

By the Kansas State Historical Society

TERRITORIAL CHARACTER: JAMES LANE

James Lane was one of the most controversial people in Kansas Territory. Some considered him dangerous. He killed a neighbor over a disagreement about property boundaries. Others supported Lane as he became an important leader in the Free State Party.

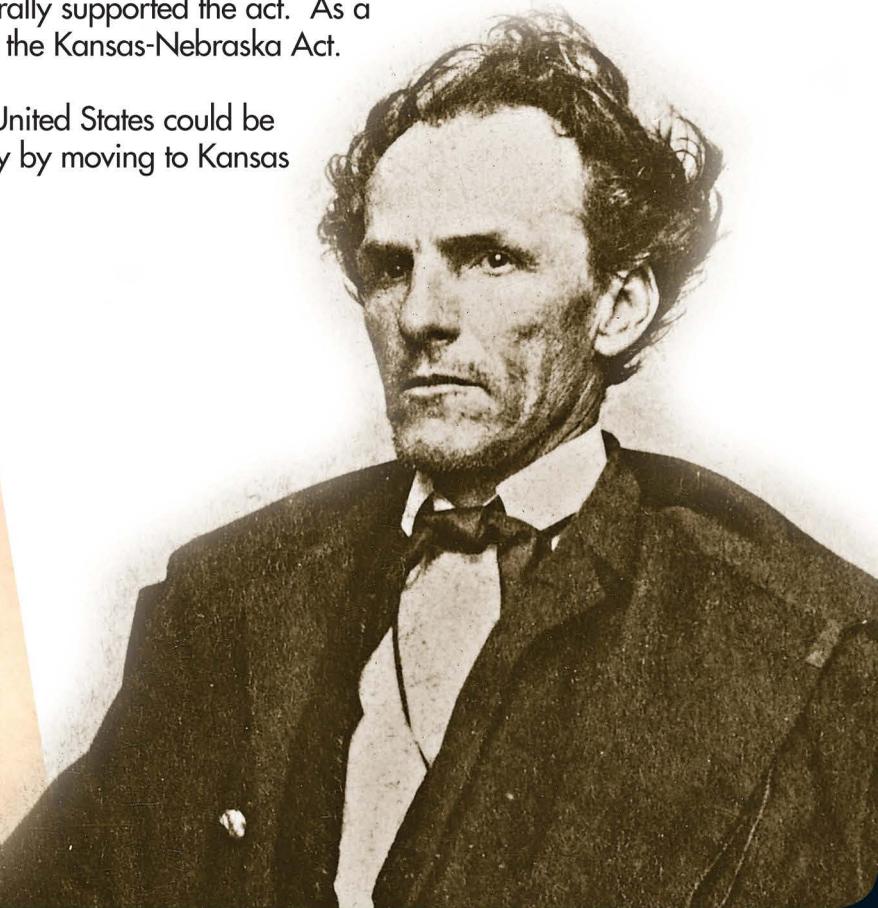
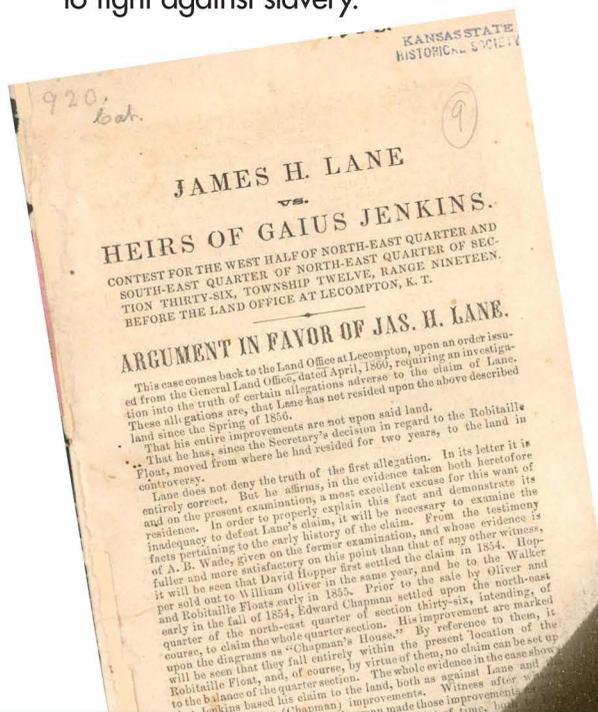
What did James Lane do before he came to Kansas Territory?

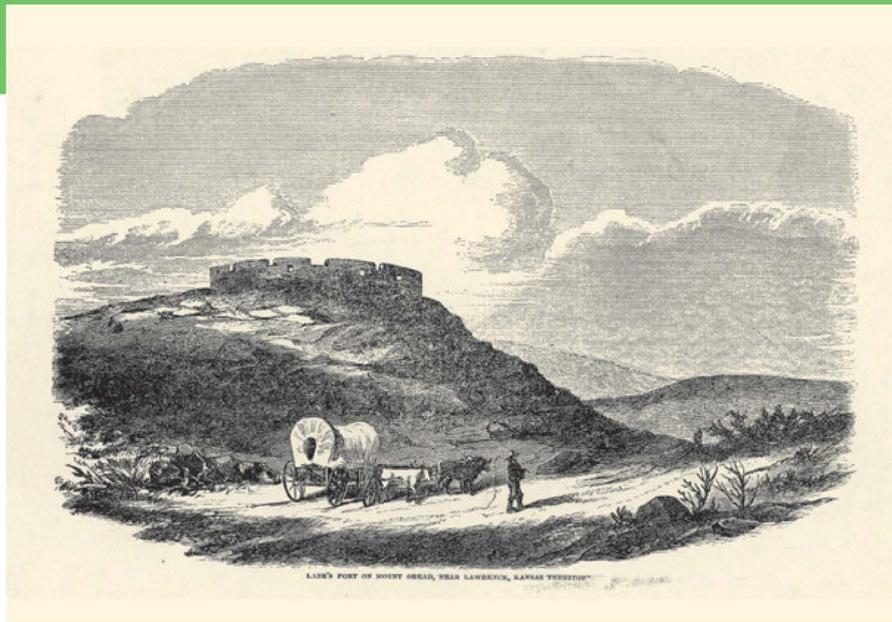
James Lane was born in Indiana. He became a lawyer like his father. Lane gained military experience serving as the commander of two Indiana units in the Mexican American War. This launched his political career. Lane became the lieutenant governor of his home state. He then served as a U.S. congressman from Indiana.

Why did he come to Kansas?

The Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed the people in Kansas to decide if they wanted slavery or not. Those who were proslavery generally supported the act. As a U.S. congressman, Lane had voted for the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

James Lane saw that the future of the United States could be decided in Kansas. He surprised many by moving to Kansas to fight against slavery.





"Lane's Fort" was built on Mount Oread near Lawrence. Today Mount Oread is the location of the University of Kansas.

What was his role in Kansas Territory?

James Lane became very active in the fight against slavery. He called slave owners "wolves, snakes, and devils."

As an active member of the Free State Party, Lane served as president of both the Topeka and Leavenworth constitutional conventions. These two attempts to write a state constitution were dominated by antislavery forces.

When Kansas became a state, James Lane became one of the state's first U.S. senators. Lane arrived in Washington D.C. as the Civil War erupted. He used his military experience to organize the Frontier Guard to protect the president and the White House.

Lane also founded three Kansas military units together called Lane's Brigade. These units fought against Confederates along the Kansas-Missouri border. James Lane also was responsible for forming the first unit of African Americans to fight for the Union in the Civil War.

Many saw James Lane as a radical. He had fought feverishly against slavery. After the Civil War his view seemed to soften. Lane did not support legislation for the rights of all people. His supporters in Kansas turned against him.

JAMES
LANE

1814 born

1849 became lieutenant
governor of Indiana

1852 became U.S. congressman
from Indiana

1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act

1855 moved to Kansas

1861 became U.S. senator
from Kansas

1861 Kansas statehood

1866 died