

By the Kansas Historical Society

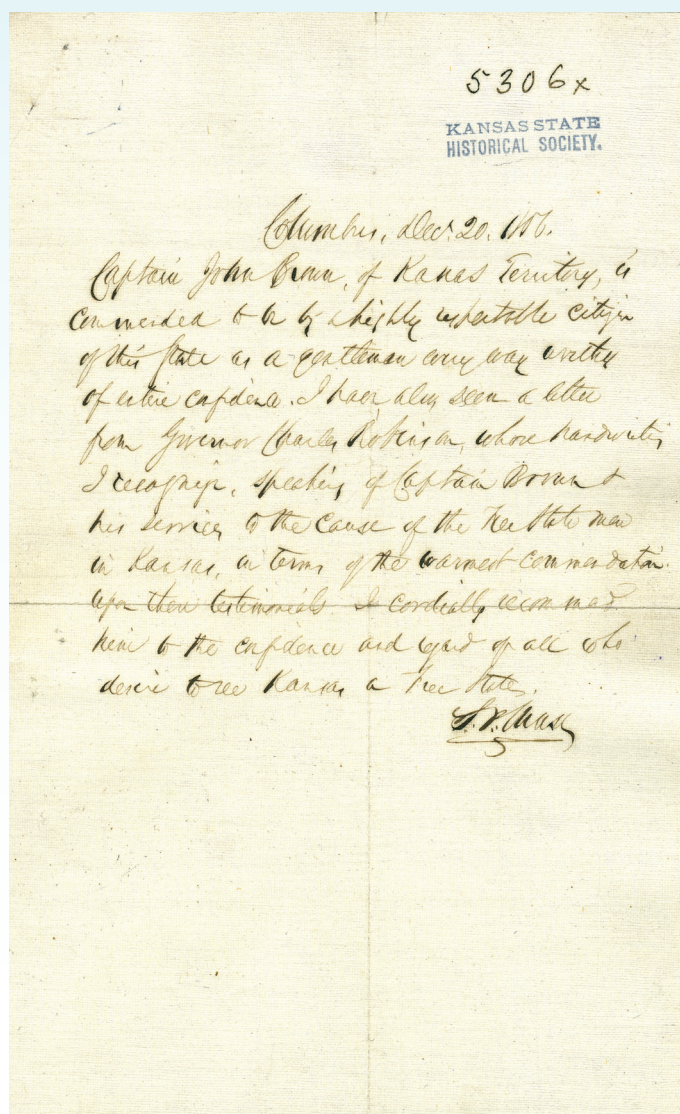
Letter from Salmon P. Chase, the governor of Ohio, December 20, 1856

Throughout his political career Salmon P. Chase advocated for the abolishment of slavery. In this letter he voices his support for John Brown and the free-state movement in Kansas Territory.

Columbus, Dec 20, 1856

Captain John Brown, of Kansas territory, is commended to be a highly respectable citizen of this State as a gentleman every way worthy of entire confidence. I have also seen a letter from Governor Charles Robinson whose handwriting I recognize, speaking of Captain Brown & his services to the cause of the Free State men of Kansas, in terms of the warmest commendation upon their testimonials I cordially recommend him to the confidence and regard of all who desire to see Kansas a Free State.

S. P. Chase



Pike

During a trip east in 1857 to raise funds for his cause, John Brown contracted with blacksmith Charles Blair of Collinsville, Connecticut, for several hundred pikes. Pikes are weapons with long wooden shafts ending in pointed steel heads, typically used by foot soldiers. Blair agreed to make 1,000 pikes for Brown at \$1 each, payable in installments.

Brown hid the pikes and a collection of firearms at a farm in Maryland near the U.S. arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Brown and his followers stormed Harpers Ferry but were eventually captured and he was later hanged for treason. Brown had intended to use the pikes and the stolen weapons from Harpers Ferry to arm slaves and spark a slave revolt.



The pikes Brown ordered consisted of (A) a 9 1/2 to 10-inch long double-edged blade of forged cast steel, (B) a 4 1/2 inch wide iron guard, (C) a 3 1/4 inch long, tapering ferrule, and a screw. These were fitted onto six-foot ash handles (D).