Territorial Character: Clarina Nichols

Clarina Nichols was a newspaperwoman. She opposed slavery and was a leader in the women’s rights movement. She made enormous contributions to the rights of Kansas women by influencing the state constitution.

What did Clarina Nichols do before she came to Kansas Territory?
Clarina Nichols was born Clarina Howard in Vermont. She received a very good education. As an adult she taught school and worked for a newspaper. She also founded a seminary for young ladies in New York. She divorced her first husband and married George Nichols. He was the editor of the newspaper for which she worked. When he died, Clarina Nichols became the editor of the Windham County Democrat in Vermont.

As a mother of four children she fought for the rights of women. In her newspaper she criticized the fact that married women could not share property ownership with their husbands. Nor did they have rights over their children. As more and more people learned of Nichols’ work, she became a popular speaker.

Why did she come to Kansas Territory?
Clarina Nichols joined the New England Emigrant Aid Company, a group that supported free-state settlement of Kansas Territory. Nichols moved her family to a claim in southern Douglas County. She came to Kansas so that her sons could establish free-state homesteads.
What was her role in Kansas Territory?
Clarina Nichols continued her newspaper career in Kansas. She moved to Wyandotte County to become an editor of the *Quindaro Chindowan*, an antislavery newspaper. She also continued to lecture about the rights of women.

Nichols wanted to see the rights of women included in the state constitution. She gathered signatures on petitions. This gave her status with the delegates to the Wyandotte constitutional convention. The delegates all were male.

Clarina Nichols sat through daily meetings using every chance available to her to lobby the delegates. She wanted women in Kansas to have equal educational opportunities. She lobbied for the rights of women to vote in school district elections. Nichols also wanted women to have equal rights to their children and property. Her lobbying was successful. The Wyandotte Constitution guaranteed these rights to women.