



NEWS

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Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History October 31-November 6, 1854

William Hutter, editor of the Easton, Pennsylvania, *Argus*, was visiting Weston, Missouri, in early November, where the Kickapoo tribe had gathered to receive their annual stipend. Hutter estimated that 1,000 Native Americans were in town to spend their money on November 6th. He described them to his readers home in Easton, as “dressed in all their showy, fantastic blankets, and covered with jewelry, feathers and ornaments.” The *Independence Dispatch* estimated that \$350,000 in annuities would be paid to the Kansas tribes that fall.

Senator David Atchison was also in Weston that week, continuing his series of incendiary speeches designed to keep his name in the papers, defeat Congressman Thomas Hart Benton who was up for re-election, and advance the Southern cause. Atchison described himself as “entirely devoted to the interests of the South...he would sacrifice everything but his hope of heaven to advance her welfare.”

After months of his threats to hang anti-slavery emigrants failed to deter Kansas settlers, Atchison formulated a new plan to counter the emigration sponsored by “a set of fanatics and demagogues a thousand miles off.” Each Missouri county should organize to send a group of 500 young men to Kansas to vote in the November 29th election that would choose the territory’s Congressional representative. “Should each county in the State of Missouri only do its duty, the question will be decided quietly and peaceably at the ballot-box.”

In Cincinnati, two 26-year-old men, Josiah Miller and Robert Elliott, bought a printing press to ship to the territory. Friends as students at Indiana University, both were sons of South Carolina families opposed to slavery. The Elliotts had relocated to Indiana; the Millers remained in South Carolina, where they continued to court violence for their vocal antislavery opinions. Miller and Elliott decided that an anti-slavery newspaper in the new territory could be profitable and politically rightminded. Their projected *Kansas Free State* was the fifth Kansas newspaper, two of which were named the *Pioneer*. After hearing of the established *Kickapoo Pioneer*, which was pro-slavery, the Speer brothers changed the name of their *Kansas Pioneer* to the *Kansas Tribune*. George Brown, newly arrived in Lawrence from Pennsylvania, had yet to publish a

second issue of the *Herald of Freedom*. The major functioning paper was the *Kansas Herald*, which maintained its impressive weekly schedule from under a tree in the town of Leavenworth.

As the weather turned colder in Kansas (on the morning of the 5th the low was 30 degrees), emigrants camped in new settlements along the western reaches of the Kansas River, establishing towns that would benefit, they believed, from steamboat traffic to the junction of the Republican River. Former Kentuckian Horace McMeekin had organized a town named Indianola on the north side of the Kaw across from Papin's Ferry. A group that included Governor Andrew Reeder had formed a company establishing the town of Pawnee City, one hundred miles into Kansas on 400 acres of the Army's Fort Riley reserve, where Reeder intended to establish the territorial capitol. Pawnee was only one of Reeder's land speculation schemes. In others, he bypassed the Indian Agencies' land distribution system by dealing directly with the tribal landholders, especially white men who had married women of Native American heritage. Reeder maintained that his investment strategies were both legal and ethical, but Delaware Indian Agent B. F. Robinson and others complained in early November to President Pierce that the Governor's schemes were neither.

"Atchison City---Speech of A Senator" Leavenworth *Kansas Weekly Herald*,
September 29, 1854

Independence Dispatch quoted in *Kansas Weekly Herald* Oct 6, 1854,

Atchison's speech in Weston reported in the Platte City *Argus* quoted in Charles Robinson, *The Kansas Conflict* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1892) Pp. 93-4.

Louise Barry (editor), "Scenes In (And En Route To) Kansas Territory, Autumn, 1854: Five Letters by William H. Hutter," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXV, 3, Autumn, 1969, Pg. 320.

Roy Franklin Nichols, *Franklin Pierce*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958) Pp. 409, 418.