



# NEWS

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By Barbara Brackman

## **Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History December 26 - 31, 1854**

In Lawrence, George W. Brown was trying to publish the second edition of the *Herald of Freedom*, the newspaper sponsored by the New England Emigrant Aid Company. He had ink, type, a press and four tons of newsprint, but building an office to house them was a problem. He couldn't find enough trees to fell for a log cabin, and the Aid Company's sawmill couldn't produce boards enough to meet demand. By Christmas night, Brown had managed to hire workmen to build the foundation and walls of an office, 80 feet long by 30 feet wide, a story and a half. The walls were framed of cottonwood boards, lumber too soft and too green for that purpose. Brown, like everyone else in Kansas, was realizing that boards and shake shingles cut from the timber along the rivers would quickly warp and twist. He predicted his new building, "will be well-ventilated by spring." As the carpenters began framing the roof during the last week of 1854, Brown began setting type.

During the week, Jonathan Bigelow, an immigrant from Maine, chopping wood west of Lawrence, was attacked by a wild animal, generally thought to be a wildcat. Bigelow, came out of the encounter with torn clothing and a story for Brown's newspaper.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, a Lawrence committee reconvened with townspeople to discuss means of protesting November's election of Congressional Representative John W. Whitfield. Newspaperman John Speer and Congregationalist Missionary Samuel Lum reported that protest resolutions seemed "inexpedient," as they might stir up more trouble. Rather, the town should prepare itself for "such action as circumstances call for." Speer however, offered modest resolutions declaring slavery to be a "blighting curse," and a request that Missourians "desist from all unlawful interference" in Kansas. Samuel Wood offered his own stronger resolutions, stating "that we do not regard General Whitfield as properly the delegate from Kansas, but as a Delegate from Tennessee, elected by citizens of Missouri." Secretary Charles Robinson reported that "Mr. Wood did not care how much our resolutions stirred up the enemies of freedom in Missouri and elsewhere---the more the better."

One small aspect of the Kansas question seems to have been settled by year's end. During the last week of 1854, George Brown wrote to Edward Everett Hale, author of *Kanzas and Nebraska*, "The spelling of Kansas seems to have become almost established by usage, and I think it would be impossible in the West to change it now."(409 words)

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George W. Brown letter, December 27, 1854, quoted in Clara Dolbee, "The First Book on Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* #2, 1934.

Lawrence *Herald of Freedom*, January 6, 1855