The Kansas historical quarterly
Mechem Kirke
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Author: Mechem Kirke

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THE
Kansas Historical Quarterly

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KANSAS HISTORICAL
Quarterly

"HOME, SWEET HOME."
Spring Post Office, Soldier Creek, Kansas Territory.
(This cabin pulled down Jan. 27, 1890, in Vol. 9, P. 306.)

OUR FIRST LOG CABIN.
INDIANOLA, K.T. JUNE, 1875.
1855. K.T.
VIEW LOOKING NORTH-WEST.

CENTENNIAL ISSUE SPRING 1961

Published by KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY TOPEKA
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THE COVER

Samuel J. Reader’s water color of his first log cabin at Indianola (Shawnee county), in June,
1855. The picture represents the typical "Home, Sweet Home" of many who were settling in Kansas
about the time statehood was achieved 100 years ago.
When Kansas Became a State

Clouds were looming ominously over the not so United States in January, 1861. After 85 years the Union seemed on the verge of dissolution over the vexing question of slavery. Saber rattling Southern senators did nothing to alleviate the situation and men with nerves frayed raw continued to jump at one another in the halls of congress over this ideological problem which had existed longer than the nation itself.

In Kansas the immediate future seemed likely to be as gloomy as the past. Not only had the territory been the scene of a six-year struggle identical to the one which would soon inflame the whole country, but hunger, poverty, and disaster still confronted her pioneers. The territory was in the midst of a severe drought which brought carload after carload of supplies from sympathetic and more fortunate friends and relatives in the East. The drought caused tight money and low employment. Despair was the lot of many a hardy soul.

Then, in the darkness of a cold January morning, came news that gladdened the heart of nearly every Kansan; the future seemed less dreary, spirits soared, and hopes were revived. Kansas had been admitted as the 34th state of the Union.

Joyful as the news was, it was not unexpected. For four years Kansans had been attempting to write a constitution under which the territory might be admitted as a state. Instruments drawn at Topeka, Lecompton, and Leavenworth had failed for various reasons—but the basic one, of course, was slavery versus freedom. A fourth constitution had been written at Wyandotte in 1859 and an admission bill introduced in congress the next year. Though the bill had passed the house of representatives, the senate's Southern bloc was able to keep it buried. In December the Kansas bill was brought up in the second session and in January, 1861, after the senators of seceding states had begun to withdraw, it finally was passed by both houses. President James Buchanan signed the bill into law on January 29.

Overanxious Topeka editors began to announce admission after
the bill passed the senate on January 21. The Topeka Tribune, January 26, 1861, stated:

KANSAS A STATE.

From the following dispatch to the Leavenworth Times, it will [be] seen that our hopes have at last been realized, and Kansas admitted, a bright, new ★, to adorn the glorious constellation: St. Louis, Jan. 21, 11 P.M.

J. K. BARTLETT:—The Kansas Bill passed the Senate with Fitch's amendment, relating to Judiciary, by a vote of 36 to 16. McKee & Fishback.

There is no doubt at all as to the success of the Bill in the House.

Gov. Robinson can now call together our State law-makers, lubricate the wheels of government and "we'll all take a ride."

"In Dixie Land we'll take our stand—"

Further rejoicing deferred until next week.

The Topeka State Record carried the news on the same date in a column Headlined "Kansas Admitted."

A second and more general round of rejoicing was had within the territory after the Kansas bill passed the house on January 28. The first to announce the news this time was the Leavenworth Conservative, established only two days before. A telegram announcing house passage was sent by Kansas Congressional Delegone Marcus J. Parrott to Abel Carter Wilder, chairman of the Republican central committee for Kansas whose brother, Daniel Webster Wilder, was editor of the Conservative. So it was that within an hour, by four o'clock in the morning of January 29, 1861, this newcomer to the Kansas journalistic scene had scooped all its established contemporaries. Unfortunately no copies of that famous Conservative extra are known to exist. The next regular edition of the paper, however, perpetuated its feat:

KANSAS IN THE UNION!!

WE WILL FIGHT FOR THE UNION.

The news of the admission of Kansas, announced by The Conservative yesterday—and only by The Conservative, no other paper in Kansas having the news—was the most important that ever reached our borders. . . .
KANSAS ADMITTED!

Reception of the News!

Yesterday morning, The Conservative, in an extra, announced to the people of Leavenworth the long-wished for and glorious tidings of the passage of the Kansas Bill. The news flew like wild-fire. Men seemed to forget all other considerations, and to unite heart and hand in giving expression to the universal joy. At every corner might be seen throngs of enthusiastic people giving vent in cheers to the general gladness. At an early hour a large number of the members of the bar waited on Chief Justice [Thomas] Ewing and Judge [William C.] McDowell, with their congratulations, and spent with them an hour of unwonted hilarity. About noon, old Kickapoo [historic cannon now in the museum of the Kansas State Historical Society], in the presence of a joyous crowd, sent forth, in thunder tones, a greeting to the now sister State of Missouri. The day was given up to general rejoicing. Those who entertain the singular notion that the people of Kansas didn't want to be admitted, would have been startled by the demonstrations of yesterday. Then hurra for the State of Kansas! Our days of probation have been long and tedious, but we believe the future, upon which we are about entering, will amply compensate for the dangers and toils of the past.

Col. Slough, Lieut. Gov. Slough, (if he had been elected), was seen yesterday in company with one of the Democratic candidates for the Supreme Court, consulting in regard to the possible chance of getting a new count of the votes for State officers under the Wyandot Constitution. It is needless to remark that the quasi Judge was one Stinson.

The State Treasurer.

The State Treasurer elect was seen shortly after the admission news was received, seated on the ammunition chest of the Kickapoo cannon. An impression having gained credit that the State treasure (and some Territorial bonds) was contained in the chest, a demonstration was made by certain State officers elect to capture the cannon, chest and treasure, with a view of distributing the contents as advance salaries. The timely rescue of the Treasurer and cannon by the Shields’ Guards, headed by their valiant Captain, prevented the improper use of the public funds. This illustrates the necessity of an efficient military organization.

Singular Effects of the Admission News.

An eminent member of the Judiciary of this State, and a General (?) under the Territorial military organization, were seen on the Upper Esplanade within fifteen minutes after the news was received, in the act of standing on their heads. What does this mean? Is there a secret organization among us?

Effects of Admission.

We have great respect for the proverb, “There is a time for all things,” &c. We were pained to notice yesterday, several gentlemen in high social standing, gentlemen who do or will hold, by the suffrages of their countrymen, high official positions under the new State, walking (or attempting to) the streets of our city in a state of inebriety.—This is sad indeed.

Let Us Rejoice!

Now that Kansas is admitted, let us all take heart—hope on and hope ever. Let us forget border wars, drouth, and hard times. A new era is to be inaugurated, and those who have undergone the privations of the pioneer, may
date from this a cessation of terrors, uncertainties and privations, and look confidently for the time when they shall reap their reward.

With the fairest land and sky in (what we hope may yet prove) our united and glorious Union, who can predict the future wealth, prosperity and grandeur of this, our free State of Kansas?

LET US ALL REJOICE!

In the troubles of Kansas was created that great party which, at the last national election, gave to the nation a President. Our position, as the battle ground upon which the new slavery issue was fought, gave us a prominence for which subsequent events developed our fitness. Upon us—a new people—emigrants, and soldiers of fortune all, was precipitated the most momentous question which has ever yet agitated the American people. We met the issue. The history of Kansas, even now, stands prominent in the annals of the nation. To rehearse the story of the struggle between slavery and freedom in this Territory, would be but to recount a story familiar to the whole civilized world. Now is not the time or place for such a history.

The election of Lincoln, glorious as was the triumph, was, in our estimation, far less important and decisive than the admission of Kansas. Against our devoted people have been arrayed the whole force of the slavery power. The ingenuity of the pro-slavery partisans has been exerted to its utmost to prevent the recognized expression of the will of the Free State people of Kansas. Every resource having been exhausted, the persistent, manly efforts, and the godlike courage of our people have at last prevailed, and the glorious reward, so gallantly earned, has been doled out to us with an unwilling hand. Yet we accept the boon—accept it gratefully, and hasten to take our place as a free State in the glorious Confederacy. Knowing, as we do, the resources of our State, and the courage and endurance of our people, we feel that this accession will go far to fill the gap made by the seceding States.

Our people have an abiding love for, and a loving faith and confidence in, the Union.—This love and faith has been bred in the bone—it has stood the test of desertion, and even oppression; but is as strong and confident as ever. For them, we send greeting to the sister States, and if ever the time should come when the Union and the Constitution should call for defenders, we pledge the faith and the strong arm of that gallant people, who, for the institutions they loved, have heretofore trod the wine-press of oppression, and come out unscathed in honor from the trial.

Then, to our Republican brethren of Kansas we send one joyous greeting—to Republicans everywhere we extend the same joyous greeting. The grand culminating triumph [of] Republicanism has been achieved. Kansas has been admitted.¹

A sister Leavenworth paper, the Herald, took a momentarily realistic view of admission in its issue of January 30, 1861:

The rejoicing over the momentous event was quite boisterous, but by no means general. The principal participants were State officers elect and individuals who are not burthened with taxes. Could the citizens of Kansas be divested of political bias on the subject, they would soon realize that our admission places us in a situation similar to the man who bought the elephant, and impoverished himself in satisfying the capacious maw of the monster

¹. The Leavenworth Conservatice, January 30, 1861.