Jim Lane and the Frontier Guard

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KANSAS was admitted to the union as the thirty-fourth state on January 29, 1861. On April 4 James H. Lane and S. C. Pomeroy were chosen by the state legislature to be United States senators. On April 12 Fort Sumter was attacked, and two days later surrendered to the troops of the secessionists. On April 15 President Lincoln issued his first call for 75,000 volunteers. The Civil War had begun.

The state of Virginia secretly adopted a secession ordinance on April 17. Maryland was in revolt, and seemed on the point of seceding also. The District of Columbia, lying between the two, was in an extremely vulnerable position, an easy target for bombardment and liable to be starved out if the railroads running from the north through Baltimore were cut off.

Precautions for the defense of the capital city were, of course, taken immediately. Volunteers were enrolled to fill the District’s militia quota, government clerks were formed into military units, and state militia from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts—quickly followed by those from other Northern states—were under arms and en route to Washington almost before the first cannon roar at Sumter had ceased to echo. The Washington correspondent of the New York Daily Tribune, writing on April 12, reported that the city had resembled a military camp for two or three days. The correspondent continued:

If Ben McCulloch and his Rebel band is not a myth but a reality, their ardor must have been dampened by the patriotic exhibition of the last sixty or eighty hours. The capture and sacking of Washington will be no holiday amusement for the empty-headed and rotten-hearted rascals who, if we credit rumor, have confederated to seize upon the White House and the Capitol. . . . By the time this letter will appear in your columns, about two thousand troops, regulars and volunteers, all picked men, will be on duty in this city. . . .

In addition to political and geographical circumstances, defense of the capital was complicated by military difficulties. The United States army suffered great loss by the resignation of many high officers, including Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, the quartermaster-general, Samuel Cooper, the adjutant-general, and Col. Robert E. Lee, the favorite aide of the commander in chief, Lt. Gen. Win-

field Scott, and the man favored to take over active field command of the armies in the event of wide-spread warfare. At no time was there a large number of troops in Washington, and optimistic reports of the Northern press to the contrary, there was certainly not enough now to withstand a determined assault by the Southern forces. True, there were ample volunteers to fill the militia quota, the clerks might have been able to hold off a siege of government buildings until the arrival of the state troops which were expected daily, but few of those in Washington had had military experience or could be counted on in an emergency. The New York Daily Tribune, interviewing a long-time resident of Washington who removed his family to the North when trouble came, quoted him as follows:

Half the people inside the city are friendly to the Southern leaders. Everywhere I boldly heard secession sentiments proclaimed; ladies rejoiced over the downfall of Sumter, and the wife of a clergyman told me triumphantly . . . . “Now you see what we can do!” This is the greatest danger to Washington, and it is one nothing can overcome. The soldiers who have volunteered in the city are nine-tenths of them boys, and would not make any show at all if attacked. You would be indignant to hear the open reproach and ridicule cast on the Massachusetts troops. It is said they ran all the way through Baltimore merely from a mob of unarmed men; and it is said with great gusto that all they had to do was to knock a Northern soldier down and take his musket from him.²

Rumors spread through Washington that the city was to be attacked, the government buildings and offices taken over by the Southerners, and the President captured and held prisoner. Extraordinary measures were necessary.

Jim Lane, who always loved a fight, must have licked his chops when he walked into the middle of this uproar to take up his duties as senator. Action and excitement were meat and drink to him. He had offered a bodyguard of Kansas men when Lincoln was ready to start for Washington to be inaugurated, but the offer was declined.³ Conditions were different now, and a guard might be useful.

Because of the inauguration of a new administration and the approaching session of congress, Washington was more heavily populated than usual with office-seekers. Many were from Northern and Western states, and Kansas had her full share. Senators Lane and Pomeroy, arriving in Washington on April 13, took rooms at Willard’s hotel, and in the evening began to make speeches. Pom-

². Ibid., April 26, 1861.
eroy, recalling these events many years later—and none too accurately, said they spoke from a dry goods box in the street in front of the hotel, himself first and then Lane. When Lane climbed up on the box there came a great shout from the mob, which consisted chiefly of Southern sympathizers: "Mob him! Mob him! Hang him!" Lane, naturally passionate and excitable, was terribly aroused, said Pomeroy. His eyes flashed, and his tremendous voice was elevated to its highest pitch. "Mob and be damned!" he shouted, "mob and be damned! I have a hundred men from Kansas in this crowd, all armed, all fighting men, just from the victorious fields of Kansas! They will shoot every damned man of you who again cries 'Mob,' 'Mob.'" Then the other side cheered him heartily, and the click of cocking pistols was heard all through the crowd. Order was restored, and men stood deathly still, for no one seemed to know who stood next to him.4

Lane and Cassius M. Clay, of Kentucky, the United States minister to Russia, "after an evening or two of flaming speech-making," organized some of this excess population into two companies, the Clay Battalion and the Frontier Guard, the latter commanded by Lane. Enrollment in the Guard took place on April 14, and organization was completed within a day or two.5 There are said to have been 120 men in the Guard, but only fifty-one of the names are now known.6

Because the Frontier Guard was a voluntary and unofficial organization, serving without pay, they were not mustered into regular army service and their names were never placed on the army rolls.7 D. H. Bailey, a member of the Guard and later consul-general to China, said in an interview many years afterwards that about the time the Sixth Massachusetts regiment was attacked by a rebel mob in Baltimore, Maj. David Hunter of General Scott’s staff called on Lane at the Willard hotel. He explained that because of the turbulent condition of the citizenry and the few troops in Washington, as well as because of secret information that an attempt was to be made to seize the President and overturn the gov-

ernment, General Scott and Secretary of War Simon Cameron wished Lane to use his company of Kansas men for the especial protection of the President. Runners were sent out immediately to call the Kansans to Lane’s rooms. On the night of April 18 at nine o’clock they marched to the White House and bivouacked in the East Room. This account is born out in general by a contemporaneous report in the Leavenworth Times which was reprinted in the Lawrence Republican on May 2, 1861, and in the Council Grove Press on May 11.

Arrived at the White House, the company was furnished with arms and ammunition. It was a strange scene. A gleaming sword was presented to Lane by Major Hunter. Well-fed Senator Pomeroy, enrolled as a private, could not find a belt long enough.

. . . After spending the evening in an exceedingly rudimentary squad drill, under the light of the gorgeous gas chandeliers, they disposed themselves in picturesque bivouac on the brilliant-patterned velvet carpet—perhaps the most luxurious cantonment which American soldiers have ever enjoyed. Their motley composition, their anomalous surroundings, the extraordinary emergency, their mingled awkwardness and earnestness, rendered the scene a medley of bizarre contradictions—a blending of masquerade and tragedy, of grim humor and realistic seriousness—a combination of Don Quixote and Daniel Boone altogether impossible to describe. . . .

An account by “One Who Was There” gives the following description of the scene in the East Room:

This well-known resort is one of the most beautiful and magnificent halls in the country. Such a post of honor, on such an emergent occasion—for the President had heard the rumor that day that himself and Gen. Scott were in danger of assassination from a Virginia party that night—was no ordinary compliment. Other companies, of no little notoriety and experience, were in the city, but this distinction was reserved for Kansas.

That night, Kansas had supreme possession of the White House, and fifty of her “Old Guard” slept sweetly on the President’s rich Brussels, with their arms stacked in martial line down the center of the hall, while two long rows of Kansas ex-Governors, Senators, Judges, Editors, Generals and Jayhawkers were dozing upon each side, and the sentinels made regular beats around them. . . .

The New York Tribune’s Washington correspondent wrote that “Jim Lane, the well-known,” and his company had bivouacked in

10. Emporia Daily News, November 29, 1882. Pomeroy himself said later that because he could not find an army uniform belt long enough to go around him, he had to cut a hole in one end of the strap and splice it with string—to the great amusement of those present.—“Reminiscences,” v. VI, p. 148.
12. The Kansas State Journal, Lawrence, May 9, 1861.
the East Room, which presented, "on the occasion, anything but a full dress appearance, but in the event of fighting the guests would show they were meant rather for use than for ornament. . . ."

Not even Mr. Lincoln, said "One Who Was There," was allowed to come into the room. "Even the President, when he attempted to enter the hall, accompanied by his lady and some members of the Cabinet, was pricked with the sharp steel of the sentinel, and told,—perhaps jeosely—that he could not possibly come in!"

The formation of the Frontier Guard was noted, usually enthusiastically, by most of the Kansas press. Brief notices first appeared in their telegraphic dispatches: "The Kansas men in Washington have formed a company of 75 men called the Frontier Guard. They have been given the post of honor of the East room of the President's House!" A similar note had been printed in the New York Daily Tribune on April 19. The Leavenworth Conservative, in a paragraph headed "Old 'Jim' Guards the Flag," said:

It will be seen by our telegraphic report that Gen. James H. Lane has been called upon by the War Department to take charge of one thousand Union Guards in Washington. It does not surprise us that the Defender of Freedom in Kansas is honored with a high position the moment he arrives at the seat of Government, and we are now willing to bet our last cent (dollars are played out in Kansas) that Washington will not be taken. When old Jim gives the word, "Up, boys, and at them," there will be an awful scattering among the rebels.

The Lawrence Republican wrote in the same vein:

What Kansan won't feel proud when he reads the telegraphic dispatch, that the post of honor of Guard at the White House, has been given to a company from Kansas? We imagine we see a few of the old "Free State" men surrounding Gen. Lane in that honorable position. Dr. Updegraff, who was badly wounded at Osawatomie, and Turner Sampson, and G. A. Cotton, and many others, who went through the Kansas struggle are at Washington, and will not be wanting in an emergency. Hurrah for the Kansas boys!

The Council Grove Press of April 27, 1861, reprinted from the Leavenworth Times this somewhat skeptical comment:

The telegraph reports that Gen. Lane is engaged in more active and earnest employment than securing official favors for his friends. He has been placed at the head of 1,000 troops, and a dispatch to the Cincinnati Commercial says

15. Council Grove Press, April 27, 1861. Few Western papers at the time had direct wire service, and Washington news was ordinarily copied from letters and exchanges. The Press, for example, frequently took its "flash" news from Leavenworth papers.
17. April 25, 1861.
he intends to resign his place in the Senate. We do not credit the latter statement. Gen. Lane has no doubt tendered his services to the Government, but we doubt whether he has as yet been commissioned as a regular officer, or assumed any position that will require him to give up his seat in the Senate.

Sol. Miller, the acid-tongued editor of the White Cloud Kansas Chief, who was seldom friendly to Lane and had no respect whatever for Pomeroy, the other senator, remarked:

The Kansas office-seekers now in Washington, have formed themselves into a military company, called the "Frontier Guards," for the defence of the Capital. Pretty good idea, as they will thus have their board paid by the Government, besides advancing their chances for office by a show of spunk and patriotism. They may do well enough, as long as Lane commands; but wo unto them if they place themselves in Pomeroy's clutches—he will surrender them to the enemy, as he did the Free State people of Lawrence, in 1856! 18

Other Kansas newspapers printing reports of Lane's military activities included The Kansas State Journal, Lawrence, April 18; the Daily State Record, Topeka, April 19; the Topeka Tribune and Leavenworth Conservative on April 20.

The Frontier Guard remained in service until May 3, 1861. By that time Washington was filled with union troops and danger of a Southern attack was removed. The Sixth Massachusetts regiment, the first of the relief, had entered the city on April 19, and the New York Seventh arrived on April 25. Thereafter other regiments came in, communication with the North was assured, and the volunteers were no longer needed. As it proved, no very decisive action was required of the Guard at any time, its chief function being to assist in protecting the White House and other important points.

One "engagement" with the enemy, however, has been recorded. A few days after the Guard was mustered into service, while they were on duty at the Long bridge over the Potomac between Washington and Virginia, it was reported that a company of rebels was at Falls Church cross roads, about seven miles from Alexandria, Va. Lt. J. B. Stockton, with a detachment of men, was ordered by Captain Lane to make a reconnaissance in that direction. "Upon their approach the rebels fled, leaving their flag, which was captured and brought back, being the first flag taken [by the union forces in the Civil War]. . . ."19

18. May 3, 1861. The last statement is a reference to the surrender of the Free-State cannon and other arms to the mob under Sheriff Samuel Jones which sacked Lawrence on May 21, 1856. Pomeroy was acting as chairman of the Lawrence committee of safety which authorized the action.

A more descriptive account of this incident is given by D. H. Bailey as follows:

Our company was the first to capture a rebel flag. It came about in this way: A report came that the rebels would make an attempt to capture the bridge across the East branch of the Potomac. We were ordered out one night in April. Marching down Pennsylvania avenue we were joined by Clay's company and marched thence to the navy yard. After a short halt the Frontier Guard filed out of the east gate across a ravine, and soon came in sight of the bridge. The moon was shining brightly and in the distance could be plainly seen a brass cannon near the draw. The writer happening to be in the front ranks went forward with palpitating heart expecting every moment to be cut down with grape and canister, but pride kept us all in line, although our knees smote together. At last coming full on the cannon we discovered to our immense relief that it was a gun of a Pennsylvania battery, and it was pointing toward the Maryland shore. This inspired us with courage. We urged Lane to have the draw lowered so that we might cross the river and scout for the enemy. Finally he assented and a detail of twelve or fifteen was sent across. Dividing the squad we pushed out on different roads and scouted the country for three or four hours. No hostile foes were found. One squad led, I think, by Harry Fields, discovered a rebel flag flying on a pole in front of a house. The owner was aroused and ordered to haul the flag down. This he refused to do, but doggedly gave them permission to take it down if they wanted to do so. The flag was immediately hauled down, brought back with considerable excitement, and the next day it was stretched across the avenue opposite Willard's hotel, with a great placard inscribed: “Captured by the Frontier Guards.” The prowess was not great, but the thing captured was a trophy.

Kansas papers carried only brief mention of this adventure, and that gleaned second-hand from Eastern publications. The Emporia News, for example, said on May 4, 1861: “A dispatch to the N. Y. Herald says that Gen. Jim Lane is guarding the navy yard against rumored deserted incendiary naval officers, and has made several scouting expeditions into Virginia, during one of which he captured a secession flag. . . .” Another account took for its source a Washington paper:

The “daring exploits” of the “Kansas desperadoes” in Washington . . . is thus reported by the National Republican, a paper published at the Capital.

Reports reaching the city last evening that large numbers of rebels were assembling and fortifying the heights on the Potomac, Gen. Lane's battalion of Kansas men were stationed on the approaches as a salutary restraint. A scouting party, under Captain Stockton, found a secession flag on a staff in a yard, and forcing an entrance, cut down the pole, and brought the flag in. It may be seen at Gen. Lane's rooms, at Willard's, and bears the following inscription: “Virginia—Palmetto—Southern Star.”

For its services the Guard received the personal thanks of President Lincoln.

The Frontier Guard, under the command of Gen. Lane, of Kansas, who have for the last week been stationed in and around the White House, by invitation of President Lincoln, waited upon him yesterday afternoon [April 26], at the Executive Mansion.

The company formed at Gen. Lane's headquarters at Willard's hotel, to the number of one hundred and twenty, and marched, under the direction of their leader, to the President's.

The Guard was ushered into the East Room and formed around it in double file.

Upon the President's entrance, the Guard was introduced to him by Gen. Lane, who also introduced Col. Vaughan, of Kansas, as the orator for the occasion, who addressed him in substance as follows:

Mr. President: Permit me to introduce to you the Frontier Guard, a company formed under the leadership of Gen. James H. Lane, for the protection of the capital of the nation, at a time when great danger threatened the liberties of this our common country.

A large proportion of them have been in situations of trial; when the dark cloud of peril overshadowed our Western borders, under the command of their gallant leader they rallied around the stars and stripes, and drove the invader from their soil.

And now, once again, in this our darkest hour, they respond to our country's call, and offer their lives and all they have to support the Constitution and vindicate the majesty of the law.

You and I, Mr. President, (pardon me for using my name in connection with yours,) you and I are Southern born, and although deprecating the shedding of fraternal blood, yet if this Government under your administration is preserved, there are thousands of our brethren at the South, Union-loving and true men, who if they can be protected, will flock to the flag of the nation, and rally around the glorious stars and stripes, and aid us in preserving them intact and pure, and handing them down unsullied to our posterity. And I doubt not, sir, there are many even in my own native state of South Carolina, that yet love this Union, and who dare not speak, for treason and disunion are abroad in the land, and their hands are tied.

It is the response of every man here, and I am instructed by them to say, so far as they are concerned, No compromise with rebels.

And now, sir, the Frontier Guard holds itself subject to orders. Should their services be needed in any capacity, to assist in the enforcement of the laws of the country, to preserve inviolate the Constitution of the United States, they are ready. Brave and true men are here, who have been proved in times of trial and danger and found to be equal to the task and ready for any emergency. Although some of us propose to leave the city if our services are no longer required for its security, yet, if necessary, every man will be at his post to protect it.

Permit me once more to introduce the Frontier Guard.

23. John C. Vaughan, of Leavenworth, was listed as a private in the company.
The President replied briefly, thanking the Guard for services performed, and for the patriotic feeling which prompted their efforts. After the very pleasant interview, the Guard marched back to Willard’s, and exchanged compliments with each other, and adjourned till the next meeting.24

This Dickensian description marks the last appearance of the Frontier Guard as a unit. Lane had written under date of April 27 to Secretary Cameron that, “in consequence of the arrival of large numbers of troops in this city, I am satisfied the emergency has ceased that called our company into service. If you concur in this opinion, I should be pleased to receive authority from you to disband said company, and to honorably discharge the members thereof from the service.” Cameron replied, on the same date, that he agreed with Lane, and gave him the requested authority. In doing so, he said, “I beg to extend to you, and through you to the men under your command, the assurance of my high appreciation of the very prompt and patriotic manner in which your company was organized for the defence of the Capital, and the very efficient services rendered by it during the time of its existence.” 25

Lane left for the West on April 28. Newspaper reports said that he was dispatched to assist in organizing volunteers west of the Mississippi river, and would doubtless take an important command.26 On his way home he made a speech in Chicago, where he “showed a secession flag which he had captured in Virginia, and endeavoring to wind up with a devout peroration, rather mixed things, saying—‘Great God, grant us success in this our righteous cause, and may we—may we—take all the starch out of these d----d rebels. Amen.’”27

He came back to Kansas less than a month after he had left it. On Thursday, May 9, he spoke to a crowded house in the Congregational church at Topeka. Said the Topeka Tribune:

The General’s remarks were inflammatory to a high degree. He had returned to Kansas for the purpose of assisting in forming two regiments of volunteers. Parts were manufactured of whole cloth; especially so, when he said that Missouri had declared war upon Kansas; that she had done so when the arms belonging to us were seized at Kansas City and at Liberty. Thought it would be the prettiest thing in the world for Kansas to pitch into Westport, Independence and Kansas City, while the secessionists were trying to take St. Louis. Thought that the Hannibal & St. Jo. Railroad might cut off com-

25. Copy of letters forwarded in 1862 to Kansas State Historical Society by R. C. Drew, adjutant general of the United States, in MSS. division.
munication, and then, while Illinois was cleaning out Hannibal, Kansas could clean out St. Jo. Said the Secretary of War had not made a requisition upon Kansas for troops, but that the speaker (Gen. Lane) had been authorized to come here and assist in organizing troops, who would be mustered into the U. S. service immediately. The General's patriotism was immense. He never knew until then how much he loved his country. Paid a compliment to Gen. Pomeroy, and wound up by wishing all present, long life, health and happiness.

The editor, having thus summarized Lane's remarks, made a few of his own:

If it is the object of Gen. Lane, in so soon returning to our State, to travel over the country making in flamable speeches, arousing the public mind, and drawing our people from their workshops and farms, for the purpose of making war upon Missouri, our people had better ask him to go back to Washington, where there is some chance for a fight, and leave the good citizens of Missouri and of Kansas to pursue their peaceable avocations.

Every-day mails bring us tidings of peace from the State of Missouri, and those of our people who prefer peace and prosperity to civil war, will not follow a leader who will exert every effort to bring about the latter.

We have been cursed enough by "war" and "famine"; let us now seek to retrieve our fallen fortunes, by engaging in good works, and refrain from stirring up strife with our sister States. We are not weak, but we need all our forces in the field and in the shop.

If an invasion is made upon our soil, then will be the time to take up arms; and a second call will not be necessary to bring our forces into the field to repel invasion. The State has the arms and her patriotic citizens are ready to meet and drive back any and all invading forces that may enter her limits.28

This editor, John P. Greer, was opposed to Lane's meddling in state matters, both political and military, and lost no opportunity to attack him. In the same issue he wrote:

The return of Gen. Lane is the return of gasconade and humbug. He has filled our community with a thousand conflicting statements as to his authority and his appointment, by the President, to do this thing and do that, none of which are true, or can be true, in the nature of the case. To suppose them true is to suppose the President and Secretary of War to be fools, fit subjects for the mad house.

The fact that Gen. Lane retails such absurdities in the community is conclusive evidence that he takes the people of Kansas to be idiots, or that he is one himself.

In another column he added: "Genl. Lane did not appear in his native garb Thursday night, viz: Suspenders and socks. He only doffed his overcoat and neckerchief."

Old Jim had an enemy in Lawrence, too. When he spoke there

on Saturday, May 11, the editor of The Kansas State Journal reported the event as follows:

This gentleman made a characteristic address to our citizens on last Saturday evening. He was full of good humor, and shook his long bony finger at the audience in the old style. The only difference between this and his former speeches was that he took off only his cravat. He thought and spoke just as much as ever of Jim Lane, and seemed to think that now was the time to think more and more of him. He appealed to the Yankees present by telling stories of Yankee grit, after they got mad, and so on. He seemed to think that now was a good time to scare Western Missouri, by telling big stories and making great preparations. He seemed to think, (and we thought it was closely connected with his speech) that he was going to drill the boys once more. He concluded by saying that there was not one man in the city for whom he did not wish long life and happiness. (Deitader was out of town!) Oh! General, you have an old head! but you may pass for war times.

This editor also stated in another paragraph: “Lane, in his Saturday night’s speech remarked that the man who told the biggest lies now-a-days served his country best, and that God would pardon him of his sins! This accounts for Lane’s political elevation. He claims the people have rewarded him for past service.” 29

Newspaper men friendly to Lane said little in his defense at this period. The Lawrence Republican, quoting a dispatch on the organization of the Frontier Guard, prefaced it with some commendatory remarks:

We copy the following from the correspondence of the Leavenworth Times, to show the estimation in which “Old Jim” is held at Washington. The principal objection raised to Lane here was, his supposed want of popularity with our public men. All admitted his hold upon the masses here, but feared that he would not have influence abroad. It appears, however, that “Old Abe” puts his life in the hands of the men who so often risked their lives for the good cause here. Gen. Pomeroi and Col. Delahay buckle on their armor as privates. We should like to look in upon that squad just now... 30

Several members of the Guard received discharges immediately after the company was disbanded. These are dated May 3, 1861, at the Executive Mansion, and include the correspondence between Lane and Cameron on April 27. The original discharge of Sidney Clarke, a private, later a member of the house of representatives from Kansas, is in the possession of the Kansas State Historical Society, and is reproduced in its Collections.31 The Society also has a photostatic copy of the discharge issued to L. Holtslander, third sergeant, and John Speer, in his biography of Lane, printed a copy

29. The Kansas State Journal, Lawrence, May 16, 1861.
of still another, issued to Clark J. Hanks of Leavenworth. However, others of the company never received discharges, and some of those who did lost them.

Accordingly, several bills were introduced in Congress in later years for an act to authorize the Secretary of War to issue formal discharges, and to place on file in the War Department the names of the officers and men of the company. During the first session of the 49th Congress, in April, 1886, Sen. Preston B. Plumb, of Kansas, introduced such a bill, which apparently died in the Senate's committee on military affairs. In the first session of the 51st Congress he tried a second time. On December 10, 1889, he introduced Senate bill No. 1005, which was eventually passed, with amendments, on April 5, 1890, and sent to the house, where it died in committee. A third and last attempt was made in 1894 by Sen. John Martin, who, on December 10, introduced Senate bill No. 2372, presenting with it the favorable report made by the Senate committee on military affairs in 1890. In this Congress, again, the bill was passed by the Senate and sent to the House of Representatives, where the record ends. Why Congress failed to pass this bill, which seems to have encountered little specific opposition, is something of a mystery. Perhaps the failure was owing to lack of political pressure on the part of the bill's sponsors, or perhaps to a desire to cut down the number of prospective military pensioners. Still another possible reason may have been the irregularity connected with the enlistment of the Guard, since it was never mustered in. Officially, it would seem, the company never existed.

The whole story of Jim Lane and the Frontier Guard is a strange mixture of fantasy and fact. These American "beefeaters" seem, in the light of actual happening, like a corps in a comic opera, but there was nothing comic about them to their contemporaries. Jim Lane himself, as great a scapegrace as Kansas ever sent to Congress, made himself a national hero by pure heroics. John Speer, his friend and most enthusiastic biographer, said that "this was the beginning of that intimate friendship" between Lincoln and Lane "which was never broken . . . except by the dissecuring chords of death." A somewhat more objective student of Lane's career, basing his view in part on Speer, remarks that although the contribution made by Lane and his Guard was a small one "it marked the beginning of

35. Speer, op. cit., p. 236.
an intimate friendship with the President . . . which gave him a prestige and influence that continued throughout the war.”

Whether the relationship between Lincoln and Lane can truthfully be described as an “intimate friendship,” or even a friendship at all, seems doubtful. The characters and ideals of the two men were so wholly disparate that any close bond appears unlikely. The truth would seem to be that Lincoln was a practical politician, accustomed to work with whatever tools came to hand, and that Lane was an opportunist who could be used. Lane made every possible use of his position in Washington to work his way into Lincoln's graces, and by his importunities secured concessions which made it appear that Lincoln recognized obligations to him. From the time he offered Lincoln a bodyguard, early in 1861, he was constantly on the President's heels. Lincoln himself is reported to have given this explanation to Gov. Thomas Carney of Kansas in 1864: “He knocks at my door every morning. You know he is a very persistent fellow and hard to put off. I don't see you very often, and have to pay attention to him.”

For those who are familiar with Lane's ambitions and moral qualities there is a temptation to sum up the incident of the Frontier Guard as a purely political maneuver, as Sol. Miller did, with the implication that it was no more than a selfish and personal raid on the glory box. Unquestionably there was a large element of the political and the personal in it. A true appraisal of the incident must consider contemporaneous circumstances, however, and cannot be swayed by partisan interpretations either of that time or later. It must be remembered that Washington in 1861 was in a condition of hysteria, and the Guard was a psychological factor of real importance in helping to calm the city's nerves, no matter what its military value may have been. If Jim Lane realized the exigencies of the moment and seized the opportunity to improve his personal fortunes thereby, the historian may at least credit him with common sense and a nose for political stratagem.