories, usually focusing on a single county, were published just for the occasion. The process continued for decades beyond the Centennial, however, and similar works appeared well into the twentieth century. The mission, as Hoaglin stated, and many other titles show, was one of recording, preserving, and compiling. Introductions in many books are almost apologetic that they cannot preserve every fact and detail that the “future historian” may find useful. This is the case for books that ranged from a scant 400-500 pages all the way to A.T. Andreas’s 3,000 page *History of the State of Kansas*, published in 1883. Local histories from the era even went to the extent of providing mini biographies for all of the important citizens in the area.

Authors also had an abiding faith that a historical work could provide an unbiased account of the past. Andreas, who relied on local editors and historians and wrote very little of the huge 1883 compendium himself, commented that there was no lack of information available to write the book, but rather the editors were “overwhelmed by a super-abundance of conflicting and often untruthful accounts of deeds done and events transpired. More especially was this apparent during the territorial period of Kansas’ history. During those exciting times it is doubtful whether a single unprejudiced person told the story.”²²² Andreas boasted that he had made an attempt to be unbiased, and did not doctor the information in his book to make sure that sections on local history matched up with his account of the overall state’s history. While histories like the ones described above may not have overtly intended to make direct arguments about the past, the ways that they choose what to include and exclude, and their brief interpretive moments often reflected an underlying sense of urgency about mastering the recent past.

²²² Andreas, preface.

Connecting the territorial period to the Civil War by saying that the war began in Kansas is a common convention of these works. In many of them, the struggles between the free state and proslavery combatants occupy much of the space devoted to the general history of the county. The Civil War sometimes seems an afterthought, a foregone conclusion after the Bleeding Kansas years had passed by late 1858. Kansas did not host the huge battles that figure prominently in the national imagination like Gettysburg, Shiloh, and Chickamauga. Sections on the Civil War are usually limited to listing the men from that area who fought in the war and the actions of their units. The continuation of the border warfare begun in the territorial period also receives a good amount of attention, and the names William Quantrill, “Bloody” Bill Anderson, and Charles Jennison, the free-state raider, appear often if these men acted in the covered region. The large amount of attention paid to the territorial period, and calling it the beginning of the war, is a historians’ attempt to center Kansas in the national narrative of progress that fascinated Americans of the era.

After a close perusal of this source material, one has to wonder what happened to the proslavery settlers in Kansas. I surmise that counties founded by proslavery sympathizers had an extra historical burden to bear, since they were on the wrong side, both when Kansas was established as a free state and when the Civil War began in earnest three months later. Local historians of these areas used various tricks to right the wrongs of the past in the pages of their books, either by rationalizing, downplaying, or denying the degree to which the area experienced sectional animosity. The lack of material detailing the history of proslavery settlers in Kansas is a telling silence. It uncomplicates the free state narrative and inscribes, like stories of “disappearing” Indians, a unified and justified past on a history of conflict.

Atchison County was one of the main bastions for proslavery settlers. Sheffield Ingalls wrote a history of the county in 1916, openly stating that it was a proslavery city. He claims, “in localities like Atchison and Leavenworth, where the Law and Order party dominated affairs, the Free State inhabitants were forced to suffer many indignities and insults.”²²³ Atchison was the home of the Stringfellow brothers, John and Benjamin, who looked up to David Atchison, the Missouri U.S. Senator for whom the city and county were named. John had written in the local paper, “Let our motto be written in blood upon our flags: ‘Death to All Yankees and Traitors in Kansas.’”²²⁴ Although critical, Ingalls was reluctant to damn Stringfellow completely, adding, “It must not be concluded, however, that the Stringfellows and other pro-slavery leaders were not law-abiding citizens. . . . It would not only be unjust to the memory of the Stringfellows and their compatriots, but unjust to posterity also to leave the impression that they had no semblance of justification, for many of their acts, which the impartial historian will admit, were very frequently in retaliation of wrongs and outrages suffered.”²²⁵

The phrases “unjust to the memory” and “unjust to posterity” show that Ingalls was quite aware of his role in shaping collective memory. Trying his best to be an “impartial historian,” Ingalls writes that there were plenty of secret organizations and raids perpetrated by the free-state settlers. As a resolution to the animosities of the past, he claims, “It is a delicate task to convey anything approaching a truthful account of the storm and stress of opinions and emotions which accompanied the organization of Kansas as one of the great American commonwealths, and the part played by the citizens of Atchison county in that tremendous work, but sixty years have served to mellow the animosities and bitterness of the past, and it is easier now to comprehend

²²³ Sheffield Ingalls, *History of Atchison County, Kansas*. (Lawrence, KS: Standard Publishing Co., 1916), 49.

²²⁴ Ingalls, 58.

²²⁵ Ingalls, 61.

the strife of that distant day and pass unbiased judgment upon it.”²²⁶ Ingalls’s inclusion of this statement shows that history weighed heavily on the minds of local residents. Calling the writing process a “delicate task” suggests that an unfairly partisan treatment of the past might garner some bad personal feelings against the historian. It is also notable that Ingalls claims that the animosities and bitterness have “mellowed” but not disappeared.

In another border county, Bourbon County, the proslavery past seemed even more quickly forgotten in the pages of history. Andreas’s compendium, which includes a detailed state history and locally-written chapters for each of the Kansas counties, includes a reprinted bill of sale for a slave, the “first of its kind” in Bourbon County.²²⁷ It also tells the story of how free-state settlers were “befriended” by proslavery settlement companies, taken to nearby Ft. Scott for “protection,” then shooed out of the county so that proslavery settlers could take their land claims.²²⁸ Southern sympathy continued into the secession winter of 1860-1, and up to the firing on Ft. Sumter, most of the people in the county favored a conservative, states’ rights approach to the secessionists. After the attack, though, “Past party difficulties were forgotten, patriotic songs were sung, patriotic addresses delivered, and the wildest and heartiest applause greeted every expression and person that was in favor of the Union. It was a demonstration in which Fort Scott and Bourbon County, and every true and loyal Kansan and American may always feel the deepest pride.”²²⁹ Clearly, the historian in this case felt a need to shape the memory of the county’s past through his telling of the story. It was a much more dramatic strategy than Ingalls’s claim of animosities slowly mellowing in Atchison County. Here, they were somehow instantly

²²⁶ Ingalls, 38.

²²⁷ Andreas, 1066.

²²⁸ Andreas, 1066.

²²⁹ Andreas, 1071.

forgotten, in ways that call to mind those against Charles Lindbergh and the isolationists after the Pearl Harbor attack.

The author of the Jefferson County section in Andreas's book gives a similar statement about Kansas Confederates, writing, "There were in this county a large number of secession sympathizers, but so great a feeling of loyalty existed among the great majority of the citizens that no rebel sentiments were ever allowed to be expressed, and it would have been unsafe for anyone to openly aid the rebels."²³⁰ This author clearly tries to write away the existence of conflict, thereby salving a potential wound in the collective local memory.

In yet another way of shaping public memory, a historian could downplay the pro and antislavery battles. The author of Andreas's section on Leavenworth County, which was also founded by proslavery settlers, claims that the residents of the city of Leavenworth were different from Atchison and other proslavery settlements. According to the writer, "They were either moderate Pro-slavery men or pronounced Free-soilers, who intended, to the best of their ability, to forget politics and possess the country for their homes and their firesides. Many of them had been slave holders, but were disgusted with the persecution which their party were dealing out everywhere to the Free-state party."²³¹ Andreas himself suggests that much of the political drama was caused by the fact that in the early territorial period, no settlement could take place without aligning with a free state or proslavery land company. Therefore, he writes, "The partisans on either side were not slow to magnify the reports of the outrages, always ignoring the true cause of the quarrel, and attributing it to a contest for principle, when only a contest for a

²³⁰ Andreas, 503.

²³¹ Andreas, 419.

valid land title was involved.”²³² Despite what Andreas said, however, the magnifications of land disputes within the frame of slavery captured the collective imagination.

F.W. Giles seemed to agree with Andreas’s assertion that free and slave state sympathies were not always the primary motivators for settlers’ actions. He wrote a similar passage in his description of the competition between the free-state town of Topeka and its rival, the proslavery settlement of Tecumseh. When it became apparent that Topeka was going to be a more prosperous settlement, “The speculative mania seized upon the Southerners and residents of Pro-Slavery towns, who, perceiving that the tables were rapidly turning upon them, and feeling that, whatever might be their political loss, their gold should win, freely invested in the lots of the Free-State towns.”²³³ It is intriguing to think that scholarly attention paid to the free or slave future of Kansas and the West is misguided, and that the average settler thought “his homestead and his family of more worth to him than all the slaves who ever suffered in Kansas,”²³⁴ but it would be naïve to dismiss the fervor as *simply* local contests over land acquisition.

The territorial and Civil War fight against slavery provided the first ingredient of the “Kansas Spirit.” It created a model of moral rectitude that other activists would invoke during their own crusades. Developing concurrently with the free-state cause was the battle against strong drink. In Linn County, for example, Mitchell relates an incident during the Civil War, when local women got wind of the troubles in Mound City caused by saloons and liquor. A wagonload of them rode in from Moneka to obliterate the whiskey casks. One of the pro-liquor men started giving them a hard time, but a “Sovereign Squat” (free state) member pulled a gun and said to let the women do what they would, so they busted it up and kept the area dry

²³² Andreas, 99.

²³³ Giles, 84.

²³⁴ Andreas, 99.

“without any assistance from courts or statute.” This last part of the story gives countenance to extralegal methods for enforcing the moral right. Mitchell adds, “Such were some of the representative people whose courage, loyalty, and genius founded our Western empire and institutions.”²³⁵ His combination of these characteristics displayed by both free-state men and temperance women with the emergent “Western empire” shows the continued formation of regional nationalism.²³⁶

In another incident, Sarah Wattles, who was one of three daughters of Augustus Wattles, who planned to rescue John Brown after his capture at Harper’s Ferry, was threatened by a liquor “drummer” after she started draining the contents of his whiskey wagon. One of her fellow temperance ladies, Amelia Botkin, brandished her hatchet and said she would split his skull if he hit Miss Wattles, and the whiskey seller barely escaped hanging by begging piteously for mercy.²³⁷ The interplay of violence, the connections to Brown, and the manifestation of the Kansas Spirit as women’s direct political action make this a particularly vibrant scene. These vignettes show the flexibility of the idea and its usefulness in vernacular culture used and shaped into collective memory by common people rather than political elites.

The Kansas Spirit that has been shown by the previous examples clearly could accommodate itself to violence, legitimated by the moral righteousness of the cause. Albert Griffin, who sought to promote settlement in Riley County, summed up Kansas’s past by boasting, “Kansas is the most intensely radical state in the Union—using the term radical in a non-partisan sense. She exemplified this trait during the ‘early days’ by the earnestness with which she struggled against slavery and rebellion; and in the later days, she marches as directly

²³⁵ W.A. Mitchell, 291.

²³⁶ See Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washington Revival to the WCTU* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 213-221.

²³⁷ W.A. Mitchell, 333.

upon the enemies works as then, and strikes as strongly from the shoulder.”²³⁸ By 1881, when Griffin wrote this, Kansas had passed a statewide temperance law that he believed was a natural outgrowth of the free-state cause.

One of the key figures that blended the free-state, temperance, and, to a degree, civil rights causes together was Linn County’s James M. Montgomery. A major leader in the local struggles against border ruffians near his home, Montgomery was said not to have taken any human lives in his border defenses and only destroyed private property when it involved breaking up whiskey barrels.²³⁹ During the Civil War, Montgomery attained the rank of colonel and commanded a unit of recently emancipated slaves in South Carolina. Although he was portrayed as an unscrupulous racist in the 1989 movie “Glory,” Mitchell’s history of Linn County is quite laudatory, claiming, “A number of families of colored people followed him all the way from South Carolina and he located them in shanties all over his place.”²⁴⁰ Montgomery often gave sermons in Linn County, and in his last, in 1871, he said, “I call upon my old friends in this audience . . . to remember what I said to you at a certain sorrowful meeting nearly fourteen years ago, when I prophesied that the remaining years of slavery could be numbered on the fingers of one hand, and that in that period I would lead a host of negro soldiers dressed in the national uniform, in the redemption of our country and the negro race from the curse of slavery.”²⁴¹

Who knows if Montgomery really predicted the end of slavery and led black soldiers? His words, if taken at face value, show that he believed the end of slavery to be redemptive in an

²³⁸ Albert Griffin, *Riley County, Kansas. ‘The Blue Ribbon County.’ Come and See Us.* (Manhattan, KS: Published by *The Nationalist*, 1881), 8.

²³⁹ W.A. Mitchell, 22-3.

²⁴⁰ W.A. Mitchell, 29.

²⁴¹ W.A. Mitchell, 298.

era when, at least to southerners, “redemption” had quite another meaning. The fact is that he became emblematic of the Kansas Spirit, much like other controversial figures such as James H. Lane and John Brown. By the late 1870s, with the help of John St. John and others who believed that the Kansas Spirit carried a responsibility to solve contemporary moral issues, steps toward solidifying black homes in the West could be taken.

Andreas struggled to find a balance when telling the story of free state violence. His discussion of the Pottawatomie Massacre practically justifies John Brown’s refusal to submit to the then-prevailing free state strategy of not resisting proslavery laws and posses in order to show the rest of the nation the evils of the perpetrators. After discussing the murders, he explains that it was not the goal of the *official* free state leadership to encourage John Brown-like actions. He condemned Brown and his followers to a life of historical infamy and blamed them for escalating the levels of violence in the territory, writing, “It meant the policy of extermination or abject submission, so blatantly promulgated by the Pro-slavery press, and proclaimed by Pro-slavery speakers, had been adopted by their enemies, and was about to be enforced with appalling earnestness.” That said, he went on to state matter-of-factly, “From the night of the terrible deed, the attempt of Pro-slavery residents to drive Free-State settlers from their claims by dire threats of arson or murder, in case they remained, ceased to be the common mode of harassing and intimidating them.”²⁴² In other words, it would have been preferable if an outraged nation had condemned the proslavery settlers and Kansas had organically become a free state, but when that failed to happen, Brown and an until then latent group of violent free state fighters stepped in to point the territory, and by extension, the entire nation, toward a more favorable future.

²⁴² Andreas, 131.

There is yet a forgotten piece of the story as it pertains to Kansas's role in an expanding domestic empire. The contests over the settlement of the newly created territory were not only between white settlers who held different political beliefs over slavery, but also between whites and Native Americans who had either recently ceded or not yet ceded lands that belonged to them. As William Ansel Mitchell explains in his chapter on the settlement of Linn County, "Such was the inviting picture in 1853 when the national government proposed to crowd the Indians farther West and create new states and state governments for white people. It was a rich prize which was unfortunately to be obtained only by fierce contention and the force of armed conflict."²⁴³ While it is true that some books refer to the Kansas territory as "unpeopled," it is more often the case that they discuss in great detail the information that they have about the Indian populations that resided in the area before white settlement began in earnest.

The U.S. government sided with the Indians on some occasions during the early era of insatiable land hunger in Kansas. In the southeast corner of the territory, settlers began moving into the "Cherokee Neutral Lands" without permission during 1860. When the Cherokees protested, President Buchanan sent in U.S. troops, and they "drove the settlers before them, burning their stacks of hay and grain, their cabins and fences."²⁴⁴ Delayed instructions as to how to proceed due to the events of the secession winter of 1860-1 preceded many of the settlers eventually buying back their illegal claims after the government negotiated a deal with the Cherokees.

Indian land claims also held settlers at bay in the northwestern part of the state. In Andreas's section on Leavenworth County, the writer explains, "Indeed, the population of

²⁴³ W.A. Mitchell, 10.

²⁴⁴ *A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Crawford County, Kansas*. By Home Authors. Illustrated. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1905), 3.

Missouri has accumulated to an unnatural degree along its whole western border, where it had been stopped by the Indian reservation, from further occupation. It is not strange that, when the Hon. D.R. Atchison notified his friends in Weston to ‘Go over and take possession of the good land,’ that they went forthwith without delay, and in total ignorance of the provisions of the treaty.”²⁴⁵ Even after the territory was opened to settlement, there were areas that remained in possession of the Delaware Indians until the Civil War, and settlers would get angry with Indian agent George Manypenny when he forbade them from taking ownership.²⁴⁶ Indeed, human geography appears to have been a large determinant in the history and local memory of each county.

Samuel Crawford’s recollections about his experiences on the frontier after leaving the governor’s office are emblematic of many white Americans’ refusal to accept “unassimilated” Native Americans in the postwar national future. Several sections of his book include reprinted letters that he received about “Indian depredations.” To Crawford, most Indians were “hostile,” and any kind of negotiations with them was a mistake. In a typical passage, describing the aftermath of a large meeting between U.S. government representatives and many Native leaders, Crawford wrote, “Having accomplished their purpose by waging a relentless warfare in Kansas during the summer, they were now ready to return to their winter haunts on the Red River and indulge in sports and war-dancing around the scalps of their victims, until the weather was propitious for another raid in Kansas.”²⁴⁷ Crawford’s aversion to Native and white coexistence is clearly displayed in this and other writings, and it makes it understandable why the shapers of collective memory during the era were eager to exclude Indians from a regionally based

²⁴⁵ Andreas, 419.

²⁴⁶ Andreas, 420.

²⁴⁷ Crawford, 278.

nationalism like the Kansas Spirit. The implication of Crawford's statements were that white people went to war for just reasons like ending slavery or securing the frontier, while Indians did it for sport or other barbarous motives. Leading a black regiment in the Civil War had changed Crawford's mind in favor of black acceptance as soldiers, but he would not shift his opinions with regard to Indians.

The early formulators and refiners of the Kansas Spirit recognized the continuing significance of the traumatic, yet appealing collective experience of Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War. With the end of Reconstruction in sight in the mid 1870s, a strong movement emerged in Kansas that prevented regional memory from being subsumed into a larger narrative about the "Lost Cause" that ignored the emancipatory promise of the recent past. They attempted to shape the past in a process of selective remembrance and distilled collective memory into a meaningful, forward-looking motivator that would inspire continued progress. The large national spectacle of the 1876 Centennial Exposition presented Kansas with an opportunity to teach the rest of the nation that its "bleeding" past was not a burden that would prevent regional prosperity, but rather a key fortifying experience that prepared the state for a leadership role as the nation's moral compass. The Kansas Spirit, refined and promoted by centennial planners in 1876 and old settlers in 1879, linked the victory over slavery to a larger moral ethos that, when applied to postwar reconciliation, was more open to recognizing and fulfilling the promise of black citizenship. This era also spawned a great push for preservation and compilation of local histories that further shaped collective memory in the free state image while often dismissing or denying the subjugations, especially of Native Americans, that were closely tied to Kansas history. As the Centennial moment gave way to the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Kansas Spirit remained a valuable connection to the deeply emotional struggles of the past,

and the question of who should “own” its legacy became hotly debated through political party opposition.

Chapter 4:

Who Owns the Kansas Spirit?

“What’s the Matter with Kansas?” William Allen White famously asked in a widely-circulated editorial in August of 1896. At that time, he had good reasons to be alarmed. After the traumas of the territorial era, the first two decades of Kansas statehood exhibited remarkable growth, with its population more than tripling between 1860 and 1870 and nearly tripling *again* by 1880. The onset of decreased economic activity in the 1880s slowed population growth in that decade to a still remarkable 43.4%, leaving the state with 1,428,128 residents in 1890. From there, however, growth practically halted. White wrote his commentary in the middle of a decade that showed a mere 3% population growth rate, a figure that, in the context of that decade’s nationwide economic depression, he attributed to more displeased people leaving Kansas than being attracted by the allure of the new West.

What had happened to the “Kansas Spirit?” Many white Kansans of the 1870s Centennial period associated the state’s heroic morality in opposing the slave power with the astounding

population growth and agricultural abundance in that era. They had accepted, or at least accommodated Exodusters as fellow citizens, sometimes publicly acknowledging that the black Southerners had escaped racial persecution and economic hard times in the Deep South to reach an asylum of liberty in the new West. In large public gatherings, they proudly remembered the formative struggle that led to the state's creation. The material gains and agricultural abundance of the postwar era were supposedly proof that free state Kansans were being rewarded for their good deeds. The Gospel of Wealth, pairing economic prosperity with the morality of sound Christian living, had become indelibly tied to the Kansas Spirit.

In recent years, though, Kansas had somehow become undesirable, at least in the rhetoric of its boosters. White addressed readers directly who puzzled over Kansas's current reputation, writing, "Go east and you hear them laugh at Kansas; go west and they sneer at her; go south and they cuss her; go north and they have forgotten her. . . . She has traded places with Arkansas and Timbuctoo."²⁴⁸ This statement is vastly different from the confident bluster of Centennial moment commemorative speakers. Kansas had lost its position as a guiding beacon for the nation; it was no longer a moral center in the geographic center of the nation.

Looking carefully at White's assessment, one can perceive a worry that while some neighboring regions at least *cared* enough to laugh, sneer, and cuss at Kansans, perhaps worst of all to a loyal state resident invested in the memory of his or her home was to be *forgotten*, especially by the northern region that had influenced the new state so directly and intimately. White worried, perhaps tongue in cheek, that Kansas had even lost its position in the hierarchy of civilization so often used as a measure of societal development in the late 19th century. To claim

²⁴⁸ William Allan White, "What's the Matter With Kansas," available online at http://www.kancoll.org/articles/what's_the_matter_with_kansas.html. Retrieved June 7, 2011. This was presumably not a reference to John Brown's upstate New York black settlement, though White and some of his readers may well have been aware of that context, too.

that it had taken the place of Arkansas, considered a remote frontier of the old Confederacy, showed a distinct lack of self respect, but to compare it to the Saharan outpost of “Timbuctoo” put Kansas on an even more foreign, remote, uncivilized—and even racialized—plane. It had once been promoted as the pinnacle of American achievement, able to flourish amid the contradictions of imperial growth, but it now was threatened with relegation to a position beneath the most uncivilized, peripheral, and irrelevant outposts.

How did once-great Kansas reach such a debased state? According to White, the political upheaval caused by the coalescence of various protest movements into the Populist movement was the culprit. His reasoning echoed several key Republican concerns of the time. With their talk of “the rights of the user” and “the Great Red Dragon of Lombard Street,” White argued, the Populists had scared off Kansans with any money and investing initiative, further deepening the economic despair. Not only that, but White believed that the unorthodox appearance of many Populist figures—William Peffer with his waist-long beard and “Sockless Jerry” Simpson, for example—made Kansas a laughingstock to the rest of the country. “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” offers a glimpse at the deep anxiety over the loss of mastery over the state’s narrative of memory and development, and the fight between Republicans and Populists in the 1890s showed the continued salience of the Kansas Spirit. As it was being contested by these political groups, blacks also stayed vigilant in their attempts to keep their wartime sacrifice and societal inclusion as important tenets of that narrative.

In this chapter, I will explain how, in printed literature and public events, Republicans and Populists wrangled over which political group should rightly own the collective memory of Kansas and thereby dictate the proper lessons of western memory for the rest of the nation. Vernacular and official culture clashed as both sides wrestled to control sites of memory. Indeed,

Kansas as a whole was increasingly treated as a site of memory that would help guide the associations and institutions that would fully embody the turn-of-the-century nation. I will also discuss of the attempts by African American soldiers and their leaders to be remembered as instrumental shapers of the Kansas Spirit during the Populist era.

Much of the Populists' belief that they were the rightful inheritors of the Kansas Spirit was rooted in their claim that they, like Kansans of the 1850s and 1860s, were fighting against slavery, albeit in a new form. Republicans, understandably indignant, often repeated that the reason for their sheer existence was to fight the expansion of slavery, win the Civil War, and guide the postwar nation. One of their key responses to the Populist uprising in the face of electoral losses in 1890 was to create the "Kansas Day Club" (KDC) and hold annual meetings in order to rededicate themselves to Republican principles. The records of these KDC meetings are a valuable source to examine how Republicans responded to challenges to their political supremacy in the state as well as national events that affected them. Of course, black soldiers and their white officers also believed that they had been the consummate fighters against slavery, since enlisted men had been fighting for the freedom of still-enslaved blacks and all of the men had been subject to the retributive violence of Confederate armies.

In his 1899 series of essays on the rise and fall of Populism, William A. Peffer, who in 1890 was elected the first Populist United States senator, traced the roots of the movement to a postwar lack of currency circulation due to the federal government taxing state banks out of existence. Efforts on the part of farmers to form mutual assistance organizations took hold better in the northern states than the South, resulting in the formation of the Patrons of Husbandry or "Grange." Peffer outlined some of the platform goals of the Grange when the organization met in 1874. The first goal was "to develop a higher manhood and womanhood among ourselves," then

work together to oppose a system “tending to prodigality and bankruptcy.” The Grangers were quick to add, “in our noble order there is no communism, no agrarianism. We are not enemies of capital, but we oppose the tyranny of monopolies.”²⁴⁹

Two points stand out about this statement. First, the primary concern with manhood and womanhood being preserved and developed seemed to anticipate attacks from opposition regarding the supposed weakness of character and lack of individualism shown by forming mutual aid associations. The Gilded Age idealized the Gospel of Wealth and the “self-made man” who supposedly used his personal talent and pluck. William Allan White’s editorial questioned the manhood of Kansas’s Populists, calling a Congressional candidate a “human hoop skirt who has failed as a businessman,” a potential Attorney General “a kid without a law practice,” and he labeled the party itself as being aided by “three or four harpies out lecturing, telling the people that Kansas is raising hell and letting the corn go to weed.”²⁵⁰ The last epithet was in reference to Mary Elizabeth Lease’s purported directive that Kansas farmers should “raise less corn and more hell.” Clearly, the use of women in Populist campaigning, as well as men depicted as childlike and feminine, were points of attack for Republicans, much like the ways that proslavery border ruffians cast free state settlers as dour, “white-livered” abolitionists in the previous generation. Grangers and later Populists braced themselves for the onslaught, seeking to rework collectivity into a masculine endeavor.

The second notable part of this early platform statement is the anticipated charge that any kind of alliance was anti-capitalist. This aspect of the Populists was the main problem that White attached to the movement. Despite claims to the contrary by the Grangers, White believed that

²⁴⁹ William A. Pepper, *Populism, Its Rise and Fall, edited and with an introduction by Peter H. Argersinger* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 30.

²⁵⁰ White, “What’s the Matter With Kansas?”

they were hindering economic and population growth in the state by scaring away all the people with money, leaving Kansas with unwashed masses consisting of “the lazy, greasy fizzle, who can’t pay his debts.”²⁵¹ If the state were choosing to support these people over wealthy capitalists, White argued, it was making a mistake.

The early agrarian movement that would later fold into the Populist Party took a different approach to the economic ills of the day.²⁵² Part of their rhetorical strategy renewed a long-standing American tradition of using slavery as a motivating ultimate evil, transposed into new contexts. Indeed, the long history of American slavery informed this idea greatly. White indentured servants and small land owners dating back to the days of Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, as well as revolutionaries 100 years later, shared a common fear of enslavement, especially as African slavery became more entrenched on the North American continent. The recent Civil War against the slave power made the rhetorical tool all the more effective. When John Davis, who served two terms as a Populist United States representative in the 1890s, addressed a meeting of the Emporia, Kansas Patrons of Husbandry in a July 4, 1874 speech, he exhorted:

Did we so exhaust our patriotism in the death grapple with American slavery that we have none left to resist these new tyrants! I dare affirm we did not, and ere long, when the whole case is fairly before the people, we shall so churn it up with agitation and discussion, that these financial magnates will be called to a final reckoning.²⁵³

With the Civil War fewer than ten years in the past, Davis tried to conjure the lingering spirit to continue to fight against oppression. During the war, the “tyrants” were the southern slave owners. Even though they were formerly the radical new party formed in opposition to slavery’s expansion, Davis charged that the Republicans had lost touch and were abusing their power,

²⁵¹ White, “What’s the Matter With Kansas?”

²⁵² See Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1976).

²⁵³ KSHS, Populist Clippings, 34E.

ignoring workers, and only interested in protecting wealthy monopolists. Even though he might be called an agent of official culture due to his status as a politician, he called upon collective memory to support a more vernacular understanding of the past to challenge the status quo of oppression.

Despite growing quickly and voicing some of the concerns that would later animate other populist movements, membership in the agrarian association, the Patrons of Husbandry, shrank in the 1880s. The organization was unable to address the dire needs of many farmers as the South tried to recover and westward expansion continued.²⁵⁴ Several similar organizations: the Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, National Farmers' Alliance, and Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association attempted to fulfill these needs in the 1880s. Kansas also had its own State Farmers' Alliance with membership estimated to be about 100,000 by 1890. Peffer explained, "In common with the people of the Northwest at the time, Kansas farmers had lost heavily in various ways, but chiefly from overspeculation, exorbitant rates of interest, excessive railroad charges, and depreciation of values."²⁵⁵ His explanation of the economic situation in Kansas clearly pinned the blame on greedy, monopolistic Republican policies.

Despite the rapid emergence of these organizations in the 1880s, the Republican Party continued to dominate state politics. Only the two-year governorship of Democrat and former Union soldier George W. Glick broke the complete control of Republicans over the United States Senate, House of Representatives, and Kansas governor seats. Although "bloody shirt" rhetoric, which emphasized the association in collective memory of the Republican Party between sacrifice and victory in the Civil War, was not altogether necessary to win elections, various

²⁵⁴ Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1978), 32.

²⁵⁵ Peffer, 36.

events continued to revisit the memory of Kansas's early formative struggles. Kansans tried to recapture the magic of the Centennial Exposition and the Old Settlers' Reunion with a recurring state fair that they named, somewhat pretentiously, the "Western National Fair." Calling it the "Kansas State Fair" would have been too banal for Kansas after garnering the kind of attention it did at earlier, larger events.

As I have argued in previous chapters, Kansans had seen themselves as national leaders and interpreters of its moral compass, but the addition of "Western" to the title implied an advanced self-image as a regional leader in the "New West" of the late 19th century. Above all, it was clear that the users and shapers of Kansas memory sought to define nationalism through the historical lens of their own territorial and state experience. The political developments and national spectacles of the 1890s, however, would show a more embattled Republican Party struggling to preserve what could now be called "official culture" and maintain control over the collective memory of early Kansas and the right to define the Kansas Spirit.

Many Republicans could sense that a challenge to their hegemony in Kansas politics was forming by the late 1880s. Some switched parties, some made promises to address populist demands and then ignored them once elected, and some just ignored them outright. Peffer explained that longtime Republican Senator John Ingalls was sent a letter in February 1890 by the *Kansas Farmer*, a Populist newspaper, asking about his position on various issues, including farmer relief, increased currency circulation, and the free coinage of silver. Having not received a reply to their concerns for three months, the Populists nominated their own candidate, resulting in the election of Peffer to Ingalls's seat. With this shocking turn of events, Republicans scrambled to fight the insurgency while the Populists gained both statewide and national momentum.

Capitalizing on the Peffer victory, other Populists stepped up their attempts to wrest control of interpreting the past from the Republicans and apply it to their own purposes. John Davis wrote an editorial for the Junction City (KS) *Tribune* in January 1891 comparing slavery of old to the current conditions facing workers. At the beginning of his argument he defined slavery simply as a master enjoying the earnings of any man. He went on to identify many different kinds of slavery, the old way being to compel labor through the lash, and the new way by hunger and depriving the other necessities of existence. Davis believed that the wage system was meant to keep people enslaved, writing:

Hunger and absolute want are less merciful than the lash. The hand that wields the lash may tire or the heart which prompts the infliction may relent. Hunger never grows tired and the cruel conditions of society do not relent, where no man considers himself directly responsible. . . . There is, then a slavery and a slavery. One bears the scars on the back, but it fills the stomach and shelters the body. It preserves life. There is an element of mercy in it. The other accomplishes its purposes with less show of violence. It cares neither for hunger, nakedness, nor destitution; nor for life itself! It cares only for the earnings of labor.²⁵⁶

Parts of Davis's argument are oddly reminiscent of antebellum Southerner George Fitzhugh's assertion that slavery was a more humane system than northern "wage slavery," although he was not as forthcoming about the violence necessary to uphold southern slavery.²⁵⁷ Davis would not have been in favor of chattel slavery as alternative to the evils of wages, loans, and monopolies that he described, but it is notable that he reworks the memory of prewar slavery and turns populism into the force that can fight it. Populists who agreed with Davis must have believed they were faced with a daunting task. They were not opposing a single individual or even a state, but rather a structural problem "where no man considers himself directly responsible."

Abolitionists had a much more identifiable enemy in slave owners or even the slavocracy. Davis

²⁵⁶ KSHS, Populist Clippings, 14 I.

²⁵⁷ See George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All, or Slaves Without Masters*, edited by C. Vann Woodward (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988).

had the difficult task of opposing aspects of the system while trying not to oppose the entire economic and political system.

The “agrarian revolt” and Populist phenomenon that coalesced in the 1890s shook the Republican Party to the core, especially in Kansas. Here was a group that not only challenged the sacred laissez-faire tenets that Gilded Age Republicans held so dear, but they appropriated the language of resistance to monolithic national evils upon which Kansas Republicans had built their reputation. Responding to this challenge, the “Young Republicans” of Kansas created the Kansas Day Club in 1891. They were not the first to celebrate the unofficial holiday, which commemorated Kansas’ day of statehood, January 29, 1861. Kansas schoolchildren had first started celebrating the holiday in 1877, and it was a well known school holiday by 1882. The Young Republicans capitalized on this preexisting date and framework of memory to make a formal club designed to rededicate the Republican Party to its own principles and remember its past after humiliating defeats at the polls.

Kansas Day Club banquet speeches provide an interesting glimpse into the anxieties and perseverance of the Kansas Republicans at this juncture. Many of the speeches and proceedings were compiled and published in 1901, a time far different from the Republican uncertainty of the early 1890s. The editor of this compilation admitted that the Kansas Day Club was a direct response to the Populist emergency, writing, “A few young fellows crawled out from under the debris and tried to look pleasant.”²⁵⁸ The KDC’s emphasis on younger party members fits particularly well in a study of collective memory, as it shows a concerted effort to pass on the founding values of the Republican Party—filtered through 1890s needs to oppose the Populists—to the generation coming of age who did not fight in, and increasingly were born after

²⁵⁸ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses. Delivered at the Annual Banquets During the First Ten Years of the Club’s Existence, 1892-1901* (Hutchinson, KS: W.Y. Morgan, Publisher, 1901), vi.

the Civil War. At the 1892 banquet, member George L. Douglass spoke directly on the subject of “Young Republicanism,” saying, “There are men in Kansas who were here when the old hero of Osawatomie first crossed her borders in his crusade for freedom whom the young Republicans of to-day would be proud to follow.”²⁵⁹ Brown’s Osawatomie had become a site of memory ripe for appropriation; the battle site received a monument in 1877. Whether or not the young party members of 1892 would have had the same radical desire for immediate, apocalyptic change as John Brown remains uncertain and highly suspect. It is apparent, however, that young men of the era desired a meaningful connection to the exciting, tangible struggles of John Brown’s time as a contrast to the increasingly staid, mundane activity of turn-of-the-century party politics.

Following a similar format of a President’s address, a state of the state address, and short topical speeches, the KDC meeting attendees would echo the meaningful free-state history of their state and use it to promote their current needs. In order to give young members a special place in the club, the KDC enacted rules limiting members to one speech per meeting and actively recognizing younger members. Typical is the description of Kansas’ past in this introductory statement from J. K. Cubbison at the 1892 meeting. He said, “The star of Bethlehem directed the way to the Saviour of the world. The star of Kansas brought about the abolition of human slavery. . . . The birth of the Republican party was the culmination of the struggle for human liberty. Its birth signified the beginning of the end of human slavery on American soil.”²⁶⁰

In this statement, there are parallels to the laudatory free-state speeches and statements surrounding the Centennial and Old Settlers’ Reunion. The environment of the early 1890s changed the meaning of fighting for liberty for many of the KDC members. With more offices lost in the 1892 elections, the KDC increased its vitriolic attacks on the Populists. At the 1893

²⁵⁹ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses*, 15.

²⁶⁰ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses*, 8.

meeting, C. Everest Elliott conceded that the party had been dealt a major blow, remarking, “We, a politically whipped, eye-blackened, broken-nosed, scratched-faced, bit-eared, torn-coated, no-vested, sleeveless-shirted crowd, ought to have a most enjoyable time sympathizing and condoling with each other, and wondering how it was done.” A primary objective, he added, was how they could prevent another “Waterloo of ‘92.” At the end of his speech, though, he took solace in the party’s past, saying that the Republicans were “born to trample under for the rebellious ‘stars and bars,’ yet live to put down and forever keep down the red flag of anarchy.”²⁶¹ Ashland resident Harry J. Bone echoed Elliott’s casting of the Republican Party in his own speech, titled “Dese Bones Shall Rise Again.” In it, he said that if the party regained the offices it lost, it would dedicate itself to “that kind of Republicanism” that rescued Kansas from the clutches of slavery and dedicated it to freedom, but also one that believed in majority rule, “crushed revolutions and insurrection in the past,” and would never allow its flag to be lowered to usurpation or anarchy.²⁶² Here, the KDC members were clearly misguided if they labeled all Populists “anarchists,” considering the number of government reforms proposed by the Populist platform that would require a central nation-state enforcement apparatus. The extreme language is perhaps more telling of the state of chaos within the Republican Party at the time at it saw its founding principles appropriated by the upstart challengers.

The often-repeated Republican accomplishment of defeating slavery makes it understandable that Kansas Day Club members would find the Populist reliance on the antislavery trope offensive. In an 1897 speech called “The Trail of the Reformer,” Henry J. Allen of Ottawa talked about a speech in Western Kansas in which a Populist orator told the farmers they were worse off than slaves. He said, “It absolutely seemed to make them feel happy to think

²⁶¹ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses*, 56.

²⁶² *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses*, 69.

they were in a condition of slavery more degraded than that under which the African slave suffered.”²⁶³ Like other Republicans, Allen claimed that the fallacy of comparing the two conditions is the mark of a lunatic fringe organization, especially when it is contrasted with the Republican fight against true slavery a generation earlier.

The Kansas Day Club helped the Republicans maintain their ideological strength throughout the 1890s, even though the state as a whole elected two Populist/Fusion governors, in 1892 and 1896. Oddly enough, it was during the administrations of these governors, Lorenzo D. Lewelling and John W. Leedy, that Kansas partook in two other great national expositions, the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893 and the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898, held in Omaha. For the 1893 Chicago Exposition, the Board of Commissioners had a difficult time raising enough money to fund the elaborate display they wanted, in part due to the deadlocked legislature that was split between parties. With the help of private donations, including a large contribution from the AT&SF Railroad, the board spent \$65,000 and still constructed one of the largest state buildings on the grounds. As far as the image portrayed by the Kansas building, a reading room full of John Brown portraits and other free-state artifacts symbolically attested to the fact that Kansas’ heroes persisted despite changes in administrations.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses*, 234.

²⁶⁴ *Report of the Kansas Board of World’s Fair Managers, Containing Report of the “Board of Managers, Kansas Exhibit,” from April 1892, to March 1893, and transactions of the Kansas Board of World’s Fair Managers,” from March 1893, to December 1893, together with Illustrations and Descriptions in Detail of All Kansas Exhibits and Awards, 1893.* (Topeka: Press of the Hamilton Printing Company, 1894), 56-7.

Governor Lewelling's speech in Chicago bound the past and the present, reinforcing memories of Kansas' founding struggles and using them to explain the state's current turn to reform. He claimed:

The spirit of John Brown is the incarnate spirit of progress, and goes marching on, to be reflected in the mighty achievements of an intelligent people. Prejudice is the black bat of civilization, existing only in the shadows; and from these shadows the people of Kansas are emerging. We challenge the world to show an equal diffusion of knowledge among the people of any state or government. Is it presumptuous to give this as a reason why the people of Kansas are the natural leaders in moral and political reforms? If Kansas joins the army of discontent, it is because of the intelligent yearning of her people for more exalted conditions. The stolid slave plods on, indifferent to his surroundings; but the animated, educated and progressive citizen goes forward to fight the battles of intelligence, and places himself and his children in the front ranks of human progress.²⁶⁵

Here, Lewelling resorts to a familiar line of Kansas rhetoric, the image of John Brown "marching on," and appropriates him as a "progressive," further adding that it is Kansas-like to be discontented in the face of oppression. The reference to slavery, which caused great consternation for the Republicans, was a creative way to shape the memory of the Kansas past into use for present challenges, condemning both slavery itself and the enslavement felt by western farmers. John Brown's "spirit," which Lewelling claims to have shown Kansans the fallacy of prejudice, fortified them to be leaders in moral reform for the rest of the nation. Lewelling's speech answers the charges of opponents like the KDC members who claimed that Populism was fanatical and anarchical. The 1893 Exposition did not have the united "love feast" atmosphere of 1876 or 1879, as Kansas was in a political flux, but the state still managed to make a respectable public showing, albeit with a contest still raging over the ownership of the Kansas Spirit.

1898, the year of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, was certainly a momentous year in American history. While not the turning point that it was once considered,

²⁶⁵ *Report of the Kansas Board of World's Fair Managers*, 113.

when the Spanish-American-Cuban War was portrayed as a sudden emergence of the United States in foreign affairs, the year was marked by shifting concerns of Kansas promoters and politicians. The Kansas-themed speeches at Omaha had a distinctly “Western” flavor, and understandably so, considering the focus on the trans-Mississippi West at the Exposition. For example, Kansas Commission Vice President John W. Frost’s welcome address on June 22 called the day of Kansas Territory’s founding, May 30, 1854, “an eventful day” that “marked the beginning of an epoch in the history of our nation, which, in its achievements, makes it possible for us to meet here today to dedicate this building as a part of this great exposition of the resources, development and boundless promise of the mighty West.”²⁶⁶ Much of the 1890s witnessed the struggle within Kansas between Populists and Republicans about how to address the limits of that so-called “boundless promise,” but for an exposition audience, Kansas still represented a model for opportunity.

A concurrent debate during the time of the Republican-Populist wrangling over the meaning of the Kansas Spirit was the one surrounding recognition of the black soldiers who served in the Civil War. Although it took many years, the eventual accolades given to the soldiers and their officers were consistent with the accommodation impulse that I argue was crucial to the Kansas Spirit. One reason why the 1st Kansas Colored did not receive much recognition was that its actions were not part of official military records for twenty-five years after the war.²⁶⁷ James M. Williams, colonel of the 1st Colored for much of its existence, cared deeply for his personal reputation, and took it upon himself to make the contributions of the 1st known, as well as clear his own name. After the war, he had stayed with the army and fought Indians in Arizona until 1868. Wounded by two arrows and dogged by a court martial regarding

²⁶⁶ *Report of the Kansas Commission Trans-Mississippi and International [sic] Exposition*, 18

²⁶⁷ *Leavenworth Times*, October 8, 1890.

the sale of army corn to buy lumber, he resigned and was never placed on the army's retired list. By 1890, however, he was able to lobby Congress to have his name honorably retired and also earn back pay for fourteen black soldiers who had served informally with the regiment. The Senate reports accompanying the bills that approved these actions congratulate the 1st Kansas Colored impressively. A segment of General James Blunt's report on the Battle of Honey Springs notes, "The First Kansas Colored particularly distinguished itself; they fought like veterans and preserved their line unbroken throughout the engagement." General John McNeil claimed, "The negro regiment is a triumph of drill and discipline and reflects great honor on Captain Williams. Few volunteer regiments that I have seen make a better appearance. I regard them as a first-rate infantry."²⁶⁸

Senator C.K. Davis of Minnesota and the Committee of Military Affairs provided the most stunning historical assessment of the 1st Kansas Colored. In his report, he claimed that it was well known that using black troops during the first years of the war was "purely experimental." He went on to say that Kansas was "naturally chosen as the locality" for such an experiment, considering it "had been the center of the slavery convulsions preceding the war." Finally, citing the larger significance of the black troops, he wrote, "The discipline acquired and the courage displayed by the First Kansas Colored Volunteers in camp and on field during the last months of 1862, influenced the actions of President Lincoln in issuing his proclamation of New Year's Day, 1863, which put in force the provisions of the act of July 17, 1862, and forecasted the freedom and citizenship of persons of African descent."²⁶⁹ Davis's link between the territorial violence in Kansas, the fighting skills of the 1st Colored, and the Emancipation Proclamation was something one might expect to read from a home grown Kansas memorialist,

²⁶⁸ United States Senate, 51st Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 1002, 1.

²⁶⁹ United States Senate, 51st Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 1214, 2.

but the fact that he was from another state suggests that the influence of Kansas and its black fighting men reached far beyond its boundaries.

Congressional recognition of the importance of the 1st Kansas Colored solidified what had been known already in Kansas. The fight against slavery had allowed blacks to secure a home in the postwar West. After his trip to Washington, D.C., Williams returned to the Leavenworth G.A.R. Hall to attend an integrated reunion for the 1st and 2nd Kansas Colored Volunteers and white soldiers from various regiments. He was introduced at the meeting by William Mathews, who had helped organize and lead the black soldiers in the early days. Williams was predictably laudatory, recounting the bravery and accomplishments of his soldiers. Even more interesting were the comments of Daniel R. Anthony, who had promised his audience in 1879 that blacks had a place in Kansas, but not necessarily within view of whites. On this occasion, he proclaimed, "Slavery will never exist again in America. It is being wiped out all over the world. Civilization is making rapid progress. To-day you have made homes for yourselves. With industry and economy there is not an able-bodied man but what can earn a good living in this country."²⁷⁰ Anthony had once again remained consistent in his feelings that Kansas and the West could accommodate hard-working people regardless of their skin color.

The black Kansans who had forged a home in this new western state also secured their place in public memory at the turn of the century. One of the primary institutions used to perpetuate collective memory, at least within the youth of a society, is standardized education. For many years, eighth year students in Kansas public schools were required to read Noble L. Prentis's *History of Kansas*.²⁷¹ Prentis included brief discussions of the participation of the

²⁷⁰ *Leavenworth Times*, October 8, 1890.

²⁷¹ *Kansas Course of Study for Graded Schools Having Nine-Month Terms. Authorized by the State Board of Education*. Revised Edition (Topeka, KS: State Printing Office, 1909), 136.

Kansas Colored Volunteers under “Volunteer Organizations,” and “Colored Soldiers.” The two sentences: “In November (1862), the First Kansas colored regiment was organized at Fort Lincoln, near Fort Scott. Kansas now had soldiers white, red, and black” may not seem like much, but during this era of increasing national exclusion of blacks from public life, this was a reminder that Kansas had been committed to a degree of integration during its formative experiences. Prentis went on in other sections to explain that blacks and Indians fighting together won the battle of Cabin Creek and later briefly described the massacre at Poison Springs, further adding the black soldiers to the story.²⁷² Unfortunately, in terms of remembering Kansas’s black soldiers, the state history book adopted by the board of education in 1912, Anna Arnold’s *A History of Kansas*, reduced coverage of Civil War Kansas from Prentis’s 25 pages to a scant 4 ½. In this version, the Kansas Colored Volunteers do not appear.²⁷³ With more recent events like the Spanish-American War taking up space in the history books, perhaps it is understandable that the Civil War and its black soldiers had some of their glory in print eroded. It may also be possible that the version of black military service that Theodore Roosevelt described in his memoirs of the Spanish-American War, which relegated nonwhite soldiers to shiftless cowards who would have been lost without strong, masculine leadership, had seeped into Arnold’s assessment of the importance of black contributions to the Kansas Spirit.²⁷⁴

Just as Kansas fit into a narrative about the developing material prosperity of the West, so did it fit into the national story of moral westward expansion. Though the era of “Manifest Destiny” is often confined to the mid-19th century, at least one speaker at the 1898 Omaha Exposition continued to draw the historical line through Kansas and up to the present

²⁷² Prentis, 97-109.

²⁷³ Anna E. Arnold, *A History of Kansas* (Topeka, KS: State of Kansas Printing Plant, 1914), 111-115.

²⁷⁴ Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire*, pp. 124-141.

international situation. Silas Porter, speaking at the dedication of the Kansas building, commented, “We dedicate it (the Kansas building) with the blasts of war blowing in our ears.” He went on to say that in times of long peace, people forget their country at the expense of their pursuit of wealth and power. There are opportunities to feed discontent on the part of demagogues. “At such times,” he claimed, “a foreign war in a just cause is a blessing. And if the revival of patriotism which we see all about us shall drive out all traces of sectionalism forever, if it shall leave men to consider the welfare of their country and to lose sight of selfish ends, if it shall result in sweeping away the social disorders which seemed to threaten the stability of our institutions, it will prove to be worth all it cost in blood and treasure. And Kansans know that our State will gain as much by this revival of patriotism as any portion of the Union.”²⁷⁵

What Porter was suggesting here is not new, if one considers the popular notion that the Spanish-American War did much to bring the North and the South back together for a common cause. But it appears that Porter was observing that the war was also curing the sectionalism of West vs. (North)east. The “social disorders” engendered by the Populist revolt were the ones that Porter was likely referring to, especially since Kansas had been a major locus of such activity. With the current war, Porter saw an opportunity to recapture the fully-embodied spirit that had unified the North and West during the Civil War and apply it to the divisive ills of the Progressive Era.

Porter went on to make the argument that maintaining control of the lands acquired in the recent war would be altogether fitting, as it pertains to the history of Kansas. He first reminded the audience that Kansas was formed out of territory gained by the Louisiana Purchase, as well as parts of Texas and Mexico in “a war of conquest.” He argued that they should take the

²⁷⁵ *Report of the Kansas Commission Trans-Mississippi and International [sic] Exposition*, 21.

Philippines, Puerto Rico, and the Canary Islands, “and by the right of conquest hold them, and establish in all of them the blessings of stable government, ‘with the consent of the governed,’ if you please.” Using Kansas as justification for this, he stated, “Kansas believes in the destiny of the Anglo-Saxon to accomplish grand results in the cause of human liberty, in the interests of civilization against despotism.” Here, he is implying that the westward expansion process that included Kansas’ stand against despotism (slavery) and establishment as a free western state should prove to be a model for the United States’ new mission overseas. A bit later in the speech, he said, “The problems that will arise as to the best way to govern the islands of the sea which we shall acquire in this just war will be bravely met and bravely solved. Kansas believes in territorial expansion, in an imperial policy worthy of the dignity and glory of this great country.”²⁷⁶ In this way, Kansas could serve as a model for the international encounters of the early 20th century.

Porter was careful to call the war “just” and invoke the enlightenment ideal of maintaining the “consent of the governed.” He did not yet know about the rebellion that would ensue in The Philippines not long after the United States took control, and this would seriously mar the ideal vision he laid out in this speech, but the manner in which he invoked the morality of westward expansion through Kansas is still quite remarkable. It showed that Kansans believed that their regional experience could be applied to a unified national strategy for just imperial conquest.

After the turn of the century, the Kansas Spirit, the commitment to reforms framed in moral language that gained legitimacy through the struggles of early Kansas, actually gained momentum in the national imagination. In the first decade of the 1900s, not only did the Kansas

²⁷⁶ *Report of the Kansas Commission Trans-Mississippi and International [sic] Exposition*, 22.

Day Club inspire a Women's Kansas Day Club dedicated to preserving the unique history of the state, but other cities from New York to California and many places in between started their own Kansas Day Clubs that would meet on January 29th. The Kansas Spirit was versatile enough that it could be invoked by both Republicans, who felt that they gave birth to the entire idea, and Populists, their enemies who challenged Republicans on the grounds that they were actually making slaves of the American people. The regional nationalism of the Kansas Spirit also continued to be claimed and refined by the inclusion of black military service and African Americans' ensuing quest for homes in the postwar West. Black residents were politically active in late nineteenth century Kansas, although usually in separate associations. The KDC remained predominantly white, but invited a prominent black educator named William T. Vernon to speak to its 1905 meeting. Political parties—with both black and white members—and other shapers of collective memory believed that the manly struggles of the earlier era provided a tangible physical and material example of fighting for a deeply felt cause. Due to this versatility, the Kansas Spirit would be a fittingly popular feature of the Progressive era, which itself fused elements of Populism with the existing Republican Party. As I will explain more fully the next chapter, the Kansas Spirit found new applicability to the United States' "progressive" imperial exploits.

Chapter 5:

Kansas as a Way of Empire

On August 31, 1910, former president Theodore Roosevelt chose Osawatomie, Kansas as the site to deliver his “New Nationalism” speech, which outlined a platform for his 1912 Progressive Party run to reclaim the White House. Osawatomie had been the one-time home of John Brown and his sons during his exploits in territorial Kansas, and the speech took place on the site and anniversary of their famous battle against and narrow escape from a proslavery Missouri militia. During the speech, Roosevelt made few direct references to Brown specifically, referring to him as a player in the “first act of the second of our great national life dramas.” On the surface, Roosevelt’s seeming reluctance to speak overtly about Brown in detail makes sense, considering Brown’s largely negative reputation in historical literature and public memory at the time. That said, the significance of Roosevelt using Brown’s Osawatomie as a symbolic site of memory for framing his new Progressive nationalism as a response to America’s current survival struggle—akin to the Revolutionary War and long Civil War—cannot be underestimated.

Another way of defining Roosevelt's invocation of Kansas as the site of America's second struggle to survive is to call it the place where national unity ruptured over the expansion of slavery to the West. In other words, it was the site where the nation fell apart. John Brown could indeed be called the consummate *divisive* figure, with his well-known actions that included seeking to start a war against slavery in Kansas, provoking sectional strife, and being hanged as a traitor for his Harper's Ferry raid. However, Roosevelt molded, stretched, manipulated, and corralled these aspects of the past in order to argue that regional nationalism—in this case, using Kansas and the West as models for ideal national citizenship—could be instructive for a new, Progressive American empire.

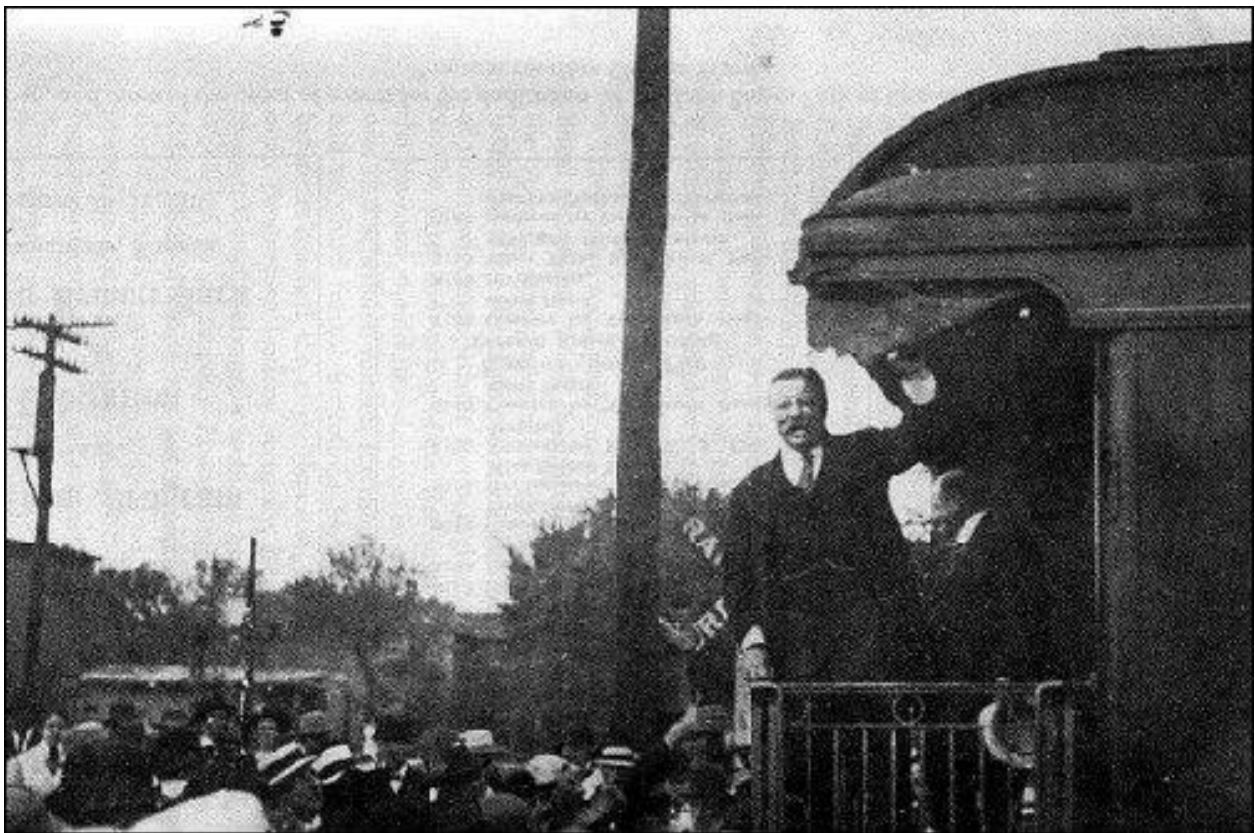


Figure 12: Former president Theodore Roosevelt at Osawatimie, August 31, 1910. Arriving to help dedicate the new John Brown Memorial Park, Roosevelt used the occasion to proclaim his plan for a “New Nationalism” during a major speech. In Robert S. LaForte, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Osawatimie Speech,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer 1966): 187-200. Available online at www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-theodore-roosevelt-s-osawatimie-speech/13176. Retrieved May 4, 2014.

One of the ways Roosevelt used the potentially divisive symbols of Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War was to engage in pointed remembering and forgetting in the same way that the regional nationalism encapsulated in the Kansas Spirit had been constructed. Explaining that the “heroic struggle” of the Civil War had a “dark and terrible side,” he admitted that “often the same man did both good and evil.” Just as the Kansas Spirit was formed through a collective, yet selective reckoning with the small and large scale traumas of the era, so too, in Roosevelt’s estimation, had the essence of modern American imperial nationhood been formed. Proslavery and free state settlers in territorial Kansas had embraced barbarity and perpetrated atrocities against each other, just as the Union and Confederate armies had on a larger scale during the war. “For our great fortune as a nation,” Roosevelt argued, though, “we, the people of the United States as a whole, can now afford to forget the evil, or, at least, to remember it without bitterness, and to fix our eyes with pride only on the good that was accomplished.” His claim is particularly notable for its conscious acknowledgement of the luxury of collective national forgetting of reprehensible acts when rebuilding a nation. Both the North and the South had fought for principles they believed to be right at the time, but the contest “was finally decided by the attitude of the West.” Here, Roosevelt directly invokes regional nationalism, recognizing that the West—with Kansas as its starting point—had been a place of violent division and conflict, but could also stand as a model for national redemption.²⁷⁷

Roosevelt briefly seemed to dabble with the common Lost Cause tropes of equal sacrifice and equally principled combatants, but in the end, it is clear that the Civil War had a positive outcome, a *just* cause, since his audience belonged “not to one of a dozen little squabbling

²⁷⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, “New Nationalism Speech.” Available online at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/new-nationalism-speech/>. Retrieved November 6, 2011.

contemptible commonwealths, but to the mightiest nation upon which the sun shines.” This stinging barb at the twelve seceding states shows Roosevelt’s critique of a defective regional nationalism that strayed into separatism and could never be truly nationalistic or imperial because it allowed for unlimited fracturing rather than unity. Kansas had itself endured a period of contemptible squabbling, but the free state victory and 1861 inclusion to the Union made the effort worthwhile. Roosevelt believed that the Kansas and Union victories, despite the evils undertaken to ensure them, had been a positive good.²⁷⁸

Prefaced by his sometimes troubling acknowledgement of the “evil” means that may result in a positive end, Roosevelt continued to build an argument for an “application to-day of the lessons taught by the contest half a century ago.” He chided contemporary people who honored “men who, in company with John Brown, and under the lead of Abraham Lincoln, faced and solved the great problems of the nineteenth century” yet fearfully shrank from or denounced that same spirit when contemplating solutions to the problems of the twentieth century. Roosevelt’s conflation of John Brown into Lincoln was a crafty technique enacted perhaps to tame the violent radicalism of Brown into a more palatable nationalist like Lincoln, which is understandable, considering his audience consisted at least in part of Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) members. However, even the suggestion that modern Progressive Republicans could stand to be a bit more like John Brown showed that Roosevelt recognized that fellow party members often referred to sites of memory like Osawatomie, Lawrence, and the Marais des Cygnes without any real intention to act righteously. Roosevelt’s speech was rooted in the core argument that the Civil War was fought against the sectional special interest and concentrated wealth of the slavocracy. The modern equivalent, which required a similar spirit and united effort

²⁷⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, “New Nationalism Speech.”

to resist, consisted of monopolistic and oligarchic corporations, and America's best hope to do so was through federal government regulation in an effort to ensure equality of opportunity.²⁷⁹

Roosevelt's New Nationalism was striking for its flexibility. The idea involved forgetting the questionable actions of individuals or the state in the name of a moral or national project. The former president refined aspects of the past to make them useful for the present. John Brown's fighting spirit and moral certitude in pursuit of creative destruction could be used as an example, but Roosevelt was quick to point out that average individuals, "sound in their home, and the father and mother of healthy children whom they bring up well," were necessary to secure the "permanent moral awakening" he advocated. Praising Brown while emphasizing the importance of sound households was a potentially dangerous strategy for the former president, considering Brown and his sons' home invasions and murders during the Pottawatomie Massacre, which in themselves were enacted in the name of protecting free state homes and stopping the spread of slavery, itself a destroyer of households.

On a similar, yet larger scale, Roosevelt argued that the "moral agitation" of a "disorderly mob" was not enough of an administrative force for success in a national contest like the Civil War. Again using the collective experiences of the G.A.R. as an example, Roosevelt reminded his audience, "You needed generals; you needed careful administration of the most advanced type; and a good commissary—the cracker line." A strong national government and functional bureaucracy was necessary to coordinate the war effort and secure victory in the moral contest brought about by those like John Brown. It was not just a temporary effort however, as Roosevelt believed that a permanently strong and active central government was the most democratic guarantor of equal opportunity. Repeatedly, Roosevelt corrals usable elements of the past,

²⁷⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, "New Nationalism Speech."

hinting that Bleeding Kansas could be remembered as a series of actions by morally outraged free state mobs, but with the thorough, professional apparatus of the national imperial state, a successful realization of these moral goals could be accomplished. Privileged with the status to influence elites and average citizens alike, Roosevelt blended vernacular and official culture in his formation of instructive collective memory; he made mundane particulars into high-minded ideals. In the modern era, Roosevelt argued, the best hope for securing American freedom was to grow as a bureaucratic military and economic empire, using the emotional, visceral past as nourishment for the spirit.²⁸⁰

Although the New Nationalism speech mainly focused on domestic policy, Roosevelt spent some time reinforcing his position that the United States should keep up its interests abroad. Deeply involved in the growth in the American navy as president, aggressively enforcing the Monroe Doctrine and his own corollary to it, and overseeing the construction of the Panama Canal, Roosevelt obviously believed that a New Nationalism would extend into the international realm. As that realm pertained to this speech, however, Roosevelt emphasized the similarities between international and personal relationships, claiming, “I should be heartily ashamed if any American does not try to make the American government act as justly toward the nations in international relations as he himself would act toward any individual in private relations.”²⁸¹

To Roosevelt, the individual, family, region, national government, and international community were all guided by the same principles. He stated this clearly in the introduction to his speech, claiming, “The history of America is now the central feature of the history of the world; for the world has set its face hopefully toward our democracy; and O my fellow citizens, each one of you carries on your shoulders not only the burden of doing well for the sake of your

²⁸⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, “New Nationalism Speech.”

²⁸¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “New Nationalism Speech.”

country, but the burden of doing well and of seeing that this nation does well for the sake of mankind.” Roosevelt keenly glossed over the many subjugations of foreign citizens and unfair imperial policies enacted with weaker nations, but Kansans had been accustomed to hearing similar proclamations about their own state’s instructive, yet intentionally forgetful significance to the nation and the world for decades by the time Roosevelt articulated his plan for a New Nationalism. Local traumas and personal, domestic relationships were much more familiar to people than distant interactions with little-known foreign citizens. Roosevelt and other progressives continued the tradition of applying Kansas’s reckoning with the burden of slavery and the Civil War to the main problems of twentieth century America.²⁸²

The first decade of the new century, in which W.E.B. DuBois famously defined the problem of the 20th century as the problem of the color line, was marked by attempts to fit racial preoccupations and distractions into a progressive mold. The fifteen years between 1895 and 1910 included several landmark attempts to define America’s stance on African American rights: Booker T. Washington’s Atlanta Compromise, the Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, and DuBois’s involvement in the Niagara Movement and founding of the NAACP. Amid these debates, the United States applied an imperial framework of multi-tiered citizenship status to venues outside of the country, such as the postwar Philippine occupation and the Panama Canal construction zone.²⁸³

Politically-minded Kansans were highly aware of foreign happenings and their relationship to local history and memory, but the 1905 Kansas Day Club meeting brought many

²⁸² Theodore Roosevelt, “New Nationalism Speech.”

²⁸³ See Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), and Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2009).

issues, both foreign and domestic, into sharp focus. In that year, the Kansas Republicans invited African-American leader William T. Vernon to speak at the meeting. Vernon was president of Western University at the time, an institution that began as Quindaro Freedman School and under Vernon had become similar to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. While Vernon was certainly not radical in his statements, the mere fact of inviting him showed that the Kansas Day Club wanted to reach out to the right kind of African Americans, the kind who, during the Exodus twenty-five years earlier, Governor St. John had welcomed to Kansas if they were willing to work hard and follow the laws. Theodore Roosevelt has famously invited Booker T. Washington to dine with him and his family at the White House in late 1901, a move that had perhaps inspired the Kansas Republicans.²⁸⁴

Vernon's speech, titled, "A Plea for a Suspension of Judgment," asked white Americans to be patient with blacks in their quest for advancement. He cited the deep incorporation and sacrifice of blacks in American society throughout its history of warfare, from the Revolution through the Civil War, recalling Crispus Attucks from the Boston Massacre and Peter Salem at Bunker Hill, as well as the slaves at parade rest when Washington accepted Cornwallis's surrender, hoping someday their children's children would be free. He paraphrased the famous words of the Carthaginian author Tertullian when describing John Brown, calling him "a martyr whose blood became the seed of the church of human liberty and freedom" and added, "for he gave impetus to the Kansas spirit and the things to which the Kansas Day Club stands."²⁸⁵ Even though Vernon's speech called to mind Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" address

²⁸⁴ See Deborah Davis, *Guest of Honor: Booker T. Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and the White House Dinner that Shocked a Nation* (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2012).

²⁸⁵ *Addresses Delivered at the Fourteenth Annual Banquet of the Kansas Day Club. In the Rotunda of the State House Topeka, The Thirtieth of January 1905.* (Clay Center, KS: The Press of the Times, 1905), 57-9.

ten years earlier, the invocation of Brown's blood as seminal to the Kansas Spirit—and in a large sense, to human liberty—glimpsed the potentially radical implications of bringing Brown back to life in the early twentieth century, implications that Roosevelt appropriated as a cornerstone of the New Nationalism.



Figure 13: Dr. William Tecumseh Vernon (1871-1944), president of Quindaro University, pictured in 1904. He was born to formerly enslaved parents in Lebanon, Missouri. He was invited to speak at the 1905 meeting of the Kansas Day Club, a Republican organization formed in the early 1890s as a response to the Populist insurgency. Vernon tied the Kansas past to a continued call for racial uplift as well as contemporary imperial issues. Photo available online at www.findagrave.com. Retrieved July 18, 2014.

Vernon's and Roosevelt's speeches were given at a time when interpreting Brown was becoming a particularly lively historical pursuit. The ten years after his speech contained a famous dispute between two prominent Brown biographers, DuBois and Oswald Garrison Villard, who published their works in 1909 and 1910, respectively. As historian R. Blakeslee Gilpin has pointed out in his assessment of the dispute, DuBois, in his underappreciated

biography of Brown, emphasized Brown's interracial cooperation and portrayed his actions as a justified reaction to the horrors of slavery in response to the growing "Lost Cause" arguments about the diminished significance of the institution to the Civil War. Villard, a grandson of the renowned pacifist abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, attacked DuBois's work for its factual inaccuracies and insisted that Brown's violent means were unjustified. As Gilpin notes, Villard believed he should determine the direction of the NAACP himself and condescendingly attributed DuBois's anger at criticism of his book to a racial characteristic of being quick to anger.²⁸⁶ Speaking within the relatively non-radical framework of the Kansas Day Club, Vernon was not as explicit as DuBois about remembering the violence and horrors of slavery, but he repeatedly emphasized cooperation between blacks and whites and recast the past as a march toward the institution's eventual end.

Vernon also tried to argue that the Republican Party presented an opportunity to bind the whole nation together. He subtly reminded the audience of the radical nature of the party's formation, saying, "With backward glance, above the smoke of battle, our eyes forever behold the gleaming sword whose upward swing preserved Kansas, and whose downward stroke freed the world from the stain of human slavery." He further interpreted the past by telling his listeners they knew whose hand was at the sword's hilt: the Republican Party.²⁸⁷ Villard's notable recollection of the "gleaming sword" conjured images of the "terrible swift sword" from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," as well as John Brown's Pottawatomie swordsmen exacting grim revenge on proslavery settlers in Kansas. Since Vernon was born in Missouri to former slave parents in 1871 and did not directly experience slavery nor, like many members of his audience,

²⁸⁶ R. Blakeslee Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives!: America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, and Change* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 82-100.

²⁸⁷ *Addresses Delivered at the Fourteenth Annual Banquet of the Kansas Day Club*, 60.

the Civil War, it also bears noting that this second generation of Republicans were witnessing an attempt to shape the story that they should collectively remember about themselves.

Continuing on the line of interracial cooperation via military service, Vernon reminded his audience that the men who fought and died for the freedom of black men had sons who fought “that Cuba might be free,” and that both followed Theodore Roosevelt, who he characterized as a “man of mighty purpose, mighty heart, and mighty brain, whose Christ-like doctrine is not black men down and white men up, but rather no man down and all men up.”²⁸⁸ Although Roosevelt was likely not quite the believer in equality that Vernon portrayed him to be, he clearly wanted to create a narrative of continuing advancement toward freedom with Roosevelt as the contemporary personification of the struggle.

Considering the firm entrenchment of the Lost Cause and the emergence of the anti-Reconstruction Dunning School within the scholarly community during this time, Vernon was making a strong argument about how to remember the Civil War. To him, the war was unquestionably about black liberation and the beginning of a process that would end racial discrimination. He emphasized the Spanish-American War’s potential, which many war hawks spoke of at the time, as a war to liberate Cuba from racial oppression as well as Spanish colonial rule. It made sense to include black and white Civil War soldiers, John Brown, and Spanish-American War veterans in the same category of freedom fighters. Vernon must have impressed Roosevelt with his works and words, as he was appointed by the president as Register of the Treasury from 1906-1911.

Vernon’s speech seems to have been well received. Governor Edward Hoch made an impromptu speech responding to Vernon’s, in which he blatantly challenged southerners who

²⁸⁸ *Addresses Delivered at the Fourteenth Annual Banquet of the Kansas Day Club*, 67.

would disagree with anything Vernon said. “So far as I’m concerned,” he stated, “I do not have to ‘suspend judgment’ tonight. I have seen the black man and the white man offer their lives together to sustain the Union. If extending a helpful hand to a struggling race, if contributing all that I can to their welfare, if treating them as gentlemen, if this be treason, let these gentlemen with microscopic brains and infinitesimal hearts make the most of it.”²⁸⁹ Hoch’s acceptance of Vernon’s plea continued the tradition of black accommodation rooted in the antislavery fight that could be traced back to Daniel R. Anthony and John P. St. John. If he did not already believe that there was a connection between John Brown, Bleeding Kansas, the Civil War, and the newer imperial contests of the 20th century, perhaps William Tecumseh Vernon’s words fortified him to make a bold statement when a national opportunity like christening of the U.S.S. *Kansas* arose.

On March 24, 1898, one month before the beginning of the Spanish American War, the United States Navy introduced two new battleships: the USS *Kearsarge* and the USS *Kentucky*. The similar 375-foot vessels would serve in the North Atlantic Fleet and take part in the worldwide voyage of the “Great White Fleet” ten years later in a show of peacetime military strength envisioned by President Roosevelt. Before their emergence on the world stage, however, the occasion of the ships’ christening in Newport News, Virginia became the center of a contentious domestic spectacle that blended Progressive Era politics with the legacy of the Civil War. The *Kentucky* incident provides important background information to understand the importance which turn-of-the-century Americans attached to symbolic imperial representations of their state.

While the christening of the *Kearsarge* proceeded according to tradition, with a bottle of ceremonial wine or champagne broken over the hull by Mrs. Herbert Winslow, the daughter-in-

²⁸⁹ *Addresses Delivered at the Fourteenth Annual Banquet of the Kansas Day Club*, 67.

law of the commander of the new ship—which was named after an earlier *Kearsarge* from the Civil War—the ceremony for the *Kentucky* was not so smooth. For this ship, the chosen sponsor was Miss Christine Bradley, daughter of the governor of Kentucky. As the Bradley family consisted of avowed teetotalers, a popular moral commitment for many turn-of-the-century Progressives, Christine Bradley decided to make a statement in favor of moral purity and use a non-alcoholic liquid to bless the ship on its launch into the imperial domain. The chosen liquid for the event turned out to be no ordinary water, but was allegedly gathered from a spring on the Kentucky farm where Abraham Lincoln was born. When Miss Bradley broke the glass bottle of water, there was an audible mixture of “hisses and jeers as well as applause.” One newspaper report stated, “Not content with the official christening by Miss Bradley, many guests battered the sides of the moving ship with bottles of rare old Kentucky whisky. These beat a tattoo on the hard steel, sprinkling many of those on the launching stand and filled the air with an intoxicating perfume.” Included among the whisky hurlers were reportedly the widow of General George Pickett, LaSalle “Sallie” Pickett, who was in the midst of a long career devoted to redeeming the image of her husband and his ill-fated, eponymous charge. In another notable instance, an unnamed participant threw a bottle of water that had allegedly been filled at a spring where Jefferson Davis was born.²⁹⁰

The *Kentucky* incident provided a stark reminder of both past and present divisions in American society at the dawn of the 19th century. Kentucky presented a particularly ripe site for contested Civil War memory, as it was a slave state that did not secede from the Union, as well as the birthplace of both the American and Confederate presidents. The characterization of the event above appears as a strong repudiation of Christine Bradley’s attempt to frame the

²⁹⁰ Topeka *Capital*, March 12, 1903.

expansionary exploits of the U.S. Navy in a moral, progressive, and, indeed, feminine manner. Instead, protesters marked the occasion in a decidedly masculine way, “tattooing” the “hard steel” of the ship with alcohol and unreconstructed water, creating an intoxicating aroma that surely offended the senses of the purely constituted prohibitionists. The inclusion of prominent men’s female family members created opportunities for women to make symbolic political statements that did not always conform to the expectations of observers.

The timing of the launching was also important, since 1898 would become the year that American imperialism took a major leap into the global realm with the onset of the Spanish-American War. Though not part of Admirable Dewey’s invading force that defeated the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay, the war gave *Kentucky* an opportunity to mobilize, and it joined other American ships in the Far East in 1900. During the first decade of the 20th century, the size of the U.S. Navy would grow and reflect America’s growing designs on an extracontinental empire.

The story of the *Kentucky* christening must have influenced Kansans when they learned that their state was going to lend its name to a new battleship in 1903. Just as Kentucky had a distinct reckoning with its past, Kansas’s place in the American nation, with its “bleeding” past and Progressive present went on display during the controversy over the christening of the USS *Kansas* in 1905. Kansas had been a dry state since 1880, and many people believed that it would be inappropriate for a ship bearing the name of a dry state to be christened with any kind of alcoholic substance. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) inundated Governor Willis Bailey’s office with letters urging him not to use anything but water to christen the *Kansas*.²⁹¹ In the State Senate, there was even a resolution proposed by Fremont Leidy to prohibit the use of any intoxicating liquid for such as event, though it failed by a vote of 19-

²⁹¹ Kansas City *Times*, March 26, 1903.

15.²⁹² The wave of sentiment in favor of making a stand against liquor continued to rise until 1905, with arguments going back and forth about tradition, morality, and who should ultimately get to decide how to send the *Kansas* into duty on the high seas.

When the ship was completed and ready to launch in August 1905, Governor Hoch chose his daughter Anna to act as the sponsor, the person responsible for christening the ship. Earlier that year, during the same Kansas Day Club meeting in which he had endorsed the statements of William Vernon, Hoch had encouraged fellow Republicans to attend the first meeting of the new Women's Kansas Day Club (WKDC), an undertaking that at least one newspaper editor had speculated to be a response to Vernon's appearance. The *Topeka Journal* claimed, "It seems to be another application of the equal suffragist plea that a woman is as good as a negro. This has been worked to the limit by advocates of female suffrage ever since the adoption of the Fourteenth amendment and now the Kansas Day Club has started more trouble by honoring a colored man and giving the equal suffragists a fresh grievance."²⁹³ While the WKDC did not claim to have been formed in order to prove this point, it is important to note that in this progressive environment, Kansas women believed that they, too, were central to an ongoing definition and refinement of the Kansas Spirit.

The actual sequence of events leading up to the August 13 ceremony in New York City was told in many different versions. Certainly, Anna Hoch preferred to make a statement by using water instead of wine, champagne, or any other potent potable. Again, as with the *Kentucky*, the source of the water became an opportunity to make a symbolic statement. The state of Kentucky could claim native sons Abraham Lincoln *and* Jefferson Davis and through

²⁹² *Kansas City Journal*, March 14, 1903.

²⁹³ *Topeka Journal*, "Women to Try it. They Propose to Organize a Kansas Day Club," Jan. 14, 1905.

that association re-fight the Civil War in the new imperial era. Kansas, however, decided that the most significant way to remind a national audience of its place of moral leadership in the nation was to procure water from the “John Brown spring” near the site of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre in Linn County, further showing the degree to which it had become a site of memory.



Figure 14: Launching party for the USS *Kansas*, August 11, 1905. Controversy surrounded the launch, as Miss Anna Hoch, the daughter of Kansas’s governor Edward Hoch, supposedly used a bottle of water from the “John Brown Spring” near Trading Post, Kansas to christen the ship. From “Ladies Who Launch: Ship Christening Photographs from Delaware Valley Shipyards.” Independence Seaport Museum. New York Shipbuilding Corporation Collection 1967.310. Available online at http://www.phillyseaport.org/web_exhibits/ladies_who_launch/records/uss_kansas_1905.html. Retrieved June 6, 2014.

According to one account of the event from a history of Linn County, someone was able to convince Governor Hoch that such a fluid “would be symbolical of all that Kansas stood for and sure to make a good story in the newspapers as an innovation.” A mission was undertaken to fill a bottle of water from the spring, which was near Trading Post—a former hotbed of border strife during the 1850s—but during the wagon ride on the way to Pleasanton, the bottle broke and had to be replaced with a bottle of distilled water from a drugstore in Missouri. According to this account, Hoch had to think of an elaborate scheme to hide this unfortunate fact that would severely hamper the symbolism of the act.²⁹⁴ Further evidence of this ruse was provided by a newspaper story that claimed a bottle of water had been delivered to Hoch on July 18 by Mound City newspaper editor Will Mason.²⁹⁵

When the Hochs arrived in New York, it was still uncertain what was going to take place at the christening. On August 12, the newspapers reported that Miss Hoch had stated a preference for using water, but was under pressure from the head of this shipping company, DeCoursey May, to use wine. During an interview, she stated, “I don’t know what we will use, but personally I would prefer water. Kansas is a prohibition state, you know, and I think it would be more appropriate.” May was supposedly standing nearby and pretended not to hear.²⁹⁶ In order to avoid tension, Gov. Hoch pulled May aside on the morning of the christening to discuss the matter. Hoch stated plainly that he had two bottles and he and his daughter would prefer to use the water, but if tradition called for it, she would use the champagne, though adding that his daughter “ha(d) never seen a bottle of champagne.” In a gesture of magnanimity, May declared that “tradition is of secondary importance when compared to hospitality” and conceded to water,

²⁹⁴ W.A. Mitchell, 317.

²⁹⁵ Topeka *Capital*, July 19, 1905.

²⁹⁶ Topeka *Capital*, August 12, 1905.

but with the added request that the decision not be made public until after the launch.²⁹⁷ May was probably aware of the debacle over the *Kentucky* and the hailstorm of whiskey bottles that followed the water christening of that vessel.

Anna Hoch's decision to use water seems to have been hailed as a victory back home, though her actions garnered at least some criticism from non-Kansans. The *Kansas City Star* reported that that naval department expected that champagne would be used, and "the announcement that water was used instead gave the weather-beaten salts of the navy a distinct shock." They did not protest, however, as they said it was none of their business. A couple days after the event, one Boston newspaper claimed that "the political conditions in Kansas must be indeed crooked and past the comprehension of outsiders" when the governor had to resort to "petty trickery" like that shown in the christening scandal. They believed that it was a clear case of "toadying up to the prohibition element."²⁹⁸

Based on contemporary press coverage, the *Kansas* christening controversy seemed to be more animated by the issue of temperance than in the legacy of John Brown, slavery, and the Civil War. Had Kansans forgotten about that past? Had Brown become a meaningless symbol, tacked on to any Kansas ceremony without any real conversation about the legacy of such a figure? This is not likely, because John Brown continued to provide a relevant model for early twentieth century Kansans and Americans as a whole. Anna Hoch, when asked in a post-christening interview if she had insisted on using water, said that she had not, but added, "No, it was water from the homestead of John Brown. Really, it is very fitting, don't you think so?"²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ *Topeka Capital*, August 14, 1905.

²⁹⁸ *Kansas City Star*, August 13, 1905.

²⁹⁹ *Topeka Capital*, August 14, 1905.

How was it “fitting” that water allegedly obtained from a spring on land briefly occupied by John Brown almost fifty years earlier would properly commemorate the introduction of a new 450-foot warship into duty as part of America’s twentieth century imperial navy? One might think that John Brown, such a polarizing figure to Civil War era Americans, would best be forgotten in a country that had spent the decades since Reconstruction, and particularly the years since the Spanish American War, coping with the wounds of traumatic divisions. Water that flowed in Pottawatomie Creek had been reddened with the blood of the five men Brown’s followers had murdered, and this fact could not have been lost on the *Kansas* christeners. Indeed, John Brown displayed the will to use extralegal violence to accomplish his goals, the kind of actions that directly challenged one of the state’s key sources of legitimacy: a monopoly on the use of violence. By actively endorsing the use of John Brown spring water to christen the USS *Kansas*, Anna Hoch, her father, and, by extension, Kansans generally, appropriated the symbol of John Brown as a moral compass that could be extracted from his own time and inserted into present domestic and international challenges. This is particularly notable for the time, for the early 1900s were marked by a sustained national, and some would say “Progressive,” push to establish a firm color line. Most turn-of-the-century Kansans, while certainly not believers in racial equality in the manner of John Brown, had to engage with the logical connections of using him as a symbol.

To many Kansans, it made perfect sense to invoke Brown as a model for righteous action in the early 20th century. The American insurgent nationalist spirit, as Theodore Roosevelt articulated, was based on embracing aggressive actions and subjugation of others, all the while justifying it in the name of moral progress and cultural tutelage. In a 1901 speech, Kansas Day Club member John S. Dawson tied together the memory of the 1850s territorial struggles with a

popular imperial term made famous by an 1899 Rudyard Kipling poem, saying, “At that time the white man’s burden was shouldered by Andrew Reeder and John Brown and Jim Lane, and thousands of others who came to brave the hardships of pioneer life and to see to it that no slave’s footprint should desecrate the free soil of Kansas.”³⁰⁰ This rather absurd grouping of figures from early Kansas history would have made little sense to abolitionists fifty years early, but the passage of time and the constant shaping of collective memory meant that they could be appropriated for contemporary uses. Because Kansas had been a frontier threatened by the barbaric institution of slavery, successfully conquered, and incorporated into the northern version of a new American empire, any historical figures loosely associated with that process seemed fit to apply to 20th century exploits that seemed similar.

In a Kansas Day speech titled “Expansion,” also from the 1901 meeting, club member Scott Hopkins stated his thesis succinctly, proclaiming, “The history of expansion is thus the history of civilization.” When the United States was at the helm of the expansionary project, it was a virtuous one. He explained further, in the recent case of American action in the Philippines, “Our navy was sent to the Philippines, after the memorable victory in Manila Bay, we were subrogated to the rights, duties, and privileges of Spanish authority, and became the guarantor of the lives, liberty, and property of the law-abiding people in those faraway Pacific isles. . . . Would we avoid these responsibilities? No, a thousand times, No.”³⁰¹ As with most Americans who invoked the idea of a “white man’s burden,” Hopkins emphasized the positive potential outcome of shouldering the burden while denying the downside, which was the bloody subjugation necessary to ensure compliance and creation of a legacy of animosity between the

³⁰⁰ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses. Delivered at the Annual Banquets During the First Ten Years of the Club’s Existence, 1892-1901.* (Hutchinson, KS: W.Y. Morgan, 1901), 448.

³⁰¹ *The Kansas Day Club. Addresses*, 426-7.

occupying nation and its victims. The framing of this episode demonstrates the management of the politics of difference, with the United States authorities imagining and trying to create unity between themselves and law-abiding colonial subjects ready to accept the granting of their inalienable rights but still drawing differences by including the Philippine project under the “white man’s burden.”

Samuel Shively, the chronicler of the Pottawatomie Massacre, also made the connection between the Brown of 1856 and America’s imperial quagmire of the early 1900s: the Philippine “insurrection.” To Shively, Brown may have been classified as reckless and misguided in his judgment, but later events vindicated him and made his decisions look more sound than other free state leaders. He explained in a 1903 speech:

The free-state men had been on the defensive for two years and that seemed long enough. When should the defensive end and the aggressive begin? We have a recent illustration. When the Filipinos attacked Manila the Americans acted only on the defensive the first day, but the next day they carried the war into the jungles. Day after day the American forces pursued an aggressive campaign until their armed foe laid down his arms.³⁰²

In this case, Shively did not justify Brown only out of self defense, but praised him for going on the offensive in order to accomplish his goals. The idea of carrying the war “into the jungles” in both cases conjures thoughts of leaving the accepted decorum of civilization behind and taking on the primitive characteristics of the enemies in order to defeat them while still maintaining an overall sense of moral righteousness. Brown himself, after returning to Moneka, Kansas with newly liberated people from a raiding excursion, reportedly boasted, “See, I have carried the war into Africa.”³⁰³ The parallel between Brown carrying the war into Africa and American soldiers carrying the war into jungles of the Philippines—or, in an earlier era, the Confederacy—rather than staying in Manila could be extended to the larger missions each was undertaking. John

³⁰² W.A. Mitchell, 77.

³⁰³ W.A. Mitchell, 221.

Brown may have considered himself a defender of free-state Kansans, but he was truly going on the offensive by moving into Kansas in the first place and likely welcomed the onset of a war that would eventually escalate into an all-out liberation mission.

The American leaders who undertook the invasion of the Philippines justified it on moral grounds as well. Destroying the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay and subsequently occupying the mainland was a preemptive, offensive maneuver, but the Americans promised the Filipinos that their life, liberty, and property would be protected as long as they cooperated with the occupying forces. The day after the Americans secured the surrender of Manila from the Spanish on August 14, 1898, Major General Wesley Merritt issued a six-part proclamation stating that his government had instructions “to assure the people that he has not come to wage war upon them, nor upon any part or any faction among them, but to protect them in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights.” This protection would come at a cost, however, as he added, “All persons who, by active aid or honest submission, co-operate with the United States in its efforts to give effect to this beneficent purpose, will receive the reward of its support and protection.”³⁰⁴ The unstated threat of course, was that of the grotesque brutality that could and did accompany refusal to comply with the U.S. occupiers. Much like Indian removal policies in 1850s Kansas and the preceding decades, authorities sought to enforce unity if subjugated people could adopt the ways of new imperial leaders. Those who chose to maintain their old or noncompliant ways were defined as outsiders not deserving civilized treatment.

Clearly, the United States presented itself as the new dominant entity in The Philippines after defeating the Spanish. Using language that invoked a patriarchal relationship, especially

³⁰⁴ Trumbull White, *Our New Possessions. Four Books in One. A Graphic Account, Descriptive and Historical, of the Tropic Islands of the Sea Which Have Fallen Under Our Sway, Their Cities, Peoples and Commerce, Natural Resources and the Opportunities they Offer to Americans.* (Philadelphia, PA: Premier Publishing Company, 1898), 112.

“submission” in exchange for “support” and “protection,” American forces sent a message to the Filipinos that they should not expect independence or sovereignty any time soon. From the outset, the leaders of the Filipino insurrection against the Spanish could sense that they may have just inherited a new imperial overlord. They issued a joint statement on November 15 that humbly thanked the Americans for getting rid of the Spanish but also asked for greater involvement in decisions about the management of their country. Contrary to the American statement, the Filipinos repeated that they sought a “friendly” relationship with the Americans, noting, “The Spaniards, the late enemies of the Americans, are shown every consideration, and the Filipinos, friends and allies, are often treated as enemies.”³⁰⁵ Suggesting a friendship between the two nations was a subtle but direct protest against the establishment of an unequal imperial relationship; a friend does not demand submission from another friend. General Merritt read the statement but was dismissive, calling the Filipinos “children” and claiming that “they must have some kind of colonial government similar to the British colonial governments.” Though he did say that he would treat the Filipinos “fairly,” he quickly added that this was because “the United States is in the habit of dealing fairly with all struggling peoples, and not because I had been authorized to say anything of the kind.”³⁰⁶ Again, promising fair treatment is not an action made by a person or government firmly committed to equality. It is more akin to a statement made by a benevolent parent. As historian Paul Kramer has explained in detail, the United States was reluctant to recognize The Philippines as a unified nation, instead characterizing it as a loose conglomeration of “tribes” that prevented it from being negotiated with as a formal nation-

³⁰⁵ White, 118.

³⁰⁶ White, 119-120.

state.³⁰⁷ Here, the United States was informed by its North American imperial expansion and history of negotiating with Native Americans in an unequal power relationship.

The imperial era celebrated masculine patriarchy, and this could have made John Brown an appealing rallying symbol for America's extracontinental project. Would Brown himself have endorsed the occupation of the Philippines and the concurrent racist arguments put forth to justify (and argue against) maintaining control of the country? Almost certainly not. But John Brown was a risk taker, a liberator, a staunch moralist, and the head of his own large family. American imperialists imagined themselves in the same position. If America's foreign excursions could be sold back home as liberating missions, then Brown would be the perfect model for such actions. Early twentieth century Americans continued to refine the past as they retold it in the present. Even after presiding over much of America's imperial expansion as president, Theodore Roosevelt continued to find inspiration in the figure of John Brown as he prepared to make a third party run at the White House. Brown's actions and martyrdom furnished a means of giving moral force and embodiment to a geographically remote, bureaucratic, and contradiction-filled imperial project to turn-of-the-century Americans—even though Brown's actions were themselves hardly free of contradictions.

Half a century after the Indian removals, territorial violence, and Civil War experience, Kansas remained a touchstone for contemporary users and shapers of western memory. The Kansas Day Club adhered to an inclusive narrative about the war's potential to bring about equality of opportunity for African Americans, and their guest at the 1905 meeting, William T. Vernon, made the connection between past and present quite clear. He further showed that Kansas's past could be instructive for the nation's foreign interactions as it grew to a worldwide

³⁰⁷ Kramer, 121-2.

empire. The christeners of the USS *Kansas* also felt a deep desire to brand their contribution to the imperial project with a local symbol. By smashing a bottle of “John Brown water” on the bow of the warship, they helped to embody it with a sense of moral certitude that both Brown and temperance represented. Theodore Roosevelt, America’s biggest advocate for a state-of-the-art navy, would have understood the connection between Brown and the USS *Kansas* much in the way that he connected Brown’s abolitionism and his own era’s fight against predatory monopolies. Though far from large cities of the East Coast, and even further from the sites of twentieth century imperial conquest, Kansas remained a center for defining and refining America’s identity.

Conclusion:

Bringing it all Back Home: Embodiment through Memory

Mother, come! Here's a home
In the waiting West;
Bring the seeds of love and peace,
You who sow the best.
Faithful hearts, holy prayers,
Keep from taint the air;
Soil a mother's tears have wet
Golden crops shall bear.
~from "Call to Kansas" by Lucy Larcom³⁰⁸

Kansas, the West, and the United States as a nation changed greatly from the antebellum to the Progressive eras, but there were broad continuities in this American age of empire.³⁰⁹ The

³⁰⁸ L.G.A. Copley, *Kansas Day for Kansas Schools*, (Clay Center, KS: Dispatch Printing House, 1882), 4.

time of the Kansas-Nebraska Act witnessed a restless imperially-minded nation looking to expand and consolidate its borders, but it was internally divided on what labor system would define newly subjugated regions. The West, which had the potential to define a unified national project of white settler expansion, instead became the place where the nation became violently and traumatically unmade, beginning with Bleeding Kansas and evolving into the larger and longer Civil War, with its continuation in the violent politics and multiple rebellions of Reconstruction and beyond. In the early twentieth century, that same nation, still grappling with the effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction, sought in many ways to remind its citizens of aspects of the traumatic struggle with slavery in order to mobilize them for a contemporary imperial project. The war had cost lives, subjugated outsiders, and threatened participants with the loss of their core humanity, but the very visceral qualities of this experience remained a model for committing American citizens to a national cause.

Kansas had been the place where personal, local fissures had opened into gaping national wounds. During the territorial and Civil War years, neighbors had breached protective boundaries, invading each others' homes and challenging the fundamental, stabilizing belief of most nineteenth century Americans that a man should be able to protect and control his own living space. White settlers took on characteristics of so-called "uncivilized" Native Americans, displacing them while creating enemy others among themselves, thereby justifying a kind of self-annihilation in addition to the removals. During the war, Kansas became the destabilizing antithesis to western slavery expansion, not only by providing a nearby destination for Missouri slaves seeking freedom, but also by giving them the opportunity to fight for the Union Army.

³⁰⁹ See E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1987), 57-59.

While this distressed many Kansans and Americans generally, it set in motion a way for African Americans to carve out a tenuous, yet historically significant home in the postwar West.

Despite the many traumatic elements of Kansas' territorial and Civil War experience, that history was reworked and reimagined in the collective memory for many decades after, usually as a positive, instructive experience that could be applied to changing regional and national challenges and thereby closing the gaps left by these earlier traumas. During the Centennial moment, which coincided with the end of Reconstruction, the Free State version of the past—which at this time began to be called the “Kansas Spirit”—emerged as a way to preserve emancipation and stopping the spread of slavery as goals of the war. This provided a counterweight to the “Lost Cause” version of the war—a narrative that coalesced after the Centennial moment, perhaps even as a *response* to the Kansas Spirit—encouraging Americans to forget the legacy of slavery and its promise of black political equality for the sake of peaceful sectional reunification after Reconstruction. In the 1880s and 1890s, western Populists rose to challenge the entrenched supremacy of a postwar Republican Party that held strongly to official memory and the “bloody shirt” rhetoric of Civil War victory in order to justify its control of national politics. Populists, however, supported a more vernacular memory of emancipation, claiming that Gilded Age monopolistic Republicans had forfeited the mantle of moral superiority and had instead taken on characteristics of prewar southern masters, exploiting and enslaving farmers and other laborers. Kansas Populists, perhaps sensing a loss of tangible connection to recent history, animated their voting base by recalling the state's contest against slavery and encouraged supporters to make a similar stand.

At the turn of the century, the United States continued and expanded its imperial project, most notably with the Spanish-American War and the occupation of Cuba and The Philippines,

as well as naval expansion to ensure safe markets for economic expansion. Although a new generation of Progressive politicians had come of age—led by the always energetic Theodore Roosevelt—the regional nationalism represented by the Kansas Spirit still carried symbolic weight as way to connect the seemingly mundane, bureaucratic nature of Progressive imperialism to the visceral, tangible, emotional, and fully embodied experience of Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War. Sites of memory, including Lawrence, Osawatomie, Pottawatomie Creek, and the Marais des Cynes became well-established locations on a collective memory map of Bleeding and Civil War Kansas and often appropriated. The great abolitionist firebrand John Brown, attached to several of these sites and remembered for his manly crusade in the name of moral righteousness rather than his deeply troubling extralegal home invasions and murders, could serve as a symbol for Progressive American Christians seeking to connect contemporary moral crusades like paternalistic imperialism to an earlier era of spiritual absolutism.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Kansas seemed to capture the imaginations of Americans across a wide geographic swath. There was a sense that Kansas had not only survived, but thrived in the face of its historical burden and created a consummate home out of a formerly precarious western existence. Cities across the nation founded social clubs consisting of former Kansans and others who wished to dabble in an energetic version of Kansas identity and relive the state's founding on its anniversary. By 1911, the *Kansas City Star* reported, “Kansas Day is becoming something of a universal celebration. . . . They are indeed happy reunions, and the idea is spreading until the absent Kansan about this time of year may drop into almost any large city and find a Kansas dinner ready to welcome him.”³¹⁰ Carrying on a tradition established by primary students who had sung “John Brown’s Body” on the first Kansas Day in 1877,

³¹⁰ *Kansas City Star*, January 30, 1911.

celebrants in 1910 at New York City's recently constructed Plaza Hotel, backed by an orchestra, "sang forth to the world that so far as Kansas is concerned, John Brown's soul is still marching on—a fact of no small importance to the nation at large in these parlous days."³¹¹ From its beginnings as a strictly partisan response to the Populist insurgency, the Kansas Day Clubs outside the state seem to have adopted a more friendly, welcoming quality that reminded people of a return to home, regardless of whether or not Kansas had ever been their home. Increasingly, at the outset of the twentieth century, middle to upper class club women sought to capitalize on this aspect of the KDC and develop it in their own image.

The Women's Kansas Day Club (WKDC) helped to refine the state's history and image during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It is a good example of how the Kansas Spirit remained relevant to and refined by vernacular culture even amid attempts to appropriate it for more official purposes.³¹² Although it was formed almost fifteen years after the more political Kansas Day Club, the Republican men's organization discussed earlier, the WKDC saw attendance grow from 300 to over 1,000 during its first decade, surpassing the KDC in numbers

³¹¹ *Topeka Capital*, February, 1910 in *Kansas Day Club Clippings*, Vol. 1 1894-1915. Collected by the KSHS.

³¹² See *Report of the Kansas Commissioners to the Louisiana Purchase Centennial Exposition. Together With Illustrations and Descriptions in Detail of Kansas Exhibits and Awards* (Topeka, KS: Crane and Company, Publishers, 1905). In a speech at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Topeka lawyer David Overmyer spoke on the "Spirit of Kansas," saying, "While in politics they are partisan to offensiveness, they are capable on occasion of rising above politics; and while Puritan prejudice has found a lodgment in their laws, they are at heart sound and sane, devoted to Constitutional liberty, true to the traditions of the Republic, and to the sentiments of the brave and faithful men who laid the foundations of the State." He goes on to explain how Kansas "thrills at the stirring strains of 'Dixie,' and remembers with patriotic pride that part of her body was once part of Dixie Land." This shows a more compromising version of the Kansas Spirit promoting official memory rather than the insurgent moral righteousness of the Free State cause, pp. 37-39.

by 1915.³¹³ Many members of the WKDC also participated in the Good Government Club, which advocated women's suffrage.



Figure 15: Mary A. Prescott Horton (1841-1933), who helped organize the Women's Kansas Day Club. The WKDC was formed in 1905 and not meant to be ostensibly political, but rather committed to preserving Kansas history and therefore valuable to the shaping of collective memory. Available online at www.kansasmemory.org/item/210271. Retrieved May 5, 2014.

Of particular note during the proceedings of the first WKDC meeting was one of the main speeches, given by J. K. Hudson and W. A. McCarter, which shared a story collected and printed in a Topeka newspaper during the black exodus to Kansas of 1879-80. The sentimental anecdote helped to reinforce an attachment to Kansas' past and the possibility for securing a home in the West. The story, titled "Bijah" and told from the point of view of an unnamed, aged formerly enslaved man, begins in a manner reminiscent of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with his

³¹³ Topeka *Capital*, January 31, 1915.

description of a peaceful, unified family life in slavery until “Old Massa Nicholas” dies and “Young Massa Jason” takes over. Jason is not good at managing the plantation, so he has to sell off the slaves, including the narrator and his wife’s (Susan) children. Despite Susan angrily telling off the master, he still sheepishly sells her sons. Susan becomes disconsolate and vows to find them, even resorting to acting up in order to get sold and go look for them. The master reluctantly sells her, so the narrator says he never saw the boys or Susan again. When the war came, he joined the Union army as a cook. After years of prayer, he told the story of his decision to come to Kansas:

I nebber heard nuffin of ‘em in all my wanderin’s sence de war, an’ I’s ben waitin’ patiently for de Lord’s good time, but my san’s is a mos’ run out now, and when I heerd ‘bout so many black people comin’ to Kansas, it ‘peared like to me I mought fin’ Susan, or ‘Bijah or John Henry, or Sammy, ef I was to come too, so I jis scraped up what little I had, an’ here I is.

Something special, intangible, supposedly, brought this man to Kansas, with the possibility that the almost mystical attraction of the state would bring the rest of his family. All of the listeners were moved by his story and were prepared to help him make sure the rest of his life would be comfortable, but he continued:

No, I nebber seed de likes ob dis; but I’s contented, ef you all will jes let me stay heah whar I kin see de refugees when dey come in. Dat’s all I come for, lady, dis fine country has no ‘tractions foh a ole black man like me. But they mought come, dey mought come; de good Lord willin’ dey will come. So many o’ my people comin’ in I’s gwine to hope on an’ keep a prayin.’

At that moment, according to the story, they all looked up upon hearing someone calling out,

“‘Bijah! ‘Bijah, is you gon let yore ol Mammy fall down in de dark in dis wile country?”

Listeners soon found out that it was Susan calling out after the now grown Bijah and his family.

They had all arrived in Kansas, with Bijah’s 6-year-old son, and the old man rejoiced.³¹⁴

³¹⁴ Topeka *Herald*, Jan 30, 1905.

This fascinating story—whether it actually happened or not—demonstrates the continued importance of slavery on forming Kansans’ idea of home many years after the territorial and Civil War years. The narrator’s reunification with his wife and children, along with his young grandson, showed that Kansas could be a site of personal and national renewal, and it suggested that Kansas and the postwar West could be a place where both blacks and whites could live together. Notably, both the narrator and his wife were not passive about challenging their situations, despite the benign, accommodating characterization of ‘Bijah’s father. Susan forced her master to sell her in hope of finding her boys, her husband joined the Union army after the war started, and both of them left the postwar South seeking better lives in Kansas. Like white free state settler narratives, there is a strong suggestion that action in the name of morality is rewarded with acceptance and a home in Kansas. The whites’ promise to take care of the narrator implies this sense of camaraderie. Reviving the story twenty-five years later implied that it had not entirely worn off, nor had the “asylum of liberty” version of the Kansas narrative ceased to be integral to the definition of the Kansas Spirit.

Members of the WKDC, who venerated pioneer women who had survived the privations of the early years and jealously preserved the Free State past, seemed particularly suited to define and embody its continued meaning. WKDC member Myrtle Carney’s 1912 speech on “Women in Kansas History” summed up the importance of preserving homes in the face of violent challenges. She remembered:

Every able-bodied man and even boys were called from home to defend settlements from Guerillas on the East and Indians on the west, from robbers, pillage, and murder. Often without food, without money, in dugouts and hovels for homes, with the tales of horrible Indian raids to keep them frightened, the women never once gave up, but with a perseverance and sticktuitiveness seldom equaled and never surpassed in the history of any state, they won the battle, saw Kansas free and with the admission of the state under

the Wyandotte constitution, saw the rights of women protected as no other state had yet done.³¹⁵

Carney emphasized the precariousness of western existence while being threatened by similarly uncivilized Indians and guerrillas, then applied the lesson of success toward women's rights, showing the continued salience of Kansas memory, especially the shaping of traumatic aspects of it, as an educational tool for contemporary audiences and political movements.

In the middle of this decade, the WKDC invited aging pioneer women along with Haskell (Indian) Institute students to their meeting, sharing Indian songs and dressing in Indian clothing. While the message could be interpreted as one of respectful remembrance of Kansas' Indian past, the overarching subtext to the "Indian Program" was, literally, in the words of one newspaper, "burying the hatchet" and advocating peaceful non-involvement in the raging Great War.³¹⁶ Just as the proslavery guerrillas had been subdued and reinstated as American citizens, so had *assimilating* Native Americans found a place through bureaucratic institutions like Haskell Institute, which had been founded in 1884 to teach industriousness and strip away most attachments of Indian youths to their traditional ways.

Collective memory of Kansas' past was still being shaped and applied to relevant causes. In an age of foreign imperial projects and entanglements, as well as bureaucratic Jim Crow policies applied to both these and domestic situations, Kansas continued to make an argument for the importance of remembering slavery by bringing the memory of its many legacies it back to the home where the final battle against it began. By the early twentieth century, that memory was also paired with the pioneer triumph over the "uncivilized" Native Americans who occupied the region up to the territorial and Civil War era. The experience of World War I, along with the

³¹⁵ Topeka *Daily Capital*, January 30, 1912.

³¹⁶ Topeka *Daily Capital*, January 30, 1916.

passing of greater numbers of Civil War veterans, certainly diminished some of the relevance of Kansas as a key symbol of American nationalism, but has remained malleable and applicable to an ever-changing political and social landscape, as President Obama's 2011 Osawatomie speech well reminds us.

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