



# NEWS

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By Barbara Brackman

## **Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History September 19 – 25, 1854**

On Sept 19<sup>th</sup>, Commissioner of Indian Affairs George Manypenny solicited bids from wholesalers and manufacturers to supply Native American tribes with goods they'd been promised in their negotiations with the government. The list of items published in the newspapers included the following textiles, telling us something of tribal wardrobe in Kansas:

- 200 dozen flag handkerchiefs
- 10,000 yards of Merrimac calico
- 35,000 yards of calico
- 8,000 yards of plaid linsey
- 1,000 flannel shirts
- 1,500 calico shirts

Indians living on reserves received annual cash payments plus tools, stock, food, clothing and bedding. Over the year, they could also purchase goods from the officially licensed traders on each reserve. Traders extended credit, debt that might be paid off by the Indian Agent or by tribe members flush with their annual windfalls. Gatherings for annuity payments took on a festival air, with traders stocking food, goods and liquor for their temporarily wealthy customers.

Realizing the problems inherent in this annual payment system, Manypenny advocated reforms, among them semi-annual installments. He also believed that payment in goods useful to farming would encourage acculturation better than cash. He was a Pierce appointee from Ohio, another Northern Democrat with Southern sympathies, another failed politician. Ambitions to be Ohio's Governor or Senator were thwarted by free-state leaders like Senator Salmon Chase who characterized him in a January, 1854, letter to a fellow Ohio politician: "I am sorry to hear that you have electioneered for Manypenny. I like him personally, but I would cut off my right hand sooner than aid him or any other man to reach a position in which he will make Ohio the Vassal of the Slave Power."

Manypenny had spent his first 18 months as Indian Commissioner traveling in Kansas, Nebraska and the far western territories, assuring tribes that ceding their lands was in their best interests. His signature was first on the treaties made in

the spring of 1854 with the Kansas tribes---the Delaware, the Munsee, the Shawnee, the Iowa, the Sauk and Foxes, the Kickapoo, the Miami, the Kaskaskias, Peorias, Piankeshaws and Weas.

Samuel Pomeroy was staying at the Gilliss House on the levee between Delaware and Wyandotte Streets in the City of Kansas. The Emigrant Aid Company had recently bought the hotel to provide a safe haven for anti-slavery emigrants debarking from Missouri river boats. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Pomeroy wrote a letter to Amos Lawrence, treasurer of the organization, updating him about the territory. The hotel, eventually renamed the American, would be profitable, he predicted. It “will be the best property...to make money on---for a long time to come.” A Philadelphian who’d joined the emigrants, John Smith, had come down with cholera and died at the Shawnee Baptist Mission during the week. More bad news included the steady stream of Missouri emigrants. “The roads are lined with teams from the border States. And in every fifth or eighth wagon you will see a sprinkling of Negro slaves.” Pomeroy had spent the last week in “our new city,” the town generally called Wakarusa, but he told Lawrence that “a majority are for calling it Lawrence.”

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, David Atchison was in the Kansas town named for him, where he gave a speech that he described in a letter to his old college friend Jefferson Davis. “[I advised Missourians] to give a horse thief, robber, or homicide a fair trial, but to hang a Negro thief or Abolitionist without Judge or Jury. This sentiment met with almost universal applause, and I could with difficulty keep the “Plebs” from hanging two gentlemen...We will before six months rolls round, have the Devil to pay in Kansas and this State. We are organizing to meet their Organization. We will be compelled to shoot, burn and hang, but the thing will be soon over....” (632 words)

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*National Intelligencer* September 19, 1854, Pg. 4.

Letter from Salmon Chase to Ed Hamlin, January 23, 1854. John Niven, (Editor), *The Salmon P. Chase Papers* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1993) Pg. 382.

Letter from Samuel Pomeroy to Amos Lawrence, September 22, 1854 in the Manuscript Collection of the Kansas State Historical Society

Letter from David Atchison to Jefferson Davis, September 24, 1854. (This letter has been edited for spelling and punctuation) in Lynda Lasswell Crist, (Editor), *The Papers of Jefferson Davis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985)