



# NEWS

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**By Barbara Brackman**

## **Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History January 25 - 31, 1854 (2004)**

In Cleveland, Ohio, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, citizens met to protest Stephen Douglas's proposal for a territory allowing the possibility of slavery above the line running along the southern border of Missouri. This "Anti-Nebraska" meeting was the first of many to be held throughout the Northern states. Two days later, New Yorkers organized a similar meeting, and that same day, the Rhode Island State Legislature presented an Anti-Nebraska resolution to the United States Congress.

Farmer Samuel Ralston of Independence, Missouri, would not have been surprised to hear of the New York meeting. Six months earlier he had described the city as "that accursed den of abolitionists," "Abolitionist" may have been as evil an epithet as Ralston could muster, one reason the Anti-Nebraskans were careful to call themselves by that awkward phrase. Most Anti-Nebraskans were not in favor of abolishing slavery in the South, but they did oppose its extension into new territories. Slaveholders like Ralston failed to see the subtle differences in Northern attitudes. They were all abolitionists to him, and they were all enemies of the South.

While the New Yorkers were planning their protest, Ralston's son John was making plans to move to the Kansas Territory. "I intend to be a farmer," he wrote to his Uncle in North Carolina on January 28<sup>th</sup>, "and to make Kansas my home if it comes into the Union as a slave state of which we have now no doubt. . . . The citizens of Missouri are now making claims in the Territory, and will enter the Land as soon as it is surveyed.... If I had money I would go up and make a claim, and it can be arranged so that it will [be] entered in my name, 160 acres can be claimed." [300 words]

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W. Darrell Overdyke, editor. "A Southern Family on the Missouri Frontier: Letters From Independence, 1843-1855", *The Journal of Southern History*, Volume XVII, Number 2, May, 1951. 216-237.