



# NEWS

6425 SW Sixth Avenue

Topeka KS 6615-1099

785-272-8681

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**By Barbara Brackman**

## **Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History January 18-24, 1854 (2004)**

During this week in Washington City, Congress first mentioned the name "Kansas" for a new territory. One attempt to satisfy both slaveholders and free-soilers was the idea of three new territories west of Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas. The northernmost area, reaching from the Iowa-Missouri border up to Canada would retain the name Nebraska. The land west of Missouri would be Kansas, usually spelled Kanzas. The southern area between Kansas and Texas would be called Cherokee after the native people who lived there.

The middle territory was named for the river there that flowed into the Missouri and the tribe who'd once thrived on its banks, a nomadic tribe called by their neighbors the People of the South Wind. Their name in the native language must have been so foreign to European ears that everyone who tried to spell it arrived at a different solution from "Canses" to "Ka," the reason the river is still known by two names, Kansas and Kaw.

On Sunday, January 22, Senator Stephen Douglas and several Senators with an interest in a pro-slavery Nebraska Territory met with Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, a good friend of President Franklin Pierce, asking him to arrange a meeting with the President. Although Pierce, a pious man, preferred to keep the Sabbath, he agreed to conduct business with the men and approved of the dramatic change they proposed. The next day Senator Douglas announced yet another version of the Nebraska Bill, this time proposing two territories, Nebraska to the north and Kansas to the south. Among the men who met with Pierce was Senator David Atchison of Missouri, one of the most powerful Southern voices in the Senate. Atchison had long advocated settlement of the territory on Missouri's western border, but because the Missouri Compromise had outlawed slavery there, he'd believed that no territory was better than a free territory. If the Missouri Compromise could be repealed, Atchison was pleased to support the bill now named the Kansas/Nebraska Bill. [330 words]