



# NEWS

6425 SW Sixth Avenue  
Topeka KS 6615-1099  
785-272-8681

[www.kshs.org/sesquicentennial/](http://www.kshs.org/sesquicentennial/)

A weekly series from the Kansas Territorial Sesquicentennial Commission  
Available online at [www.kshs.org/sesquicentennial/series.htm](http://www.kshs.org/sesquicentennial/series.htm)  
By Barbara Brackman

## Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History February 8 - 14, 1854 (2004)

February of 1854 saw a relatively mild winter on the central plains according to Reverend C. B. Boynton who recorded the weather at Fort Leavenworth. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the temperature at 9 a.m. was 64 degrees, the morning high for the month.

In Washington City, tempers and public interest grew hot while debate over the Kansas and Nebraska Territories extended into its second month. Texas's Senator Sam Houston set aside his usual whittling as he rose often from his desk on the Senate floor to voice the minority opinion. Houston, angry over the proposed bill taking Indian Territory for white settlement that could include slavery, refused, as usual, to get in line behind his fellow Southern Senators. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, he surprised everyone with the outrageous idea that women be invited to listen to the proceedings on the Senate's floor. There were a hundred ladies waiting outside the door, he argued, hoping to obtain a seat in the balcony, the small gallery to which they were confined by tradition. "One hundred ladies?" questioned his peers. "Well, possibly fifty." The women eager to view the historical debate remained outside in the cold.

One who found a seat in the second floor gallery was Thomas Ewing, Jr., a student cutting his classes at Brown University in Rhode Island. "I was intensely anti-slavery," he recalled. "I was hot with indignation at the Whig leaders who supported the repeal of the Missouri compromise, or acquiesced in it, or resisted it but feebly."

On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, Houston made a long speech reminding the Senate that land in the Indian territories had been promised to the tribes in perpetuity. While others "say in substance that God Almighty has condemned [them] and made them an inferior race; that there is no use in doing anything for them....I must be permitted to dissent...If the Indians on the frontier are barbarous..., who are we to blame for it?" [325 words]

---

Thomas Ewing, "The Struggle for Freedom in Kansas," *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, May, 1894, quoted in G. W. Brown, *Reminiscences of Governor R. J. Walker* (Rockford, IL, by the author, 1902) Page 159

James L. Haley, *Sam Houston* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002) Pages 321-2