

By the Kansas Historical Society

## Fighting for Slavery in Kansas Territory

Missouri was a slave state. Since Missouri and Kansas share a border, many proslavery Missourians were interested in Kansas Territory. They wanted to see slavery expanded. The hope was to extend southern farming practices onto the fertile lands of Kansas.

Those who supported slavery feared antislavery settlers in Kansas. They felt that if Kansas became built on slavery, it was feared that their very way of life was threatened. Slaveholders on the Missouri border also worried about what would happen to their slaves if Kansas became a free state.

Some Missouri leaders encouraged proslavery settlement in Kansas. They also encouraged Missourians to cross over the border to vote illegally in Kansas political elections. In this way they hoped to influence the outcome in Kansas. Conflicts along the border became a way of life. Proslavery Missourians who crossed over the border were called **"border ruffians"** or **"bushwackers."**

Most people in Kansas Territory lived with the threat of violence over the issue of slavery. The year 1856 was a particularly violent one. Border ruffians attacked the free-state city of Lawrence, burning down businesses and homes. David R. Atchison, the former U.S. Senator from Missouri, addresses the raiders as "border-ruffian brothers."

In 1856 David R. Atchison and other proslavery supporters wrote the pamphlet *The Voice of Kansas: Let the South Respond*. They wrote in favor of making Kansas a slave state. They also were appealing for money and support for the proslavery cause. What is presented here is an excerpt from the pamphlet.



Camp Saunders was a proslavery settlement located 12 miles southeast from Lawrence, Kansas Territory, in 1856.

## THE VOICE OF KANSAS LET THE SOUTH RESPOND

APPEAL BY THE LAW AND ORDER PARTY OF KANSAS TERRITORY TO THEIR FRIENDS IN THE SOUTH, AND TO THE LAW-ABIDING PEOPLE OF THE UNION.

... That a state of ... civil war exists among us is abundantly evident: the "law and order party" on the one side, opposed on the other by the abolitionists, sent out and sustained by the Emigrant Aid Societies of the North. A brief review of the points at issue, and their controlling circumstances, may be useful to justify this our appeal for aid.



David R. Atchison

In territorial politics, the question of free or slave State has swallowed up every other. The abolitionists on the one hand ... regard slavery as the greatest possible evil; they deem it a monstrous national crime ... they feel bound each to struggle for its overthrow; ... their perverted consciences justify any mode of warfare against slaveholders ... many of them already go so far as to oppose all law, religion, property, order, and subordination among men, as subversive of what they are pleased to call man's natural and inherent equality. And with them it is no mere local question of whether slavery shall exist in Kansas or not, but one of far wider significance, a question of whether it shall exist any where in the Union. Kansas they justly regard as the mere outpost in the war now being waged between the ... North, and the South; and winning this great outpost ... they ... will be open to an easy conquest of the whole field. Hence the extraordinary means the abolition party has adopted to flood Kansas with the most fanatical and lawless portion of northern society; and hence the large sums of money they have expended to surround their brother Missourians with obnoxious and dangerous neighbors.

On the other hand, the pro-slavery element of the "law and order party" of Kansas, looking to the Bible, find slavery ordained of God; they find there, as by our law, slavery made "an inheritance to them and their children forever." ...

... we believe [slavery] is a trust and guardianship given us of God for the good of both races. Without sugar, cotton, and cheap clothing, can civilization maintain its progress? Can these be supplied without slavery? ...

DAVID R. ATCHISON,  
WM. H. RUSSELL,  
JOS. C. ANDERSON,  
A.G. BOONE,  
B.F. STINGFELLOW,  
J.BUFORD.

June 21st, 1856