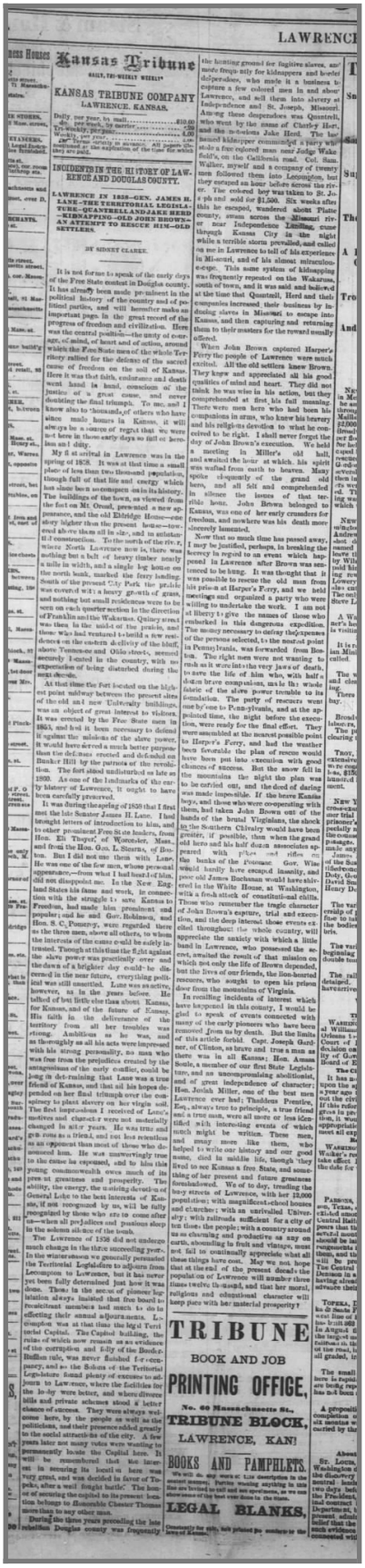
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INCIDENTS IN THE HISTORY OF LAWRENCE AND DOUGLAS COUNTY.

LAWRENCE IN 1858—GEN. JAMES H. LANE—THE TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURE—QUANTRELL AND JAKE HERD—KIDNAPPING—OLD JOHN BROWN—AN ATTEMPT TO RESCUE HIM—OLD SETTLERS.

BY SIDNEY CLARKE.

It is not for me to speak of the early days of the Free State contest in Douglas county. It has already been made prominent in the political history of the country and of political parties, and will hereafter make an important page in the great record of the progress of freedom and civilization. Here was the central position—the unity of courage, of mind, of heart and of action, around which the Free State men of the whole Territory rallied for the defense of the sacred cause of freedom on the soil of Kansas. Here it was that faith, endurance and death went hand in hand, conscious of the justice of a great cause, and never doubting the final triumph. To me, and I know also to thousands of others who have since made homes in Kansas, it will always be a source of regret that we were not here in those early days to still cet heroism and duty.

My first arrival in Lawrence was in the spring of 1858. It was at that time a small place of less than two thousand population, though full of that life and energy which has since been so conspicuous in its history. The buildings of the town, as viewed from the foot on Mt. Oread, presented a new appearance, and the old Eldridge House—one story higher than the present house—towered above them all in size, and in substantial construction. To the north of the river, where North Lawrence now is, there was nothing but a belt of heavy timber nearly a mile in width, and a single log house on the north bank, marked the ferry landing. South of the present City Park the prairie was covered with a heavy growth of grass, and nothing but small residences were to be seen on each quarter section in the direction of Franklin and the Wakarusa. Quincy street was then in the midst of the prairie, and those who had ventured to build a few residences on the eastern declivity of the bluff, above Tennessee and Ohio streets, seemed securely located in the country, with no expectation of being disturbed during the next decade.

At that time the Fort located on the highest point midway between the present sites of the old and new University buildings, was an object of great interest to visitors. It was erected by the Free State men in 1855, and had it been necessary to defend it against the minions of the slave power. It would have served a much better purpose than the defenses erected and defended on Bunker Hill by the patriots of the revolution. The fort stood undisturbed as late as 1860. As one of the landmarks of the early history of Lawrence, it ought to have been carefully preserved.

It was during the spring of 1858 that I first met the late Senator James H. Lane. I had brought letters of introduction to him, and to other prominent Free State leaders, from Hon. Eli Thayer, of Worcester, Mass., and from the Hon. Geo. L. Stearns, of Boston. But I did not use them with Lane. He was one of the few men, whose personal appearance,—from what I had heard of him, did not disappoint me. In the New England States his fame and work, in connection with the struggle to save Kansas to Freedom, had made him prominent and popular; and he and Gov. Robinson, and Hon. S. C. Pomeroy, were regarded there as the three men, above all others, to whom the interests of the cause could be safely intrusted. Though at this time the fight against the slave power was practically over and the dawn of a brighter day could be discerned in the near future, everything political was still unsettled. Lane was as active, however, as in the years before. He talked of but little else than about Kansas, for Kansas, and of the future of Kansas. His faith in the deliverance of the territory from all her troubles was strong. Ambitious as he was, and as thoroughly as all his acts were impressed with his strong personality, no man who was free from the prejudices created by the antagonisms of the early conflict, could belong in determining that Lane was a true friend of Kansas, and that all his hopes depended on her final triumph over the conspiracy to plant slavery on her virgin soil. The first impressions I received of Lane's motives and character were not materially changed in after years. He was true and grew rons as a friend, and not less relentless as an opponent than most of those who denounced him. He was unswervingly true to the cause he espoused, and to him this young commonwealth owes much of its present greatness and prosperity. The ability, the energy, the untiring devotion of General Lane to the best interests of Kansas, if not recognized by us, will be fully recognized by those who are to come after us—when all prejudices and passions sleep in the solemn silence of the tomb.

The Lawrence of 1858 did not undergo much change in the three succeeding years. In the winter season we generally persuaded the Territorial Legislature to adjourn from Lecompton to Lawrence, but it has never yet been fully determined just how it was done. Then in the sense of pioneer legislation always insisted that five board to recalcitrant members had much to do in effecting their annual adjournments. Lecompton was at that time the legal Territorial Capital. The Capitol building, the ruins of which now remain as an evidence of the corruption and folly of the Border-Ruffian rule, was never finished for occupancy, and as the Solons of the Territorial Legislature found plenty of excuses to adjourn to Lawrence, where the facilities for the lobby were better, and where divorce bills and private schemes stood a better chance of success. They were always welcome here, by the people as well as the politicians, and their presence added greatly to the social attractions of the city. A few years later not many votes were wanting to permanently locate the Capitol here. It will be remembered that the interest in securing its location here was very great, and was decided in favor of Topeka, after a hard fought battle. The honor of securing the capitol to its present location belongs to Honorable Chester Thomas more than to any other man.

During the three years preceding the late rebellion Douglas county was frequently the hunting ground for fugitive slaves, and more frequently for kidnappers and border desperadoes, who made it a business to capture a few colored men in and about Lawrence, and sell them into slavery at Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri. Among these desperadoes was Quantrell, who went by the name of Charley Hart, and the notorious Jake Herd. The latter feasted kidnapper commanded a party who stole a free colored man near Judge Wakefield's, on the California road. Col. Sam. Walker, myself and a company of twenty men followed them into Lecompton, but they escaped an hour before across the river. The colored boy was taken to St. Joseph and sold for $1,500. Six weeks after this he escaped, wandered about Platte county, swam across the Missouri river near Independence landing, came through Kansas City in the night while a terrible storm prevailed, and called on me in Lawrence to tell of his experience in Missouri, and of his almost miraculous escape. This same system of kidnapping was frequently repeated on the Wakarusa, south of town, and it was said and believed at the time that Quantrell, Herd and their companies increased their business by inducing slaves in Missouri to escape into Kansas, and then capturing and returning them to their masters for the reward usually offered.

When John Brown captured Harper's Ferry the people of Lawrence were much excited. All the old settlers knew Brown. They knew and appreciated all his good qualities of mind and heart. They did not think he was wise in his action, but they comprehended at first, his full meaning. There were men here who had been his companions in arms, who knew his bravery and his religious devotion to what he considered to be right. I shall never forget the day of John Brown's execution. We held a meeting in Miller's old hall, and awaited the hour at which his spirit was wafted from earth to heaven. Many spoke eloquently of the grand old hero, and all felt and comprehended in silence the issues of that terrible hour. John Brown belonged to Kansas, was one of her early crusaders for freedom, and nowhere was his death more sincerely lamented.

Now that so much time has passed away, I may be justified, perhaps, in breaking the secrecy in regard to an event which happened in Lawrence after Brown was sentenced to be hung. It was thought that it was possible to rescue the old man from his prison at Harper's Ferry, and we held meetings and organized a party who were willing to undertake the work. I am not at liberty to give the names of those who embarked in this dangerous expedition. The money necessary to defray the expenses of the persons selected, to the nearest point in Pennsylvania, was forwarded from Boston. The right men were not wanting to rush as it were into the very jaws of death, to save the life of him who, with half a dozen brave companions, made in his whole fabric of the slave power tremble to its foundation. The party of rescuers were one by one to Pennsylvania, and at the appointed time, the night before the execution, were ready for the final effort. They were assembled at the nearest possible point to Harper's Ferry, and had the weather been favorable the plan of rescue would have been put into execution with good chances of success. But the snow fell in the mountains the night the plan was to be carried out, and the deed of daring was made impossible. If the brave Kansas men, and those who were co-operating with them, had taken John Brown out of the hands of the brutal Virginians, the shock to the Southern Chivalry would have been greater, if possible, than when the grand old hero and his half dozen associates appeared with pikes and rifles on the banks of the Potomac. Gov. Wise would hardly have escaped insanity, and poor old James Buchanan would have shivered in the White House, at Washington, with a fresh attack of constitutional chills. Those who remember the tragic character of John Brown's capture, trial and execution, and the deep interest those events excited throughout the whole country, will appreciate the anxiety with which a little band in Lawrence, who possessed the secret, awaited the result of that mission on which not only the life of Brown depended, but the lives of our friends, the lion-hearted rescuers, who sought to open his prison door from the mountains of Virginia.

In recalling incidents of interest which have happened in this county, I would be glad to speak of events connected with many of the early pioneers who have been removed from us by death. But the limits of this article forbid. Capt. Joseph Gardner, of Clinton, as brave and true a man as there was in all Kansas; Hon. Amasa Soule, a member of our first State Legislature, and an uncompromising abolitionist, and of great independence of character; Hon. Josiah Miller, one of the best men Lawrence ever had; Thaddeus Prentice, Esq., always true to principle, a true friend and a true man, were all more or less identified with interesting events of which much might be written. These men, and many more like them, who helped to write our history and our good name, died in middle life, though they lived to see Kansas a free State, and something of her present and future greatness foreshadowed. We of to day, treading the busy streets of Lawrence, with her 12,000 population; with magnificent school houses and churches; with an unrivalled University; with railroads sufficient for a city of ten times the people; with a country around us as charming and productive as any on earth, abounding in fruit and vinages, must not fail to continually appreciate what all these things have cost. May we not hope that at the end of the present decade the population of Lawrence will number three times twelve thousand, and that her moral, religious and educational character will keep pace with her material prosperity?

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