

WOMEN OF BLEEDING KANSAS

A Thesis by

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Master of Arts, Wichita State University, 2008

Submitted to the Department of History
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

December 2008

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in History.

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ABSTRACT

In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Kansas Territory was opened to settlement, and the those that emigrated to populate it would decide if it was to become a slave state. This popular sovereignty caused many struggles for power in the early history of the state. As Free-State antislavery emigrants began to travel to Kansas from the Northern United States, Missouri and other slave-holding Southern states responded, staking claims in Kansas Territory. Both sides intended to win at the ballot box, and widespread vote tampering and border skirmishes give this period in the state's history the title of Bleeding Kansas.

While the role of Kansas in the antebellum years is often cited in Civil War historical scholarship, Women who came to Kansas during the period have been overlooked. Traveling both from the North and South, they traded their homes and comforts for a new life and new struggles. The examination of these women's lives and contributions can only serve to enhance the historical record.

The historical record offers many diaries, letters and published books written by women who came to Kansas as Free-State supporters. These sources, along with more limited examples from Missouri women, offer insight to the role that the Women of Bleeding Kansas occupied.

Ultimately, this research attempted to examine the lives of women in Kansas during the period, and identify and assign meaning and importance to their struggle. Women were an important part of the struggle for Kansas. Kansas entered the Union in 1861 as a Free State, due it part to the real contributions made by Kansas women.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

By the nineteenth century, it was apparent that life in the United States was changing. The country increased in size, and also underwent changes in demographics, attitudes, and economy. While this brought increased prosperity to some, the country also experienced the growing pains of a new nation. In the second half of the century, the United States were on a path toward the Civil War. The debate over slavery, economic pressure, and land speculation in the newly-opened West caused conflict between different regions. Kansas Territory opened for settlement in 1854. Fraught with difficulty from the onset, the eventual admittance of Kansas to the Union would be a long and difficult road. These changes are well represented in women's lives at the time.

Middle-class women of the nineteenth century were mainly relegated to their homes. These are the women that we know the most about, through their letters and diaries. Because of this, most examinations of nineteenth-century women focus on the middle class. It should be noted, however, that the middle-class women examined do not represent the entire society, but simply those who left documents allowing insight into their lives. The domestic ideal was still a notion that was encouraged and expected. Women were seen as helpmates to their husbands, domestic laborers in their homes and teachers, and caregivers to their children. Women's roles were expanding also. The Second Great Awakening brought a new evangelicalism to religion that was in the realm of women, and women were leaving the home in greater numbers for the first

time to attend church meetings, reform societies and charity drives. The boundaries of traditional womanhood were challenged by a few intrepid groundbreakers, and many found a voice and purpose outside of the home for the first time.

As new western territories opened for emigration, questions followed. Both free and slave states were added to the country, and the decision whether or not each state would allow slavery became a national question. Kansas Territory was no exception. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 repealed the previous Missouri Compromise and left the slavery issue up to the people of Kansas. They would vote, ensuring popular sovereignty, and the outcome would decide Kansas's future. The southern states assumed because of its proximity that it would also be a slave state, while the growing antislavery movement in the northeast cried out for a free Kansas. Popular sovereignty was promised by the federal government, and so the citizens of Kansas would decide whether the state became slave or free. The debate and battles that followed foreshadowed the Civil War, and lent the name 'Bleeding Kansas' to history.¹

Emigration to Kansas grew at an increasingly fast rate, and each adult male in Kansas would vote and help decide the future of the state. While many studies have been written detailing the Kansas question, little scholarship focuses on the women that emigrated to Kansas during the territorial period, 1854-1861. The majority of these women were middle class, and came with their husbands and families. The women who came from the northeastern United State were Free-State supporters, and did not support the growth of slavery into new territory. Women also came from the South, in

¹ Craig Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State 1854-2000* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 35-40.

smaller numbers, to assure that Missouri's interests as Kansas's next door neighbor were kept in mind. In their eyes, Kansas must be a slave state.²

The historiography of women's history is an important part of any discussion of nineteenth-century women. The earliest attempts to include women's history in the narrative of the nation did not happen until the second half of the twentieth-century. In the 1960s, as the woman's movement was occurring in parts of the United States, groundbreaking historians began to reexamine the historical record, looking for the voices of women to augment the decidedly male narrative of the nation. Historians of women's history, often women themselves, challenged the pervasive influence of 'Great Men's History' and alongside the growth of social and cultural history, women's history altered the conventional history of the United States with amazing results. As scholarship on women increased, each era of American history was reexamined from a new point of view.³

Even as women's historical scholarship was flourishing in the 1960s and 1970s, it would not be until the 1980s that the time before the Civil War, the antebellum period, was examined in depth by woman's historians such as Catherine Clinton and LeAnn Whites, who examined the antebellum period and the Civil War with fresh eyes and from a female perspective. Civil War historiography was reexamined and new sources were discovered. These sources, along with groundbreaking scholarship led several seminal women's historians to rewrite the history of the nineteenth-century woman, allowing insight previously ignored.

² Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 14-20.

³ LeeAnn Whites, *Women in Missouri History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 3-6.

While women's scholarship has grown into an important part of history, historians continue to reexamine previous parts of U.S. history under a new light. Women's history often requires an increased diligence. Unfortunately, no matter how much scholarship, the historical record left by women in the nineteenth century pales in comparison to that left by their male counterparts. Documents, diaries, letters and court records are all that remain in certain areas of women's history. For the purposes of this thesis, there was a reasonably rich amount of primary sources available. As women in the nineteenth century began to question and participate more within a public sphere, their writings documented such a transition. This was the era of diary and letter writing, seen as an acceptable past-time for females. It is important to note that the majority of primary documents that remain are written by middle and upper-class white women. There is little to document the thoughts and feeling of the non-elite, native and slave women. The diaries and letters that do remain are what allow historians to alter the history of antebellum America with a female perspective, and arguably forever change the narrative. Kansas women were no exception. The documents they left offer insight and a new perspective on an old struggle.⁴

As the focus of this thesis will fall more on the women who emigrated from the northeast, some background of religion and abolition will be necessary. The antislavery movement, found mostly in churches, embraced women as an important part of the struggle against slavery. The abolitionist movement called for an end to the morally unacceptable practice of slavery, and women were seen as an asset in the struggle. Women left their homes for antislavery sermons, wrote letters to their newspapers

⁴ Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 42-50.

calling for reform, and gathered funds and supplies for those that were headed to Kansas to help the Free-State cause.

With the growth of support in the northeast for a free Kansas, many emigrant aid companies and societies were established. It was these companies, such as the New England Emigrant Aid Company, that offered the infrastructure to encourage emigration to Kansas in the name of a slave-free state. These companies often combined land speculation with emigration, and through their actions many of Kansas's first towns were established, places which remain important today, such as Lawrence and Manhattan.⁵

Although many Free-State settlers came via emigrant aid companies, they were far from the only pioneers in Kansas. The South, especially Missouri insisted that Kansas should be a slave state. Lured by popular sovereignty, many people, mostly men, crossed the border from Missouri to Kansas to support slavery at the polls. These men included groups of Border Ruffians, armed posses that would cross the border to do damage and incite fear among the Free-State settlers. Unfortunately, little historical record remains to document the presence of Missouri women in Kansas, but although their primary documents are not as plentiful they too made the trek to Kansas.

Finally, examining the case studies of three women who came to Kansas during the territorial period will offer insight into the female experience. Although these women all came from the Northeast, they found themselves in Kansas under different circumstances, and with different results. Julia Lovejoy was a deeply religious woman who made Kansas her home until her death. Hannah Ropes spent only six months in

⁵ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 48.

Kansas before returning to the Northeast, finding pioneer life less than desirable. Sara Robinson became the First Lady of Kansas, but only after living at a prison for weeks while her husband was held. Their stories personalize the Kansas struggle.

Women in territorial Kansas played a behind-the-scenes but important role that allowed the successful growth of the state. They worked the fields, cooked, cleaned incessantly, and proved constant helpmates to the men in their lives while raising children in a foreign environment often much less comfortable than the homes they left. While often ignored in the history of the state, Kansas women were an important part of the pioneer process that cannot be ignored. Through their hard work and influence, Kansas entered the Union as a free state, and the legacy of these women continues today.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGION AND ABOLITION

As Kansas Territory opened to settlement, both antislavery Free-State supporters and proslavery southerners began to emigrate to Kansas. Men from both sides of the question came to have their voices heard at the ballot box. While women did not yet have the right to vote, their opinions and feelings about slavery were as strong as those of the men in their lives. Mothers, daughters, and sisters came to Kansas from other states, either accompanying the men in their families or on their own to join male family members who had gone ahead to set up lodging or to stake claims. While these women came from various places in the United States, and supported both sides of the question, the focus of this chapter will be on those who emigrated to Kansas from the New England region. What made these eastern women have such a great desire to travel huge distances for the cause of abolition? Women and abolition can be examined in three specific ideas: the Second Great Awakening allowed women to have an increased role in religion, churches and organizations dedicated to the abolition of slavery depended upon female involvement; and these organizations eventually changed the face of American politics.

To examine Free-State women, we must first look at the lives they led back east before traveling to Kansas. As religiosity in women became more prominent in the northeastern United States, the push for abolition within these eastern churches often splintered and changed the ongoing evolution of many denominations. American culture and women's roles within it were beginning to evolve between the years of 1820

and 1875, alongside the move of the American economy into the aggressive capitalist system beginning to flourish in the world at the time. Religion's place increased in the cultural identity of many Americans, and women were a part of that cultural transition. Christian women examined their faith as the Second Great Awakening swept the eastern United States. Ann Douglas, in her book *The Feminization of American Culture*, writes,

Under the sanction of sentimentalism, lady and clergyman were able to cross the cruel lines laid down by sexual stereotyping in ways that were clearly and historically important and undoubtedly personally fulfilling. She could become aggressive, even angry in the name of various holy causes; he could become gentle, even nurturing, for the sake of moral overseeing. Whatever their ambiguities or motivation, both believed they had a genuine redemptive mission in their society: to propagate the potential matriarchal virtues of nurture, generosity and acceptance to create the "culture of the feelings"⁶

The redemptive mission and slavery were naturally matched. In 1833 the Slavery Abolition Act was passed in Britain, and the abolitionist movement in the United States gained momentum. There was also growing pressure on the world stage for the United States to end and eventually outlaw the slave trade. The Second Great Awakening (c.1790-1840) also helped spur many toward the antislavery cause. Those who were vehemently against slavery saw the growing religious movement as an opportunity to further the abolitionist cause. As the revival of religion grew, women with a renewed focus on their faith sought causes such as the elimination of slavery to center upon. Both women and religion grew in their power to affect social change. Christianity was one of the core tenants of the abolitionist movement.

⁶ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 10-11.

Almost all abolitionists were devout Christians. “Armed with their belief that all human beings were capable of salvation, evangelical abolitionists saw slavery as a sin that required immediate abolition.”⁷ The timing of the abolitionist cause coincided with the increased religiosity of the nation, and attracted many supporters. Proslavery Americans also believed they had religious directive, however. The rise of religion at the time fueled the slavery debate on both sides of the issue. The churches had a role in the growth of abolition, with mixed results. While the antislavery cause brought some denominations together, it splintered others permanently. The participation of women in church activities was encouraged, and through the churches and religious organizations women took a more active role in the opposition to slavery, a moral cause and therefore in their realm.

Abolition was bound and connected to the Second Great Awakening. The role of religion in the life of the nineteenth-century woman is telling, and the transition into the Second Great Awakening can offer insight into women’s prominence in the antislavery arena. Women did not always have a prominent role in religion, but following the First Great Awakening (c.1730-1770) in the colonies and Britain, and the evangelicalism that followed, women were allowed much more access to organized religion. This involvement only increased with the Second Great Awakening. Organized churches saw in women an untapped resource. Previous to the Second Great Awakening church attendance was on the decline, and the addition of women’s church-sponsored charity societies, bible studies, and other church activities geared toward women offered a renewed membership to many denominations. Church sponsored revivals also

⁷ John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1998), 6.

recruited many new female members. As itinerant preachers traveled through the northeast, they brought with them a message of God and morality that appealed to nineteenth-century women. This regular involvement and growth of women's participation in their churches offered both a path to renew their protestant faith, but more practically a social outlet where they also had the opportunity to make a difference. Women became the members of their families to assure household piety and morality, and through this new role in some cases found greater purpose and happiness. Historian Susan Juster writes, "The qualities that defined the evangelical faith-its emotionalism, sensuality, and above all its porous sense of self-were qualities that to the eighteenth-century mind were distinctly female."⁸ This appropriate female role was something in which women took pride and increased responsibility.

The Second Great Awakening, at the turn of the nineteenth century, was the second great revival of religion in the United States. Previous to the First Great Awakening, the Revolutionary War had refocused attention on survival. In a time of war, although most had strong religious faith, attending church and supporting church activities often became less important than feeding the family or establishing self government. With the conclusion of the war, New England church attendance was markedly down. As democracy spread throughout the United States, New England ministers began to look for ways to maintain their roles or authority within the society. Without a state church clergy sought new strategies to increase church membership. Frightened by the 'godless revolution' in France, ministers began to actively recruit members. Through the process of revival, with emphasis on personal salvation, their

⁸ Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 5.

success was widely reported, encouraging other denominations in other locations to try the same approach. The need to maintain social control drove the process, but out of this control came service that would manifest into many movements- abolition, suffrage and others.⁹

Similar to the First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening took place in New England. It quickly spread west, alongside the many people who packed up their lives and traveled toward the unknown for many reasons. An important aspect of the movement was the number of female converts, who greatly outnumbered the male. In some cases, religion gave women a purpose and voice outside the home that they greatly desired. The Second Great Awakening provided the groundwork needed for the future fight in Kansas, but its effects on women were unique, and the place of women in the church structure grew greatly at this time. Julia Louisa Lovejoy, writing from Kansas Territory in 1857, saw the connection between religion and abolition when she wrote, “for Kansas will be saved to God and freedom, and generations yet to come may rise up even on these lovely plains, to call us ‘blessed,’ for our sacrifices in wresting this fair land from the ‘mildew of slavery,’”¹⁰ Lovejoy demonstrated the connection that she and many other settlers in Kansas felt between religion and abolition, seeing their struggle as supported by God.

Through active participation in religion, women could explore their own personal identities and drives. Most middle and upper-class women, confined mostly to the home, served as domestic helpers to the men in their lives. Many women’s lives and

⁹ John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1998), 8.

¹⁰ Julia Louisa Lovejoy, *Letters of Julia Louisa Lovejoy, 1856-1859* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1947), 22.

their identities revolved around their domestic duties and children. While the wealthiest families may have had domestic help, most middle-class women did the majority of the cooking, cleaning, and child rearing while their husbands went out in the world to earn the paycheck. This traditional arrangement likely suited many women, but also limited countless others who longed for a role outside of the home. The Second Great Awakening allowed increased social and religious life out of the home while allowing women to maintain acceptable roles within the community.

Further compounding the issue was the social trend that surrounded these domestic roles. To maintain women in the home, an entire philosophy emerged, championing the homebody role as true feminism, the one and only way ideal women should be. This cult of domesticity was stifling to many women. These ideas can be traced back to the concept of republican motherhood, where women were responsible to raise the next generation of American leaders in their homes while still maintaining entirely feminized roles and doing much of the 'men's work' when necessary. Perfect womanhood was something to aspire to, and something that some women felt stifled by. Others, however, might have seen this religious and domestic role as a prized duty, given by God. It gave some purpose and direction, and a real and appreciated role within the family unit.

Alongside the children and household duties, women were also often the religious representative for the family. As the nation's men built the country towards industrialization and a strong economy, materialism dominated. Busy with the work of business and industry, sometimes men drifted farther and farther from their forefather's religion. They could have faith that the women in their lives carried the religious torch for

the family. The female members of the household could maintain religion both for their homes and their husband's children. The husbands in the middle and upper classes could focus more of the growth of capitalism and the economy as it pertained to their jobs and businesses. As Barbara Welter writes in her seminal article on the subject, "The attributes of True Womanhood...can be divided into four cardinal virtues- piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity...Religion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, the source of her strength."¹¹ From this piety came identity, and the domestic role that women already held suddenly offered greater rewards.

Although not originally intended, this female religious movement also allowed them an outlet for their frustrations, boredom, and often resentment. It was a way for women to get out of their homes occasionally, while still maintaining their proper sphere. Women could be religious, even to the extreme, and still occupy the roles that their male counterparts desired: subservience and obedience. Female education also increased at the time, albeit religiously focused, but was seen to keep women away from impure activities such as reading novels, or pursuing intellectual inquiry too far.¹² It was safe to allow women to belong to church organizations, and probably also allowed the less religious men in their lives some solace, knowing that their wives lived godly lives for the family, and therefore the children. Keeping occupied with other like-minded women and religious clergy who would only encourage women to stay in these safe sometimes repressing roles of housekeeper and wife or mother also appealed to their husbands.

¹¹ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" *American Quarterly* 18, No. 2, Part 1, (Summer, 1966): 152.

¹² *Ibid.*, 154.

The focus on religiosity in females to some extent evolved from Republican Motherhood. While revolutionary women would have educated their young male children to become the next generation's leaders, women in the eastern United States during the Second Great Awakening would educate their children and sometimes husbands on the increasing religious activity that they experienced in their everyday lives. They were meant to embody the cult of domesticity and its cardinal virtues, but also to maintain their religious values for their families and the next generation. While this can be seen as largely symbolic, the practicality of it allowed women a small respite from the daily drudgery of their everyday lives at home and arguably a move in the direction of citizenship. The social involvement that churches offered was an expansion of the private sphere that women occupied. Expansion of their identity was acceptable to society, and although it did not represent a dramatic change in women's roles, it did offer increased opportunity outside of the home. Probably appealing to most women, it no doubt interested those that had previously felt a void in their everyday existence. By filling this void with religion, it is no wonder that often fanaticism or the all-consuming fight for what social issues, in this case abolition, often took over. The bond between religion and women in the antebellum period allowed women's religiosity to grow and change into concrete action.

Slavery had always been a point of contention in the United States. Although some noteworthy early Americans were anti-slavery, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, the Revolutionary War put the slavery debate on the back burner.¹³ The religious debate over slavery began to take hold in the early nineteenth century,

¹³ Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2002), 8.

partially due to the Second Great Awakening, causing sectional tensions in the churches on both sides of the questions. While southern churches were largely proslavery, northern churches on varying levels questioned the institution. To have such differences under the same umbrella, denominations divided by location created many problems for the unity of churches, and few were able to withstand the struggle. The churches that were beginning to splinter in almost every denomination were concerned that inner church quarrels over slavery would jeopardize the church leadership, and inevitably most denominations took a varied stand on the issue.¹⁴ Many northern churches gained great power and membership largely due to the Second Great Awakening, and church leaders saw this splintering as problematic, and a threat to their very core.

The issue of slavery in religion was far from homogenized from church to church. Those with strong central leadership, such as the Episcopalians, were worried about disturbing the existing social order, that they might alienate the elite that they depended on for funding. As a result, clergy were forbidden to be openly abolitionist or participate in abolitionist activities. Maintaining the status quo seemed to be these churches' goal. More decentralized denomination such as the Baptists and Congregationalists allowed local churches to set their own membership standards, which varied hugely from state to state. The Baptist church eventually found itself a divided denomination, however, as churches split off supporting or rejecting abolition. In churches that allowed abolitionist activities, quite a few church members joined the abolitionist cause. Church support of abolition was localized, and no actual antislavery doctrine or practice was adopted by

¹⁴ Ibid.

these churches nationally. Denominations with a more federated structure, such as Presbyterians and Methodists, allowed for abolition tendencies. Through lectures and activity, abolitionists found it possible to infiltrate these denominations and once in control of a jurisdiction, they could send delegations to national authorities, demanding strict anti-slavery restrictions within the church.¹⁵

Church clergy often faced an additional struggle. Clergy from the North and the South were often educated side by side, and as a result, when they were assigned to specific churches, they often felt themselves torn between their congregations and their personal feelings. These men, who had gone to seminary together often felt distressed that they should be divided from those that they saw as their equals. Many clergymen choose to stay out of the fight entirely as the lines became too blurred and they knew the men leading these southern churches, and could not simply brand them as evil slavery supporters. Roman Catholic clergy were also forbidden to participate in abolitionist activities.¹⁶

Interestingly, both sides of the slavery issue used religion as justification. The proslavery faction “defended slavery on scriptural grounds, claiming that both revealed and natural religion sanctioned slavery.”¹⁷ They argued that Christ did not condemn slavery, and while abuse did occur, it was at the hands of misguided individuals, not the system. From an opposing viewpoint, slaveholding was a sin, period, and much debate and discussion was held over whether slaveholders belonged in northern churches. Not

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 8.

just a regional division, the lines were often blurred by families that had homes or relatives in both the north and the south.

It is a misconception, though, that most people, men and women both, felt that strongly either way. When later Americans thought of the abolition of slavery and the upcoming Civil War, the picture that they held in their heads is North against South, when in reality the greater differences between the East and the West held more influence. In popular press and media, northerners of the time are largely remembered and portrayed as virulent abolitionists, where as Southerners are all thought of as slave holders, strongly supporting the institution. Historians have exposed these stereotypes as simply not true. Most moderates, who were the vast majority of churchgoers, were turned off by both proslavery and abolition rhetoric. The majority of northern churchgoers were antislavery moderates, who saw slavery as evil, but supported graduated reduction, with church supported programs. They favored compensation for masters, colonization and apprenticeships for freed slaves. They did not see southerners as evil, and did not have hatred for the South in general. They objected to abolitionist attacks on the moral fiber of slaveholders, and they did not favor the mandatory expulsion of southerners from churches.¹⁸ It is difficult to generalize the feelings and thoughts of an entire region of the United States, but ultimately most people in the north were not ready to condemn slavery on the whole if it meant condemning all southern Americans as well. Slavery was an issue that to northerners needed attention, but emotionality about the issue was not widespread.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

The majority of southerners were not slave holders. The wealth of the South was in the hands of a very few elite plantation owners, and you were much more likely to be poor and white than a slave holder in the South. Even though most did not own slaves, southerners saw the attack on slavery as an attack on the southern way of life. Ultimately, if you will never own slaves, slavery as an institution means little to your everyday life. Also, in the early history of the United States, the struggle between federal and state governments had yet to be resolved. Many states believed that it was a state and not a federal issue and saw this fight as a threat to the southern way of life. From a world view, the government of the United States was still an infant, and while powerful and with much potential, many of the details had not yet been hatched out. Many groups of people, far from the wealthy elite on the east coast, needed to know their importance in relation to other groups. Those who advocated a larger role of state government would obviously disagree more with federal mandate, and vice versa, often regardless of the issue. It is important to note that views of issues such as slavery at this time often had more subtle agendas. The growth of women within the churches allowed a community of women who, not satisfied with simply opposing slavery, took it upon themselves to take action.

In the specific field of antebellum women's history in the United States, historians have found it useful to identify three types of political involvement of women. The first and most unique to the timeframe is the group work that they began to participate in outside the immediate family. The second level, called "gender-conscious group activity" meant that not only were they participating outside of the family, but they became aware that they were women acting with other groups of women as women.

Lastly, as women worked together, although perhaps not originally planned, their goals transitioned from the fight against slavery into group activities and the struggle for women's rights and interests.¹⁹ These levels prove useful in examining the growing participation of women in activities outside of the home.

Although many women were satisfied with their role, religious abolitionism spurred others further into the public sphere, away from their homes and families. As abolition-minded women began to form societies and work groups, they were united by their cause separate (although often affiliated) from their churches. These groups of east coast women would come together regularly to sew clothing for the slave settlements in Canada, and to raise funds for various projects or groups headed west, closer to the front of the abolitionist's battle. The tangible objects made and collected were important, because "women had something tangible in which to root their loyalty may be one reason that women, not men, constituted the great silent army of abolition."²⁰ These projects allowed women to demonstrate the effort made, and also to reassure themselves that their struggle would yield results.

Not all women were satisfied with the small measure of freedom that religion gave them, however, specifically the weekly trips out of the home for various revivals and church events. A certain faction of these women embraced religion and its causes to the extreme, intoxicated with the idea that they might maintain some godly form of identity other than wife. While many were probably contented with the role of wife and mother, those that were not were offered another option through religion, and zealotry

¹⁹ Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., and authors, introduction, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 2.

²⁰ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolition* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998), 6.

was something that could not be largely challenged in their eyes by the men in their lives, because it came from God, who they were not to question. Offering some women a remarkable power, and while their religious intentions were sincere, the role that extremism allowed and the power they must have felt certainly had something to do with the process. Defining zealotry at the time is difficult, as evaluating women entirely on their writings about abolition could easily lead to an over emphasis on this part of their lives.

Different women took the fight against slavery to different levels, but they still maintained families, friends and households. Many women fought slavery fervently, but as one female abolitionist, Sarah Smith wrote, "Slavery was not merely a political question, but also a question of justice, of humanity, of morality, of religion."²¹ These ideas were all appropriate for women to discuss and by defining the issue as not merely political, Smith demonstrates how women defended themselves against those who argued that slavery was solely a political issue. As women increased their participation in organization and societies, certain outspoken leaders emerged.

Lydia Maria Child, a leading abolitionist and later women's suffragist suffered the title of extremist. Vocally against slavery, the expansion of the United States, and a proponent of women's rights, she turned her eyes toward Kansas after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. When Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner was beaten in the senate chamber by another congressman after giving an impassioned speech denouncing the South's attempt to move slavery into Kansas, Child quickly wrote to him, offering her support. As a result she began to write a serialized fiction in

²¹ Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 6.

the *New York Tribune* in the fall of 1856 titled “The Kansas Emigrants.” The story told of one Free Soil Massachusetts family’s journey to Kansas, and their struggles as they “cheerfully return good for evil.”²² This story did much for the abolitionist cause in the west, and encouraged the support of Kansas as a free state.

Widely published, much of the general public at the time saw Child as a crazy zealot, but Child did not care, and in fact, in her preface to *The American Negro*, she encouraged even those who disagree to read her works: “-Read it, from sheer curiosity to see what a woman (who had much better attend to her household concerns) will say upon such a subject:-Read it, on any terms, and my purpose will be gained.”²³ Women like Lydia Maria Child were fully aware of their public impression, but believed that discourse was the first step, and if riling up those who disagreed accomplished that, so be it. From the writings of outspoken women like Child emerged women’s groups and societies that felt that in addition to discourse action was required. As pressure began to build within the abolitionist cause, churches felt pressure to solidify their stances on slavery. As the churches sought to make their positions known, other groups were emerging separate from the churches who clearly spoke out against slavery. Women were involved in these increasingly political groups also.

The American Anti-Slavery Society, who believed, “Slavery is contrary to the principles of natural justice, of our republican form of government, and of the Christian religion, and is destructive of the prosperity of the country, while it is endangering the peace, union, and liberties of the States;”²⁴ was founded by William Lloyd Garrison and

²² Lydia Maria Child, “The Kansas Emigrants.” *New York Tribune*, October 8, 1856.

²³ Lydia Maria Child, *The American Negro* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 3.

Arthur Tappan in 1833, was made up of reformers who gave particular attention to the anti-slavery fight. Garrison was well loved and hated depending upon which side of the issue you fell, but his power as a reformer led great credence to much of the abolition battle. Garrison had strong feeling on the place of women, and was an early advocate for equal rights:

The Natural rights of one human being are those of every other, in all cases equally sacred and inalienable; hence the boasted "Rights of Man," about which we hear so much, are simply the "Rights of Woman," of which we hear so little; or in other words, they are the Rights of Humanity, neither affected by, nor dependent upon, sex or condition.²⁵

William Lloyd Garrison is an interesting character in the abolitionist struggle. He had a strong personality and even stronger following, and his tactics varied from others. He employed a technique called moral suasion. This rhetorical tool was used to appeal and apply pressure to those that might not share his views. Although he did use political tactics to further the abolitionist cause, he maintained a largely anti-political stance, instead using religion and morality as his principal tools. Historian Bruce Laurie writes, "A principled foe of racism, Garrison found it impossible to envision emancipation or racial equality without a thoroughgoing transformation of the hearts of men and women."²⁶ Garrison did not simply wish to change the law, but the moral compass of those that supported slavery.

As Garrison and his followers became increasingly radical, even to those that supported the antislavery fight, Garrison went too far in the eyes of many when he

²⁴ William MacDonald, *Documentary Source Book of American History* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), 304-305.

²⁵ William Lloyd Garrison, *The Words of Garrison* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), 46

²⁶ Bruce Laurie, *Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform* (New York: Cambridge Press, 2005), 3.

proposed to place Abby Kelley, a radical member of his society, on the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery society. This blending of the fight against slavery and the increased demand within the Society for women's rights was seen to many as simply too much. Kelley's radicalism, with her constant cry for "Revolution Not Reform" and her assertion that the Constitution was a proslavery document was simply too much for many.²⁷ This event was the catalyst for a split within the society. As the abolition movement and the proslavery movements grew, it was inevitable that the debate would soon spill onto the political field. In 1840 a group of over a hundred abolitionists met in Albany, New York to decide whether or not they should nominate an independent candidate for the presidency. Breaking from William Lloyd Garrison, they intended not to form another society, but a political party.

These original men and women were precious members and supporters of William Lloyd Garrison's Anti-Slavery society, who had left the organization to form one of their own after the nomination of Abby Kelley. After days of debate, the first candidates of what would become the Liberty Party were nominated. The Anti-Slavery Liberty Party existed until 1848, when it merged with other factions to become the Free Soil Party.²⁸ The Liberty Party did not enjoy much success, due largely to growing American sentiment, which was unwilling to address the racial equality and the abolition of slavery. It was poorly organized and under funded, but while its candidate in 1840 only received 7,000 votes, great growth occurred in the interim, and in 1844 Presidential candidate James G. Birney received 65,000 votes. While small and unnoticed by many,

²⁷ Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 2.

²⁸ Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), 25.

the Liberty Party played a significant and timely role in the growing abolitionist war on slavery.²⁹ The Liberty Party faced another hurdle in its early days, its position on women's rights. With slavery and suffrage often intertwined in reform societies, it is difficult for historians today to correctly assess the Liberty Party's opinion on such issues, as often their lack of elected officials made for much disagreement on official stances. The influence of women in the Party is unquestioned, though, as much of the rhetoric of the Liberty Party was passed along in its newspapers, aimed at the family and home, with anti-slavery articles right alongside recipes, courtship sagas, and children's serialized fiction.³⁰

The split between Garrison and the Liberty Party also had unintended consequences upon churches. Garrison and his antislavery society increasingly began to expunge the connection between church and abolition, citing corruption. Garrison and his followers began to favor more secular means and goals, while yet another faction of abolitionists continued their campaigns to reform northern religious institutions. Leading to a secondary wave of schisms in many churches, specifically the Methodist and Baptist, infighting began to grow. The increasing factionalism undoubtedly caused many problems within the movement, which found it difficult to accomplish and make true gains while disagreement within the Party remained a large problem³¹ Ultimately the Liberty Party never went very far, but played an important role in the future yet to come. The first real gains were made when the Liberty Party joined with other factions

²⁹ Ibid., 24.

³⁰ Ibid., 26.

³¹ John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 13.

including antislavery Whigs and Democrats (more moderate groups) to join the Free Soil Party. The Free Soil Party, along with the Republican Moderates, saw “slavery as a morally unacceptable institution.”³² The Free Soil Party enjoyed a much longer period of existence than the Liberty Party, and grew in strength from its founding in 1848 to the founding of the Republican Party in 1854. Eventually the Free Soil Party encouraged more and more input and action from the women in its ranks, led largely by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

As female membership increased, women within the party began to develop their own separate ideas, rhetoric and arguments for winning others to the abolition cause. Although they could not vote, they could campaign and influence the men in their lives. Interestingly, women within the Party often could be much more radical than their male counterparts. While radical abolitionism definitely existed within the ranks of female members of these organizations, however, historians are now beginning to argue that the most effective female abolitionists were in fact far from radical. Women such as Stowe and Lovejoy among others were not truly radical abolitionists, argues historian Michael Pierson: “Usually labeled abolitionists by historians, these women instead appeared in Republican or Free-Soil Party venues and often publicly quarreled with abolitionists.”³³ Women often received the label of ‘radical’ because they were functioning outside of societal norms, however, most believed in mainstream antislavery rhetoric. The truly radical abolitionists were those that called for the overhaul of the constitution because of its proslavery identity, as Abby Kelley did, or supported acts of

³² Ibid., 13.

³³ Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), 48.

violence or terrorism in the name of abolition carried out by zealots such as John Brown.

Far from a uniform group, these women often had different ideas about legislation and abolition. This is yet another example of the title of 'abolitionist' leaving something to be desired. Stowe, eloquent and passionate about the abolitionist cause said in a speech:

So long as the law considers all these human being, with beating hearts and lining affections, only as so many things belonging to the master – so long as the failure, or misfortune, or imprudence, or death of the kindest owner, may cause them any day to exchange a life of kind protection and indulgence for one of hopeless misery and toil – so long it is impossible to make anything beautiful of desirable in the best-regulates administration of slavery.³⁴

Women's influence and involvement in the Free Soil Party grew leaps and bounds between its inception and its joining with the Republican Party. This change in the Republican Party marked a turning point which eventually gave way to the Civil War. Historian Eric Foner believes that during the antebellum period,

As southerners were becoming more and more consciously to insist on slavery as the very basis of civilized life, and to reject the materialism and lack of cohesion in northern society, northerners came to view slavery as the antithesis of the good society, as well as a threat to their own fundamental values and interests.³⁵

This polarization cause a definite split among political lines, as both republicans and democrats sought to politicize the slavery question. Women's involvement in politics

³⁴ Harriet Beacher Stowe.
[http://thinkexist.com/quotation/so long as the law considers all these human/326661.html](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/so_long_as_theLaw_considers_all_these_human/326661.html)
(accessed May 2, 2008)

³⁵ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*. (New York: Oxford Press, 1970), 9.

was limited, as they had yet to win the right to vote, but that did not keep them from supporting moral issues such as abolition.

Economics play a central role in government, and that is very true of the slavery issue. While some historians have argued that slavery was an economic issue before anything else, to focus entirely on economics as the only cause of slavery is to ignore the result. Much of the North's growing industry had financial backing in the South among slave holders, which could cause a problem as abolitionist sentiment grew. Cotton mill owners and bankers are but only two of the many examples of Northerners who depended upon slave labor to fuel their businesses in the North, albeit indirectly. These northern businessmen were often large contributors to both missionary societies and benevolent organizations, and used their financial power within these organizations to maintain the status quo. It was these men and their money that fueled the fight against abolitionist's advancement.³⁶ As churches began to emerge supporting or rejecting abolitionist sentiment, private societies and clubs also emerged. Churches could not be counted on entirely to ensure abolition, and citizens formed groups dedicated solely to the cause.

The relationship between abolition and religion is nuanced and complicated. From the increased pressure in the East came church infighting, religious zealots, the beginnings of political abolition and the place of women in the anti-slavery fight. While the battle for Kansas would soon emerge, it was partially thanks to the religiosity, participation and hard work of women that the national eye was now turned to slavery and the Kansas question.

³⁶ Ibid., 12.

As the fight for Kansas came to the forefront of political debates, many of these eastern women did not believe that supporting the cause from afar was enough. Largely through aid societies organized to go to Kansas to settle free minded people, a large influx of men and women against the growth of slavery began to flow into Kansas. These aid societies and organizations offered women a particular role that they could not achieve through political means, as they could not vote. Instead, they could help to organize groups to Kansas, write letters to newspapers in support of a free Kansas, or gather supplies and materials to send to the territory to help the emigrants that had already arrived. Some women accompanied or followed the men in their lives to Kansas, and although they did not vote, they kept house, fed their families, tended the sick and worked the farms along side the men. They served an important role in child rearing also, raising the next generation of antislavery voters.

In 1854 Charles Robinson and his wife Sara headed to the Kansas Territory with other members of the New England Emigrant Aid Society. Their goal was to populate Kansas with as many Free Soil supporters as possible. Charles would first become Lawrence Town Company president, the leader of the Free-State movement in Kansas, and the first governor of Kansas in 1861. Sara, largely homesick, spent a good deal of time back east. As tensions ramped up in Kansas, though, Sara published a book that illustrated clearly what was going on in Kansas at the time. Religious and a strident abolitionist, Sara wrote, "In the God of our fathers trust that he will lead us safely through this Red Sea of evil, until we plant our feet securely on freedom's bulwarks,

having passed from this worse than Egyptian bondage."³⁷ Sara Robinson represents an educated abolitionist who furthered the cause more than many of her male counterparts.

Sara is only one example of women who made a lasting impact on the historical record. Religion and abolition, bound together as a single entity sparked the Kansas fight. Women had a primary role in these battles, even if there were not voting at the poles or fighting border ruffians. Abolitionist women in Kansas held social meetings for other women, supported the churches sprouting up in their areas, and wrote letters back home urging support for Kansas. They were largely the glue that held pioneer life together.

How, then, did abolitionist sentiment in the North come to Kansas? It came with those who intended Kansas to be free from slavery. This movement to Kansas was organized and planned by the churches and their offshoot missionary societies and aid organizations, as well as speculative town companies. These societies, such as the New England Emigrant Aid Company, were the practical driving force that took sentiment and idea and turned them into concrete tasks for families. By examining these aid agencies and women's roles within them and the role of women in early Kansas history, the story of the battle for Kansas unfolds.

³⁷ Sara Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols and Co., 1856), 69.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW ENGLAND EMIGRANT AID COMPANY

As antislavery sentiment in the North began to grow, it intersected with the desire to move west. In search of ‘virgin’ land, where many believed that opportunity and resources were plentiful, many families made the decision to emigrate with their neighbors or communities. In 1855, 635 men, women, and children left Boston under the care of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, heading for Kansas. The majority of this first party had strong abolitionist feeling, and went to help Kansas become a free state. Among them were Hannah Ropes and two of her children, Edward, who had recently turned eighteen, and Alice, eleven. Their father had abandoned the family when the children were small. Edward, who planned to homestead in the Lawrence area, encouraged his mother and sister to follow him to Kansas. Sympathetic to the Free-State cause, Ropes was ultimately looking for a new beginning and ideally prosperity, although eventually political turmoil would take its toll and she would return to Massachusetts. Of her time in Kansas, though, she wrote:

“We have suffered a very great deal from pain, sickness, and from want of comfortable things to make us warm, but not for food. The sick moan for good water-for lemons, oranges, and as they get better, for oysters and a thousand things a weakened mind remembers as among the luxuries of other times. But then came the quails, prairie chickens, and venison such as your epicures would smack their lips over, and when I am my feet my head is as good as ever. Now I must tell you, we are in the midst of most serious preparations for defensive war.”³⁸

³⁸ Charles L Chandler, “Two Letters from Kansas” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11, no.1 (June 1942): 78.

Ropes eventually found the atmosphere of war and homesickness too much to bear, and returned home after six months in Kansas. She was just one of many, who under the auspices of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, made out for Kansas, most seeking land, homesteading rights, and to create in Kansas a state without slavery, offering assistance and support to those that had already made the journey. An examination of the Company and its objectives in Kansas allows us to draw conclusions about the long-lasting effects of its success, and mark the contribution these families and especially women left on Kansas. Women who came to Kansas with the Aid Company made a lasting and important impression on the Territory, and it was partially through their hard work and dedication that Kansas entered the union as a free state.

While not all Northerners were forcibly against slavery in the South, as the previous chapter examined, most opposed the continued extension of slavery into newly created states. Slavery had already caused great debates in 1819 and 1820, as Missouri was brought into the union as a slave state, to the dismay of many New Englanders. The Missouri Compromise was the eventual result, introduced by Henry Clay, and in essence drew a line across the 36' 30' parallel. Any territory north of this line would be free, and territory south of the parallel would be allowed to consider slavery. The Missouri Compromise was seen as a final decree, a long time coming result that needed to be the last word.

In 1854, however, the finality of the Missouri compromise was itself compromised by the Nebraska bill that united the North against slavery to an extent not previously seen. If the Compromise was no longer valid, then certain groups of northern lawmakers and political participators would do everything in their power to prevent new

slave holding states to join the Union. Mr. Eli Thayer of the Massachusetts legislature was one of the first to act, introducing into legislation an 1854 petition for the incorporation on the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company. The legislation read:

“...are hereby made a corporation, by the name of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company, for the purpose of assisting emigrants to settle in the West; and, for this purpose, they shall have all the powers and privileges, and be subject to all the duties, restrictions and liabilities...The capital stock of said corporation shall not exceed five millions of dollars. Said capital stock may be invested in real and personal estate.³⁹

Thayer’s proposal was seen as bold. Printed in all parts of the country, Northerners were surprised to see that Massachusetts was going to invest five million dollars in the new western territory, and planned on sending men who would know how to spend the money. Eventually the results of this legislation accomplished only a small amount of the intended work, but this proposal accomplished gaining the ear of people of some sort, and the names of the petitioners for the legislation are a virtually who’s who of Massachusetts at the time. The list of men included multiple members of congress, leading merchants, writers, abolitionists, and a future governor and a future Vice-President.⁴⁰

The bill was passed and the charter for the company was signed soon after. It was thought that the charter would bring 20,000 free men to Kansas, with five million dollars as their backing to create communities and governments that were opposed to slavery. The charter, which was widely published, stated as its purpose, “To organize emigration to the west and bring it under a system, with benefits arising from the

³⁹ Edward Everett Hale, *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*. 1897. N.P., 81.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

arrangement first to the emigrants, second to the country, and third to the company.”⁴¹

It must be noted that most company investors hoped that eventually the Company would turn a profit, as shares were sold of it. Shareholders also had political aims, as they sought to maintain an amount of northern interest in the vast west.

Eli Thayer, who held the initial idea for the Company, was already a well-known man in his home state. An educator and politician, in 1849 he founded the Oread Collegiate Institute, a school to prepare young women for college, an innovative idea at the time. He became quite successful with his school, not only financially, but also within social and political circles. He believed strongly in Free-Soil politics, and from 1857-1861 he was a member of the U. S. House of Representatives.⁴² After proposing the Company’s charter, and while waiting for legislative approval, he began to give speeches in city halls throughout the northeast to gather support. These meetings and lectures allowed many potential emigrants to hear of the opportunity. They also allowed countless others, who had no intention of moving to Kansas, to financially back the Company. It was not necessary to attend a meeting to hear the message, however, as newspapers offered coverage and often reprinted passages of Thayer’s speeches:

There were hundreds and thousands of northern man ready and anxious to emigrate to Kansas, but they needed a rallying point, some organization, that they might know that they would not be trampled underfoot by the Missourians of the border. This the Aid Society supplied, and thus has been the greatest service to the cause of a free Kansas.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 83.

⁴² Horace Andrews, Jr., “Eli Thayer and the New England Emigrant Aid Company.” *The New England Quarterly* 35, vo.4 (Dec. 1962): 497.

⁴³ Eli Thayer, quoted in the *Trenton State Gazette*, July 11,1856. Issue 2901, Page 2.

Thayer was clever in how he presented his plan for organized emigration. He did not wish to be associated with previous antislavery campaigns which he believed had been largely unsuccessful due to their excessive focus on hatred and morality. Many vociferous antislavery personalities (Abbey Kelley, for example) were so strident and hateful toward the South and the institution of slavery that they alienated the average American. Many Americans were against slavery; few wanted to overhaul the entire constitution and the social, political and economic system of the United States. Thayer, aware that to many emotions would not appeal to successful men especially, called his plan “Business antislavery:” Strongly against slavery, but also for profit and financial success in the interim. In approach, it allowed the antislavery message to also be one of business success and capitalism, which appealed to a much larger segment of the population. He focused his speeches behind the concept of popular sovereignty, what was the heart of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and which he believed was the key to Kansas’s entrance as a free state.⁴⁴

Early on, Thayer knew that to sway the hearts and minds of other like-minded individuals, and to find those willing to make the arduous journey to Kansas, he would need supporting voices within the Company. As he continued to give speeches and write articles about the importance of a free Kansas and the success that settlers might enjoy in Kansas Territory, others joined his fight. His first notable ally was Reverend Edward Everett Hale, a Unitarian minister in New York. Hale had previously published pamphlets on the importance of free labor emigration as a possible solution to the spread of slavery. Hale had no specifics in mind, and was merely theorizing, but in

⁴⁴ Horace Andrews, Jr., “Eli Thayer and the New England Emigrant Aid Company.” *The New England Quarterly* 35, vo.4 (Dec. 1962): 498.

Thayer he found a more practical partner who could translate theory into reality. Hale joined forces with Thayer, and as a prolific writer became the main propagandist for the Emigrant Aid Company, writing flyers, pamphlets and speeches intended to recruit those willing to go to Kansas.⁴⁵ He also became one of Thayer's closest friends.

Problems soon arose after incorporation. Although many notable men were more than willing to sign their names to the charter, fewer were willing to put up their own funds for stock. Some of the men, such as the Boston philanthropist Amos A. Lawrence, who himself was the head of a large manufacturing company, did not agree with the commercial for-profit aim of the company. As treasurer of the company, Lawrence's concerns could not be ignored. Thayer, dismayed by these concerns, realized that Lawrence and others were reluctant to have the general public believe that they were driven by profit rather than Free-State patriotism. Speculation and charity did not seem to go hand in hand to many of these businessmen. Lawrence, Thayer, and J.M.S. Williams, who are considered the three early visionaries of 1854, knew immediately that change would have to occur.⁴⁶ Thayer wrote, "It will be seen... that the enterprise was intended to be a money-making affair as well as a philanthropic undertaking. The fact that we intended to make it pay the investors pecuniarily brought upon us the reproaches and condemnation of some of the abolitionists."⁴⁷ Realizing that restructuring would be necessary to continue, the original charter was laid aside and the company was reorganized into a private venture. After some squabbling and

⁴⁵ Ibid., 499.

⁴⁶ Edward Everett Hale, *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*. 1897. N.P., 84.

⁴⁷ Eli Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company* (Worcester, Mass: Rice Publishing, 1887), 13.

infighting, the Massachusetts and New York factions parted company, and New York sought to create a separate charter.

Formally recognized on July 24, 1854, the New England Emigrant Aid Company was vested soon after, with a total amount of \$200,000 in stock sold, at \$20 a share. Amos Lawrence believed that to succeed the company needed a board of wealthy successful directors. Many of Boston's earliest notable family names appear on these documents, including Charles J. Higginson, John Lowell, and Samuel Cabot, Jr. While the company was still considered a stock-owned business, it succeeded largely through generous donations and gifts of those that sought to be philanthropic or patriotic. As new articles of association were passed, the control of the company shifted slightly, and Thayer became more behind the scenes in his role, recruiting colonists and giving speeches but staying out of many of the executive decisions of the company.⁴⁸ The company also sought the help and advice of Charles Robinson, a physician who had already spent time in Kansas and who helped the first parties with travel advice, maps and information that only someone who had recently been to Kansas could offer. Robinson would later go on to be the first governor of Kansas. While the New England Emigrant Aid Company was not the only antislavery organization that promoted emigration to Kansas, they were the most successful and mainstream. By combining the promise of land speculation with the backing of many notable politicians and society names, they were by far marketed and supported on a scale not comparable to most other organizations.

⁴⁸ Horace Andrews, Jr., "Eli Thayer and the New England Emigrant Aid Company." *The New England Quarterly* 35, vo.4 (Dec. 1962): 500.

Emigrant companies, such as the New England Emigrant Aid Company, however were not alone. Immediately after President Franklin Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, companies from Missouri, having the advantage of proximity, seized some of the best Kansas lands, often not even waiting for Native American removal. The men involved with these early seizures were fully aware that the fight over slavery was quickly coming closer to their homes, and wanted any advantage possible. Squatters arrived in full force in Kansas, and most of the earliest had land speculation on their minds as the issue of slavery moved to the back burner. Rumors began to circulate in Kansas about large groups of northerners that had been recruited by a corporation to bring abolition to Kansas, driving out Southern settlers. Panic ensued, and proslavery forces in Kansas, led largely by David Atchison, formed self-defense societies to protect their holding and interest, as well as their right to own slaves.⁴⁹ These circumstances made both the New England Emigrant Aid Company and their potential colonists nervous, as the date for the first party's leaving soon approached.

Once the company was vested, the practical matter of finding the first colonists arose. Through lectures and a propaganda campaign, many were interested, but it was necessary to take care of practical concerns before the pioneer party headed to Kansas. Dr. Charles Robinson, who had traveled through Kansas multiple times previously on his way to California, where he first settled, shared information as to the terrain. Robinson was quickly hired to return to Kansas to scout out potential locations for the soon coming settlers. His journal places him in Kansas as early as July 1854, within six weeks of the passage of the act that opened Kansas to settlement. Parts of his journal were later printed to be used as company propaganda encouraging further

⁴⁹ Ibid., 501.

settlement into Kansas. Robinson traveled nearly forty miles into Kansas to avoid an Indian reservation that was just west of what is now Kansas City. The city of Lawrence now stands upon the land he chose for the first colony. Thinking ahead, Robinson also advised the trustees to purchase a decrepit tavern that was located in the small town of Kansas City. Although not a great place for permanent settlers, as it was technically inside the Missouri border, it would allow for a place for emigrants to meet, regroup before moving on to their claims, and where people were known to be courteous and friendly.⁵⁰

As Robinson returned ready to take the first groups of emigrants, “Kansas Meetings” began to be held with more frequency throughout the New England region. The press, being favorable to the movement helped out a great deal with recruitment. Many of the early leaders of the company planned to go to Kansas themselves, and would announce their intentions and recruit neighbors and friends to accompany them. Hale, a founder, saw these men as “men of enthusiasm, of good position at home, who had determined for years that the southern supremacy in the council’s of the nation should be destroyed.”⁵¹ How true of a statement is anyone’s guess, but there is no doubt that a certain amount of land speculation accompanied these high-minded ideals. The neighbors and friends that these early men gathered had various motives for going to Kansas, but it is extremely likely that they had a strong antislavery sentiment to some extent. There was risk involved, which might have also been attractive to young men who sought to grow their place in the world.

⁵⁰ Edward Everett Hale, *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*. 1897. N.P., 85.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

The Emigrant Aid Company was able to secure cheap travel tickets for its emigrants, and while the company never accomplished its goal of half priced tickets, they were able to secure them at a deep discount, and as a result, almost all settlers headed for Kansas went under the banner of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, for reduced ticket prices if nothing else.⁵² Hale recounts a story of dubious origins that he maintains is “undoubtedly true”: “Governor Walker, the proslavery governor sent out by President Pierce, and his secretary bought their tickets west at an Emigrant Aid Company’s office, and obtained the reduction which the company made.”⁵³ While this story may be apocryphal, it does lead to the question of how many people went west under the auspices of the company who had little or no interest in the slavery question. While sentiment in New England gravitated on the whole toward antislavery, it seems likely that some left with company parties hoping solely for economic opportunity or a better life in a different place, not to mention adventure, as many party members were young men and women, lured by stories of the West. Hale does admit that no questions were asked at the offices as to emigrants’ motives, but that no money was ever given to assist anyone individually, aside from reduced rate tickets, which individuals were solely responsible for financing on their own.

Although the company did offer perks that made the trip to Kansas much easier, the majority of emigrants were religious antislavery people who had lofty ideals for the new land. The largest perk offered was undoubtedly information. In a time before reliable research and resources, the company offered free information, maps, statistics and leadership for the parties. It also offered almost free lodging at locations along the

⁵² Ibid., 86.

⁵³ Ibid.

way to Kansas, in its own hotels and places of reception in Missouri and Kansas Territory. As little to no infrastructure existed for the earliest settlers, it was necessary for the Company to build steam-powered saw mills at various locations throughout the Territory, extremely necessary for building any kind of homes or businesses in a region where water powered saw mills were not possible. A shortage of timber also hindered fast expansion. Getting settlers to Kansas was one thing, but helping them succeed was the only way they were going to stay, and had mixed results as I will explore later. Seemingly less important, but arguably more important was the creation of two company newspapers, the Herald of Freedom and Kansas Free State Newspaper, published by the Company in Kansas, one in German. While probably filled with Company rhetoric to a degree, these papers also provided an information life line that many in rural areas desperately clung to, and offered encouragement to those that were finding the reality of Kansas a little less desirable than they might have previously imagined.

On July 17, 1854, the pioneer party of the New England Emigrant Aid Company left Boston. Under the leadership of Dr. Charles Robinson, they numbered twenty-four. They arrived in St. Louis on July 24th, and finally arrived in what would become Lawrence on August 18th. “They described their new home as ‘six miles above the mouth of the Wakarusa, a tributary of the Kansas river.’”⁵⁴ Other parties followed in the years to come.

While a couple of scouting parties were quickly dispatched to Kansas, the Company realized that more substantially-sized groups were necessary to have any lasting effect. Time was spent organizing the first regular spring party, made up of

⁵⁴ Ibid., 85.

approximately 200 people. They left Boston on March 13, 1855. Robinson, who was again the agent in charge of this first regular party, writes,

The first Kansas [sic] party arrived at this place about 8 o'clock this morning, all well and in good spirits...Our party was greeted on the way with cheers and good wishes for success at several of the stations. At Fitchberg not less than one thousand of the citizens meet us at the depot, and greets us with songs and cheers that thrilled the heart of every Kansas bound pioneer.⁵⁵

This party was followed two weeks later by one similar in size, and from March until May about 200 people set out every couple weeks. While early parties were met with support and enthusiasm, the trip to Kansas was long and nerve-wracking for many, especially women, who were leaving their families and homes to join their husbands in the wilderness, and taking children on what could easily amount to a month long journey that quickly became more work than fun. Hannah Ropes, who went to Kansas with her son and daughter in September, 1855, writes in a letter to her mother,

It is just a week since we left home, and we are three hundred and fifty miles up this river, it seems endless, and the immensity just begins to dawn upon me, as well as the distance from home. Everything seems a world too wide for the home emotion to root in.⁵⁶

Men and older sons often went first to Kansas, to prepare homestead sites for their families who they would send for when reasonably accommodations had been made. Ropes also writes, "Our party numbers twenty-five, ten of them children, and five women, who are going to homes prepared for them and now occupied by their husbands and fathers."⁵⁷ It took some men longer than others to bring their families to

⁵⁵ Hannah Anderson Ropes, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, March 20, 1855.-Clipping in Webb Scrapbooks, v.III p.50.

⁵⁶ Hannah Anderson Ropes, *Six Months in Kansas: By a Lady* (Boston: Jewett, 1856), 31.

Kansas, depending on the size of the family, their assets and wealth, and sometimes the willingness (or lack thereof) of the wife, often quite happy back home in New England, to head for Kansas. Ropes for example lasted only six months before returning to New England. Having experienced sickness and intense fighting between the antislavery emigrants to Kansas and their Missouri neighbors, Ropes became homesick and worried. While many liked the idea of populating Kansas to prevent slavery, and also saw the opportunity for business and wealth, arriving in Kansas was a rude awakening to many. They were not prepared adequately for the heat, sun, and dugout houses, and later disease and lack of food or enterprise.

Many large groups of emigrants made the journey only to splinter after reaching St. Louis. While they enjoyed camaraderie with other emigrants on the trip to Kansas, those who chose to homestead in more remote areas found themselves quite lonely and isolated. The immense amount of work that it took a wife and mother while separated from her support structure could take a serious toll, as Mrs. Edward Buffum, originally from Salem Massachusetts writes from the Lawrence area in 1855:

I have something of a family, eight in number, which is rather more than I care about, and more than I can take care of in this hot weather, we have but one room, in which we all eat, drink, and sleep, and that is not as large as your kitchen...up on the farm it will be better I hope.

Mrs. Buffum, like many of her contemporaries, longed for home,

And now dear sisters, good-bye; you cannot remember me as I do you, for you are in your pleasant homes, and I am a stranger in a strange land, while everything around you and your distant home wears a charm.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁸ Mrs. Edward Buffum, *Salem Gazette*, June 5, 1855. v. IV, pp.140-141

Disillusionment with Kansas occurred in many families, and some who could simply packed up and went back East. Others stuck it out through the early difficulties in dugout houses until larger homes could be built on family farms and larger tracts of land. While some returned home because of homesickness, others became gravely ill and died in Kansas. A severe drought in Kansas in the winter of 1854 and spring of 1855 caused further problems, and many of these early emigrant parties arrived in Kansas to find conditions quite different that they had thought had been promised. Often, the amenities that they had been promised left something to be desired. A lack of trees causes a problem in many areas, as well as a lack of mills to treat what timber could be obtained. Those who today find Lawrence a leafy green tree-lined area would see then only a very few native trees not entirely suited to homebuilding. Lawrence's trees of today were planted by those early inhabitants in the hope of someday enjoying vegetation similar to their native New England region.⁵⁹

Many emigrants turned around and immediately went home. Some were dismayed at how apparent the hostility was between the anti and pro slavery factions. Hannah Anderson Ropes writes,

Quite a number are returning when I go. As yet there is no prospect of peace here. We have to thanks this pitiless winter for our safety thus far. Nobody goes to bed here without some preparation for an attack before morning. You at home can't get the whole measure of a 'border ruffian' quite yet, and those who go on east, and preach smooth things, are land speculators who will make a fortune here. It was well I came out here for my stay has been of use to very many; and I leave loaded with the blessing of many who were 'ready to perish'.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Louise Barry, "The New England Emigrant Aid Company Parties of 1855" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 12, no.3 (Aug 1943): 227.

⁶⁰ Hannah Anderson Ropes. In Charles L Chandler's, "Two Letters From Kansas" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11, no.1 (June 1942): 79.

A real threat to life and home was enough to send many back to New England, while others stayed to fight. As more Free-State settlers came to Kansas, through the Emigrant Aid Company or on their own, the proslavery Missourians also came across state lines to Kansas. Seemingly set on doing what damage they could to discourage emigration, many small 'border wars' occurred, widely differing in severity and outcome. Mail was also a problem, as ruffians would steal both incoming and outgoing correspondence to prevent organization of emigration. Becoming a serious problem, this communication disruption did damage to business, travel and morale. In 1856, a proslavery legislature was the official governing body of Kansas Territory. Free-State Kansans, outraged by such government, set up their own Free-State legislature in opposition. Tensions grew until a Douglass County Sheriff was shot in Lawrence while trying to arrest a free-state citizen. The federal marshal in the area declared the city of Lawrence as rebellious and interfering, and a territorial grand jury found that the Free State hotel was actually built as a fort, a baseless accusation. On May 21, 1856, a group of over 750 proslavery supporters entered and sacked Lawrence, destroyed the two printing presses in town, and after many unsuccessful efforts with cannonballs and gunpowder resorted to burning the hotel to the ground. Remarkably, only one person was killed during the sack of Lawrence, a proslavery man who died after being hit with falling masonry.

This real violence was not the first or last to infiltrate the Lawrence area. Settlers slept close to guns and came up with elaborate systems of notifying neighbors if trouble was on the way. Although those living in town or close to it might be forewarned when

trouble was coming, more rural families heard bits and pieces of rumors and lived with a certain measure of apprehension. Chestina Bowker Allen, who came to Kansas with the Emigrant Aid Society in 1854, and whose family was living quite a distance from Lawrence, writes in her journal on May 31, 10 days after the sack of Lawrence,

Heard that the hotel at Lawrence had been blown up by the proslaveryites, the printing presses were destroyed, the inhabitants made to leave the place, money and goods stolen, that a man who was moving into the ter[ritory] was robbed of \$400, and his provisions taken O! President Pierce of the Granite State Wo!Wo!Wo! be unto thee.⁶¹

Allen and her family are a perfect example of rural settlers who while are aware and part of the Free-State movement are also cut off from the real violence of it through their distance from the center of the fighting. While the Free State cause was real and present, the serious illness of children with cholera was far more important, as was making sure that they would have enough for themselves and their livestock through the winter. Fighting did not take place only in Lawrence, as skirmishes close to the border were frequent as one side would cross the state line to attack and then pull back into their own territory.

For those women who stuck out the journey and the fighting, loneliness soon set in for many, especially those used to an extended family network. Many young women, hardly past their teenage years, ventured into Kansas Territory with husbands to start new adventures, only to realize that the amount of work and time required to start a life from scratch was not as romantic as they had imagined. While always busy, the women found different ways to fill the lonely times, often writing letters back home. Sarah Wilmarth came to Kansas Territory with her father, stepmother and step brother

⁶¹ Glenda Riley. "The Diary of Chestina Bowker Allen," *Kansas History* 9, no.2 (1986): 92.

in late 1855. Her father opened what was to become a successful store, and Sarah soon met her future husband, Edward, who after several different jobs would settle into farming. While Sarah was luckier than some to have family in Kansas territory, it is evident from her letters back home that she plaintively missed her mother. She writes, "My Own Dear Mother, ...I must confess that always having been accustomed to near neighbors & friends I did sometimes feel a little lonely."⁶² It was difficult for Sarah not to compare her new life to her old, and her letters are also filled with statements such as, "-When I look back sometimes to the days at the East, and think of how I used to sometime to complain of 'want of room'-that I then almost had a palace."⁶³

The New England Emigrant Aid Company, aside from conflict with border ruffians, had many problems throughout the years. While numbers started strong, with emigrant parties numbering close to two hundred, subsequent parties dropped in enrollment, for several reasons. The main reason, mentioned earlier, was drought. The settlers who did arrive in Kansas were worried about the lack of water, no working timber mills, and fewer trees than they had hoped. Some undoubtedly wrote letters home warning other family members that all was not well in Kansas Territory, and certainly countless other potential settlers were persuaded other areas would be better. Transportation costs rose substantially, with drought preventing boats from traveling as far as fast on the Missouri river. The potential for violence also dissuaded many with families, and encouraged others. In 1855, approximately 900 emigrants made the journey to Kansas territory. It is unknown what percentage of them actually stayed, but

⁶² John M. Peterson, ed. "More Letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch, 1855-1863" *Kansas History* 20, no.1 (Spring, 1997): 77.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 71.

it is probably safe to say a good many returned home.⁶⁴ The Company continued to send smaller parties to Kansas through 1858.

As emigrants in Kansas continued to battle against the pro-slavery Missourians, the New England Emigrant Aid Company in Boston was struggling to fight off bankruptcy. Company expenditures were continuing to grow while not all of the stock subscribed for had been paid. Amos Lawrence, who had been treasurer of the Company, resigned, after having to pay \$6,000 from his own pocket to cover Company bills and expenses in Kansas. The Company in Boston had trouble selling stock in a company that was unlikely to turn a profit anytime soon, and founders began to circulate the ideas that organizations and those with philanthropic and patriotic aims should purchase stock not as an investment but as a duty, and most were not buying it.⁶⁵ Alarm bells began to go off when a lecture circuit in the East that was expected to bring large investors only netted \$3,000. Some blamed Eli Thayer for what was seen as a failing Company. Thayer took up the gauntlet, and invited the Company to hire him as a full time stock subscription agent, and for a time the Company returned to solvency, with Thayer able to bring in more than \$50,000.⁶⁶

The Free State Hotel was attacked and burned by ruffians in 1855. In the East, support for the company grew quickly. Emigrant Aid societies and Kansas Relief societies cropped up all over that northern United States. The New England Emigrant Aid Company began to stop their saw-mill funding, favoring the goods of war instead,

⁶⁴ Louise Barry, "The New England Emigrant Aid Company Parties of 1855" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 12, no.3 (Aug 1943): 228.

⁶⁵ Horace Andrews, Jr., "Eli Thayer and the New England Emigrant Aid Company." *The New England Quarterly* 35, vo.4 (Dec. 1962): 506.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 507.

and sent clothes and necessities that the settlers needed to keep themselves alive through the winter. While fighting would eventually continue into the Civil War, with the rejection of the Lecompton constitution in January 1858, Kansas was returned to a close semblance of law and order. The Emigrant Aid Company saw the battle for Kansas as won, and began to translate religious anti-slavery zeal into business fulfillment. Crop failure and deflation in land prices largely ended their hopes for speculative success. The depression in Kansas lasted until 1860, and ultimately the Aid Company was forced to sell out. The entire property of the Company, valued at roughly \$150,000 was sold at auction for \$16,500.⁶⁷

While disappointed in its lack of financial success, Thayer and other board members easily found a way to save face. After all, while they might have taken huge financial losses, they claimed to have won the Kansas struggle, and Thayer wrote, “No man, unless he ignorant of the facts in the Kansas struggle, or completely blinded by malice or envy, will ever attempt to defraud The Emigrant Aid Company of the glory of having saved Kansas by defeating the slave power in a great and decisive contest.”⁶⁸

Eventually those who remained in Kansas Territory began to see it as home, and their cause justly served as Kansas became a free state in 1861. The success of the New England Emigrant Aid Company is debatable. As Historian Louise Barry points out, “One of the fallacies of history ... is the belief that Kansas in the early territorial period was populated almost entirely by settlers from New England.”⁶⁹ Debate remains

⁶⁷ Ibid., 511.

⁶⁸ Eli Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company* (Worcester, Mass: Rice Publishing, 1887), 249.

⁶⁹ Louise Barry, “The New England Emigrant Aid Company Parties of 1855,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 12, no.3 (Aug 1943): 228.

today as to the success or lack thereof of the aid company and over the total number of New Englander's brought to Kansas by the company, but a safe estimate would be 2500. While some scholars have said that the influence from New England was scant at best, it is probably a disservice not to recognize the contributions of the Emigrant Aid Company. Largely through their propaganda, they did educate a large portion of the northeastern United States about the Kansas problem, and shed light on an issue that might have ended differently if kept in the dark. While they did not make a fortune in Kansas as many of the board members would have liked to, it seems that many, like Thayer, did truly believe in the fight, and considered a free Kansas an ultimate success. Thayer continued his fight to Virginia, where the onset of the Civil War was to destroy the free labor colony he set up. It seems a trend in scholarship in the past decades to question the importance and historical significance of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, and many have dismissed it as an unimportant part of the Kansas struggle. Perhaps reexamination is beginning to turn the tide, though. While the Company itself over inflated its importance and accomplishments, there is no doubt that the movement did have an effect on the minds of Americans, as those making the trip to Kansas wrote back to family and newspapers passing the stories of their trials and tribulations on. And while many might have gone to Kansas simply as part of the western push for more land and opportunity, that chose to come into the less-than-stable Lawrence area between 1854 and 1856 had decidedly strong views about what Kansas should become, and their aims and goals should count for more as they are those that were actually there.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibid., 229.

Women who accompanied men to Kansas and joined their husbands and fathers must have felt a sense of excitement on the journey there, on to different things, and maybe a measure more of freedom that Northern society might have encouraged. Maybe freedom is the wrong word, however, as women did not have any more rights in Kansas than anywhere else. Moving to Kansas did allow them to feel as though they were helping a cause they believed in, and without the vote, it was the strongest statement they could make. Upon arriving in Kansas, many probably would gladly have traded that statement for the comforts of home. The isolation and loneliness was difficult to say the least. Women's journal and letter writing often shed light into the emotion and physiological difficulties that pioneers faced that may not be so evident in the writings of men. Organizations such as the Emigrant Aid Company brought hundreds of women to Kansas, and while the Company's ultimate success is debatable, these women undoubtedly felt as though their hard work and sacrifice spoke to their character.

CHAPTER FOUR

MISSOURI WOMEN

Free-State settlers who came to Kansas with the Emigrant Aid Company were far from its only inhabitants. Men, women, and children from Missouri also came to Kansas for various reasons, primarily to hold land claims for the proslavery interests. While the most well known of these Missourians were the 'border ruffians,' those armed bands of Missouri men who crossed the border largely to subvert and steal from the free state settlers, these men were far from the only Missourians in Kansas. Women also came to Kansas from Missouri, though in lesser numbers. While the majority of Missourians did support slavery as an institution in theory, it did not affect their everyday lives, as an elite few families owned slaves, and the slaves in western Missouri were few and far between within the average family.

To understand the opposing side the Missouri settlers represented, several things must be examined. It is important to recall the history of Missouri and slavery, the lifestyle and goals of the average Missouri family, what brought Missouri settlers to Kansas, and what role women had in these situations. It is also necessary to look at the lives of Missouri women both in Missouri and Kansas. By examining specific incidents from the proslavery female point of view it will become clear that few of these Missouri people were the monsters that Free-State propaganda portrayed. Specifically, the women, whether Free State or proslavery, dealt with the same everyday concerns and issues, namely their families survival and safety. Missouri and Kansas women faced some of the same limitations and social conditions of their time, not just their location.

While women had limited roles in society, the years leading up to, and including the Civil War can be seen as “a liberating turning point for the women of the United States, both North and South.”⁷¹ Although the Second Great Awakening had brought a newly revived religiosity to the country, as the nation pushed toward industrialization, women’s roles would soon be less definable, especially those who were non-elite. Women from both sides of the slavery question traveling to Kansas managed to challenge their traditional roles while still maintaining acceptable nineteenth-century, middle class gender distinctions.

Although there are many more accounts from Free-State women, proslavery women were also present and offer different insight. These women’s experiences foreshadow those of the women left at home by the Civil War, in that they often had to fend for themselves until their husbands returned. Historian LeAnn Whites reminds us not to dismiss Missouri women, however: “The assumption that women’s contributions to the social order were of secondary importance, through their “influence” upon men, helps to explain the almost total exclusion of women from the state’s history, and from history more broadly at this stage of its development.”⁷² It is important to remember that just because Missouri women are largely not featured in most histories of the state does not mean that they were not playing an active role in politics and their own lives.

The history of the state of Missouri might offer insight into the later struggle for Kansas. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, as the United States grew and added territory a debate emerged. As each new state joined the Union, would it be a

⁷¹ Nina Silber. *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*. Edited by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber. (New York: Oxford Press, 2006), 7.

⁷² LeeAnn Whites. *Women in Missouri History: In Search of Power and Influence*. Edited by LeeAnn Whites, Mary C. Neth and Gary R. Kremer. (Columbia: University of Missouri, 2004), 4.

slave state or a free state? Adding to the problem was the American political party system at the time, which was in a state of transition. When it came time for Missouri to join the Union, heated debate and hatred accompanied the process, as slavery was openly discussed on the floor of Congress, as well as in churches, town hall meetings, and social outings. Historian Robert Pierce Forbes even believes that it was at this point that many began to realize that the fight for or against slavery might lead to eventual war.⁷³ The controversy in Missouri would eventually be solved to some satisfaction by the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The Missouri Compromise admitted Missouri to the Union as a slave state, but with the condition that the latitude of Missouri's southern border, 36'30' would be the northern limit of future slave states that might also be created out of the old Louisiana Territory. Maine was admitted as a free state to balance the power between the two sides of the issue. Ultimately the fight for Kansas would challenge the compromise, and the Civil War would only later decide the question, but Missouri's heritage as a Southern slave state is important background to the struggle for Kansas.

The average Missourian did not own slaves, and yet as slavery was part of Southern heritage and tradition, the majority of non-slave owning Missourians still supported it as an institution. These non slave-holding Missourians were still part of a slave-holding society, and for economic as well as cultural reasons, strongly supported an institution that affected their day to day lives very little. They maintained that the Constitution allowed slavery, and resented the extension of the federal government into state and territorial matters. The majority of western Missourians who did own slaves used them largely as domestic labor, having a single slave to help with housework and

⁷³ Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise And Its Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007), 5.

child rearing. Large plantations with slaves were not common in western Missouri. Missourians who did own slaves, however, had invested financially in slavery and saw the fight over slavery as a more concrete thing than many opponents. Forbes makes the point, "While antislavery Americans were advocating for abstract ideals, slaveholders defended their immediate and personal interests. There was nothing abstract or theoretical about their struggle."⁷⁴

It was also the South as a whole that supported the growth of slavery into new territories. While the majority of the nation's slaves at the time of the Missouri Compromise were living in Virginia, the labor was beginning to outweigh the land, and speculative Southern plantation owners, their capital invested mostly in slaves, began to look to the southwest for additional fertile lands and places to relocate or sell 'surplus' slaves. The South had a true and present economic interest in slavery and its continuance as an institution. Many southerners saw slavery as an integral part of southern growth and economic prosperity, and the South was united in a way that it would take the north many more years to achieve.⁷⁵

While the Northern antislavery movements were fractured and seemed endlessly at odds with one another over ideology and religious tensions, the South was largely united in their support of slavery, whether it be for practical, religious, racist or economic reasons. While the support for slavery was widespread in the South, southerners did not have an ideology to support slavery aside from simple self interest.⁷⁶ The Missouri Compromise gave them time to craft an ideology for the first time. The creation of such

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

'slave ideology' gave voice, and however false, meaning to the proslavery fight. As these ideals were created, so began the propaganda to accompany slavery that gave a voice to the non slave owners who still identified themselves as Southerners.

Ultimately, the battle for Kansas was reduced to the same reoccurring theme for both Free State settlers and Missourians: economic interest. Land speculation was a huge business as Kansas Territory was opened with the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Missourians saw Kansas as a natural extension of their state, and assumed that it would enter the Union as a slave-holding neighbor and ally. The Free-State faction who insisted that slavery had no place in Kansas did not agree.

The tensions did not come to a head until the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The act repealed the Missouri Compromise, and effectively reopened the western United States to the slavery question. The Act opened the land west of the Mississippi to settlement and divided it into two territories, Kansas and Nebraska. Senator Stephen Douglas, who proposed the act, argued for popular sovereignty, which would allow the settlers of the territories to vote to allow or disallow slavery. Opponents of slavery were aghast, as this legislation directly contradicted the previous Missouri Compromise, which would have made both Kansas and Nebraska slave free. Southerners likely saw the Kansas-Nebraska act as an opportunity to extend slavery into previously unavailable places. As immigration to the new Kansas territory began, Missourians grew disturbed by what they saw as an influx of Northerners who were likely to be a threat. While the largest population of Kansas settlers came from Ohio, Michigan and the Northeast, the newspaper attention given to the New England Emigrant Aid Society, and the society's propaganda drive to encourage emigration undoubtedly scared some

Missourians, who worried that the influx of abolitionist settlers would shift the power of the region and take away from their rights as southerners and slave holders.⁷⁷

As the New England Emigrant Aid Company began to bring both antislavery propaganda and settlers to Kansas territory, the people and leadership of western Missouri grew worried. Missourians saw Kansas as a gateway to the southwest, and wished to push slavery west. The Emigrant Aid Company posed an organized threat to their goals. These people were not simply individual families coming to Kansas to try their luck, but groups supported by a larger institution with abolition as a goal. Missourians grew concerned, first because they saw much of the Emigrant Aid Company's message as pure propaganda for financial gain, and second, because organized emigration into Kansas Territory would be much more difficult for them even with their closer proximity.⁷⁸

There were several problems on the road to colonizing Kansas Territory for Missourians. They were concerned that bringing slaves into the territory with them might be problematic were they to emigrate. While they assumed until the question was decided legally that slave holders' rights in Missouri would be maintained, there was no slave code to protect them in Kansas, and did not think it would be prudent to take slaves into such a hot bed of abolition. Though some emigrants did, most others saw it as dangerous. Further, would plantation crops of the South succeed in Kansas and the West? Would the slave system still be profitable under the western agricultural system? And finally, most of the large Missouri plantations were in the southeast region of

⁷⁷ Ibid., 7-10.

⁷⁸ James Malin, "The Proslavery Background of the Kansas Struggle," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10 no. 3 (1923): 292-293.

Missouri, away from the border. To uproot these entire plantations and move them to place that slavery was not an assured right in the future was a large gamble at best.⁷⁹

Proslavery leadership in Missouri took these problems seriously, and with the encroachment of the Emigrant Aid Company growing every month, looked for practical ways to assure slaveholders rights in Kansas. There were strong personalities associated with the proslavery struggle, including the probably best known, Daniel Atchison. Atchison, originally from Kentucky, was a lawyer that had settled in Missouri, with eyes towards politics. In 1843, he was appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill a vacancy left by the death of another Missouri senator. Reelected in 1844, Atchison became popular in the Senate, and pushed for both territorial expansion and maintaining slavery as an American institution. Atchison had been an integral part of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and an advocate of popular sovereignty. He assumed that Kansas would be settled by Missourians, and Nebraska would go to the Free State factions. He and his supporters also assumed that settlement would come largely from surrounding territories and were dismayed when the Emigrant Aid Society began their fervent campaigns in the northeast, encouraging Kansas emigration. As discussed in the previous section, not nearly as many settlers came via Emigrant Aid societies as they would have liked Missourians to believe. The propaganda campaign they began, though, as well as the real settlers that they did bring from the east, disturbed and angered Missourians like Atchison, who were having a much more difficult time encouraging Missourians to emigrate to Kansas. While the South liked the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

idea of Kansas becoming a slave state peopled by southerners, not nearly enough proslavery emigrants came to Kansas to permanently make this a reality.⁸⁰

Atchison and his followers began to organize, believing it tantamount to having any success in the region. These men understood that if they were to hold any lasting impression or power in Kansas, that they must take certain economically strategic positions to ensure control. They planned to occupy the most desirable tracts of land, and limit access to water and lumber. The next step was to figure out a way of capturing the territorial government and having it devise a slave code that would make emigration easier and more likely for slave-owning Missourians. They believed that if a slave code and economic power was in their hands, they could then begin their own full fledged campaign to bring proslavery emigrants to Kansas. Interestingly enough, these proslavery leaders realized from the onset that “energetic measures” might be necessary to accomplish their goals, but early on they did not think that violence and civil war were going to be part of the equation.⁸¹ If the proslavery faction wanted to first seize economic power, they would need people to back it up. While Kansas had a lot of prairie land available, the ideal regions were those that had both water and timber, important and lacking in much of Kansas, and concentrated largely in the northeastern part of the state.

Beginning in the summer of 1854, many Missourians came to these areas to stake their claims, not really to permanently settle their families there, but to hold these strategic locations against Free State settlement until they could persuade proslavery

⁸⁰Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 5.

⁸¹James Malin, “The Proslavery Background of the Kansas Struggle,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10 no. 3 (1923): 294

settlers to come settle the area. Their wives and children stayed in Missouri, some emigrating once makeshift living quarters were arranged. Many Missouri men were hesitant to move their families to such an uncertain place, preferring to wait until some headway had been made, and their claims were authorized. This squatting led to eventual problems, as many Free-State settlers came into the region to find all of the most desirable locals taken, not by families that intended to stay, but by squatters who were only holding someone else's place in line.⁸² Missourians were tough, and held their ground.

There were Southerners who even in the face of probable defeat were willing to try to urge Kansas towards slavery. By the end of 1855, it was becoming evident that Missourians alone would not be able to prevent a free Kansas, and some began looking toward the South for support and help. Jefferson Buford, an Alabama Lawyer called for emigration from the South to Kansas in 1855 and to anyone who agreed to go to Kansas he guaranteed transportation, forty acres of quality land and support for one year. He wrote in an advertisement that was published throughout the South, "I wish to raise three hundred industrious, sober, discreet, reliable men capable of bearing arms, not prone to use them wickedly or unnecessarily, but willing to protect their sections in every real emergency."⁸³ Donating \$20,000 of his own money, he asked for contributions, promising for every fifty dollars, one settler would be sent to Kansas. Finding financial support proved problematic, though, and the majority of his plan was funded from his own pocket, even selling forty acres to fund the project.

⁸² Ibid, 295

⁸³ Jefferson Buford, quoted by Walter L. Fleming, *The Buford Expedition to Kansas* (Montgomery: Alabama Historical Society, 1904), 169.

By April, 1856 he managed to gather 400 men to emigrate to Kansas, the majority of whom were from Alabama and South Carolina. He did not invite women to join, as this was at best a pseudo-military operation, and the Southern ideal of manhood precluded putting women in danger. While they might not have courted violence, they knew it was not out of the realm of possibility. Women, in the traditional role of the time, stayed at home taking care of their families, and sometimes making sure that family farms and businesses continued to function in their husbands' absence. The Southern ideal for womanhood was more rigid and domestic. As the men traveled they carried banners reading "The Supremacy of the White Race" and "Kansas, the Outpost."

After settling in Kansas, many of Buford's men joined the territorial militia that had been called upon by the proslavery governor of the territorial legislature. Buford soon became disillusioned, however, when after joining the proslavery faction they were called upon to help sack Lawrence, which Buford disagreed with, arguing that he did not come to Kansas to help destroy property, and left the territory for Washington, D.C. to solicit aid. When he returned to Kansas, he was disappointed to find many of his men had returned home, while others had enlisted, and even a few had become Free-State supporters. Disappointed and broken, Buford returned to Alabama, having suffered great financial loss.⁸⁴

It was probably inevitable that violence occurred, as tensions ran high on both sides of the Missouri line. The situation came to a head as it came time for Kansas Territory to hold its first elections. The first main issue became who was allowed to vote. Few people had built actual settlements, many people had only been in Kansas a matter of days, and the law offered little guidance. Illegal voting ran rampant on both

⁸⁴ Walter L. Fleming, *The Buford Expedition to Kansas* (Montgomery: Alabama Historical Society, 1904), 179-185.

sides, and tensions mounted. There has been significant debate over how much vote tampering actually happened, and how much it affected the outcome of the elections. Ultimately, a proslavery man was elected to congress to represent Kansas. The point is that the debate at the time only furthered the gap between the two sides, and edged them ever closer to physical confrontation. In the upcoming territorial government elections, once again the proslavery forces were victorious, again among charges of illegal voting and vote tampering. A slave code was soon passed, and Missourians were pleased with their success, which had come largely without violence thus far. The proslavery faction finally had the assurances that they needed to pass on to the potential Southern settlers. Yes, their slaves and slave owning rights would be safe with them if they emigrated to Kansas. This began a competition of sorts between the sides to bring as many emigrants as possible to Kansas. It was at the height of this competition that something occurred that took the proslavery leaders by surprise.⁸⁵

In August, 1855, Free Soil leaders and supporters met in Lawrence to discuss possible solutions to the proslavery territorial government. Though a bit of a stretch, they likened themselves to the earliest of revolutionary patriots, and announced the illegality of the territorial government and began to elect their own delegates and craft their own constitution. The official Free State Party was created, “united by its opposition to non-resident voting, its belief that Kansas should be a free state, and its conviction that the ‘crisis’ obliged them to save ‘the guarantees of Republican

⁸⁵ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 70-80.

institutions by the Constitution.”⁸⁶ By forming their own extralegal government, the Free State supporters furthered the tension between the two factions.

Escalation of tension would soon bring more border warfare. Arguments over a particularly fertile and treed area just south of the Wakarusa River led to battle, which later as a propaganda tool was labeled the ‘Wakarusa War’ to lend importance to the battle over Kansas. In November of 1855, a Free-State settler was shot and killed by a proslavery settler, in a dispute over the settlement by the Wakarusa that had been claimed early by Free State men from Indiana, and later claim-jumped by proslavery Missourians. While some of the claims taken by proslavery men were done under the title of legality, as the original Free State claimants had forfeited their right by their continued absence, other claims were seized violently. The violence soon escalated, and in the town of Palmyra, residents were told by a band of proslavery Missourians to leave. They largely resisted, but isolated violence by from both sides was carried out. By December, tensions had grown even further, and a proslavery force of 1500 men began to plan to lay siege to Lawrence. These men, under their leader Samuel J. Jones, who was the sheriff of Douglas County, Kansas, had broken into the United States arsenal at Liberty, Missouri, and had stolen ammunition and weapons. They argued that they had to defend themselves against the ‘militia from Kansas Territory,’ which did not exist, at least not in any formal way.⁸⁷ The Missouri men came to the Free-State headquarters of Lawrence, where Free-State settlers had erected barricades and were assembling defensive placements. Little happened. In reality, the Wakarusa

⁸⁶Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 72.

⁸⁷ William Phillips, *The Conquest of Kansas, By Missouri and Her Allies* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Co., 1856), 163.

War was a weeklong standoff in which only one casualty occurred: Thomas Barber, a Free-State supporter who was murdered trying to return to his homestead. Reprisal was threatened, and for a while it seemed that it might turn to violent war. Territorial Governor Wilson Shannon quickly came to Lawrence, however, where he brokered a peace treaty bringing an end to the week long 'war.' The skirmishes were far from over though.⁸⁸

These incidents took a toll on the Missouri women who came with their families to support the proslavery cause. These women were often left home alone in Kansas to guard property and claims, and found themselves alone and scared. An unnamed proslavery woman gives her written account of the looting of her home:

By request of Sheraf Tate I will try to give the discriptions of the band of robbers that robed this house to the best of my knowledg and thier conduct while here... They ordered Mr Brown to surrender which he refewsed to do untill we all saw he was over powered and then we all prevailed on him to surrender which he did. They was vowing they woud burn the house over our heads and not one should escape he then opened the door they ran in taking his arms and then they sent him in the east room where all the family was garded they then plundered the house taking all the cloathing and Blankets guns Amunitions and Money they could find and dressed their selves in unkle Briscoe Davis close and burnt thiers in the house...⁸⁹

Women on both sides of the issue often faced the same concerns: The care of their children, the defense of their homes when their husbands or fathers were away, and the safety of their selves and property. Women in Missouri, however, faced unique problems.

⁸⁸ John McCool, The Making Of A Martyr, [KansasHistoryOnline](http://www.kansashistoryonline.org/ksh/articlepage.asp?artid), ed. Henry J. Fortunato, [1/5/2006], Hall Center for the Humanities. <http://www.kansashistoryonline.org/ksh/articlepage.asp?artid> (Accessed September 2,2008)

⁸⁹ Unnamed proslavery women. (Sister of Briscoe Davis), 1856. Kansas Historical Society Online. [9-01-08] Item Number: 3554Call Number: William I. R. Blackman Coll. #278 Box 1 Folder 2
KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID:3554. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/3554> (Accessed September 2, 2008)

Missouri was a gateway to the West, and those headed to Kansas and other areas passed through. Having a positive impact on the economic conditions of Missouri, these travelers pumped money into the economy. As the conditions in Kansas worsened, and more men from Missouri and other parts of the South left for Kansas Territory, many women were left at home in Missouri. Often not hearing from their husbands for months at a time, these women at first felt an independence, as some became the head of their households, with increased responsibility and control. As their husbands' absences began to lengthen, that independence often changed to loss. They raised children, hoping that the youngest ones would remember their fathers and not be frightened when they returned. Worrying about their husbands' safety, and also worried what they would do if something did happen, and their husbands did not return. Financial problems also caused them great concern, wondering if they would have enough funds to last until the return of their husbands, or if they would have to ask their parents for support. The freedom they enjoyed slowly wicked away, as they "soon realized that life in limbo was only another form of bondage."⁹⁰ The worst possible case was when their husbands did not return from Kansas, dying more likely from sickness than violence. In this case, these women became a rallying cry for the pro-slavery cause. Their loss encouraged other Missouri men to go to Kansas, to fight for the slave-owning rights and the state rights they believed were God given and also for the families left in Missouri.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Carla Waal. *Hardship and Hope: Missouri Women Writing About Their Lives, 1820-1920*. Edited by Carla Waal and Barbara Oliver Korner. (Columbia:University of Missouri Press, 1997), 48.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

Discussed previously, the sack of Lawrence in the summer of 1856 brought the tension to its boiling point. The admittance of Kansas as a free state was beginning to look likely, and those in Washington were worried that Kansas Territory would soon escalate into Civil War, taking the rest of the country with it. While the hotel was burned and property destroyed, no one was killed in battle, and rumors of all kinds ran rampant, but were largely baseless. While the Free State party charged Atchison and other proslavery leaders with inciting violence, Atchison later argued, "I spoke in the interest of peace-exerting myself to check, not to excite, outrage. It was not my wish that the hotel should be destroyed."⁹² Historian James Malin argues that this was the end point for the future of the proslavery party. While the proslavery men had some success, the cost of their limited success was too great. The emigration movements from both the North and South were waning and not likely to continue as Kansas and the country came closer to war. Mary Darrah, whose family emigrated to Kansas from Missouri, became scared:

The border ruffian war started in 1856, and the community which we lived was settled by mostly a pro-slavery element. On account of the strife many of them left their new homes and went back to Missouri. Those were heart rending days for my young mother. Many times my mother answered the door when, if my father had gone, he would have been instantly shot down.⁹³

Women who had accompanied their families to Kansas from Missouri largely faced the same problems as women from antislavery factions did. They feared for the safety of

⁹² James Malin, "The Proslavery Background of the Kansas Struggle," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10 no. 3 (1923): 304.

⁹³ Mary Darrah, quoted in Joanna L. Stratton, *Pioneer Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 235.

their husbands, brothers and sons, while trying to maintain life in a new situation where they were often less than welcomed, depending upon where they settled.

In response to the sack of Lawrence, and the earlier destruction of his homestead by proslavery men, both of which had been rather bloodless, John Brown and a group of abolitionist settlers (mostly his sons) visited several homesteads of proslavery men and attacked and killed five pro-slavery settlers with broadswords and guns in what was named the Pottawatomie Massacre. Citing the sack of Lawrence, John Brown was an ardent supporter of a free Kansas who believed action, and therefore violence were required to abolish slavery. Historians seem rather divided on John Brown, but it is after these attacks that the civil war in Kansas is said to have truly begun, and whether you believe John Brown to be a hero or a terrorist, it is possible to find supporting opinions.⁹⁴

It is interesting that one of the most violent incidents of the Bleeding Kansas period came two years after the sack of Lawrence and the Pottawatomie massacre. The territorial government was now officially in the control of Free Staters, and with the end of the proslavery Lecompton Constitution, it was no longer possible for Kansas to emerge as a slave state. Guerilla warfare became increasingly prevalent and radical. After John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, many in the South feared slave revolts, and both sides of the slavery issue in Kansas sought redress from perceived wrongs. As Nicole Etcheson, a Kansas historian writes, "Kansas taught many Kansans violence and made its use respectable."⁹⁵ While the Free State territorial government came out

⁹⁴ Nicole Etcheson. *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004) 190-191.

against violence, both Free-Staters and proslavery men alike were using violence in guerilla type attacks on each other. Civil War would soon break out elsewhere, and in Kansas, violence and battle was already prevalent. The Free-State guerillas were organized into several bands, one of which was led by James Montgomery, who views of slavery had been recently radicalized by the Kansas Civil War beginning to break out. His family had been burned out of their homestead in a previous year by proslavery men, and Montgomery had formed his own group of men to evict proslavery men from their homesteads, stealing horses and justifying violence. In perhaps one of the most interesting records written by women at the time, a woman named Sene Campbell writes to James Montgomery. A proslavery supporter from Missouri living in Kansas, she is angry with him at his alleged murder of her husband, and threatens him directly in a letter, a most unusual thing to do at the time:

Listen to me. Today I heard you said in a speech a few days since, that you were not sorry you had killed John Little, that he was not killed to soon. Can you before God say so? O, the anguish you have caused – He was one of the noblest men ever created, brave and true to his country and word. You can't prove he ever injured an innocent person. – A few days more and we were to of been married then go south to trouble you no more. But through your influence he was killed, sent to another world without even time to pray or say good bye to his friends. But thanks to God if you did kill his body you can't touch his soul, no, no it is in the spiritland, now, the cry of "the Osages are coming" can awake him no more, for he now quietly sleeps in our little grave yard, But remember this, I am a girl but I can fire a pistol and if ever the time comes I will send some of you to the place where thers Weeping and knashing of teeth," you a minister of God, you mean a minister of the devil and a very superior one too. I have no more to say this time & you and your imps please accept the sincere regards for your future repentance of .⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 191.

⁹⁶ Letter from Sene Campbell to James Montgomery, 1859. Kansas Historical Society Online. Item Number: 90110 Call Number: James Montgomery Coll. #446 Folder 2. KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 90110. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/90110> (Accessed September 1, 2008)

It is remarkable that this letter remains, and offers us insight into the rage that many women must have felt on the proslavery side, helpless and angry as Sene's letter above shows, and anger often focused solely on the other side, which must have been easier than the situation of which they could do little. The Missouri women that did accompany their husbands to Kansas were every bit as ardent about the proslavery cause.

Although she blames James Montgomery, a leader of a Free-State band of men, her words are of grief, and the sacrifices she made to come to Kansas are suddenly in vain. To return to Missouri after the fight for slavery had been lost was one thing, but to lose your husband to a cause that would prove ultimately fruitless seemed insulting.

United States troops began chasing these bands of men, James Montgomery and his proslavery counterparts, and in 1857 clashed with a Free-State party who fired into the U.S. troops, killing one and wounding several more. While limited U.S. troops continued the chases, violence continued between the antislavery and proslavery factions. For every action there seemed to be retaliation, and in 1858, what would become known as the Marais des Cygnes Massacre occurred.⁹⁷ Charles Hamilton, leader of a proslavery band of men, sought retaliation after many of his proslavery men had been driven out of Kansas by Free-State guerillas. These men, who had lost property and land claim rights, were more than ready to avenge their losses. In May, speaking before a group of proslavery men, Hamilton called for a war of extermination. While some of his own men believed that this was going too far, others supported the idea, and soon an armed band of about twenty five were riding to Kansas.

⁹⁷Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 191.

Approaching a trading post, they captured one prisoner, and upon entering town took several others captive. One of the men captured owned a store, which was robbed by the Missouri men as well. Some of the prisoners were released while still in town, but the others were forced to march out of town to the northeast. Hamilton continued gathering men, specifically those that he believed were part of Montgomery's Free-State band, but mistakenly took men who had no part in any guerillas activities. The men were made to march until they reached a place known as Priestly Mound, an elevated area northeast of town. Hamilton and his men then attempted to take Eli Snyder, a blacksmith in Priestly Mound who chose to fight. Snyder fired his shotgun at Hamilton, missing the man but hitting his horse in the neck. Snyder continued firing upon Hamilton's men, and with the help of his son was able to force Hamilton back with his men, where they gave up on Snyder and continued to march their prisoners. The prisoners were forced into a ravine and ordered to line up. Hamilton instructed his men to 'present arms' meaning point their weapons at the prisoners, and while some of his men complied, several did not, and Hamilton grew agitated, swearing and repeating his orders. One of Hamilton's men left, wanting no part of any 'execution.' Hamilton then pulled out his own revolver and called upon his men to fire. Shots rang out, and all of the men in the ravine fell upon first fire. Hamilton told his men to see that all were dead, but in their hurry to rifle through their prisoners' pockets and flee the scene, several of the men were left alive. One of the prisoners' wives came, calling out to the men, after hearing shots, and she was dispatched to get help, which took quite a while to arrive.⁹⁸ Men counted on the women who had come to joint them in Kansas territory, and

⁹⁸G. Merlin Welch, *Border Warfare In Southeastern Kansas: 1856-1859* (Pleasanton, Kansas: Linn County Historical Society, 1977), 102.

whether free state or proslavery, these women offered the support, help and daily labor that made life possible in a new place, far away from the conveniences and family at home.

Mrs. B.L. Reed, whose account was later taken and printed in the Herald of Freedom, a Free-State paper, was informed that her husband had been taken prisoner and quickly made her way to her neighbors home, where she could see the forced march with the help of a spy glass. She went to another neighbor for help, and found the wives of three other prisoners there. She then carefully followed the men, hiding when she heard shots, but continuing along. She then came upon the member of Hamilton's party who had wanted nothing to do with the executions; he informed her she would find men among the trees. She rushed to the men, and seeing how bad things were ran back to town to get help and a wagon. By the time she returned with help some of the survivors had crawled away in search of water. All were eventually found.⁹⁹

Free-State men were no more sympathetic to proslavery women than proslavery men were to Free-State women. After the Marais des Cygnes Massacre occurred, a census report was taken of the area, and offers a little insight to the women settled there and their experiences, "While absent they drove his family out consisting of a wife & 10 children out of the house and burned it down."¹⁰⁰ While men were doing the majority of the fighting, women were often left to pick up the pieces.

⁹⁹ *Herald Of Freedom*, Newspaper, July 10, 1858, page 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Five men were killed, five wounded, and one was unharmed after playing dead. A meeting was held in Lawrence to determine a course of action, sympathy was expressed for the families of the victims, and the U.S. troops were declared worthless. The Lawrence meeting requested that writs be issued for the men involved, and a letter written to the governor of Missouri to deliver the men. Little would come of any of it.

Charles Hamilton had fled back to Missouri, with a story quite different than the reality. He claimed that the victims were prisoners of the battle between himself and the Free State guerilla band under Montgomery. Hamilton claimed that he had released his prisoners upon the condition that they return home, but instead he claimed that the free state 'prisoners' fired upon him and his men, who had little choice than to return fire. This story was supported very little, however, and the Free-State version of events would prevail as close to the truth. While detailed truth was not ever to be had, as too many stories and accounts conflicted, it was decided that twenty seven men under Hamilton participated in the Massacre, only one man was caught and hanged as a result. Most of Hamilton's gang had split and escaped capture and the rising violence on both sides of the border, along with differing accounts and the unwillingness of Missouri to help capture the perpetrators made it impossible to exact the justice the Free Staters sought.¹⁰¹ Hamilton is said to have survived the Civil War after serving as a colonel, and died at home in Georgia following the war. His foray into Kansas and leadership in the Marais des Cygnes Massacre elevated tension in Kansas even more,

¹⁰¹ G. Merlin Welch, *Border Warfare In Southeastern Kansas: 1856-1859* (Pleasanton, Kansas: Linn County Historical Society, 1977), 108-110.

though, and although he might have been planning a war of extermination, if anything his actions made it even less safe for proslavery men to be in Kansas.

Often the fallout for violence and battles was left for women, especially when men were not there to help pick up the pieces. Some of the most numerous records involving proslavery women were the territorial loss claims filed by these women with the government. Often, they were driven off their land, had their livestock and horses stolen and their homes burned to the ground. Forced off their land, many sought shelter with neighbors, but many more went home to Missouri. Angry that they had lost all that their families had worked so hard to maintain, these complaint claims were many. Each of these claimants had to submit an itemized list of property lost, and had two witnesses attest to the losses. While most of these complaints were approved for payment, no money was ever appropriated or distributed. An example of such a claim loss, filed by an Ann Hoper, a proslavery woman who was forced off her claim:

I was living at the house of my son, J.L. Hopper, near Lawrence, where I had all my goods and worldly effects; an armed body of men...came to said house, and with threats and violence, force and armes, drove me and the family from house and home. Fearing to return, in our absence they took and carried away, or destroyed upon the premisise, all the articles charged at fair and reasonable rates...I had never recovered any of said property....¹⁰²

Many women suffered the loss of family and property, and very few if any saw any payment of any kind.

While these are a couple examples of violence that occurred in Bleeding Kansas as all-out war loomed, there is some debate about how bloody Bleeding Kansas actually

¹⁰² Ann Hooper, territorial claim of proslavery woman, 1859. Kansas Historical Society Online. Call Number: 328.7304/Un3/Serial No. 1017.KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 1731 <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/1731> (Accessed September 1, 2008)

was. In July, 1859, a fourth draft of a Kansas constitution, known as the Wyandotte Constitution was voted upon and approved by the citizens of Kansas, and in 1860, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the constitution. The Senate proved more problematic, as slave states were seceding from the Union, and senators were leaving their seats with increased frequency. On January 21, 1861 the Senate passed the Kansas bill, and Kansas was admitted to the Union as a free state eight days later. This eventual defeat of the proslavery side by Free Staters was seen as a long and hard won battle, but as the country was disintegrating toward Civil War, it was merely one more problem for the United States. Most proslavery men from the South returned home to eventually join the Confederate Army or returned to their homes and families. Some did stay in Kansas, but the turmoil of the upcoming years would be difficult for everyone, Kansans included.

Kansas proved to be the first battleground for what would later escalate into Civil War and the division of a country. While at odds with their Free State counterparts, Kansas and Missouri women's daily lives and struggles were the same, but in the end, Missouri women would not be championed the way that Free State women would be. There are problems with examining this period only through the writings of women present. The accounts, especially from proslavery women are few and far between. Often, even if a letter or diary entry is available, there is no information on the woman that wrote it, leaving the historian to speculation that should be avoided. Women from both the proslavery and antislavery backgrounds, supporting vastly different politics, did not differ as much as they may have thought. Their lives mainly consisted of taking care of their families, cooking, cleaning, and supporting the men in their lives. The

documents that they leave behind offer a glimpse into their inner lives, and while they may have embraced the traditional roles, they also had opinions, feeling and perspectives that serve to enrich the historical record.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDIES

During the territorial period in Kansas history (1854-1861), many women from all over the United States migrated to the area for various reasons. For the purposes of this examination, I focus on women who came from the northeastern United States via various aid companies. While the occasional letter or court record from women traveling to Kansas from Missouri exists, there are very few longer records, no unpublished diaries, or published books. Patterns of migration of women to Kansas Territory are not well documented, but according to the written record, women came in larger numbers from areas other than the South. While one might draw the conclusion that women from Missouri and the South did not arrive in Kansas in the same numbers, it ignores an important fact. Many women who did come to Kansas with their husbands or families to establish homesteads or claims often returned home soon thereafter, disillusioned about life in the west and realizing that opportunity in Kansas was often not what they had promised it would be.

Groups from the northeast had different settlement patterns from those of the South. The trip to Kansas was much longer for those coming from the northeast. The decision to move to Kansas was often more planned and a more permanent move. Emigrants from Missouri needed only to cross the state line. As a result, many proslavery Missourians had no intention of permanent relocation to Kansas before the slavery question was resolved, and some only crossed temporarily, to add their numbers to popular sovereignty. Women from Missouri did not accompany or follow

their husband in as great of numbers as those Free State women did. Missouri men had the advantage of not being far from home, and it was a much easier process to squat a claim on their own than to relocate their entire family. Women were not allowed to vote, and therefore their presence was not needed politically, and it was easier and more comfortable to stay home with their families or homes while the men settled in to what were commonly improvised, shoddy accommodations. Moreover, some of the Missouri women who stayed were simply domestic help, and in a couple of cases, slaves. These women left no written record of their lives. Men from Missouri most frequently crossed the border to establish claims, and even the men often did not stay, but rather hired someone to watch their claim before returning home. Other Missouri men, in ruffian groups, only came to Kansas to inflict damage to the Free-State homesteads, and then crossed back into Missouri and returned to their homes until the next raid.

The women who will be explored in this section were all from the northern United States, some through the New England Emigrant Aid Company, and other such parties or groups. It is probably not accurate to categorize the women discussed in this chapter as average, but as representative of different reasons for migration. The majority of nineteenth-century women did not leave their homes to go to newly opened territories. Historian Gail Collins writes, “Women who weren’t completely fulfilled as wives and mothers gravitated toward reform movements-almost all of which were viewed as the natural outgrowth of maternal concern.”¹⁰³ The Free State movement can be categorized loosely into this ‘reform’ mentality. The three women described in this chapter wanted more meaning in their lives, and the movement for a free Kansas

¹⁰³ Gail Collins, *America’s Women* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 96.

offered an acceptable outlet. Religion was the main driving force in some lives, especially in Julia Louisa Lovejoy's life, as she emigrated to Kansas with her Methodist minister husband. Some women who came to Kansas with family soon returned home, leaving only a travel diary as record of their trip to Kansas like Hannah Ropes. Other women accompanied influential and important men, as in the case of Sara Robinson. While these case studies are an important voice in the narrative of women coming to Kansas, they are not the only voices, just the only ones we have recorded. As historian Jean Fagin Yellin writes, "The antebellum period produced multiple and conflicting definitions of 'true womanhood.'"¹⁰⁴ This is apparent in the differences of life and situation of the three women examined. Their accounts are important, as they offer significant insight from a perspective not always acknowledged by traditional history books that focus on important men.

JULIA LOUIS LOVEJOY (1812-1882)

As a child in New Hampshire, Julia Louisa Hardy underwent conversion and became devoutly religious at age nine. As a Methodist, she dedicated her life to God, and planned to become a missionary or find some way to make the most of her deep religious conviction. At twenty-one she married Charles Hazeltine Lovejoy, a Methodist minister. The Lovejoys had four children while residing in various places on the east coast: Charles, born in Maine in 1838; Juliette, also in Maine in 1839; Edith, in

¹⁰⁴ Jean Fagin Yellin, *Women and Sisters* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1989), xiv.

New Hampshire in 1849; and finally Irving, born in Kansas Territory in 1855. The Lovejoys also had two children who did not survive birth. Her husband Charles was a preacher who traveled from place to place, following his assignments from the church and as such he was open to the idea of moving to Kansas after the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Julia also welcomed the move to Kansas. She saw the free-state fight central to her faith, and had found an outlet for her religious feeling and her reformer's spirit.¹⁰⁵

On December 10, 1854, in New Hampshire, Julia writes in her diary:

We are now very busy, making preparations, to go West, in the Spring. We may go to Kansas, if the way opens for us, in the order of Providence. We have "usefulness to our fellow-creatures," in view, before any other object, of worldly gain. I am perfectly passive, as it respects "the spot," or state, or Ter. where Mr. L. sees fit to pitch his tent, let God direct, and all will be right, -- I write no more, in this diary, until we reach our place of destination. "Carry us not thence, unless Thy Presence, go with us," is our prayer.¹⁰⁶

Julia's diary reflects a strong religious conviction, but also an apparent excitement. In her words she demonstrates a willingness to obey both her husband and God, and sees her family's emigration as religiously ordained. This fact gave her steadfast strength and purpose that undoubtedly helped on the long journey.

Eager to reach Kansas, and believing it their divine duty and responsibility, the Lovejoys did not come to Kansas via the Emigrant Aid Company, but rather with the assistance of one of many companies of the time, the Manhattan Town Company, a group of business interests and speculators that were some of the first emigrants to

¹⁰⁵ Julia Louisa Hardy Lovejoy, *Letters of Julia Louisa Lovejoy 1856-1859* (Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, 1947), 1.

¹⁰⁶ Julia Louisa Hardy, *Diary*, p. one..(12-10-1854) KSHS. Item Number: 7660 Call Number: Charles and Julia Lovejoy Coll. #419 KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 7660 <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/7660/text> (Accessed July 12, 2008)

Kansas. While the New England Emigrant Aid Company was the most well known and well-funded company, there were several other companies facilitating emigration to Kansas, some with obvious Free-State agendas, and others purely speculative. The Lovejoys came with the Manhattan Town Company not because of its religious or free state message, but because Charles knew the founders and possibly had investment in it. In March of 1855 they left New Hampshire for Kansas, and settled first in Manhattan, as Charles was a member of the Manhattan Town Company and is believed to have built if not the first, than one of the earliest houses on the site of what would later become the city of Manhattan. The importance of Julia's recollection of this time is great, as she is describing her family's part in the construction of some of the earliest Kansas cities, still there today. While a male account might contain information on the early days of Manhattan, Julia describes details that might have been missed by male accounts, and offers insight into the emotional toll emigration took.

Julia found Kansas Territory to be a sad sick place, and was ill prepared for the reality of the frontier. Left at a Kansas City hotel with her children while Charles went to stake a claim and begin building a cabin for his family, she worried about her family's health. The majority of middle-class women in the antebellum United States did not work outside of the home. These women did work, however, in the home "producing goods and services of value within the household"¹⁰⁷ In Kansas Territory, however, survival was the goal. Used to hard work, Julia took a job at the hotel, as did her older daughter Juliette. They mainly served food and waited tables, for little more than their board, but it allowed them to survive without Charles until his return. It was not the hard

¹⁰⁷ Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 23.

work that worried Julia, but rather the illness that seemed to be spreading throughout the area:

It is very sickly here in this Hotel, and in the Town. Many cases of death. Pneumonia seems to be the prevailing sickness. Our food is miserably cooked, so much so, at times, it produces a nauseating effect on approaching the tables. Hundreds are arriving here weekly for the Ter...All three of us, are sick, and I know we cannot live in this unhealthy atmosphere. Deaths almost, or quite daily, here. Sadness and discontent, sit on the brow, of every fresh arrival of emigrants, and scores come back here.¹⁰⁸

Julia was shocked to find so much sickness, as were most other women who migrated to the Territory. Illness was the largest cause of death in Kansas Territory, and women who relocated with their children arrived in towns crippled by disease. This alone was enough to send many who could afford it back East. Julia also writes of the hundreds arriving weekly at the Kansas City hotel, and worried that so many people in a confined space did little for public health. The influx of people from various places guaranteed exposure to many illness and diseases that their immune systems were not prepared to fight. Death remained a large possibility, and Julia was truly concerned for her children and herself. Her children were all sick, Edith with the measles, and Julia herself was unable to get out of bed for a period of time. Ever the realist, she realized that the hotel and its constantly changing population were partly responsible for the ongoing sicknesses, and knew that she must get herself and her children out of the hotel and into a private home. Julia was self sufficient and intelligent enough to know what was best for her daughters, and at a time where her husband was the leader of a household, she felt comfortable taking matters into her own hands when necessary. In doing so

¹⁰⁸ Julia Louisa Hardy, Diary, page 2 (March-1855) KSHS. Item Number: 7660 Call Number: Charles and Julia Lovejoy Coll. #419 KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 7660 <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/7660/text> (Accessed July 12, 2008)

she demonstrated a pragmatism that must have been important in an environment where each day could bring a different struggle.

Meanwhile, her husband and eldest son were in Manhattan, helping to establish a town, and the journey was long and hard at this cold time of year. For the first time discouraged, Julia wrote of her homesickness and nervousness for the health of her children. At first she found a private home to board at, not waiting to receive a response to the letters she had sent Charles. It was announced, however, that a boat was booking passage up the river to Fort Riley, closer to Charles and Julia booked passage, traveling with her two sick daughters, Juliette improving, but Edith growing sicker by day with measles. After hitting a sandbar and being stranded on the boat for several days, Julia sent an 'express' letter again to her husband, and prayed for his arrival. She began to get desperate, expecting the worst might have happened to her husband and son, as she had not yet heard from them. Eventually, after an extended period of time stuck on the sandbar Julia could not wait any longer, and hired a man to take her and her daughters toward Lawrence, hoping to run into her husband on the way. With too large a burden and a drunken driver, the horses often refused or were unable to pull the load.

It is interesting to note that at this point in her diary, after a horrible storm forced them from their wagon, Julia wrote of taking shelter along the way in the home of a slave holding pro-slavery family, and seems surprised by their hospitality and kindness: "They were slave-holders, but we were cordially received, and freely, and kindly entertained. May Heaven reward them, for their hospitality, to a way-faring pilgrim,

whose heart was well-nigh bursting from accumulating anguish.”¹⁰⁹ Coming from New Hampshire as a religious abolitionist, Julia must have had a rather decided opinion of slave holders, and this incident probably allowed her some insight into the other side of the slavery question. This experience undoubtedly did not change her views, it was the first time in her writing that the ‘enemy’ was personalized, a human being just as herself.

Edith, Julia’s youngest daughter, died soon after on the road to Lawrence. From her diary entries, it is apparent that Julia was devastated, on the road alone without her husband, with little money or supplies, and a child dying on the floor of a Shawnee Indian’s cabin where they had paid for lodging. Julia recounts Edith’s last words, “I feared Edith had the seal of death, upon her brow. She opened wide, her full blue eye, and looking me full in the face, said she, ‘Mother, you are good.’”¹¹⁰ Right before Edith’s death, the traveling family could finally make out Lawrence in the distance, but Julia’s reunion with her husband and son was bittersweet, as she had just lost her daughter, and also discovered a couple months earlier that she was pregnant. Facing difficulty, so far from home and comfort, Julia’s religious fervor sustained her and kept her going. While she trusted God, she did cry out to him at the injustice and pain that she felt at the loss of her child: “My God! Why dost Thou suffer this to come upon us!”¹¹¹ After burying Edith outside of Lawrence, the Lovejoy family continued on to Manhattan, where the two Lovejoy men had managed to put up a crude cabin for the family. After

¹⁰⁹ Julia Louisa Hardy, *Diary*.(april/may-1855)p.9 KSHS. Item Number: 7660 Call Number: Charles and Julia Lovejoy Coll. #419 KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 7660 <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/7660/text> (Accessed August 5th, 2008)

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

settling in, Julia gave birth to a baby boy, but in her diary she still lamented the fresh pain of her daughter's death, and it made her son's birth bittersweet.

Her husband, Rev. Charles Lovejoy was often assigned to churches far away from their home, and as a result was gone for extended periods of time. Julia pens about these times as the most difficult in her life, and longs for her warm home in New Hampshire: "were it possible I would take up the bones of my child, and go to N. England and not go thro' what I have since I came to Kansas."¹¹² The conflict in Kansas and the nature of her husband's job often left Julia to her own devices, and while she found appropriate outlets, such as her writing, life was difficult for her. Historians remind us that as the country ramped up toward civil war, the conflicts "pushed women into spaces previously considered exclusively masculine preserves."¹¹³ Julia experienced a little of this in Kansas Territory. Left on her own for extended periods of time, she sought meaning in her life and found it in the abolitionist movement and God. Julia still felt the loss of her daughter, and in March her daughter Juliette married, leaving Julia even more alone than before. This sense of isolation was very common among women who went to Kansas. While many accounts are concerned with the activities, political infighting and skirmishes, the loneliness and isolation of life so far from their families made life hard for women in Kansas. Perhaps one of the important contributions of women's diaries and letters is the emotion that they express. As emotions were understood to be the realm of women, women could express what surely

¹¹² Ibid.,16.

¹¹³ Catherine Clinton, *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford Press, 2006), 5.

men were also feeling, and these personal insights are sometimes more important than detailed accounts of politics or skirmishes.

While Rev. Lovejoy had been assigned to Lawrence, his family remained in Manhattan. In the spring of 1856, he traveled back east in an attempt to raise funds to build a more permanent church in Lawrence. His success was limited, but upon his return in August, 1856 he moved Julia and the family from Manhattan to Lawrence, where he could be closer to them. He was transferred again in April 1857, this time to the Oskaloosa mission, and while Charles, Jr. and Juliette had married and settled in different areas, Julia and her two-year-old son Irving moved to a claim at Palmyra. Far from their last move, the Lovejoys zigged-zagged back and forth across Kansas Territory. Unfortunately, while visiting family in New Hampshire in 1860, they lost their other daughter Juliette to illness, and soon after Charles, Jr. joined the army as the Civil War approached. Leaving their home to do God's work was a difficult transition, but the difficulty was only compounded by the death of her daughters. This was a hardship faced by many emigrants, as disease often took at least one family member. Julia wrote about these losses matter-of-factly, undoubtedly to mask her pain from herself. Her faith is what seemed to sustain her, but her writing grows more melancholy over time.

In the nineteenth-century United States, women "were accountable not only to their Creator, but to fathers and husbands as well."¹¹⁴ Julia Lovejoy wanted to support her husband's religious role in Kansas, and this was done through her writings. Faith is what brought the Lovejoys to Kansas as strident abolitionists. Charles preached against the evil of slavery and Julia wrote letters back East to newspapers about the plight in

¹¹⁴ Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1989), 9.

Kansas every chance she could. In those letters she pleaded for support, in a style recalling the book of Revelations, and some of her most famous words indicate her dedication to the issue: "We are in the midst of a war-war of the most bloody kind-a war of extermination. Freedom and slavery are interlocked in a deadly embrace, and death is certain for one or the other party,"¹¹⁵ The Lovejoys took their mission to Kansas quite seriously, and lost two children in the process. They both were later involved in the Civil War, Rev. Charles as a chaplain, and Julia joined him in Missouri as a teacher. By September 1866 the Lovejoys returned to Kansas, settling near Baldwin. Julia died there on February 6, 1882, leaving what so few women of her time and place did, a written record of her experiences.¹¹⁶

HANNAH ANDERSON ROPES (1809-1863)

For every woman such as Julia Lovejoy, who came to Kansas and stayed, there were countless others that returned home after a brief time in Kansas. Hannah Anderson Ropes is one of these women. Known best historically for her role as a Civil War nurse in Washington, D.C., Ropes traveled to Kansas in September of 1855 as a supporter of abolition, and later published a book of her collected letters written from

¹¹⁵ Hannah Ropes, published letter, Kansas Historical Society August 25, 1856.

¹¹⁶ Julia Louisa Hardy Lovejoy. *Letters of Julia Louisa Lovejoy 1856-1859* (Kansas Historical Society: Topeka, 1947), 3.

Kansas. Hannah's perspective is unique because while she was a Free State supporter, she was neither a strident abolitionist nor a particularly religious woman. As is common in any historical scholarship the accounts are often written by those whom history finds memorable for their differences. Hannah's account is important because it chronicles a typical experience. Her time in Kansas probably reflects that of more women than does Julia Lovejoy's.

Born in 1809 in New Gloucester, Maine she came from a family of early New England settlers. She married a teacher at twenty-five, William H. Ropes, and moved to Massachusetts to start a family. Of the four children that they had, only two lived to adulthood. After a difficult period in their marriage, with money problems dominating, her husband left her and their two children. While this must have been a very difficult period in her life, she seemed to flourish, welcoming a level of self-reliance that she had previously not had. As historian Sara M. Evans writes, "Within the urban middle classes, domesticity had become fused with a broader worldview by the 1840s and 1850s."¹¹⁷ Women like Hannah Ropes could find identity and purpose in life and try new things like traveling to Kansas Territory without a husband. Supporting abolition, she did not plan on going to Kansas Territory until her son, at eighteen, became a homesteader in 1855. While her son played the part of 'man' in her life, he was eighteen years old and lacked life experience. For Hannah, making the trip to Kansas with only her daughter was scary and exciting. Both Hannah and her daughter Alice traveled to Kansas in September of 1855, writing many letters back home to her family and friends. Upon their return to Massachusetts they were published and sold quite well for a time.

¹¹⁷ Sara M. Evans. *Born for Liberty* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 96.

Through examining these letters we learn that not every trip to Kansas was the same for northern women. ¹¹⁸

Leaving Boston by train, Hannah's party headed to Kansas. In good spirits, the party numbered twenty five, with five women and ten children who were going to meet their husbands. Hannah seemed to share this enthusiasm for travel, and while her son was already in Kansas Territory awaiting her arrival, she perhaps felt a freedom and excitement. It was soon tempered with the reality of long term travel, and as many women who went to Kansas, seems to momentarily question why she is making the miserable journey,

I muster up from my memory all the reasons wherewith I nerved myself to leave dear New England; but they do not stand out so clearly as when first enrolled in my cause. Like me, they seem wilted by the heat and marred by the noise. ¹¹⁹

Days later, Hannah arrived in St. Louis to board a steamer that would take their party to Kansas City. As many did, Hannah complained about the heat she felt in the Midwest, differing from that at home, "The weather is intolerably hot. I never felt anything like it."¹²⁰ She also encountered on the steamboat a family of newly-bought slaves, and she also commented on the slaves that served as waiters at dinner, although does not seem particularly bothered by this. It is interesting that Ropes does mention that aboard the ship are a mixture of pro and antislavery passengers, and the discussion and squabbling between the two sides seems to drive her crazy. Instead of being outraged by the proslavery faction, she writes, "O dear, I wish they would not *talk*. I believe I hate

¹¹⁸ John R. Brumgardt. *Civil War Nurse: The Diary and Letters of Hannah Ropes*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1980), 10-11.

¹¹⁹ Hannah Ropes Anderson, *Six Months in Kansas By A Lady*. (Boston: Jewett, 1856), 10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

petty argument. It leaves each stronger in his own view. But perhaps it is because I am a woman, and, woman-like, jump to a conclusion without the drudgery of measuring the intermediate steps.”¹²¹ Hannah, on her way to Kansas Territory is exposed to people who do not share her point of view, but like Julia Lovejoy she seems to realize that they too are just people. Unlike Julia, however, she is rather dismissive of the whole situation, and seems more concerned at her discomfort than anything else. Ropes, though openly against slavery, embodies the feelings of many people at the time, who while not approving of slavery do not necessarily want their slave-owning neighbors killed. It is insightful because of the misconception written about in previous chapters that all Americans were stridently on one side of the issue or the other.

Arriving in Kansas City, Hannah seemed a little dismayed at the conditions and overcrowding at the boarding house where she and Alice spent a couple nights before the journey to Lawrence. As they approached Lawrence, though, the driver invited them down from the wagons to look over the city, and Hannah writes, “One could hardly conceive of a picture so really beautiful, of a town one year old. As we enter, the river -- which we do not see -- forms the background with its thickly-wooded bank. A few nice-looking houses appear, and cabins quite numberless.”¹²²

Upon their arrival Ned, Hannah’s son, came to Lawrence to pick up Hannah and Alice from the boarding house and took them to the new cabin that was almost completed. Hannah, although impressed with her son’s labor, returned to the boarding house to await its completion: “I went back to the hotel, feeling as though I could not sleep in a room where half of it was the open ground. My terror of snakes, mice, and

¹²¹ Ibid., 28.

¹²² Ibid., 44.

vermin generally, sprang into the most intense life; and would not be put down or reasoned with.”¹²³ Rather unequipped for the realities of pioneer life, the excitement and romanticism of the move began to wear off. This dose of reality affected most women who came to Kansas. Once they had arrived after a long travel ordeal, they found the situation less appealing. Their concerns were of a more practical measure. While husbands and older sons staked and built on claims, the women had the job of keeping their families alive and fed in the absence of men. The amount of work often seemed insurmountable, even to those who were used to labor. Although the nineteenth-century, middle class woman was largely confined to the home, in Kansas as in the eastern United States, a woman’s domain did include more responsibilities. “She was charged with the moral, spiritual and physical well-being of her entire family.”¹²⁴ While Hannah had an eighteen-year-old son who she could count on for support, much of the burden for the welfare of her children, including her eighteen year old, fell on her shoulders.

Sickness was an issue for the Ropes family. Like Lovejoy family, the Ropes were also shocked at how much sickness was present in the territory, the extent of which Hannah was not aware before her journey. Falling sick was on her mind constantly. On September 25, Hannah and Alice move into the cabin that Ned has completed, and again Hannah seems preoccupied with bugs:

Soon I see coming down the beam near me a cricket-looking body, only large as a half-dozen home crickets. I move suddenly, but say, very quietly, "Ned, what lodger is this?" He is intimately acquainted with them, for he points to quite a small army of them in another direction, and says, "Only crickets. Everything

¹²³ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁴ Catherine Clinton. *The Other Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 41.

grows large in this country. They won't hurt you. Why, they lived here by right before we came." Verily the boy is more of a philosopher than his mother. Will she ever get rid of her fear of bugs?¹²⁵

Hannah did seem to adjust to life on a claim, comforted by her things from home and letters from her mother. While seemingly excited about her great adventure, one can feel an undercurrent of exhaustion, exacerbated by the cooking, cleaning, and hard work required for survival. Historian Sara Evans writes, "Homesteaders sometimes lived in extreme isolation, cut off from any community. The work of Midwestern farm families closely resembled that of colonial farmers."¹²⁶ The labor required was great, but life outside Lawrence improved when neighbors and acquaintances began to show up in the evenings to spend time socializing. Hannah saw these evenings as respite and greatly looked forward to them. Sickness soon invades the Ropes household, though, as young Alice falls ill and Hannah also longs for home and her own mother,

How strange it is, to be sitting here, holding in my hand a pen, wherewith I relieve myself by saying anything I please to you; laying aside, very often, this same pen, which seems to my spirit to actually touch you, that I may moisten the parched lips lying close by my side, powerless to do anything more than accept the cooling draught. The kind physician comes in often and sits awhile; but gives no medicine. She has taken nothing but the drops of water for nine days; and all her requests are, "Please take me home; please take me home."¹²⁷

Alice soon began a slow recovery, though, and Hannah's letters begin to be dominated by the growing tensions between the Free-State and proslavery factions. Her growing concern is evident in her letters home. She wrote of a growing armed force in

¹²⁵Hannah Anderson Ropes, *Six Months in Kansas By A Lady* (Boston: Jewett, 1856), 61.

¹²⁶ Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 96.

¹²⁷ Hannah Anderson Ropes, *Six Months in Kansas By A Lady* (Boston: Jewett, 1856), 109.

Lawrence, under Dr. Robinson and Col. Lane, and also of the Missourian forces encamped outside of Lawrence. She wrote of gun shots going off in the night outside in the distance while they sleep, and the murder of Thomas Barber recounted in the previous chapter. Her writing is one of the few in-detail female accounts of the fighting that was breaking out at this time, and although the information she heard was mostly second or third hand, it allows insight to the fear that many women in Kansas Territory must have felt as the violence escalated and the men of their families joined the armed forces or simply patrolled their livestock in the night. These female perspectives are invaluable, because they are written from a perspective of the political climate and gossip that surrounded them. These women were not present for most of the fighting, but often faced its consequences and were forced to pick up the pieces. Hannah soon began to show cracks in her resolve, writing home,

How we, at the North, have always believed implicitly in the chivalry of the south, and the wide-hearted generosity of the West. It is not till we arrive in Kansas, away from everything dear and familiar, away from all the ordinary comforts of older countries, the truth really dawns upon us. Mother, there is no indignity to be mentioned that has not been heaped upon us. By it I feel myself robbed of a large estate-my faith in human nature.¹²⁸

Hannah's days in Kansas Territory were numbered. She returned to Massachusetts with her daughter in April 1856. Soon after, she collected her letters to her mother and published them, with moderate success. She returned to Massachusetts even more strident a supporter of abolition than when she left, and politically active as well. Following the success of the letters, she published a novel, and later, after reading

¹²⁸ Ibid., 178.

about Florence Nightingale, became a nurse during the Civil War, keeping a diary of this time which she is most well known for. She did not regret her time in Kansas Territory, but rather used it as a tool for her expanding mind and career.

While we are lucky to have her published letters to her family, it is important to note the difference between these and the diary of Julia Louisa Lovejoy. While Lovejoy's diary was never published, it was also not edited for publishing. The insight that it offers is solely her own, for better or worse. While undoubtedly the events and experiences that Hannah Anderson Ropes writes of are true and honest, her writings have had the benefit of editing and revising with publication in mind, which cannot be discounted. Nevertheless, she describes in detail events she was present for that very few other women have, and as such, her letters are priceless.

SARA ROBINSON (1827-1911)

Perhaps one of the most politically and widely recognized women of Kansas Territory, Sara Tappan Dolittle Lawrence was born in Massachusetts on July 12, 1827. A prolific writer, her published book and letters offer insight into her life. Sara's story is told alongside that of her husband, as his position afforded certain experiences that are unique to Sara's narrative. Women had fewer choices in the antebellum United States, and little place to "demonstrate autonomy. Choice of church, marital partner, and

perhaps family limitation were the only decisions left to women.” Seemingly aware of this, Sara expected more out of life than her counterparts when she married Charles, who was to achieve success in Kansas. Often ambitious women had to channel their ambitions through their husband’s life.¹²⁹

Well educated, Sara enjoyed and excelled at school. In 1849 she met Dr. Charles Robinson, who was headed to California. Trained as a physician, Dr. Robinson was also a speculator and adventurer. Upon his return in 1851, Sara married Charles and they set up home in Massachusetts. The Robinsons were quite dedicated to the cause of abolition, and as mentioned in chapter two, Charles soon became affiliated with the New England Emigrant Aid Society. Charles was part of the first party to Kansas Territory to scout out an appropriate site for settlement, and then returned to Massachusetts to lead the first round of emigrants to Lawrence. He had by then been named president of the Lawrence Town Company, and was considered one of the most respected Free-State leaders. The perspective of Sara’s writing is markedly different than either Julia or Hannah. Sara represents the elite echelon of Kansas society, and because of her position and experiences, hers is not the story of an average Free-State woman. It is because of women like Sara, though that the Free-State movement flourished and attracted support back home in the northeast. She represents a unique and powerful woman for the time and place. That a woman in the nineteenth-century could achieve and maintain such an important voice within the Free-State movement certainly had something to do with her husband’s position, but also reflects her resolve and strength of character.

¹²⁹ Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 43.

Sarah came to Kansas to join her husband in the spring of 1855. Both Robinsons were committed the Kansas cause, but Sara was not content in Kansas during its early years, and spent most of her time back East, visiting friends and family. As time went on though, and circumstances changed, Sara began to spend more time in Kansas with her husband. Historian Catherine Clinton reminds us, “during the nineteenth century, women’s concerns began to expand- in concentric circles- beyond the home. But when women began to step out of their immediate domain, they followed a path prescribed by domestic custom.”¹³⁰ Sara would soon find herself in a situation that would require her to expand her domain. In 1856, Charles was arrested and held for treason against the then legitimate proslavery government. Sara sprang into action, traveling to Washington, D.C. where she “eloquently reported the plight of her husband and the free state cause” to both the Emigrant Aid Company and any member of congress she thought might be able to help.¹³¹

Sara was allowed to live in a tent with her husband while he was being held at Leecompton, Kansas at the federal prison. During this period she wrote *Kansas: Its Interior and Exterior Life*. This book was different from the other travel journals and diaries that have been written by the women previously mentioned above. While women like Julia Lovejoy and Hannah Ropes wrote diaries and letters, Sara Robinson was writing with a purpose and goal. She wanted to first draw national attention to the Kansas struggle, while encouraging boosterism and the Free-State cause. Her book, written from the perspective of a Free-State woman in Kansas drew great support. It was also good timing, as many people who kept up on the Kansas question were aware

¹³⁰ Ibid., 44.

¹³¹ Don W. Wilson, *Governor Charles Robinson of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975) , 41-42

of her husband's imprisonment. Part detailed record of Kansas and its political history, part propaganda, her book was one of the earliest published accounts of life in territorial Kansas. She tempted readers to Kansas with excellent writing, the result of her thorough education:

The prairie for miles, with its gently undulating rolls, lies before the eye. Rivers, glistening in the sunlight, flow on between banks crowned with tall trees; -- beyond these, other high points arise. Trees are scattered here and there like old orchards, and cattle in large numbers are grazing upon the hillside, and in the valleys, giving to all the look of cultivation and home life. It is, indeed, difficult to realize that for thousands of years this country has been a waste, uncultivated and solitary, and that months only have elapsed since the white settler has sought here a home.¹³²

Sara thought Kansas beautiful, to be sure, but moreover wanted her readers to envision a type of paradise that they would never see. Their appreciation of the importance and beauty of Kansas was integral to their financial and political support. While she did share the topography and other practical information with her readers, the true motivation of her writing was hidden, as is made perfectly clear in her preface. She had every intention of doing what she could to help her husband, and waged a propaganda war of her own on those back in Washington and the Northeastern United States as she opens her book:

This work, now offered to the public, has been written amid all the inconveniences of tent life. Its pages were penned during a three months' residence of the authoress in the United States Camp, at Lecompton, with her husband, one of the state prisoners. If a bitterness against the "powers that be" betrays itself, let the continual flanking of sabres, and the deafening sound of heavy artillery in the daily drills of the soldiery, aids in crushing freemen in Kansas, -- the outrages hourly committed upon peaceable and unarmed men, -- the daily news of some friend made prisoner, or butchered with a malignity more than human, -- the devastation of burning homes, by the connivance of the

¹³² Sarah Robinson, *Kansas: Its Interior and Exterior Life* (Boston: Jewett, 1856), pg 2

Governor, under the eye of the troops, and no power given them to save an oppressed people, -- be placed in the balance against a severe judgment.¹³³

These words encourage sympathy, but also support. Sara represents the strong helpmate willing to go to the ends of the earth to support her husband and the freedom of her home. By describing the people as oppressed she appeals to the like minded back home who also feel that slavery is the worst type of oppression. In describing Kansas, Sara did not stick to positive pretty images that would encourage further settlement. She wished for like-minded men and women to come to Kansas, but also wanted to draw the attention and support of those that had no intention of ever nearing the territory. She wrote about the violence, the hardship and the evil she saw in the pro-slavery faction,

The outrages of the pro-slavery men are again becoming frequent. Mr. Mace, residing a few miles from Lawrence, the evening after having given in his testimony concerning the ill treatment he received at the hands of the Missourians at the election in the spring, was shot. Hearing his dog bark, he stepped out of his house, and reports of pistols resounded in the air, a ball striking him in the leg. At the same time, he heard one of the assassins say, "There's another d--d abolition wolf-bait!"¹³⁴

A little shock and awe always appealed to the reader, and this account allowed those back East an inner glimpse in the life of a Free-State settler. These similar situations related repeatedly add to the sense of urgency and peril she wanted her readers to experience. While Sara did write of such inflammatory subjects, there are similarities between her writing and the other women profiled. While previous women discussed led more ordinary lives than Mrs. Robinson, whose husband would become the first

¹³³ Ibid., vi.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 209.

governor of Kansas, they all faced the same hardships in Kansas; disease and sickness is present in Sara's account just as it is in Julia Lovejoy's and Hannah Ropes's. Sara wrote of the difficulties of keeping house, the food shortages, and violence that plagued the struggle. She missed her friends and family, as most pioneer women did. She was in everyway a helpmate to her husband, as would have been expected, but as an articulate and educated woman she made quite an impact on the future of Kansas Territory, if mostly behind the scenes.

In addition to the pioneer life vignettes present in most published books from Kansas Territory, Sara's book also included the history of the struggle and documented events that took place in the Lawrence area. She described the 'bogus' legislature, the Wakarusa war, the sack of Lawrence and her husband's election to governor. Sarah's book was known throughout the United States, and, "At the time, some considered Robinson's book second only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in importance to the anti-slavery cause."¹³⁵ Sara's husband would later, in 1892 also write a book about the territory, *The Kansas Conflict* in which he recounted the history of the Kansas struggle.

Kansas was successfully admitted to the union as a free state after the 1861 Wyandotte Constitution. Charles, under the conservative wing of the Kansas Free State Party, became the first governor of Kansas. He served from 1861-1863, taking office right before the outbreak of civil war. It must have been difficult for Charles and Sara to see the country torn apart in war so soon after their long struggle for Kansas had been won. Charles went on to have some political difficulties, largely stemming from his rivalry with James Lane, and was impeached but acquitted after infighting within

¹³⁵Territorial Kansas Online, a division of the Kansas Historical Society's web site. http://www.territorialkansasonline.org/cgiwrap/imlskto/index.php?SCREEN=bio_sketches/robinson_sara (Accessed October 1, 2008)

Kansas's early government. Although he served only one term as governor, Charles remained active in Kansas politics until his death in 1892, just two years after writing the book on the Kansas conflict. Charles's death was difficult for Sara, and because the couple had remained childless, she faced the hole his death left in her life alone, if not supported by a state who had loved Charles as one of their founding fathers. Sarah had many years left in her life though, and spent them trying to maintain the history of Kansas as she saw it. The last period of her life was rough, and historian Julia Courtwright recounts,

At the time of Charles Robinson's death, the Kansas conflict was a part of the relatively distant past. Most Kansans of the 1890's were more concerned with dismal economic conditions and a farm crisis than with the territorial skirmishes of forty years earlier. Following her husband's death, however, Sara Robinson was not content to settle peacefully into old age. She disregarded the new political issues and remained focused on her old campaigns, the controversy about which haunted her final seventeen years.¹³⁶

It is necessary in the case of history to wait a period of time before opening up scholarship on a particular incident or period. Delay allows enough thought and insight, but also to further the gap from the time long enough for examination by less biased eyes. With the Kansas struggle far enough in the past that a new generation of scholars had emerged, historians began to examine and write about Kansas. They all believed that they had the 'true' story down, and quickly sides were drawn and debate began. Sara took this debate personally, and as a living pioneer who had been present and part of Kansas history, she saw it as her right and duty to maintain her version of events. "Her 'facts', she noted, were 'quite at a variance with the expressed opinions of

¹³⁶ Julie Courtwright, "A Goblin That Drives Her Insane: Sara Robinson and the History Wars of Kansas: 1894-1911." *Kansas History* 25, no.2, (Summer 2002): 105.

some of the would-be historians of the day in the twentieth century.”¹³⁷ She saw herself as one of the few surviving links to the past, and as such grew angry when her recollection or history was questioned. Kansas historians who would go on to lead the board of the Kansas Historical Society in the early twentieth century saw Sara as a difficult and tiresome widow whose only goal was to inflate her husband's memory in the history of Kansas. As Courtwright mentions, though, it is also possible that these male historians resented Sara as a woman meddling and overstepping her traditional nineteenth-century role. With the exception of her campaign to keep Kansas history in her own view, Sara did maintain the traditional role of a woman at the time. She was not particularly interested in the suffragist movement or women's clubs, but maintained a one track driven goal of preserving Kansas history, which her considerable finances and time allowed.¹³⁸ Sara believed that any means necessary must be employed to keep Kansas history safe, and saw herself as the gatekeeper.

Sara Robinson lived a long prolific life, and there is no doubt that her campaign to keep Kansas history in the direction that she preferred was marginally successful. If nothing else, her book and letters recount a time and place in which she was present and played a part. She certainly had her own views on specific issues, some quite controversial, as she did not believe that John Brown had done Kansas any good at all, but they were her memories and ideas. As younger generations of historians began to question the past, and specifically Sara's version of history, there is no doubt that this process caused a great deal of pain to a woman who not only lived through it, but wrote it down for the benefit of all who study Kansas.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Upon her death in 1911, much of Charles and Sara's estate passed on to the University of Kansas, and in fact, a good portion of the university sits on land donated by the Robinsons. Although Sara Robinson certainly had her detractors, she accomplished much during her lifetime, and not only witnessed a period in Kansas history that was extremely important, but wrote of her experiences in a time that women's voices are few and far between in the West. Perhaps the best educated and most elite of the women examined in this chapter, she was dedicated to Charles and to Kansas, and through her written record we are offered a view of Kansas that is not found anywhere else.

The three women examined in the chapter represent just a small section of the women who came to Kansas during the territorial phase. Unfortunately, history is limited to the documented record, and for every Julia, Hannah, and Sara whose writings we have, there are countless others in many different places in life we do not know. We cannot imagine what life must have been for female slaves in Kansas, though they were few, because we have little documentation and few slaves even left writings. And for every Free-State woman's diary we hold, there was another pro-slavery woman who believed her view equally as legitimate. Unfortunately among those who came to Kansas no Missouri women's writings have been discovered. Julia, Hannah, and Sara, all present in Kansas at the same time, had very different experiences. While they all felt hardship, sickness and fear, they also lived in different situations, under different circumstances. Sometimes in the desire to add a female perspective to historical writing, women are lumped together as a group. While women in the nineteenth century

in Kansas shared certain aspects of culture and society, women were no more alike then in thought that they are now. It is important to keep these women's lives in context, as well as their writings. They are a product of their time and situation, but allow insight into the female experience in Kansas Territory that is very valuable.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Kansas played an important role as one of the earliest battlegrounds of the Civil War, long before war was declared, and the women who came to Kansas were every bit as impassioned and effective as men. Their books and letters were published and read by thousands of Americans thousands of miles away, and they had an effect on the national conscious. Women were seen as more emotional than men, and as a result, they were often trusted more. The nineteenth century brought limited change to the lives of middle class women. Although they could not vote, they were leaving the home in greater numbers than even before for various reasons. The Second Great Awakening increased the role of religion in women's everyday lives. Often, with growing religiosity came involvement in their communities, politics, and the national agenda.

Religion and abolitionism went hand in hand. Women's roles in antislavery and abolitionist societies were primary, as they wrote letters, held fundraisers and meeting in their homes, and educated and influenced the men in their lives. This antislavery activity forced the Kansas question to the national stage, and as a result men and women from the northeastern United States emigrated to Kansas. There was opportunity in Kansas Territory, both economic and political.

Although women did not have a leadership role in the Emigrant Aid Societies, they came to Kansas under their auspices, and it was through their letters back East that such companies were supported and funded as long as they were. It is the records

of these companies that offer insight into those who emigrated to Kansas from the north. Women packed up their belongings and children and left their families and homes for an unpopulated unknown part of the United States, often traveling without the male members of their family. It was these societies that allowed women to travel unaccompanied, and their infrastructure that aided in settling the new territory.

While the scholarship on Missouri women is woefully brief, these women were far from the evil slave drivers imagined by their counterparts in the northeast. Their beliefs were not that different from Northern women when it came to home, family and God. The majority of Missouri women had little to do with the practical reality of slavery, and felt threatened, as most Southerners did, when their way of life was challenged and discarded by their Northern counterparts.

The Free-State women examined in the case studies section demonstrate that even within the same movement there is much diversity. Julia Lovejoy represents the most religious of those that came to Kansas. Dedicated to the goal of a free Kansas, she made it her home for the remainder of her life, even after encountering difficult living conditions, loneliness, sickness and the death of a child. Hannah Ropes, not nearly as religious as Julia, demonstrated the reality of Kansas life. It was a difficult place to live, it could be dangerous and the reality of an unknown adventure drove her and many others back home. Sara Robinson was perhaps the most unique of the three. Intelligent, educated and wealthy, she supported her husband throughout his time in jail, even writing a book from a prison tent. He became the first governor of Kansas, and she was by his side during the political fight for Kansas. Although I choose to examine three Free State women for the case studies chapter, in reality this was not a choice at

all. The historical record did not offer enough information for any in depth coverage of particular Missouri Women. The Free State women examined were far from alike, however. While their titles of 'Free State Supporters' put them in a category together, they came from different backgrounds, and had different experiences with different results. They did however, share some common qualities. Like many nineteenth-century middle class women who emigrated to Kansas, they were tough. They were women who overcame difficulty in Kansas, as they struggled to cook, clean and care for their families in less than ideal conditions. These women were educated and literate, and their narratives serve only to enhance Kansas history

Women have a very real and important role in the history of Kansas, and increased scholarship can only help to augment Kansas history. In the second half of the nineteenth century women's lives were beginning to change in small ways that would eventually lead to the fight for suffrage, and later equal rights. It is possible to trace the progression of women in the United States through their own words, and incorporate this history into the larger picture, offering a more realistic view of women in history.

As historical scholarship continues to diversify, new perspectives often change the groundwork of old arguments. Women's history is a great example of this. Through the examination of women's letters, diaries and published works the historian is offered a female perspective to some of our nation's formative years and struggles. This is true in Kansas history. It is important to remember that so much progress has been made in the area of women's history in a relatively short period of time. As time goes on, more women's lives will be discovered in archives and attics, and shared. Every examination

of history from a different perspective offers insight that can only serve to enhance the record, and the women that emigrated to Kansas during its territorial years had an impact both on Kansas and United States History.

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