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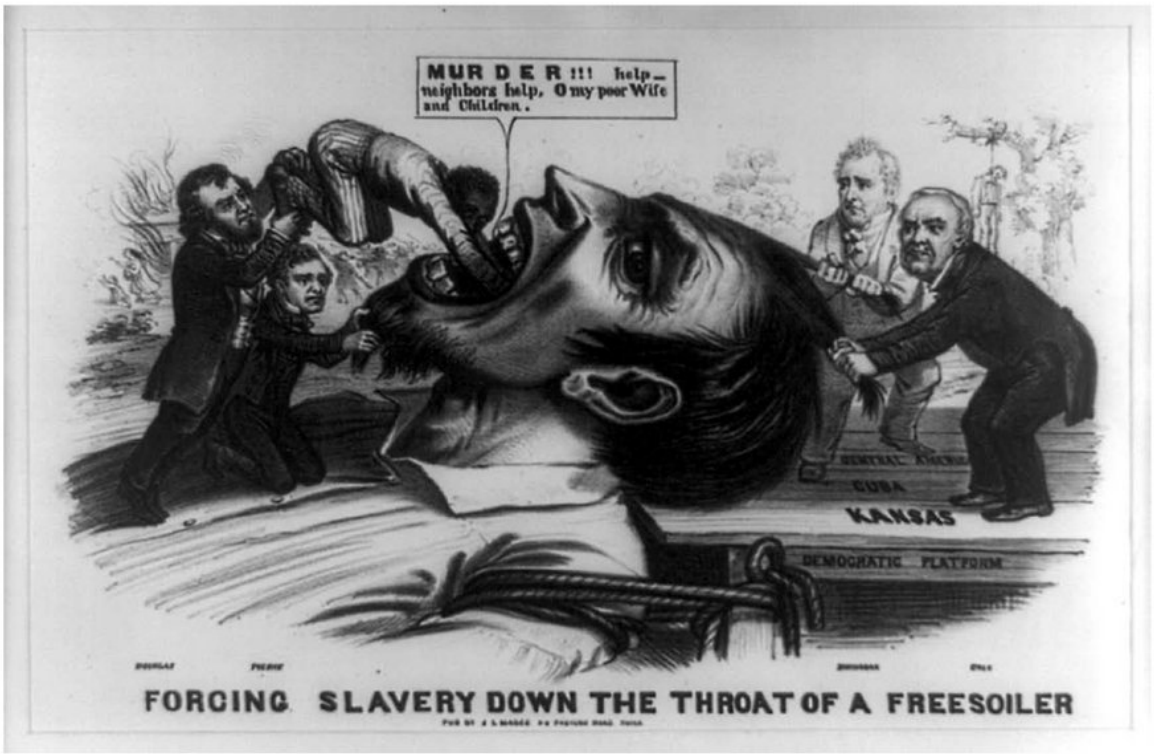
"ARE WE READY FOR THE CONFLICT?"



Cartoon, drawn by John L. Magee in 1856, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Black Abolitionist Response to the Kansas Crisis, 1854–1856

by Zachary J. Lechner

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On the evening of May 22, 1856, Frederick Douglass delivered an address titled "Aggressions of the Slave Power" to a meeting of the Rochester (New York) Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. He spoke just one day after the proslavery raid on the free-state stronghold of Lawrence, Kansas. For over a year a de facto civil war had raged in Kansas between antislavery and proslavery factions, as they battled over whether Kansas would enter the Union as a free or slave state. The fight was waged outside Kansas, as well. Hours before Douglass's speech, South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks beat Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts senseless at his desk in the Senate chamber of the U.S. Capitol as retribution for Sumner's confrontational "The Crime against Kansas" speech. Douglass's oration in Rochester outlined the deep divisions between North and South engendered by slavery. He bemoaned what he considered the proslavery focus of President Franklin Pierce's administration. The chief executive, he advanced, allowed "border ruffians" from Missouri to assault free-state settlers and push their proslavery agenda by voting illegally in territorial elections. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act's repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which had provided for clear divisions between free and slave states, was very significant. Douglass argued, "Until that act of bad faith on the part of the South, the North continued to believe in the South. They can believe in it no longer, and hence no compromise is possible." A few moments later Douglass added, "Since compromises are out of the question, nothing remains but to fight the battle out. One or the other—Liberty or Slavery must be the Law giver in this country. Both cannot reign, and one must be put down."[1]

The vitriolic nature of Douglass's speech is a striking example of the militancy that the Kansas crisis promoted in black abolitionists. Their increasingly violent language demonstrated their frustration with the continued presence and threatened expansion of slavery into the territories and their dissatisfaction with a political process that was slow and hostile to African American interests. These grievances helped to fuel blacks' escalating militancy during the decade. Importantly, however, blacks' vituperative rhetoric did not segue into murderous or destructive exhortations. Rather, as historian C. Peter Ripley has written, "Black abolitionists wavered between hope and despair during the 1850s."[2] One part of this dichotomy is embodied in Douglass's pessimism about defeating the entrenched position of the so-called "Slave Power" in the national government. Black abolitionists worried that white Northerners either did not recognize or did not care about the proslavery threat.

At other times, African American leaders were more hopeful. Many of them regarded white Northerners' outrage over the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska bill as profoundly significant and even encouraging.[3] The bill, approved by Congress on May 26, 1854, and signed by President Pierce four days later, opened the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to popular sovereignty, whereby the citizens of the territories could decide if they wished to allow slavery within their borders. Blacks hoped that white outrage would translate into a large-scale Northern movement to destroy the Slave Power. They also anticipated that the fighting in Kansas and Sumner's caning would further awaken Northerners to the proslavery menace. Prominent African Americans such as Douglass remained vague about how the North would counteract

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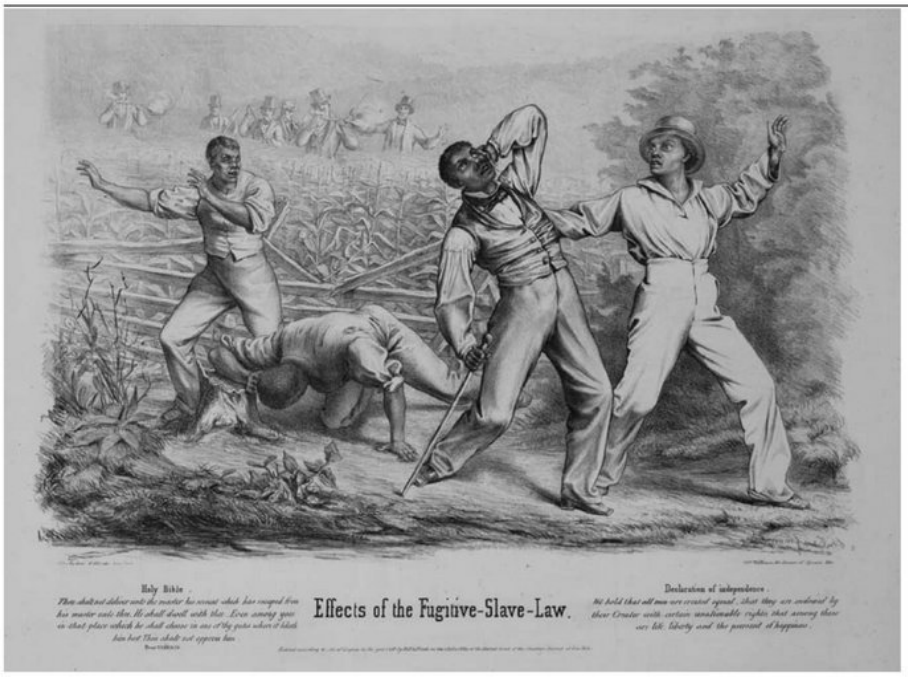
The author would like to thank Michael A. Morrison for helping to conceptualize this project and Robert E. May, Elizabeth R. Varon, and *Kansas History*'s anonymous reviewers for their comments on the manuscript.

1. "Aggressions of the Slave Power" in *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews: Volume 3: 1855–63*, ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 126.
2. C. Peter Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: Volume IV: The United States, 1847–1858* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 207.
3. As one of the cornerstones of the antebellum sectional crisis, the Kansas-Nebraska Act and its ensuing political fallout have been discussed in numerous works. Starting points include William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chs. 30–31; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), ch. 5; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), particularly chs. 7 and 9; and James C. Malin, *The Nebraska Question, 1852–1854* (Lawrence, Kans.: James C. Malin, 1953).



Historians of black abolitionism acknowledged the psychological toll that the sectional crises of the 1850s took on black leaders, in particular the enactment and enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law and the issuance of the Dred Scott decision. The gruesome results of the former are depicted in this 1850 political cartoon, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Slave Power incursions, but they believed that the eventual abolition of slavery hinged on an informed and engaged Northern populace. Thus, black abolitionist responses to the Kansas struggle operated on a continuum, teetering between optimism and pessimism.[4]

Studies focusing on Northern free blacks and their communities have given scant attention to the reaction of African American leaders to the Kansas issue.[5] Although historians of the sectional crisis seem to acknowledge the ambiguities of black sentiment toward North-South tensions, they have not developed in-depth examinations of black leaders' thoughts on the divisive issues of the 1850s. The debate over Kansas has been especially overlooked. Some scholars, such as James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, mentioned the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the territorial struggle in their works, but they eschewed discussions of black responses, aside from African American support for the free-soil rhetoric of the Republican Party. Similarly, historians of black abolitionism acknowledged the psychological toll that the sectional crises of the 1850s took on black leaders, though they rarely drew ties to Kansas. Collectively these scholars demonstrated that sectionalism led to increased African American militancy and interest in emigration from the United States.[6]

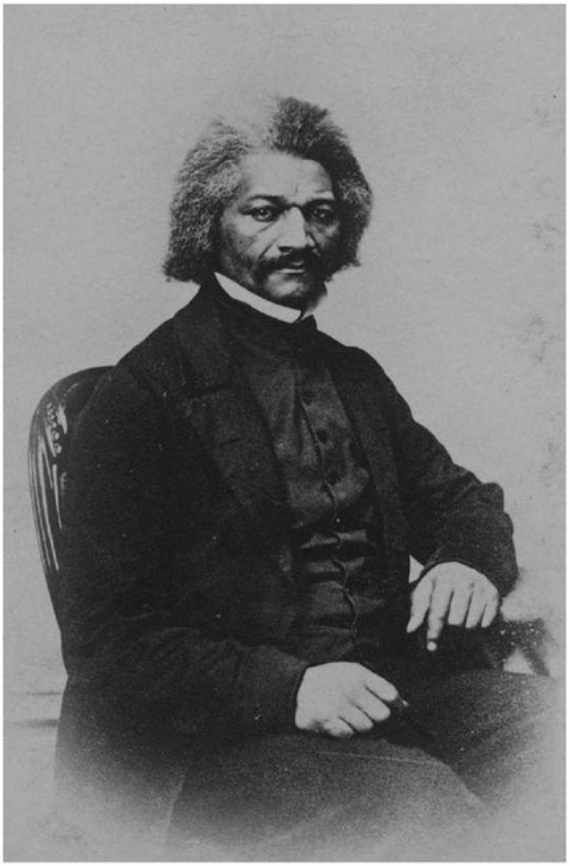
4. Historians have written extensively about the Kansas-Nebraska Act and Bleeding Kansas, generally focusing on the ideological reasons that drove proslavery and free-state factions to kill each other. In the mid-1950s, Alice Nichols argued for the centrality of slavery in debates over Kansas's status, and James A. Rawley, in the following decade, made the case that racism in both the proslavery and free-state factions was central. The two sides hated blacks, he contended, and free-state settlers wished to keep both free blacks and black slaves out of Kansas. By contrast, Paul Wallace Gates insisted that land concerns, not slavery or race, fed territorial strife. Gunja SenGupta took a more moderate position, stressing the importance of economic issues, along with political and moral concerns over slavery. Most recently, Nicole Etcheson has asserted that proslavery and free-state settlers battled over differing interpretations of liberty. Alice Nichols, *Bleeding Kansas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954); James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969); Paul Wallace Gates, *Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts over Kansas Land Policy, 1854–1890* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1954); Gunja SenGupta, *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Master and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854–1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). For a view similar to Etcheson's, see Michael A. Morrison's earlier *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 159. Gunja SenGupta provides an excellent overview of Bleeding Kansas historiography in her review essay "Bleeding Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Winter 2001–2002): 318–41.

5. For a consideration of black abolitionist historiography, see Manisha Sinha, "Coming of Age: The Historiography of Black Abolitionism," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: The New Press, 2006), 23–38.

6. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 257–58, 260–63; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (1969; repr., DeCapo, 1991), 217–22, 229–35. The Hortons and Quarles are careful to assert that most Northern free blacks continued to oppose emigration in the 1850s. See also Harry Reed, *Platform for Change: The Foundations of the Northern Free Black Community, 1775–1865*

On the issue of militancy, historians emphasized the impact of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott case. Historian Benjamin Quarles wrote in *The Black Abolitionists*, "The militant spirit among Negroes was fanned full sail in 1857 by the Dred Scott decision." Likewise, Horton and Horton noted the promotion of black armament by the Garrisonian abolitionist Charles Lenox Remond and the justifications given by Frederick Douglass for killing slave hunters empowered by the Fugitive Slave Law.[7] This focus on extreme militancy during the 1850s neglects black leaders' views of the Kansas struggle, which generated harsh rhetoric, but rarely calls to unprovoked violence. Black abolitionists often placed their critiques in a larger context; they combined their outrage over the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, conflating the danger of slave catching with slavery's expansion.

Black activists recognized the complicated environment in which they protested the proslavery position. Their role was largely reactive due to their tenuous social and racial positions. Black and white political abolitionists sought similar results, but blacks faced greater difficulties. Northern racial discrimination acted as an additional obstacle to the effort to promote the unpopular cause of immediate abolition. Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease have elucidated the divisions among African American and white abolitionists.[8] In general, black activists focused more intently on the plight of Northern free blacks and on community building than did their white allies. The cause of political abolitionism, in contrast to Garrisonian abolitionism, sought constitutional remedies to black enslavement. Due in part to its more single-minded goals of legally outlawing slavery and restricting the influence of Southerners in Washington, this ideology guided black and white reformers along similar paths. Nevertheless, African Americans recognized that impassioned responses to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the violence in Kansas Territory could not by themselves bring abolition about. Blacks had to rely on the assistance of like-minded whites, in the Northern public and in Congress, in order to fight the slaveocracy. They framed their battle as one aimed at spreading black influence.



Amongst his other abolitionist activities, Frederick Douglass, pictured here ca. 1870, published a series of newspapers, including Frederick Douglass's Paper *out of Rochester, New York, from 1847 until 1863. This paper, which mostly found its way into the hands of antislavery whites, offers invaluable information on the opinions of black leaders regarding obstacles to abolition like the Kansas-Nebraska Act.*

(East Lansing: Michigan State Press, 1994), 166, 199–200; Joel Schor also notes the overall effect of the sectional crises of the 1850s in driving black militancy in *Henry Highland Garnet: A Voice of Black Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 136–39, 144–45, 216–17; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830–1861* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 243, 255–77; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970; repr., 1973), 274–76.

7. Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 230; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 257. These authors and Foner also describe the formation of black militias after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law: Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 229–30; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 263–64; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 274–75.

8. Pease and Pease, *They Who Would be Free*, ch. 1.

An examination of this battle adds a new layer to the history of African American political thought during the 1850s. The struggle evoked a less violent strain of militancy, which operated within a framework that varied between optimism and pessimism about the meaning and outcome of the crisis. This dichotomy is the primary concern of this essay. In order to access these complex attitudes, this essay's methodology centers on an examination of black abolitionist newspapers. It draws heavily from *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, published in Rochester, New York, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary's *Provincial Freeman*, founded and published by American expatriates living in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Most copies of these newspapers probably found their way into the hands of antislavery whites. Regardless, these publications offer invaluable information on the opinions of the black leaders on which this essay focuses. "Aside from furnishing a vehicle for self-expression," Quarles stated, "these newspapers furnished an outlet for the frustrations of the Negro, and his blueprints for a new relationship between white and black Americans." African American meetings, including state conventions throughout the free states, often forwarded the minutes of their proceedings to *Frederick Douglass' Paper* and the *Provincial Freeman*. Douglass's publication, in particular, featured a centralized forum for many of the key black abolitionist voices of the day, including William J. Watkins, William Wells Brown, and William Still. These newspapers therefore served as important repositories of African American abolitionist thought.[9]

For black abolitionists the debate over slavery in Kansas was no abstraction. African Americans' anti-Nebraska sentiment, rather than being simply a rhetorical position from which to promote abolition, drew on the fear of slavery actually expanding into the territory. They agreed with white Northerners who believed that eastern Kansas's fertile soil could produce large yields and promote slavery.[10]

9. Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 89. The *Provincial Freeman*, co-edited by Cary and Reverend Samuel Ringgold Ward, is useful because, despite being published in Canada, recent African American migrants to Canada wrote for the paper, and it accepted contributions from blacks residing in the United States. Douglass claimed three thousand subscribers in 1855. See Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1855), 394; online at http:etext.Virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DouMybo.html. The *Provincial Freeman* claimed to have a larger subscription list than Douglass's publication, but even so, the Canadian paper's circulation probably remained low. Yet, it is likely that issues of black newspapers moved about in black (and white) circles, possessing a greater influence than their modest subscription tallies suggest.

10. William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852–1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 75.

William J. Wilson, the Brooklyn correspondent for *Frederick Douglass' Paper* writing under the name "Ethiop," illustrated his fellow blacks' concerns. He demonstrated the extreme anxiety that the Kansas-Nebraska Act induced in many African Americans, as they expected that slavery would flourish in Kansas and possibly even the less hospitable Nebraska territory. "Already I hear the sound of the auction hammer," Wilson wrote. "Already do I see husbands and wives, parents and children, separated, manacled and driven off to the dark and lone swamps of Nebraska. . . . Already do I see the jaws of the ferocious bloodhounds dyed in the red gore, and the poor victims' whitened bones as monumental curses resting in the mountain fastness and plains of Kansas."[11] William J. Watkins shared Wilson's fears. Hailing from a prominent free black family in Baltimore, Watkins served as a traveling lecturer and co-editor of *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. He chose less colorful language than Wilson in reproving the Kansas-Nebraska Act, but Watkins blasted the "short-sighted prophets" who considered the Nebraska issue an "abstraction." The extension of slavery, he asserted, had nothing to do with a new area's suitability for farming. The Slave Power would push slavery wherever it could, if permitted. Watkins stated that one had to look no further than Kansas's election of a proslavery territorial representative in late 1854 to understand the strength and potential of the proslavery influence in the newly formed area.[12]

Watkins effectively distilled black fears of slavery's stretching into Kansas while also epitomizing the hopefulness of African American abolitionists about the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He and other black leaders expressed joy at the scores of anti-Nebraska meetings held throughout the North in early 1854. In a March 3 editorial entitled "Effect of the Nebraska Bill," Watkins advanced a withering condemnation of slaveholding. More important, he exhibited confidence in the bill's ability to consolidate Northern support against the peculiar institution. Watkins ridiculed the hypocrisy of proslavery men who spoke of slavery's "humane and christianizing influence" while brutally mistreating their chattel. He believed that the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Act would draw more attention

11. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 9, 1854. Newspapers were accessed via Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers, 1830–1865* (17 vols.; New York: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1981–1983), microfilm reels 8–10; or online at http:www.accessible.com/accessible. For more biographical information on black abolitionists, see Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 4.

12. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, December 15, 1854.

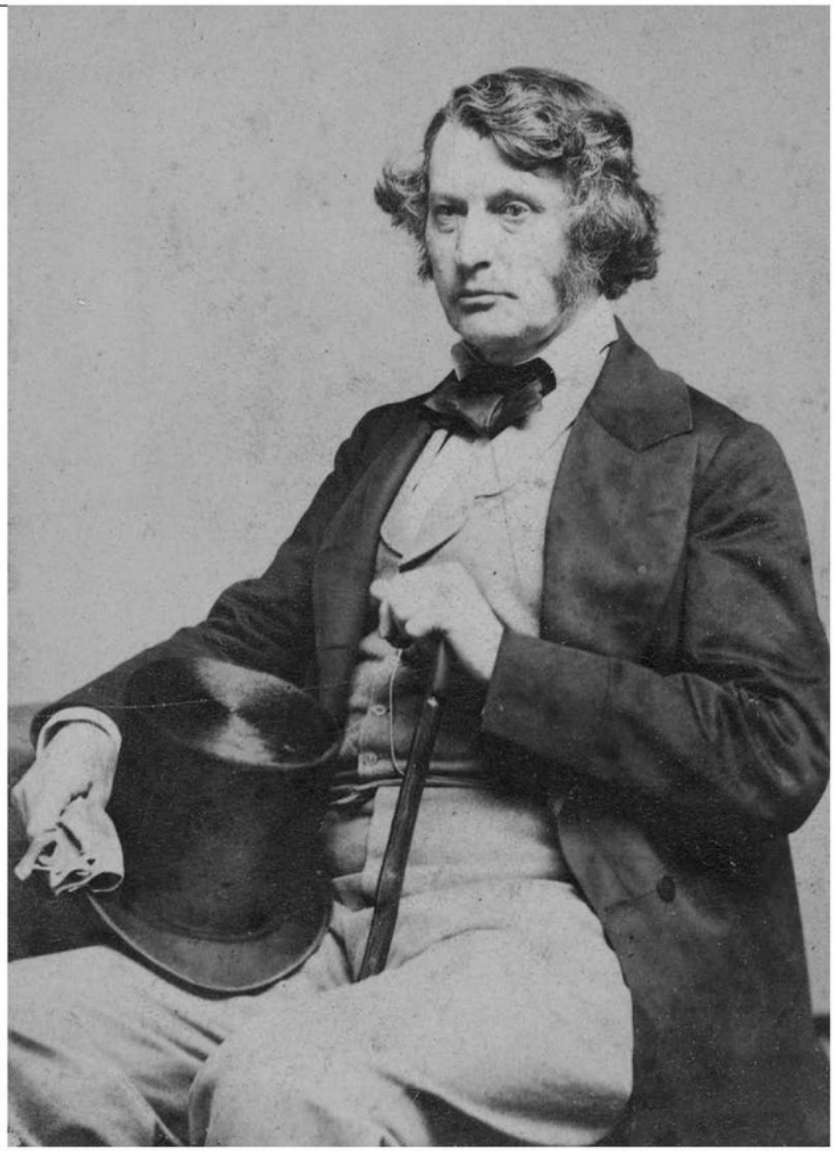
Events such as the 1855–1856 proslavery attacks on free-state settlers in Kansas—including assaults on women and children as seen in this depiction of the May 1856 sack of Lawrence from O. N. Merrill's 1856 publication, A True History of the Kansas Wars*—convinced African Americans that the Slave Power could not help but reveal its dubious aims.*

to slavery's atrocities. "Slaveholders and their apologists are unconsciously erecting a gallows upon which to hang themselves," Watkins wrote. "They are doing much toward the overthrow of the foul system of slavery." Here he alluded to the unintended consequences of the South's thirst to expand slavery. The Slave Power's agitation in this area would not succeed, Watkins assured his readers, because its zealousness exposed unsavory designs.[13] Once the North fully understood the proslavery aim to spread human bondage throughout the entire United States and even south into the Caribbean, black leaders expected Northern whites to vote out Southern-sympathizing politicians.[14] Watkins and others failed to indicate how they expected to deal with a united, proslavery Southern faction alienated by Northern rhetoric that conflated popular sovereignty with slavery extension.

African American abolitionists, encouraged by the anti-Nebraska sentiment sweeping the North, often employed in their writings and speeches the image of an awakening Northern populace. This trope would emerge at various times from 1854 through 1856 as perceived Slave Power threats increased. Writing from his home in New York, the black lecturer Jermain W. Loguen reported, "this Nebraska business is the great smasher in Syracuse, as elsewhere." Loguen served as an Underground Railroad stationmaster in Syracuse and a clergyman in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He noted how he and other black abolitionists could barely keep up with demands for anti-Nebraska speaking engagements. Like Watkins and other allies, Loguen felt that the Nebraska bill, although part of the treacherous designs of the Slave Power, boosted the antislavery movement. Illinois Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the legislation's author, had unknowingly aided the cause of freedom. For Loguen the explosion of anti-Nebraska meetings pointed to a simple conclusion: "The

13. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 3, 1854.

14. Ibid. Northern political antislavery advocates shared black leaders' fears of a Slave Power conspiracy. After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, Northerners increasingly drew on the image of a rapacious Slave Power determined to gobble up land for its brutal institution. Eric Foner largely credited Senator Salmon P. Chase with persuading Northerners to this point of view; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 93–96.



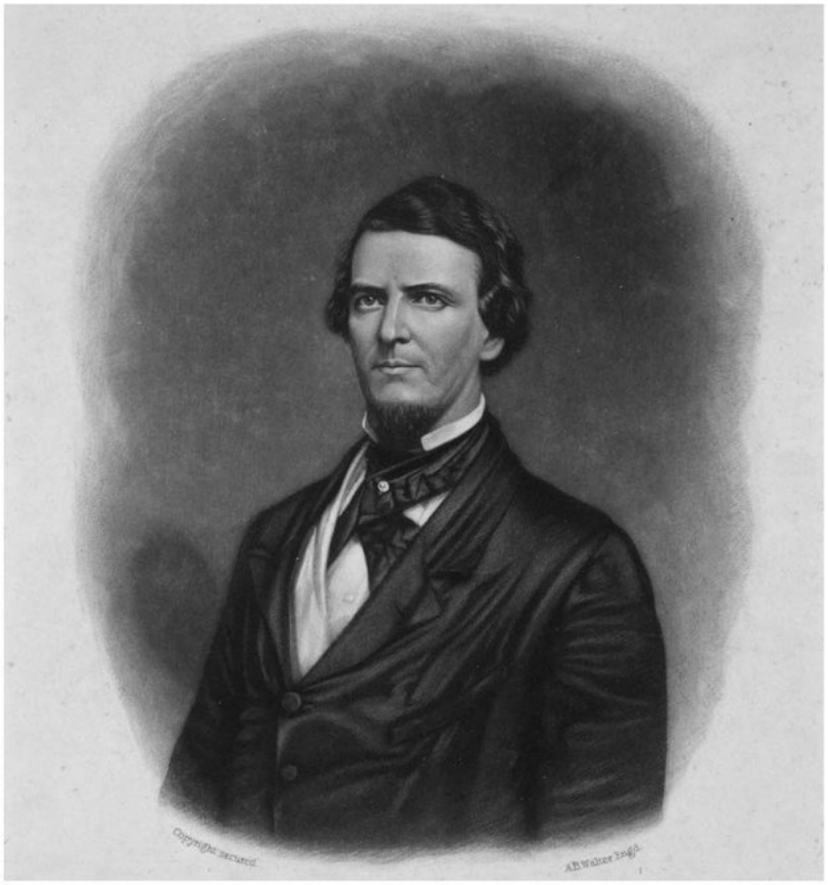
Nebraska bill is waking the people up in all parts of the country."[15]

These anti-Nebraska meetings mentioned by Watkins and Loguen were often biracial and sometimes solely run by African Americans. On March 20, 1854, black Philadelphians held an anti-colonization and anti-Nebraska meeting and passed four resolutions related to the Nebraska bill. Philadelphia blacks echoed many of their brethren in denying Congress's right to legalize slavery. Its violation of the Missouri Compromise, they emphasized, was a relatively small issue compared to the greater evil of allowing slavery to survive and potentially grow. The resolutions also thanked several senators and representatives who objected to the bill.[16]

Critical events, such as the 1855–1856 proslavery attacks on free-state settlers in Lawrence, Kansas, and the brutal caning of Senator Sumner in May 1856, convinced African Americans that the Slave Power could not help but reveal its dubious aims. William Still, a black community leader and conductor on the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia, sought to put the alleged atrocities in perspective. He contended that, as a whole, the Missourians who tried to make Kansas a slave state were no worse than the rest of slaveholding Southerners, yet he considered them less secretive in how they employed their tyrannical methods. They openly attacked free-state settlers and violated voting regulations. Ultimately, Still advanced, the border ruffians' actions would probably benefit the side of antislavery. He declared that the Missourians' "lawless deeds will bear undying testimony against oppression the civilized world over!"[17]

Black abolitionists' beliefs in an "awakening" North rested not only on the proliferation of Northern anti-Ne-

15. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, April 14, 1854.
16. *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, March 30, 1854.
17. *Provincial Freeman*, May 19, 1855.



Two days before the infamous 1856 proslavery attack on free-state settlers in Lawrence, Kansas, Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner (opposite), gave a speech titled "The Crime Against Kansas" on the floor of the U.S. Senate. He accused the authors of the Kansas-Nebraska bill—Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and Andrew Butler of South Carolina—of any number of crimes. The former was, he said, a "noisome, squat, and nameless animal"; the latter had "a mistress who, though ugly to others, is always lovely to him . . . the harlot, Slavery." Two days later, Representatives Preston Brooks (left) and Laurence M. Keitt of South Carolina, along with Henry A. Edmundson of Virginia, approached Sumner as he sat at his desk in the nearly empty Senate chamber. Brooks excoriated Sumner for libeling his home state and Butler, whom he claimed as a relative. Brooks proceeded to beat Sumner over the head with his cane, and when the injured senator stumbled out from under the desk where he had taken refuge Brooks beat him until the cane broke and Sumner was unconscious. Those senators who tried to help Sumner were held at bay by an armed Keitt. Sumner spent three years in recovery, during which time Massachusetts voters again elected him to the Senate. His empty seat served for them as an abolitionist symbol. Image of Brooks courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

braska meetings and sentiments. The election of Northern anti-Nebraska politicians was also critical. Fourteen Northern Democratic senators voted for the Kansas-Nebraska Act and ensured its passage in the upper chamber in early 1854. William J. Watkins spoke for other African American leaders when he denounced these men as "traitors" and fantasized about banishing them from the country.[18] As a result, Watkins and his black colleagues must have felt especially encouraged by the strong showing of Northern anti-Nebraska candidates in November 1854. The Northern public took out its anti-Nebraska ire against the entire "Democracy." The Northern Democratic Party hemorrhaged a remarkable sixty-six congressional seats. Applauding the rebuke of so-called "doughfaces," a term usually reserved for pro-Southern Democrats, Watkins wrote, "The People have administered a withering rebuke to those of their representatives, or the most of them, who basely deserted Freedom in the hour of her extremity."[19]

The doughface dilemma illustrates how the Kansas crisis brought out black feelings of both hope *and* despair.

18. When the House of Representatives passed the Nebraska bill in May, forty-four Northern Democrats voted for the legislation, forty-three opposed it, and five abstained. See Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 78; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 10, 1854.

19. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, December 1, 1854.

Arguably, black abolitionists focused their greatest displays of hatred on doughfaces and their role in the Kansas crisis. For African Americans, any Northern congressional support of the Kansas-Nebraska bill was unforgivable. Blacks could expect Southern congressmen to vote for dissolving the Missouri Compromise and for the possible spread of slavery into new territories. Doughfaces, on the other hand, undermined the united Northern front crucial for defeating the forces of slavery. In the month following the passage of the Nebraska bill, Watkins implored Northern voters to depose doughfaces, who "should be politically decapitated."[20] The defeat of pro-Nebraska congressmen did not end the doughface threat. Black leaders thought that the United States government continued to acquiesce to slaveholders' whims in Kansas. After all, Frederick Douglass argued, the government did not put up adequate resistance to the ballot box-stuffing operations of the border ruffians. Douglass spoke before the Colored Men's State Convention of New York in September 1855. There he drew on the image of a famous battle during the Crimean War. Douglass asserted, "The walls at Sebastopol are of granite. The walls of Kansas are of *dough*!"[21] Over two years after the Kansas-Nebraska Act went into effect, Chicago black leader H. Ford Douglas claimed that "dough-faces [were] innumerable in the North." He decried their support for the Southern idea that slaveholders had the right to take their slaves into any United States territory.[22] In spite of this exasperation, black abolitionists recognized that poll results showed the weakness of the doughface position in the North. They cheered the defeat of Nebraska supporters for reelection and optimistically noted the legislation's potential for girding Northern antislavery feeling. They also believed that the North continued to demonstrate weakness against the aggressive Slave Power.

The successes of anti-Nebraska politicians fueled the hopes of African Americans anxious to see Pierce unseated in the 1856 presidential election. Many black abolitionists, like their white counterparts, rebuked Pierce for signing the Kansas-Nebraska bill and for his criticism of free-state forces. In March 1855 Reverend John W. Lewis, a New Hampshire Baptist minister and antislavery lecturer, took comfort in his state's election of an anti-Nebraska governor and anti-Nebraska state legislators. Because the president hailed from New Hampshire, Lewis understandably viewed the election tallies as a Northern strike against the Kansas-Nebraska Act and against Pierce for his allegedly proslavery sympathies.[23] The Boston correspondent for *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Dr. John Stewart Rock, also bashed Pierce while playing up the significance of the recent New Hampshire elections. "The people are both tired and disgusted with [the Pierce administration]," he advanced. Rock further excoriated the president for assisting the proslavery agenda. This correspondent referred implicitly not only to Pierce's support for the Nebraska bill but also to his refusal to take punitive action against proslavery Missourians who voted illegally on Kansas territorial measures. For Rock and other black leaders the successes of anti-Nebraska candidates at the polls showed that Pierce's collaboration with the Southern aristocracy had backfired; Northern opinion had turned against the president.[24]

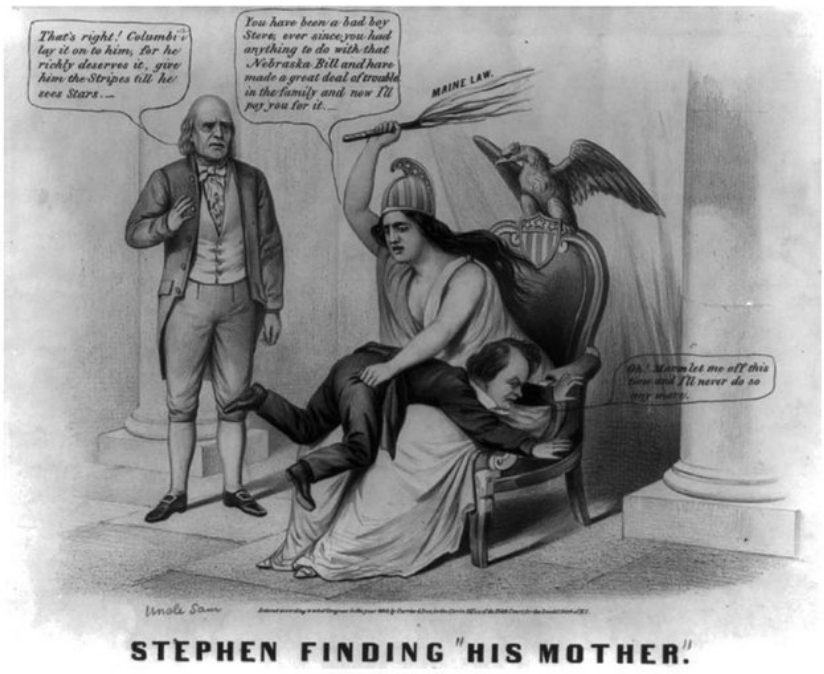
The anti-Pierce sentiments of black abolitionists often ran contrary to their hopes for a unified North. Black leaders targeted Pierce with great intensity while also exhibiting enmity for other individuals who were identified with fomenting the Kansas crisis. Not surprisingly, the Kansas-Nebraska bill's author, Stephen Douglas, came under fire. Anti-Douglas speeches and writings from prominent blacks echoed the attacks on Pierce by portraying the Illinois senator as having sold out the North to the Slave Power. At a spring 1854 meeting of Garrisonian abolitionists, Philadelphia's Robert Purvis, a co-founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society, called Senator Douglas "a man who would offer up to the bloody Moloch of Slavery, the unpolluted and virgin soil of a territory larger than the original thirteen States."[25] Joseph C. Holly of Rochester,

20. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 23, 1854. In the December 1, 1854, issue, Watkins celebrated the "political decapitat[ion]" of pro-Nebraska politicians in the midterm elections.

21. Speech of Frederick Douglass at Colored Men's State Convention of New York, Troy, September 4, 1855, in *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840–1865, Volume I: New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio*, ed. Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 96.

22. Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840–1865, Volume II: New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, Illinois, Massachusetts, California, New England, Kansas, Louisiana, Virginia, Missouri, South Carolina* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 78. H. Ford Douglas delivered his speech on November 15, 1856, at the State Convention of Colored Citizens of the State of Illinois, Alton. Soon, Douglas would become even more closely identified with Kansas; see Roger D. Cunningham, "Douglas's Battery at Fort Leavenworth: The Issue of Black Officers During the Civil War," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 23 (Winter 2000): 200–217. Although contemporary references to Douglas often spell his name "Douglass," the author chose to use the spelling preferred by Ripley in the bound version of *The Black Abolitionist Papers*.

23. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, April 27, 1855.
24. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, April 6, 1855.
25. *The Liberator*, May 19, 1854.



Not surprisingly Stephen Douglas, after helping to draft the Kansas-Nebraska bill, came under the fire of black abolitionists. Northerners opposed to the Illinois senator's support of Southern interests lobbed similar criticisms. Such censure is seen in this 1860 cartoon, which depicts Douglas being paddled by "Mother" Columbia (with a "Maine Law" switch, a possible reference to one of the many laws enacted in Northern states to oppose the Fugitive Slave Law). Uncle Sam lends support, stating "give him the Stripes till he sees Stars." Cartoon courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

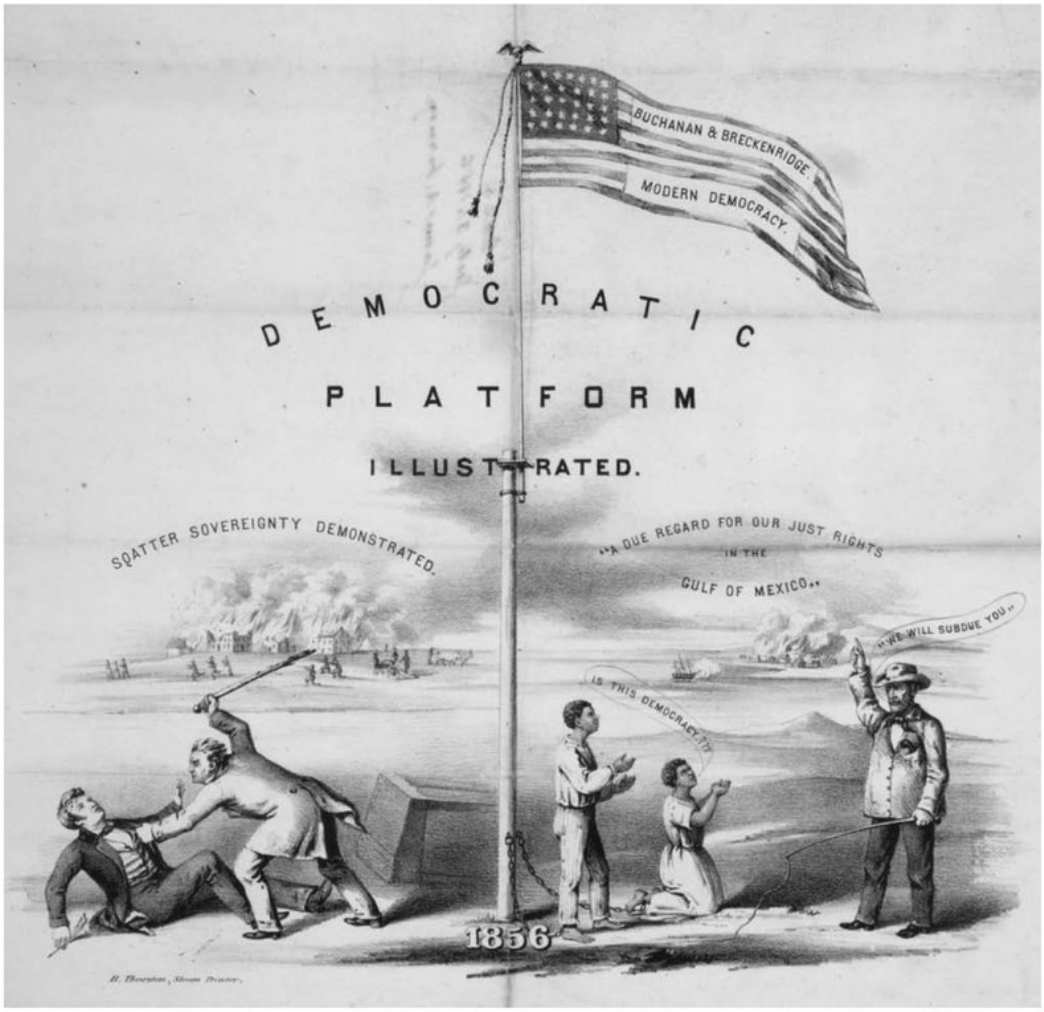
New York, exhibited his anti-Douglas fervor in verse. The black community leader and poet believed that Douglas's supposed desire to increase his fame by aligning himself with the proslavery faction would ultimately fail. Addressing Douglas in a tortured rhyme scheme, Holly wrote, "Not by such means is Southern favor bought, / You've rolled and wallowed in the dirt for naught; / Henceforth, saving your bad notoriety, / You'r doomed to moulder in obscurity."[26] William J. Watkins similarly offered harsh rhetoric against Douglas, but he claimed, maintaining the theme of Northern awakening, that Douglas's villainy would eventually rouse the North from its Slave Power-induced sleep. More broadly, black abolitionists condemned Pierce and Douglas's affiliation with the Democratic Party, which they considered the political mouthpiece of the proslavery agenda. African Americans reprimanded the Democracy even as they toasted its "waning influence."[27] Delegates to an 1856 black convention in Ohio spoke for other members of their race when they labeled the party as "the black-hearted apostle of American Slavery" that "has pledged itself to do the menial offices of slavery," promoting slavery expansion and the Fugitive Slave Law, resisting antislavery entreaties, and making a mockery of the country's "great principles of justice."[28]

It should come as no surprise that most black political abolitionists lent their support to the Democrats' new opponent, the Republican Party. Formed from a tenuous coalition of Northern Whigs, former Free Soil Party members, and anti-Nebraska Democrats, the Republicans strongly opposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the further extension of slavery into the territories. Black abolitionists, however, were guarded in their support of Republicanism. The views of the Republican Party certainly trumped what

26. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, July 14, 1854. For more examples of black anti-Douglas sentiment, see *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 3, 1854; June 23, 1854; and October 5, 1855; and *Provincial Freeman*, April 12, 1856.

27. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, April 28, 1854; Foner and Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions*, 1:308.

28. Foner and Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions*, 1:307. Ohio delegates to the 1856 convention specifically condemned Douglas, Pierce, border ruffian leader David Rice Atchison, and John H. Stringfellow, a prominent member of the proslavery faction in Kansas. All of these men, as well as Lewis Cass, the 1848 Democratic presidential nominee and supposed originator of the popular sovereignty doctrine, attracted censure in other black writings and speeches. For a discussion of Cass's connection to popular sovereignty, see Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861*, 57–59. For more on Stringfellow, his brother Benjamin, and their Atchison newspaper, see Bill Cecil-Fronsman, "'Death to all Yankees and Traitors in Kansas': The Squatter Sovereign and the Defense of Slavery in Kansas," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 16 (Spring 1993): 22–33.



The Radical Abolitionist Party, a biracial group that called for the end of slavery throughout the Union, ran New York Senator Gerrit Smith for president in 1856. Most African American abolitionists recognized that the party had little chance for success, though they certainly felt a need to oppose the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan and his running mate, John C. Breckenridge, as this election-year cartoon suggests. Here the "Democratic Platform" is viciously pro-slavery. In the foreground "Squatter Sovereignty [is] Demonstrated," as Brooks beats Sumner and two slaves are chained to the flagpole, asking "Is this Democracy?," while their master promises to subdue them. In the background Lawrence, Kansas, burns (left) as ships fire on Cuba (right), demonstrating Democratic ambitions to extend slave territory. Cartoon courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

African Americans considered the Democrats' proslavery stance, but the Republican platform did not address slavery as an evil institution. In 1855 Jermain W. Loguen noted the new party's pledge not to tamper with slavery where it already existed. Still, Loguen respected the organization for its stance, even if it was not ideal. "If the Republicans can get a good meal at the public gramary [*sic*] this fall," he contended, "it will, perhaps, strengthen up their back bones a little, so that they will 'come up' nearer the broad, true ground of Radical Abolitionists."[29] The Republicans dashed Loguen's hopes when they failed to move toward abolitionism despite their success in the Northern states.

The Radical Abolitionist Party referred to by Loguen never held much favor among blacks. This biracial organization had enjoyed minimal success in the previous decade as the Liberty Party. The Radical Abolitionists, who called for the end of slavery throughout the Union, ran New York Senator Gerrit Smith for president in 1856. Most African American abolitionists recognized that the party had little chance for success. Smith himself contributed funds to the campaign of the 1856 Republican presidential candidate John C. Frémont. Blacks recognized that Northern voters felt more comfortable with the Republicans' less severe position on slavery. Recognizing that Republicans had better chances for victory, Frederick Douglass changed his support in 1856 from Smith to Frémont and showed high hopes for the Republican Party despite its limited goals. He believed that the Republicans would, among other things, stand up against the Slave Power, rid the government of proslavery influences, "give ascendancy to Northern civilization over the bludgeon and bloodhound civilization of the South, and [put] the mark of national condemnation on Slavery."[30]

Far from Frederick Douglass's strong enthusiasm and Loguen's guarded optimism lay the radical slant of H. Ford Douglas. He disagreed vehemently with Frederick Douglass's advocacy of the Republican Party and deplored African Americans who touted Republicanism, because he believed this position led them away from committed abolitionism. "Men who had gloried in the name of abolition all their lives were swallowed up in the Republican maelstrom," H. Ford Douglas stated in a speech shortly after the 1856 elections.[31] In reality H. Ford Douglas paralleled Frederick Douglass's analysis of Republican ideology. The Republican Party's emphasis on protecting white free labor formed a central part of its appeal in the 1850s. Historian Michael F. Holt posited that this appeal "had less to do with what ultimately happened to the West than with the immediate threat of the so-called Slave Power to the rights and liberties of northerners, most of whom had no intention of decamping to Kansas or Nebraska."[32] Regardless, Loguen's comments best represented the opinion of black leaders on the question of proper party affiliation. Most blacks considered the Republican Party their best hope for challenging proslavery incursions in Kansas, bringing the territory in as a free state, and stemming the overall spread of slavery. In their analysis, neither the Democrats, nor the nativist American (or Know-Nothing) Party, could be trusted, so black abolitionists tentatively embraced the Republican Party.[33] They viewed it as malleable and dedicated themselves to holding the party accountable for its antislavery pronouncements. Leading African Americans' feelings about the Republicans were indicative of their general response to the Kansas crisis. Optimism coexisted with a fear that neither Northerners nor Republicans would resist the constant agitation of proslavery adherents.

Not all blacks were convinced that the events in Kansas had made Northerners conscious of the Slave Power's deceptions. African Americans responding to the Kansas controversy often tempered their hope that the North would "awaken" with the concern that this event still had not taken place. Douglass observed on May 25, 1855, that although newspaper reports had made Northerners well aware of the proslavery crimes in Kansas he doubted the North's commitment to an immediate response. He described people on the streets who heard the news of Kansas outrages on the telegraph wires and then proceeded on their way in a state of

29. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, November 9, 1855.

30. "Fremont and Dayton" in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass: Volume II: Pre-Civil War Decade, 1850–1860*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 401.

31. Foner and Walker, eds., *Black State Conventions*, 2:78. For another example of black abolitionists' tepid support for the Republican Party, see the minutes of the August 26, 1856, meeting of Boston's African American citizens in *The Liberator*, September 5, 1856, and Henry Highland Garnet's speech printed in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, October 3, 1856.

32. Michael F. Holt, "Making and Mobilizing the Republican Party, 1854–1860," in *The Birth of The Grand Old Party: The Republicans' First Generation*, ed. Robert F. Engs and Randall M. Miller (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 42–43.

33. For black opposition to the Know-Nothing movement, see *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, July 6, 1854 and January 4, 1855. Blacks generally believed that nativism threatened their rights as well as those of immigrants. William Still credited the resistance of Northern Know-Nothings to a hands-off approach to slavery expansion and their demands to restore the Missouri Compromise. See *Provincial Freeman*, June 23, 1855.

indifference. "The sluggish north is still asleep, or at most, is but half awake, and is not ready for sacrificing anything for the cause of law or liberty in Kansas," Douglass concluded.[34] More realistic than pessimistic, Douglass's assessment left room for the eventual coalescence of Northern resistance against the proslavery influence.

Hope for a revitalized North also underwrote black reactions to Senator Sumner's caning. Like the vast majority of their white counterparts, prominent African Americans lent support for the stricken Massachusetts senator and denigrated his assailant. They felt a special affinity for Sumner, Gerrit Smith, Salmon Chase, and other antislavery or abolitionist senators who sympathized with the plight of free and enslaved blacks.[35] A group of African Americans from Cape Island, in the North, praised Sumner's dedication to aiding "our Down Trodden Breatheren [*sic*]" and wished the senator a quick recovery so that he could continue his work for the black race. Although concerned for the senator's health, black leaders were cognizant of how Sumner's misfortune might work to their advantage. The *Provincial Freeman* blamed the assault, in part, on the conciliatory attitudes of the Northern press and politicians toward the "slaveocrats." One week after the attack, the paper stated that this latest Southern attempt to stifle free speech would prompt "a most powerful rebuke" from Northerners.[36] Similarly, Garrisonian Robert Purvis utilized Sumner's beating. After all, "Any thing, any thing, in God's name, that will tend to establish a backbone for the North, in asserting and maintaining its rights, and without regard to peril or to consequences" should be appreciated.[37] Despite their outrage, black abolitionists expected a proslavery assault in the halls of government to jumpstart or accelerate a Northern backlash against slavery. Overall, they anticipated that the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Bleeding Kansas, and "Bleeding Sumner" would individually or collectively rouse white Northerners to active support of the antislavery cause.

Frederick Douglass, however, proved that black optimism over the Kansas question could veer toward overconfidence. In September 1854 he pushed Northerners to accept the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, but not the development of Kansas as a slave state. Douglass explained, "[the Nebraska] Bill leaves Liberty and Slavery on terms of equality." The main emphasis should be placed on restricting slavery in Kansas, a task Douglass wished to accomplish through free black migration. He proposed that one thousand Northern black families move to Kansas. Slaveholders would recoil at the mere presence of a large free black population, he declared, "as if it were infested by famine, pestilence, and earthquakes."[38] Surprisingly, Douglass hoped that black settlers would be able to vote despite the fact that very few Northern blacks possessed that right and the Kansas-Nebraska Act alluded to exclusively white suffrage. Douglass stressed the legislation's failure to specifically exclude blacks from the voting rolls. Ceding that black suffrage could experience resistance, he fell back on the idea that free black settlement would discourage slaveholders from migrating to Kansas. Douglass appeared to recognize the long odds of his poorly formulated plan. Yet he believed that "to omit any effort or neglect any plan to secure a victory for freedom" might negatively impact the larger battle against slavery.[39] Douglass's idea received some support. The Chicago black abolitionist, Henry O. Wagoner, was "favorably impressed." He told Douglass that slaveholders would indeed want nothing to do with Kansas once they discovered it inhabited by free blacks. Wagoner expected the Northern states to embrace the scheme, but there is no evidence to suggest that significant numbers of Northern blacks followed Douglass's enthusiastic advice.[40]

Benjamin Quarles contended that Douglass "had [not] sufficiently weighed the antipathy in Kansas to people of color."[41] By 1855 African Americans had come to the conclusion that the opposing forces in Kansas had little concern for the black race. Proslavery forces obviously promoted black exploitation, they believed, but freestaters posed an even more insidious obstacle. Freestaters disliked slavery; still, many wished to exclude blacks from Kansas and to keep it free for white men only. Historian Richard H. Sewell correctly noted the larger Free Soil and Republican movements' commitment to political abolitionism. They saw the containment of slavery as a tool for strangling the

34. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, May 25, 1855.
35. See, for example, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 16, 1855; April 6, 1855; and June 29, 1855; and Stephen A. Myers to Gerrit Smith, March 22, 1856, in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. Ripley et al., 4:328.
36. Stephen Smith, Peter Christian, Nathan W. Depee, and George W. Gaines to Charles Sumner, July 24, 1856, in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. Ripley et al., microfilm reel 10; *Provincial Freeman*, June 7, 1856; and May 31, 1856.
37. *The Liberator*, June 13, 1856.
38. "Our Plan for Making Kansas a Free State" in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Foner, 2:313, 312.
39. Ibid., 313–14, 315.
40. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, September 29, 1854.
41. Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom: Blacks and John Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 31.

institution. Race, other scholars have recognized, remained a sensitive issue for antislavery politicians. Eric Foner maintained that many Republicans avoided controversial stances like black equality because they feared rejection at the polls by a racist Northern citizenry.[42] There is no doubt, as Frederick Blue argued, that "most [freesoilers] . . . were eager to keep free blacks out of the territories," even if "their influence did tend to temper the worst aspects of the racism of the other Republican factions." Within Kansas the anti-black thread in free-soil/free-state ideology showed itself in December 1855 when the freestaters ratified a constitution excluding all blacks from the territory.[43] The optimism felt by black leaders in response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, fighting in Kansas, and the outraged reaction to the beating of Senator Sumner turned to despair once they realized how weak freestaters were on the issue of slavery and recognition of their own political impotence set in.

A free black named Samuel Golden offered in the *Christian Recorder* a somewhat more optimistic position on black political leverage. He bemoaned the failure of blacks to petition state legislatures, as he believed this to be an avenue for increasing the rights of African Americans. According to Golden, the passage of legislation like the Nebraska Act might result in "a few public meetings . . . but there generally the matter ends, until something detrimental comes to our notice." Blacks needed to take concrete action to achieve political improvement.[44] Philadelphia's Johnson Woodlin ridiculed Golden's position as out of touch. In a letter to the *Christian Recorder*, he wrote that in the many states where blacks could not vote legislatures had no interest or obligation to grant them their rights. Simply put, Northern African Americans stood outside "the pale of politics." They wielded no political autonomy, Woodlin claimed, and "the powers that be" would make sure that they never could. Most prominent blacks clearly believed that their protests against the Nebraska bill were worthwhile, but they recognized that their forceful words needed wide-scale white support. Both black Garrisonians, who rejected antislavery agitation via political means, and black political abolitionists knew this. Abner H. Francis, a Portland, Oregon, political abolitionist and merchant, went so far as to place black hopes for political change in the hands of sympathetic antislavery whites.[45]

The failure of freesoilers to fight for black rights concerned African American leaders even more than their own political ineffectiveness. By 1855 black abolitionists began to show their understanding of and their disappointment with the free-soil stance. The *Provincial Freeman* observed that Northern whites portrayed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as an assault on white liberty. "The rights of white men had been invaded; a solemn compact entered into with white Americans had been broken," one editorial read. The paper pointed to Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, as proof of the dubiousness of anti-Nebraska sentiment. Greeley had stated a desire to export blacks out of the United States. Prominent African Americans noted the rise of this new breed of antislavery men, those who found slavery distasteful or a threat to free labor, "but who also didn't want the niggers about them."[46] Black newspaper editor Mary Ann Shadd Cary considered this type of antislavery sentiment a critical development. The small group of abolitionists who fought for slaves based on genuine concern was declining, she stated. In their place, rose legions of "abolitionists" who neglected the enslaved individual in favor of protecting their personal liberty. Cary lamented the lack of "[c]ompassion for the slave in his chains." Black abolitionists asserted that struggles for white liberty in Kansas downplayed the exertions of slaves and free blacks, both of whom had few rights to defend.[47]

The belief held by Northern whites that the extension of slavery was detrimental to white independence and rights affected blacks in differing ways. By enlightening fellow Northerners, freesoilers helped to gather the support necessary for restricting slavery. Unfortunately for African Americans, the free-soil position often exhibited as much hatred for blacks as it did for black slavery. Once they understood this stance, blacks found little to support in Frederick Douglass's migration plan. But despite their cynicism, blacks believed that keeping slavery out of Kansas served their cause better than the alternative. They contended,

42. Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), viii; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 262–63.

43. Frederick J. Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848–1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 286; Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 75.

44. *Christian Recorder*, September 16, 1854.

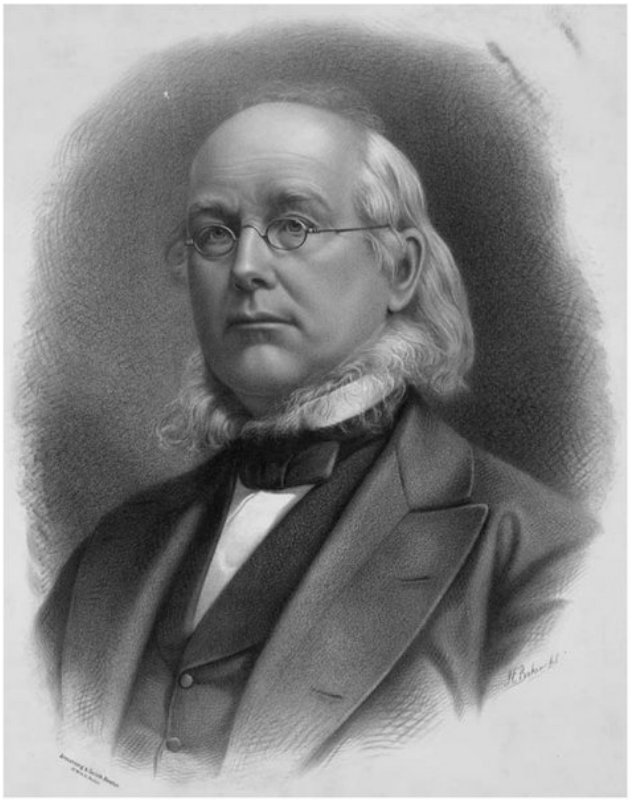
45. *Christian Recorder*, October 18, 1854; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, September 22, 1854. Assuming a less pessimistic point of view, Henry Highland Garnet acknowledged the limitations on black citizenship, but urged enfranchised Northern blacks to exercise their right to vote. See *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, October 3, 1856.

46. *Provincial Freeman*, April 21, 1855; *Provincial Freeman*, January 20, 1855.

47. *Provincial Freeman*, December 6, 1856.

in Quarles's words, "that to save it for partial freedom was an important first step" in the battle to end slavery.[48] The spread of the institution had to be stopped before it could be destroyed.

Although black leaders were concerned about the lukewarm positions held by Northern whites on the slavery issue during the Kansas crisis, they also feared apathy within black ranks. Watkins's lectures in the North drew large crowds of both blacks and whites during the Nebraska bill controversy. He frequently recalled speaking to hostile white audiences, but more disturbingly, in some locales he encountered indifferent African Americans. Their "cold and dead" reactions contrasted sharply with the general Northern fervor engendered by the bill.[49] An editorial published in the *Provincial Freeman* recorded a similar anxiety. Curiously, it criticized black leaders who, it claimed, had made "no attempts to excite sympathy" to the danger posed by the Nebraska bill. The newspaper's criticism is indicative of its frustration with free blacks who remained in the United States instead of emigrating to Canada, a country that boasted more equitable citizenship for blacks.[50]



The failure of freesoilers to fight for black rights concerned African American leaders even more than their own political ineffectiveness. Certain whites, for example Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York Tribune *pictured here, held anti-Nebraska sentiments, though they also desired to export blacks out of the United States. Prominent African Americans noted the rise of this new breed of anti-slavery men, those who found slavery distasteful or a threat to free labor, "but who also [didn't] want the niggers about them." Portrait courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

The *Freeman* sounded a more enthusiastic note in July 1856. It reported on energized African Americans who were deciding in huge numbers to flee to Canada. The major issues at stake, the newspaper remarked, were the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Certainly, numerous fugitive slaves and free blacks went to Canada to avoid slave catchers empowered under the Fugitive Slave Law. It is difficult to determine how many left the United States as a result of the Kansas controversy. The larger point is that whether or not free blacks showed apathy toward the implications of the Nebraska bill initially, their leaders viewed them as more animated after two years.

Even more importantly, prominent African Americans realized that although blacks might respond negatively to anti-black legislation, they hardly could be called a united people. They were divided on key issues, including whether to emigrate or remain in the country, how skin shades should be used to determine status in their communities, and whether to support Garrisonian or political abolitionist views. Blacks' resistance to the Kansas-Nebraska

48. Quarles, *Allies for Freedom*, 31.
49. Quoted in Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 4:220.
50. *Provincial Freeman*, April 15, 1854. The newspaper's editors hoped that the Kansas crisis coupled with the oppressive Fugitive Slave Law would convince American blacks to abandon their homeland. In the *Freeman*'s July 26, 1856, issue, Isaac D. Shadd, brother of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, argued that the Kansas crisis had left free blacks with little choice but to move to Canada: "The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law . . . and . . . the Nebraska Bill, have so completely destroyed the hopes of the colored people that emigration seems inevitable."

Act or proslavery atrocities in Kansas did not translate into a concerted attempt to exploit these events for their political or social advantage. James McCune Smith, a New York City physician and author, as well as a close friend of Douglass, attributed the dilemma to a lack of true leaders in the black community. Smith acknowledged that black speakers and delegates to state conventions sought to help their race, but "they have never had the masses to support them . . . [in] their well meant efforts." Simply no black person held the confidence and support of the whole of African American society. Even as leading blacks increasingly noted their people's alertness to the danger of the Kansas issue, they agonized over how to harness this energy in the face of seemingly intractable divisions among the black masses.[51]

In addition to concerns over free-soil bigotry, the Kansas dilemma sparked other major fears in the minds of African American abolitionists: proslavery incursions and the idea that slavery itself would continue unabated. Blacks, like many antislavery or free-soil whites, considered the Slave Power a monolith that sought to plant the peculiar institution wherever possible, as evidenced by Watkins's rhetoric and Wilson's "Ethiop" writings. Other black abolitionists addressed this issue as well. Orator and writer William Wells Brown had recently returned to the United States after spending several years abroad. The Boston resident outlined in an October 1854 speech the major changes that had occurred since his departure. For one, he said, slavery appeared on the verge of expanding everywhere in the United States. He addressed how Congress had allowed the institution to gain footing in new territories. "Yes, slavery has received a license to run wild on the virgin soil of Nebraska and Kansas," Brown noted. He also anticipated that slaveholders would make inroads into the Caribbean, and that Cuba, and possibly Haiti and St. Domingo, would fall to slavery. Brown had cause for concern. Congressional debates over acquiring Cuba betrayed Southerners' interest in making the country an outlet for further slavery extension. Moreover, John A. Quitman, a Mexican War general and former governor of Mississippi, drew considerable support in the South for a filibustering expedition to Cuba. As historian Robert E. May asserted, "Southerners flocked to [Quitman's] standard trusting that the movement would enhance the strength of the slave states."[52]

Watkins surely agreed with the picture of slaveholders' aggressions painted by Brown. In his judgment, the South demanded the ability to establish slavery anywhere in the country. "The passage of the infamous Nebraska bill," Watkins insisted, "is but one of a series of measures to be enacted for the aggrandizement of the Slave Power." The expectation of continued proslavery agitation continued through 1856. After the nation heard of the bloody clashes between border ruffians and jayhawkers ad nauseam, William Still could not be sure how the struggle between proslavery and antislavery factions would progress in that year. He was convinced that proslavery men would strike new, hard blows against "the cause of freedom."[53] Still's analysis proved prophetic for abolitionists who, three months later, felt both energized and dismayed by the proslavery attack on Lawrence, Kansas, and Sumner's caning.

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill and the bloodshed in Kansas clearly filled blacks with a wide range of emotions. The expression of militant attitudes marked one of their most important responses to the crisis. Frequently they insisted that the Kansas situation and the Fugitive Slave Law should be understood together as two major components of the Slave Power's thrust for national domination. Garrisonian abolitionists had already spent years arguing for "No Union with Slaveholders" and promoting the dissolution of the Union as a way to rid the free states of slaveholders' influence. The atrocities in Kansas fueled still more resistance from black Garrisonians toward staying politically united with proslavery adherents. Paraphrasing a speech by Charles Lenox Remond, the *Liberator* read, "[Remond] could hardly take up a newspaper [in which] he did not see some great outrage committed upon Northern rights." Remond stressed that the North, if it truly believed in freedom, could not remain affiliated with the South.[54]

Even some political abolitionists like Uriah Boston, a barber from Poughkeepsie, New York, could now coldly parse the benefits of the end of the Union. The entrance of Kansas into the Union as a slave state would necessitate this act, Boston stated. Far from being a dire situation, dis-

51. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, September 21, 1855. During the previous year, Smith explained that free blacks lacked unity because "we are not equally oppressed" throughout the Northern states. See James McCune Smith to Frederick Douglass, May 4, 1854, in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. Ripley et al., 4:220–23; *Provincial Freeman*, July 26, 1856.

52. *The Liberator*, October 20, 1854; Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854–1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 51, 56–58.

53. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, August 10, 1855; *Provincial Freeman*, February 9, 1856.

54. *The Liberator*, August 10, 1855.

union would debase the Slave Power and free the North of the financial burden of "promoting slave interests." The South would be wracked by a rise in runaway slaves and slave rebellions, Boston concluded, leading to the eventual end of slavery.[55] Most black abolitionists thought it would be easier to abolish slavery within the Union, though even amongst this group the events in Kansas caused some disunion sentiment to kindle.

More commonly, it was African Americans' forceful language that betrayed their increasing militancy from 1854 to 1856. Blacks began to speak more apocalyptically of a hardened division between the forces of slavery and freedom. William J. Wilson wrote a dispatch in June 1854 rebuking the intransigence of the forces of slavery and calling blacks to arms. "Let the tocsin be sounded, and to arms every man whose skin is not whitened with the curse of God; and let our motto be, 'hands off, or death.'"[56] Watkins selected similarly ominous language. In an 1855 editorial, titled "Are We Ready for the Conflict?," he compared the abolitionist to a lone traveler for whom "a sword or a musket would be preferred" in a dark wilderness. He did not explicitly advocate violence, although his message was unmistakable: abolitionists must respond in kind to proslavery aggression. Furthermore, they should "maintain a consistent warfare with the Slave Power." This position seemed particularly relevant in the succeeding months when reports of attacks on free-state settlers flooded newspapers across the country.[57]

Watkins's militancy reflected the temperament of Douglass, who, after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, began using more divisive rhetoric. According to Douglass, the repeal of the Missouri Compromise placed the forces of slavery and freedom in a state of near conflict. "In the name of God, let the battle come," Douglass boldly asserted on the day the Nebraska bill became law. He found subsequent attempts to compromise with slaveholders useless. Historian John Stauffer suggested that Douglass's relationship with John Brown led Douglass to accept violent alternatives to peaceful abolitionism. It must be pointed out, however, that Douglass tempered his flirtation with violence with a continued dedication to using peaceful means to effect change, even if they seemed unlikely to succeed. Despite his ambivalence toward violence, there is no doubt that the Kansas issue drove Douglass—and other blacks—to extreme rhetorical positions.[58]

Just as significantly, some Northern black churches assumed more militant, but decidedly nonviolent, positions during the Kansas crisis. By 1835, black churches no longer served as the centerpiece of political action in black communities. Secular organizations began assuming some of their roles; nevertheless, ministers remained important leaders among African Americans and continued to address political questions. The Reverend John W. Lewis, an antislavery orator, told Frederick Douglass of his hope for an invigorated church-based response to the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[59] Like their white abolitionist counterparts, many black preachers met this call and during the Kansas controversy reinforced their opposition to slavery and its extension. At a Providence, Rhode Island, conference in January 1854, the African Methodist Episcopal Churches' New England ministers spoke defiantly against the Fugitive Slave Law, the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the introduction of the Nebraska bill. The Committee on Slavery resolved that "in these wicked and cruel acts are burning coals of fire, which will burn to the lowest hell. Over them all hovers the dark angel of night, covering them with the dark mantle of wickedness."[60] The Kansas issue marked a continuation of black churches' increasing outspokenness against slavery during the 1850s. Numerous congregations ignored the Fugitive Slave Law and helped to conceal fugitive slaves or smuggle them toward freedom. In 1854 black churches combined this resistance with their hatred of the Kansas-Nebraska

55. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, August 31, 1855. See ibid. for Frederick Douglass's negative critique of Boston's argument.

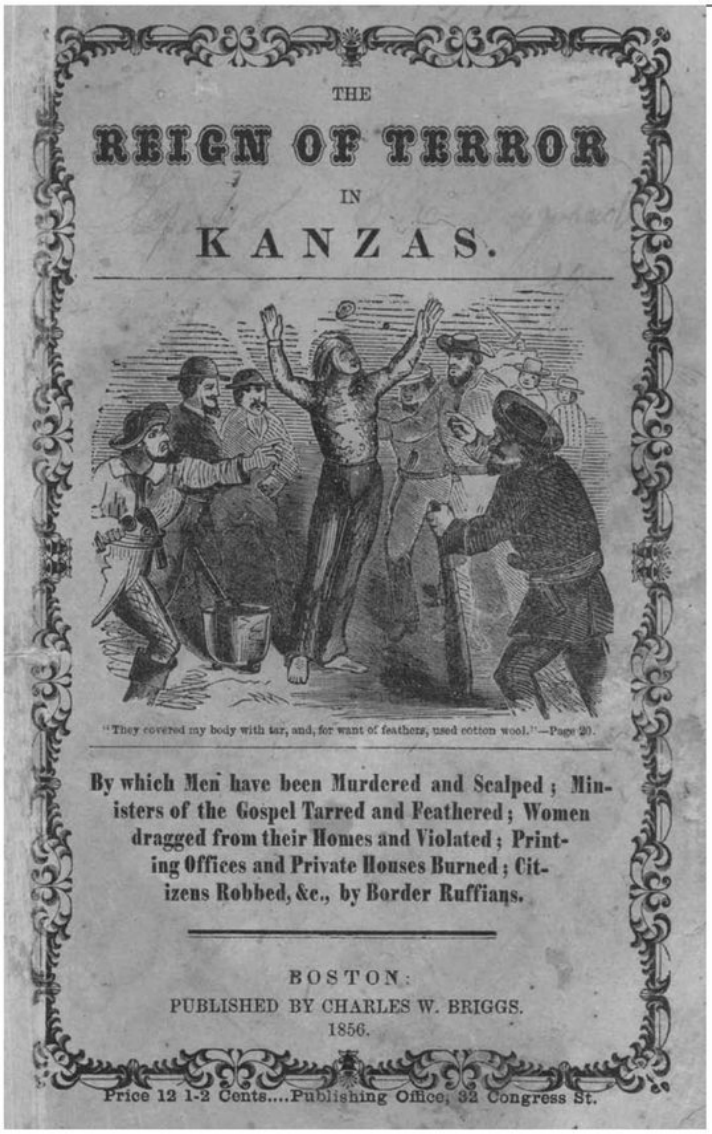
56. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, June 9, 1854.

57. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, February 9, 1855. For more of Watkins's militancy, see *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 2, 1855.

58. "The End of All Compromises with Slavery—Now and Forever" in Foner, ed., *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 2:283, quoted in John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 180. See also William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 189–90, for a characterization of Douglass as generally committed to nonviolence. See also, "Peaceful Annihilation of Slavery is Hopeless" in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Foner, 2:406. In this piece, Douglass accepted slave violence as legitimate, but insisted, "we feel bound to use all our powers of persuasion and argument" to end slavery.

59. Reed, *Platform for Change*, 47, 49; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, January 12, 1855.

60. Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed. C. S. Smith (Nashville: Publishing House of the AME Sunday-School Union, 1891), 308; online at http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/payne/payne.html. For more on the AME's opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, see the *Christian Recorder*, July 18, 1854. This issue includes the report of the "Committee on the Nebraska and Kansas Bill," dated May 23, 1854.



The official title of this 1856 publication out of Boston describes atrocities in Kansas that black abolitionists hoped would provoke the rest of the country to action against slavery: The Reign of Terror in Kanzas: as encouraged by President Pierce, and carried out by the southern slave power: by which men have been murdered and scalped! Women dragged from their homes and violated! Printing offices and private houses burned! Ministers of the gospel tarred and feathered! Citizens robbed and driven from their homes! and other enormities inflicted on free settlers by border ruffians as related by eye witnesses of the events. *Book cover courtesy of the University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence.*

Act. Although they resisted overtures toward violence, they spoke in increasingly vehement and political tones.[61]

The rising militancy of leading African Americans operated within a mindset that alternated between hope and despair between 1854 and 1856. Blacks remained optimistic that the Kansas crisis would gird Northern support for antislavery. They commented enthusiastically on the proliferation of anti-Nebraska meetings. Surely, they believed, these gatherings testified to a growing Northern awareness of the Slave Power's bottomless desire for slavery expansion. Black leaders also relished the victories of anti-Nebraska candidates after the adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The new Republican Party, which dedicated itself to admitting no further slave states, lacked abolitionist fervor, but African Americans considered its platform a step in the right direction. A strain of pessimism operated simultaneously in the minds of black abolitionists. How could they truly effect political change, many of them wondered, if so many free blacks lacked basic civil rights? Moreover, African Americans came to believe—correctly as it turned out—that most Northerners who adopted the free-soil position rejected any concessions toward black equality. African Americans were excited that Northern whites personalized the struggle against the Slave Power. They simply wished it did not have to come at the expense of committed abolitionism. With the future of the Union and race relations so uncertain, blacks could at least take some comfort in having a powerful, yet tentative, ally in the Northern people. Just how far this friend would walk with them on the road to abolition remained to be seen. Black abolitionists hoped that the Kansas controversy would force the North into action, although they bemoaned the limited results, such as the cessation of slavery expansion, that Northerners seemed content in achieving. KH

61. Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 4:195.

"The Colored People Hold the Key"

Abram Thompson Hall, Jr.'s Campaign to Organize Graham County

by Charlotte Hinger

From the summer of 1877 through 1879, approximately six hundred African Americans in organized colonies, clusters of family groups, and small trickles of courageous individuals migrated to the High Plains and established and settled Nicodemus, Kansas. For the first time in the history of the United States, enough blacks gathered in a specific region to affect critically important issues indigenous to the settlement of the West.[1] In just three years time, these African Americans created the first township in Graham County, secured its first official school district, persuaded Kansas Governor John Pierce St. John to appoint a black census taker, and controlled the structure of bi-racial political alliances in their county.[2]

Charlotte Hinger, *western Kansas historian and novelist, earned her master's in history from Fort Hays State University. She writes about Kansas settlement and, with this article, focuses on African American political and intellectual contributions. She is currently an instructor in the English department at Fort Hays State University.*

The author thanks Virgil Dean, Melissa Tubbs Loya, Deborah Dandridge, Angela Bates, and the tireless manuscript retrieval staff at the Kansas Historical Society for their assistance with this article. She is especially appreciative of the time and talents donated by volunteers in local Kansas historical societies. This article is dedicated to the memory of her late husband, Donald R. Hinger, who supported all her writing endeavors.

1. For an overview of African American post-Reconstruction political activity in Kansas see Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Craig Miner, *West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865–1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986); Norman Crockett, *The Black Towns* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1979); Robert G. Athearn, *In Search of Canaan: Black Migration to Kansas, 1879–80* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978); Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); see also Claire O'Brien, "'With One Mighty Pull' Interracial Town Boosting in Nicodemus, Kansas," *Great Plains Quarterly 16* (Spring 1996): 117–29; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

2. For detailed information on the settlement of Nicodemus see William J. Belleau, "The Nicodemus Colony of Graham County, Kansas" (master's thesis, Fort Hays State University, 1950); Orval L. McDaniel, "A History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas" (master's thesis, Fort Hays State University, 1950); Nell Waldron, "Colonization in Kansas" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1932), 125–27; Van Burton Shaw, "Nicodemus, Kansas: A study in Isolation" (PhD diss., University of Missouri, 1951); Glen Schwendemann, "Nicodemus: Negro Haven on the Solomon," *Kansas Historical Quarterly 34* (Spring 1968): 10–31; Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, "The Origins and Early Promotion of Nicodemus: A Pre-Exodus All-Black Town," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 4 (Winter 1982): 220–42; Clayton Fraser, "Nicodemus: The Architectural Development and Decline of an American Town," in *Promised Land on the Solomon: Black Settlement at Nicodemus, Kansas*, ed. Gregory D. Kendrick (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1984), 35–61; Daniel Chu and Bill Shaw, *Going Home to Nicodemus: The Story of an African American Frontier Town and the Pioneers Who Settled It* (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Press, 1994).

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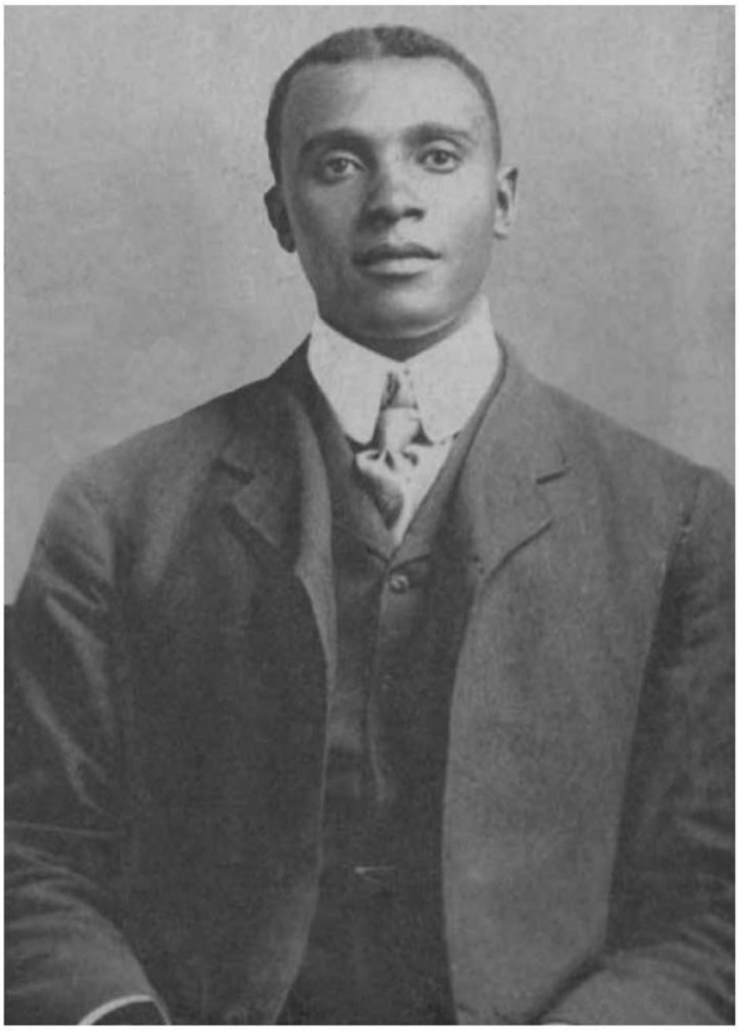


Portrait of A. T. Hall, identified by the author and courtesy of the Nicodemus Historical Society Collection, Kansas Collection, RH MS 545, University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

These achievements were largely due to the pragmatic leadership abilities of Abram Thompson Hall, Jr., a well-educated, freeborn African American journalist. Hall's editorials and letters printed in Kansas newspapers, and his correspondence to and from Governor St. John provide ample evidence of his critical role in organizing Graham County. Hall's astute political maneuvers forced early county organization, despite vigorous opposition from the white majority that felt the move was premature and would result in unnecessary financial burdens for struggling settlers.

Hall was born April 15, 1851, in Chicago, Illinois, to Abram and Joanna (Huss) Hall. His father, Abram Thompson Hall, Sr., was a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). The elder A. T. Hall was the first black man given formal license to preach in Chicago. He

organized Quinn Chapel, which became one of the largest AME congregations in the country.[3] A. T. Hall, Jr., was educated in the public schools and attended medical school for one year at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Indianapolis, Indiana. After Hall left college, he worked three seasons as a sailor on the Great Lakes. He then began his career as a journalist. Throughout his long life he was at various times an editor, reporter, and columnist.[4]

While employed as the city editor for the black newspaper, the *Chicago Conservator*, Hall read articles about the "movement to locate Negro Americans on United States Government lands in the west during the winter of 1877–1878." According to Hall, blacks were enticed by reports of "boundless acreage, fertility of soil[,] equable climate and golden opportunity to acquire and own a home on lands west of the Missouri river, in the State of Kansas." Excited by these new opportunities, in the early spring of 1878, Hall and his "political chum" Edward Preston McCabe headed west to Kansas.[5]

Upon reaching Leavenworth, in April 1878, Hall's focus shifted from business opportunities to politics and journalism because of a conversation he overheard in a café regarding the plight of the Nicodemus settlers who were in need of supplies to tide them over until their crops matured. He later explained that his "newspaper instinct instantly apprised that here was a human interest story fairly crying out loud for investigation and publication." He tracked down John W. Niles, an agent from Nicodemus in Leavenworth soliciting aid for the colony. Hall learned that despite the presence of "articles in the daily newspapers, emanating from a disgruntled group back in the colony [Nicodemus], impeaching his right as a solicitor," Niles's appeal had been highly successful. Now, however, "a group of local race [Negro] politicians" led by W. B. Townsend and William Matthews tied up the aid. In Hall's opinion, Townsend and Matthews, "seeing the success of the donation," were "eager to be given credit or glory for what they had had no part in bringing about."[6]

Hall was a well-established journalist in his hometown Chicago, but in the early spring of 1878 he and his "political chum" Edward Preston McCabe, pictured above, headed west to Kansas.

3. Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopaedia of The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1916), 103; online at: http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wright. References to the senior Hall's first name vary between Abraham, Abram, or A. T. Hall, Sr.; A. T. Hall, Jr.'s younger brother, Charles, who was ten years old when Abram came to Nicodemus, later became a statistician and wrote an intricately researched 845-page book on the progress and status of the Negro race in the United States for the Department of Commerce. See Charles E. Hall, *The American Negro, His History and Literature: Negroes in the United States, 1920–1932* (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

4. Lulu Sadler Craig, "Early Settlement," *Craig Manuscript Collection*, Graham County Historical Archives, Hill City, Kansas, 10; Belleau, "Nicodemus Colony," 51. The Craig Manuscript is comprised of topically arranged material about Nicodemus and contains a detailed narrative from Hall. In her foreword, Craig thanked A. T. Hall, W. L. Sayers, Annie Hickman Comer, and Betty Kirtley Lewis for "suggestions and data." Unfortunately, Hall did not provide precise dates for his employment in either the Craig manuscript or the frequently quoted biography contained in the Belleau thesis. As was the custom, Hall was identified by "Sr." rather than "Jr." after his father's death.

5. Hall's account, in Craig, "Early Settlement," 10. Although only four issues of the historic crusading newspaper, the *Chicago Conservator*, have been preserved on microfilm, Hall is present in the first three editions, and his father in the final one.

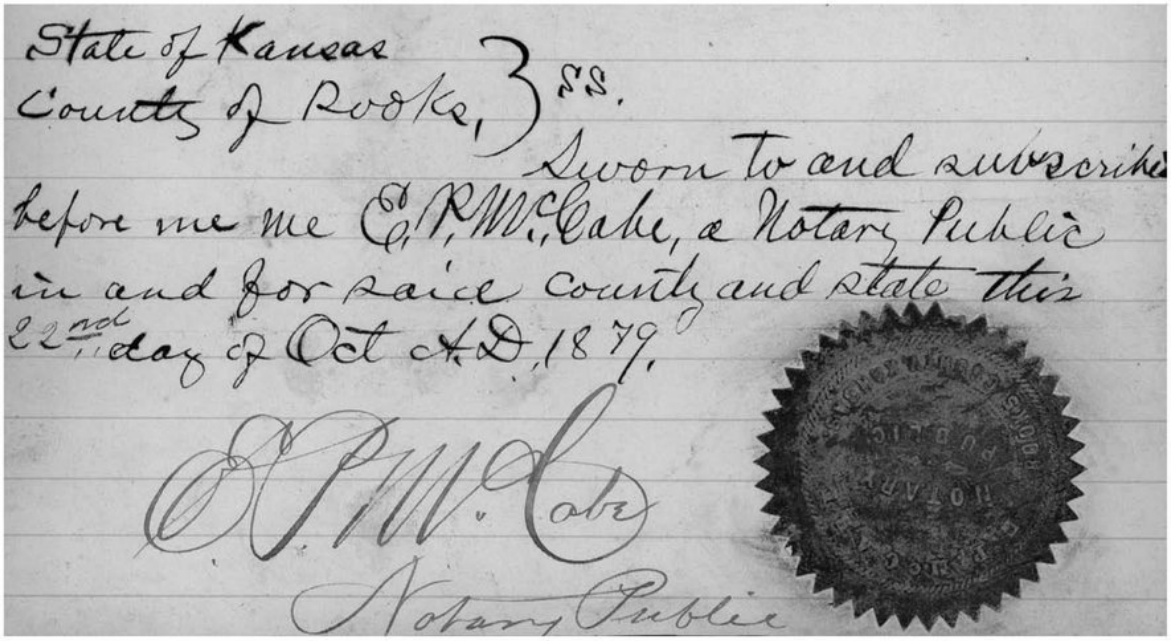
6. Ibid., 11. For more on William D. Matthews and William B. Townsend, both long-time residents of Leavenworth and influential leaders of the African American community, see Roger D. Cunningham, "Douglas's Battery at Fort Leavenworth: The Issue of Black Officers During the Civil War," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 23 (Winter 2000–2001): 204–16; "Capt. Matthews, Pioneer Colored Kansan, Is Dead," *Leavenworth Times*, March 3, 1906; "Brief Biographical Sketches, of State Officers, Members of Congress, and Officers and Members of the Legislature of Kansas, for the Year 1879," *Topeka Commercial*, March 5, 1879; "W. B. Townsend Is Prosperous," *Topeka Plaindealer*, March 14, 1902.

Soon after his arrival, Hall took charge of officially recording the settlers' preemption, homestead, and soldier's claims at the district land office in Kirwin, Kansas. Warned by land officers of an impending rush of white settlers, Hall urged the colonists, like those pictured here, to move out of their temporary residences in Nicodemus and onto their own property because the law required "whole or partial residence and a certain amount of cultivation" to legitimize a claim. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

According to Hall's account, prior to a meeting to be held at the AME church later that very evening to determine custody of the supplies, he and Niles hatched a plan that worked to perfection. At the outset of the meeting the opportunity for further debate was thwarted when Hall immediately moved to release the goods to Niles. "Our program," wrote Hall, "went through almost unanimously," and Niles was "elated over the outcome." Impressed with Hall's abilities, Niles persuaded Hall and McCabe to accompany him to Nicodemus. Hall later wrote that when the party arrived with the wagons of supplies the "entire population met us . . . with a greeting much like that accorded homecoming victors loaded with the spoils of war."[7]

Hall used his political skills to settle the controversy in Nicodemus about Niles's self-appointed role as the colony's agent. Those who had supported Niles from the beginning wanted to keep the supplies for themselves, but Hall persuaded that faction to share with all who would

7. Hall's account, in Craig, "Early Settlement," 11–12; see also Schwendemann, "Nicodemus: Negro Haven on The Solomon," 21–22. Hall's account of the trip to Kansas in the Craig manuscript contains more details than the biography in Belleau, "The Nicodemus Colony of Graham County, Kansas."


State of Kansas
County of Rooks, } ss.
Sworn to and subscribed
before me me E. P. McCabe, a Notary Public
in and for said County and State this
22nd day of Oct A.D. 1879.
E. P. McCabe
Notary Public

Hall was appointed deputy district clerk of Rooks County for the as yet unorganized Graham County, and McCabe was commissioned as a notary public. Pictured is McCabe's signature on a petition requesting that Governor St. John take steps to organize Graham County. When the county was organized in 1880, the governor appointed McCabe county clerk, a position to which he was subsequently elected. Two years later, McCabe received the Republican nomination for state auditor and won that office in the November election. He was reelected in 1884 and thus served the state in that capacity from January 1883 to January 1887. To date, E. P. McCabe is the only Kansan of African decent to have held a statewide elective office.

sign a document he drew up authorizing Niles to solicit aid on behalf of the colonists. All but seven signed at once, and by "ration day," they too had signed.[8]

Soon after his arrival, Hall took charge of officially recording the settlers' preemption, homestead, and soldier's claims at the district land office in Kirwin, Kansas. Warned by land officers of an impending rush of white settlers, Hall urged the colonists to move out of their temporary residences in Nicodemus and onto their own property because the law required "whole or partial residence and a certain amount of cultivation" to legitimize a claim. The Kirwin land agent, W. C. Don Carlos, helped secure Hall's appointment as deputy district clerk of Rooks County for the as yet unorganized Graham County, and McCabe's commission as a notary public.[9]

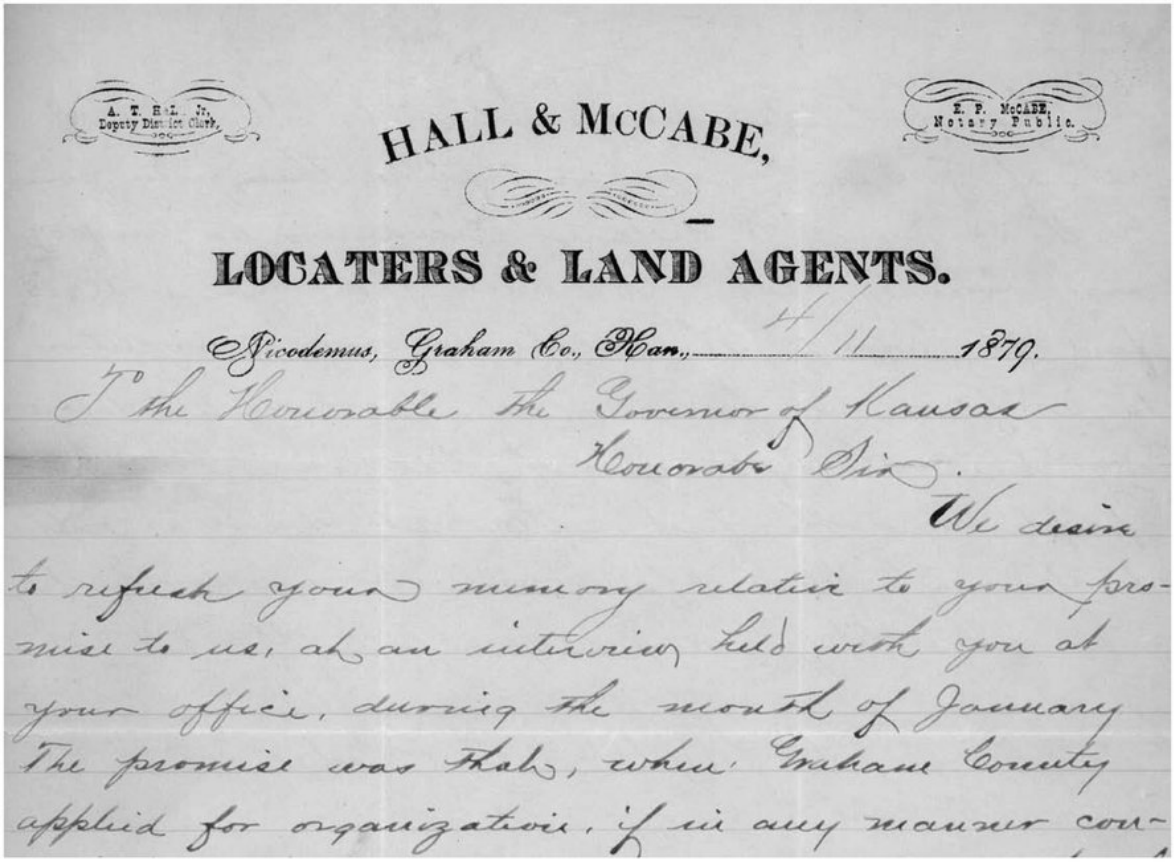
Hall and McCabe began a land location business and advertised themselves as attorneys qualified to conduct business in the fifteenth judicial district.[10] At a time when the requirements for admission to the bar were quite casual and based on "good moral character," Hall's educational credentials were considerably above most lawyers practicing on the prairie. His letters and speeches contained Latin and French phrases, and he often quoted from the classics and Shakespeare.[11]

8. Craig, "Early Settlement," 12.

9. Ibid., 13, 14; "Secretary of State-Second Biennial Report," in *Public Documents: Kansas, 1879–1880,* (Topeka: Geo. W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1881), 125. McCabe was the second person commissioned as notary in Rooks County. He was preceded two days earlier by N. C. Terrell, a Millbrook man, who would later play a crucial part in Graham County politics.

10. As local papers began publication, Hall and McCabe advertised in all but the *Graham County Lever*, which was located at Gettysburg. The newspapers in Graham County in order of appearance were: *Western Star* (Hill City, May 22, 1879); *Millbrook Times* (Millbrook, July 11, 1879); *Graham County Lever* (Gettysburg, August 2, 1879); *Roscoe Tribune* (Roscoe, June 23, 1880); *Graham Republican* (Millbrook, August 6, 1881); *Millbrook Herald* (Millbrook, May 16, 1882). They also advertised in Topeka's *Colored Citizen* beginning on September 6, 1878.

11. Kansas *Compiled Laws* (1879), 113; Robert W. Richmond, *Requisite Learning and Good Moral Character: A History of the Kansas Bench and Bar* (Topeka: Kansas Bar Association, 1982), 37–70; Michael H. Hoeflich, "Why the History of Kansas Law Has Not Been Written," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 26 (Winter 2003–2004): 264–71; Robert C. Haywood, *Cowtown Lawyers: Dodge City and Its Attorneys, 1878–1888* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 49–50; D. M. Valentine, "Roll of


A. T. Hall, Jr., Deputy District Clerk,
E. P. McCABE, Notary Public.
HALL & McCABE,
LOCATERS & LAND AGENTS.
Nicodemus, Graham Co., Kan., 4/11 1879.
To the Honorable the Governor of Kansas
Honorable Sir.
We desire to refresh your memory relative to your promise to us, at an interview held with you at your office, during the month of January The promise was that, when Graham County applied for organization, if in any manner con-

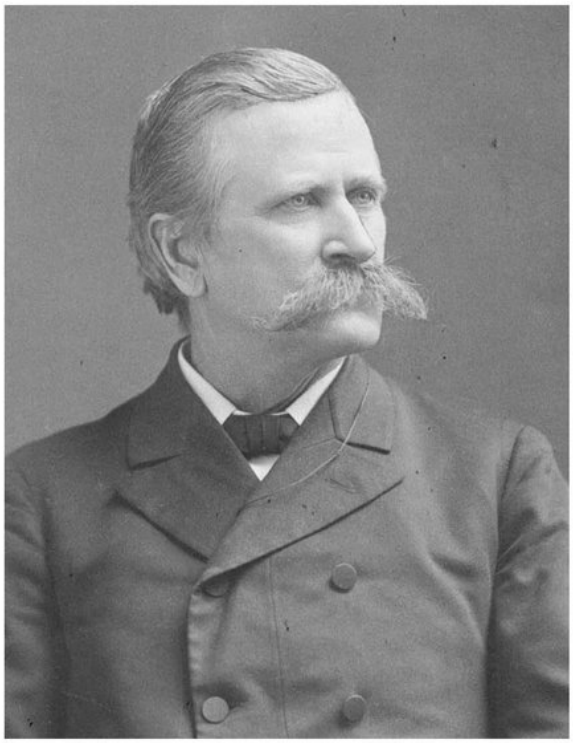
Hall and McCabe began a land location business and advertised themselves in newspapers as attorneys qualified to conduct business in the fifteenth judicial district. The two men also advertised their offices on this letterhead, which notes Hall as Deputy District Clerk and McCabe as Notary Public.

A scant two weeks after arriving in Nicodemus, Hall resumed his vocation as a journalist, sending letters and columns in support of the colony to various Kansas newspapers before Graham County itself acquired papers. He also staked his claim as the official correspondent from Graham County at the influential *Atchison Daily Champion*, edited and published by John A. Martin, a prominent Kansas Republican and soon-to-be governor. Hall first wrote in May 1878 to the *Colored Citizen*, a black publication founded in Fort Scott and moved to Topeka in July 1878. He urged blacks to "lay down the hoe in the South, leave the old worn out fields and move to Kansas, the freest, grandest, noblest State in the Union." Written in his typically lyrical style, Hall referred to "the merry laugh of children at

Attorneys," in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of the State Of Kansas* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1883), 29:xiv–xv. Valentine recorded seven hundred persons admitted to practice before the Kansas Supreme Court by 1883. Out of the plethora of attorneys in Graham and Rooks counties—identified as such through business cards and letterheads—only the names of Thomas Beaumont and T. T. Tillotson appear on Valentine's roll. Communication from the State Library of Kansas, Topeka, received while researching this article, verified that there are no historical lists of attorneys practicing in the various counties in Kansas. The Kansas Bar Association was not established until 1883. However, Hall and McCabe are named as attorneys in numerous documents and the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) has record of Hall and McCabe as attorneys in Abram T. Hall, Jr., and E. P. McCabe, "Brief of the attorneys for the Roscoe Petition," filed March 30, 1880, 27-04-01-7, folder 23, Correspondence of Governor John P. St. John's Office, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas (hereafter cited as "St. John Papers, KSHS").

play upon the green sward," proclaiming that "what was once a prairie wild will soon take on city airs."[12]

Hall published his first regional letter in Rooks County's *Stockton News* on June 10, 1878. He submitted breezy little "unconsidered trifles" regarding Nicodemus. The letter was a blend of social commentary and skillful propaganda, which displayed the new community of Nicodemus in the most favorable light. He reported on a church wedding, a Sabbath school, plans for a glorious Fourth of July celebration, businesses under construction, and the receipt of provisions from blacks in eastern Kansas. He also noted that the colonists had undertaken the arduous task of digging a town well. Overall, the "unconsidered trifles" were hardly small matters. In a very short letter, Hall presented the black colonists as law-abiding, religious, industrious, patriotic, shrewd, and innovative.[13]



Hall and McCabe met with Governor John Pierce St. John, pictured, shortly after his January 13, 1879, inauguration. They asked him to designate Nicodemus as the temporary county seat. This was the first of many such requests received by St. John from towns in what would become Graham County.

During the first year after their arrival, Hall and McCabe became involved in state politics. The *Colored Citizen* praised the two men for paying their way to the Republican congressional convention and working like "true heroes for their race." On his trips to Topeka, Hall secured his relationship with that city's African American community. He gave an inspiring address on January 21, 1879, to the literary society at St. John's AME Church, Topeka's second oldest African American church and one of its most influential black institutions. The *Colored Citizen* reprinted the speech in its entirety.[14]

During 1878, Hall was neutral toward county organization. In a letter to the *Stockton News* he wrote that "there are a class of men in this county who are bent on organizing the county in some one or the other manner." He predicted that "nothing will grow out of it, save bad blood and heartache," and mused that "the colored people hold the key to the situation and will no doubt use their advantage." The "key" lay in the strength of the black community's unified voting block, because the white vote was split among a number of towns. Hall informed readers of the *Atchison Champion* that there were "myriads of aspirants for county honors" and that until slates were known, "public opinion and comment should be held in abeyance."[15]

By the end of 1878, however, Hall had become increasingly concerned about the county seat issue:

> The county seat question still demands attention. . . . As before hinted, Nicodemus has hopes of proving to be the dark, yet winning, town in the race. She will certainly command the entire Negro vote of the county, and the white vote in her immediate vicinity, which is about double the vote which any of the other five points can bring to bear. A few bold spirits on Bow Creek want municipal organization, but the mass of Grahamites prefer county organization, as the lesser evil.[16]

12. *Colored Citizen*, May 10, 1878. Hall was a highly-observant, trained journalist and this letter contains detailed information regarding the founding of the colony. For more on John A. Martin, who took over the Atchison newspaper at age nineteen in 1858 and served as governor from 1885 to 1889, see Homer E. Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 113–15.

13. *Stockton News*, June 10, 1878.

14. *Colored Citizen*, September 6, 1878 and February 1, 1979; *Hays City Sentinel*, September 14, 1878; Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865–1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 31.

15. *Stockton News*, December 5, 1878; *Atchison Daily Champion*, December 19, 1878.

16. *Stockton News*, January 2, 1879.

Hall's letters and columns to papers outside Graham County and his correspondence with Governor St. John reveal the brewing controversy. The organization of the county was a matter of fierce debate, and in the span of seven years two county seats were duly established: Millbrook in 1881, and Hill City in 1888.[17]

Hall and McCabe met with the governor shortly after his January 13, 1879, inauguration. They asked him to designate Nicodemus as the temporary county seat, and referred to this meeting in a letter sent April 11, 1879:

> We desire to refresh your memory relative to your promise to us, at an interview held with you at your office, during the month of January. The promise was that, when Graham County applied for organization, if in any manner consistent with your position you could further the interests of Nicodemus you would do so. Memorials to your Excellency praying for organization are now circulating throughout the county and are receiving many signatures of bona fide residents and householders. . . . What we ask of you is, to use your option, thus given you by the signers, and declare Nicodemus as temporary County Seat. We trust that you will find it within the scope of your jurisdiction to favor us, for our sole purpose in desiring it is the upbuilding of Nicodemus, and our people are the first settlers and desire it only temporary. Please favor us with an early reply.[18]

St. John replied April 17, 1879: "I must be governed, as I stated to you when you were here, by a petition of citizens." He assured them that "it will afford me pleasure to do anything I can consistent with my duty to favor your people and locality," and advised them to get up a petition.[19] However, Hall was undoubtedly shrewd enough to realize that a petition for Nicodemus would fail. In his next letter to the *Stockton News*, published February 13, 1879, Hall again commented on the county seat question. He observed that although "Stevensville is the latest aspirant for the county seat, Nicodemus is still in the field, and it has been well said that 'the colored troops fight nobly.'"[20]

In a May 7, 1879, letter to the *Stockton News*, Hall demonstrated that community issues challenging Kansas African Americans often transcended racial agendas. White and blacks alike could be victimized by careless legislation. Hall was uniquely qualified to assess consequences and affect public opinion. In this letter, Hall referred to the state legislature as "the grave and reverend solons who misrepresented their constituency so ably last winter at Topeka." On March 12, 1879, these officials had approved an act to alter the boundaries of Sheridan County, a change that encroached on Graham County's territory and eliminated four townships along with proposed county seat locations.[21] Hall and McCabe wrote the attorney general, Willard Davis, asking for an official opinion as to the validity of the legislation. Davis assured them the previously established boundary of Graham County would not be affected, although "what the Legislature intended cannot be determined . . . and must remain in uncertainty till that body again meets and settles it." In the meantime, confusion over this legislative act fueled debate over the formal organization of Graham County. For instance, in "A Voice for Organization" farmer Fred Harris wrote: "We are surrounded on three sides by organized counties, which are ready to possess themselves of a portion of our territory, and unless we organize we are powerless to prevent it. Our county is none too large now; shall we allow our more enterprising neighbors to gobble a tier of townships from each side?"[22]

It may have been concern over the vulnerability of Graham County that prompted Hall to organize Nicodemus Township, though he clearly preferred county organization. Graham County was attached to Rooks for judicial purposes, and, as long as it was unorganized, Graham County citizens were required to conduct all municipal business and file all legal papers—even affidavits—at Stockton, Rooks's county seat. Trips to Stockton were

17. "Graham County Commissioners' Journal, Docket 1, (incomplete) March 7, 1881–February 3, 1887," in *Historical Records Survey* (Topeka: Federal Works agency, n.d.), 69. This document is apart from the *Survey of County Archives* conducted by the Works Projects Administration; Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 40.

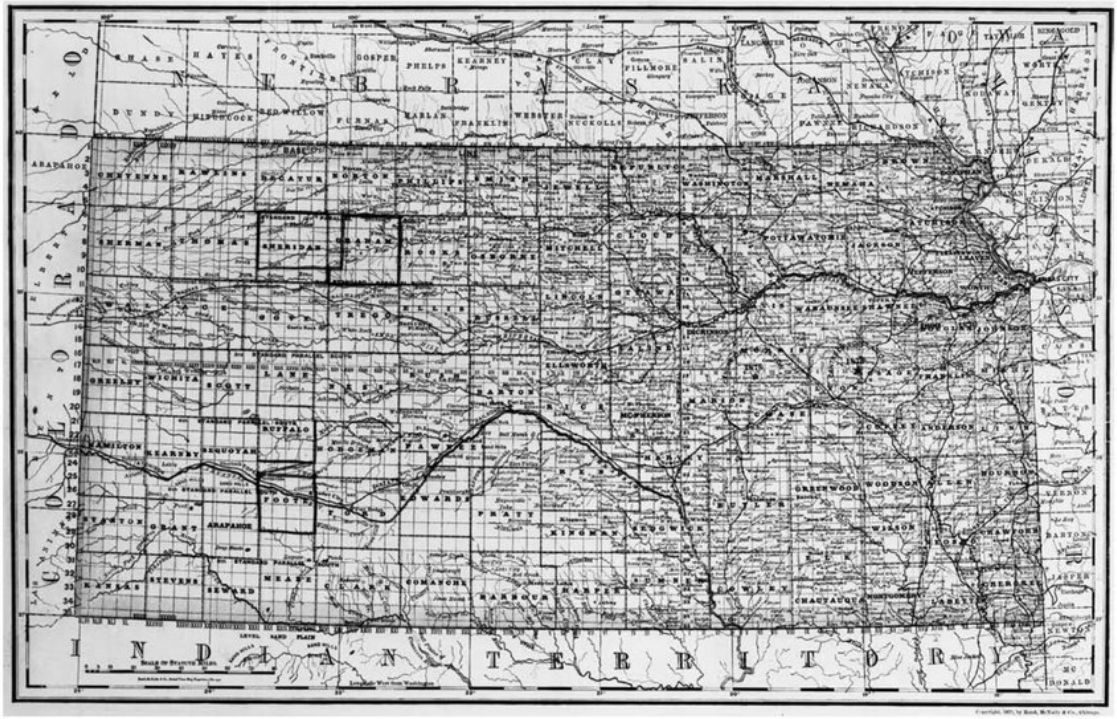
18. Unfortunately although KSHS has appointment books for Governor George T. Anthony who preceded St. John, and Governor George W. Glick who followed, there is no extant similar record for St. John. Both Hall and St. John alluded to this meeting in correspondence. Abram T. Hall and E. P. McCabe to Governor John P. St. John, April 11, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 1, St. John Papers, KSHS; St. John to Abram T. Hall and E. P. McCabe, April 17, 1879, 27-03-01-04, no. 15, St. John Papers, KSHS.

19. St. John to Abram T. Hall and E. P. McCabe, April 17, 1879, 27-03-01-04, no. 15, St. John Papers, KSHS.

20. *Stockton News*, February 13, 1879.

21. *Stockton News*, May 7, 1879; Kansas *Laws* (1879), ch. 73, sect. 3; *Stockton News*, May 21, 1879. Attorney General Willard Davis wrote Benjamin B. F. Graves on July, 30, 1879, that in his opinion "some clerk made a mistake." See *Public Documents—Kansas, 1879–1880*, "Report of the Attorney General," (Topeka: George W. Martin, Kansas Publishing House, 1879), 111. In fact, changing county boundaries required a majority of votes by the legal voters of both counties. See Kansas *Compiled Laws* (1879), ch. 24, sects. 1369–73, 124–28.

22. "Report of the Attorney General," in *Public Documents—Kansas, 1879–1880*, 112. Davis's letter was sent to W. R. Hill, but was "in answer to the letter of yourself, Hall, McCabe and others." The pages of this publication are renumbered within sections. *Millbrook Times*, August 22, 1879.



On March 12, 1879, the state legislature approved an act to alter the boundaries of Sheridan County, a change that encroached on Graham County's territory and eliminated four townships along with proposed county seat locations. This move, illustrated in the hand-redrawn boundaries of the two counties on the 1879 map pictured above (top left), caused continuing confusion as Hall and others worked to organize Graham County.

difficult even when the weather was mild. And although a justice of the peace could attend to some matters, and as a notary public McCabe attested to the validity of a number of signatures, this authority was through his commission in Rooks County. The successful organization of Nicodemus Township, then, was financially and logistically advantageous for Hall and McCabe.

There are two definitions of townships. One is a legal description of lands in deeds assigning public domain. These townships were determined during physical surveys and were not controversial. The second type—municipal townships—were corporate bodies with the power to make contracts, hold elections, levy taxes, and raise militias. Municipal townships also supervised roads and bridges and could issue bonds for their construction and maintenance. Organizing a municipal township in the unorganized county of Graham would transfer municipal authority from Rooks County to that new township.[23]

On July 7, 1879, twenty-five African Americans from Nicodemus presented a petition for the organization of Nicodemus Township to Rooks County commissioners J. S. McComb, R. S. Shorthill, and Eli Sherman. The commissioners accepted the petition, and the town of Nicodemus was "fixed as the place holding the election" at that same meeting. The commissioners met July 29, 1879, in a special session to formalize election proceedings. Rooks County sheriff, John Shaw, interrupted them with an injunction restraining the "action of the board in ordering the election." However, the injunction was in vain. For by law, whenever "twenty-five electors in any such unorganized county" petitioned the commissioners for municipal organization at the place they dictated "convenient," the commissioners were compelled to act. The white population of what was to become Graham County was too late to deflect the bold move that would force them to conduct their municipal business in a black town.[24]

23. "Townships and Township Officers," in Kansas *Compiled Laws* (1879), ch. 110.

24. J. N. Mitchell, Rooks County Clerk, Minutes of the Rooks County Commissioners, July 7, 1879 and July 29, 1879, Office of the County Clerk,

During this critical, turbulent month, July 1879, editor Benjamin B. F. Graves formally launched the *Millbrook Times*. Millbrook was a Democratic stronghold, but Graves was an avid Greenbacker. Nevertheless, Hall, a staunch Republican, maintained a mutually respectful relationship with Graves throughout his residency in Graham County. In the first issue of the *Times*, published July 11, 1879, Graves established a neutral stance toward race, saying he had "no sentimentality in the matter." He claimed to "regard the white and black man as equals" and insisted that "if their conduct is equally good, we shall not profess any inordinate love for the colored man, nor extol him above the clouds, with a view to securing his support when elections are held; . . . for our colored people are too intelligent to be deceived with such chaff."[25]

Hall was pleased with Grave's racial stance and sent the editor a letter that was printed in the second edition of the *Times* on July 18, 1879:

> We respect your sentiments regarding colored people. We do not wish to be put above our white neighbors, and when we see one of them professing to elevate us to that position we very naturally question his motives. All we wish is those equal rights which the law guarantees to us, and this we are satisfied you are willing to grant us. If the *Millbrook Times* speaks the sentiments of the Millbrook people we are all Millbrook men.[26]

By this time, however, Graves had learned of the petition organizing Nicodemus Township and in the same edition containing Hall's response, he printed the following:

> We must protest against a law which makes two thousand citizens of this county subject to the will or caprice of any twenty-five men, without giving the great mass of people a chance to speak a word in their own behalf. It matters not if every man in the county is opposed to the thing, saye [*sic*] twenty-five, for these twenty-five are the sole dictators in the matter. . . .
>
> We don't object to what has been done because of the race of those who have done it, nor because of the location of township headquarters at Nicodemus, but we do most emphatically denounce the law which enables any twenty-five men to defy the wishes of every other man in the county. [27]

Hall defended his actions in the next edition: "We were not prepared for quite so general a disapproval of the township organization as we find existing. . . . Wishing to organize the county . . . and meeting with ill success we took the step we have as a last resort. We should have been satisfied had the same thing been done by any other place in the county, but having no hopes of their doing it we did it ourselves."[28] The only recourse for the white population to avoid conducting their official business in a black town indefinitely was to organize the county and force Governor St. John to appoint a temporary county seat until the official election of the permanent site.

Editor Graves wrote St. John asking "what rule, if any, is adhered to in designating the temporary county seat of an unorganized county where there are two or more aspirants for the position?" St. John replied that he was required to locate the temporary county seat wherever the majority of "legal voters" indicated by their signatures on a petition. "The law is plain and leaves no discretionary power in the matter."[29]

Furious over the petition emanating from Nicodemus, Gettysburg residents entered the fray in earnest. F. E. Bowers, a carpenter and the deputy superintendent of public instruction, wrote the governor complaining about the township organization by the "colored portion of the county aided by a few white men whose record for honesty is not the best, without knowledge or consent of the better portion and majority of the people of the county." Bowers insisted the motive of the Nicodemus petition was the ten thousand dollars in bonds that would be given to the new seat. He concluded that despite the financial hardships, county organization would be preferable and asked St. John to consider the matter.[30]

On October 11, 1879, St. John received a petition initiated and circulated by N. C. Terrell, a wealthy businessman residing in Millbrook. The petitioners requested the "speedy organization" of Graham County and that Abram T. Hall be appointed census taker for a one-time census validating

Rooks County Courthouse, Stockton, Kansas, 208; Kansas *Compiled Laws*, ch. 24.

25. James R. Shortridge, *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 82–92. The Greenback Labor Party favored monetary inflation, and so supported increasing the number of paper dollars in circulation. *Millbrook Times*, July 11, 1879.

26. *Millbrook Times*, July 18, 1879.

27. Ibid.

28. *Millbrook Times*, July 25, 1879.

29. Benjamin B. F. Graves to St. John, July 29, 1879, 27-04-07-7, folder 1, St. John Papers, KSHS; Governor John P. St. John to Benjamin B. F. Graves, July 31, 1879, 27-03-01-04, no. 17, St. John Papers, KSHS.

30. F. E. Bowers to St. John, July 10, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 1, St. John Papers, KSHS.

fifteen hundred bona fide inhabitants of an unorganized county as required by law for formal organization. This census was separate from the scheduled census mandated by the U.S. Constitution that would also take place in 1880. The position of census taker was viewed as a prize political plum, and quite lucrative. The job paid three dollars a day and six cents a mile "for each mile necessarily and actually employed in making the return to the governor." A Millbrook family of attorneys who were friends of St. John—Charles, T. T., and Ida Tillotson—supported Terrell.[31]

When by early November no action had yet been taken on Terrell's petition, Hall wrote to St. John to urge him to act:

> More than three weeks have passed away since I conferred with you relative to granting a petition from the citizens of Graham County, asking you to appoint me as census-taker. The objection which you raised to the affidavit of the three free-holders, was met immediately after I returned to this county, and a new affidavit such an one as you had approved, was made out and subscribed and sworn to by the free-holders, and forwarded without delay to you. Since when we have patiently waited to receive the appointment asked, or to learn the why it was with-held. . . . Meanwhile the other points that are desirous of catching the plumb of temporary county-seat, encouraged by your silence, are using every endeavor, both *fair and foul* to change the current of public sentiment in their favor.[32]

As proof of these "foul" means, Hall enclosed four affidavits by Nicodemus residents claiming they had been tricked into signing petitions for Gettysburg when they were actually in favor of Millbrook for county seat. Two of the men declared that the bearers of the petition had said the "colored leaders" of Nicodemus, "Hall and McCabe," had sold their people out. St. John replied November 6, 1879, that "under the law (with which you I suppose are familiar) when my attention is called to alleged fraud connected with the memorial asking the appointment of a census taker, it becomes my duty to investigate."[33] He later found the accusations against Hall to be unfounded.

31. "Petition for the Organization of Graham County," received in the office of John P. St. John, October, 11, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 4, St. John Papers, KSHS. Kansas *Compiled Laws*, ch. 24, sect. 114. Ida Tillotson would become the fourth female "admitted to practice law" in Kansas in 1881. See *Graham County Lever*, April 22, 1881. In the June 16, 1881, edition of the *Hill City Lively Times*, editor Thomas McGill mentioned borrowing a law book from Ida inscribed "To Ida Tillotson, att'y at law, Millbrook, Kans., from her friend and Sabbath School teacher, John P. St. John."

32. Abram T. Hall to St. John, November 3, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 1, St. John Papers, KSHS. Affidavits were enclosed with this letter.

33. St. John to Hall, November 6, 1879, 27-03-01-05, no. 20, St. John Papers, KSHS.

The same day he wrote Hall, St. John received a petition from Gettysburg. It was commercially printed, with an elaborate inscrolled heading: "To Hon. John P. St. John, Governor of Kansas." The Gettysburg petitioners asked for a specific slate of county officers, with Robert Richmond as census taker. Richmond was not the only contender vying with Hall for the position. Another notable rival was Thomas Beaumont, an attorney and editor of the Hill City paper, the *Western Star*. His co-publisher, T. H. McGill also desired the position, but was willing to be named "assistant when the time is ripe." McGill thought Beaumont's appointment "would be satisfactory to the people here."[34]

The Reverend John Henry, a Baptist minister whose territory included Nicodemus, warned St. John that Hall's appointment was risky and that "the feeling against the first office of the Co. being given to a Col[ored] man is intense." He believed "Hall could more easily fill any other office than the one to which he aspires: the one that would bring him in contact with every excited man in the Co." Henry's concern was well founded, as John Landis, the man who originally surveyed land for the colonists, had repeatedly been threatened and was eventually murdered. The Reverend Daniel Hickman, one of the original Nicodemus settlers, and other blacks, believed Landis was killed because there was opposition by whites to a settlement of African Americans. The *Western Star* referred to the killing as "a ku-klux measure."[35]

Hall's political courage during this volatile post-Reconstruction era was matched by St. John's commitment to equal treatment of human beings irrespective of race. Hall's request for the appointment to census taker came during a particularly difficult time for the governor, as the state was overwhelmed by a migration of blacks from the South during the Exoduster movement. At one point St. John was even asked to issue a proclamation and "arrest this disastrous flood of Negro paupers in its flow to Kansas."[36]

34. "Petition from Gettysburg for County Officers," received in the office of John P. St. John, November 5, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 5, St. John Papers, KSHS; Thomas Beaumont to St. John, May 23, 1879, and T. H. McGill to St. John, May 29, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 1, St. John Papers, KSHS.

35. Rev. John S. Henry to St. John, November 7, 1879, 27-04-01-7, folder 1, St. John Papers, KSHS; *Western Star*, quoted in the *Millbrook Times*, August 1, 1879; George A. Root, "Biographical Sketch of Rev. Daniel Hickman," in History, Graham Co., Nicodemus, collection 691, box 1, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka. "Landis" is incorrectly referred to as "Landers" in this manuscript. The *Norton Advance* stated this was the third attempt on Landis's life. A correspondent from Nicodemus also implied there were racial factors in the murder of John Landis, when commenting on the "Roscoe riot." See *Roscoe Tribune*, January 28, 1881.

36. I. O. Pickering, "The Administrations of John P. St. John," *Kansas Historical Collections* 9 (1906): 670.

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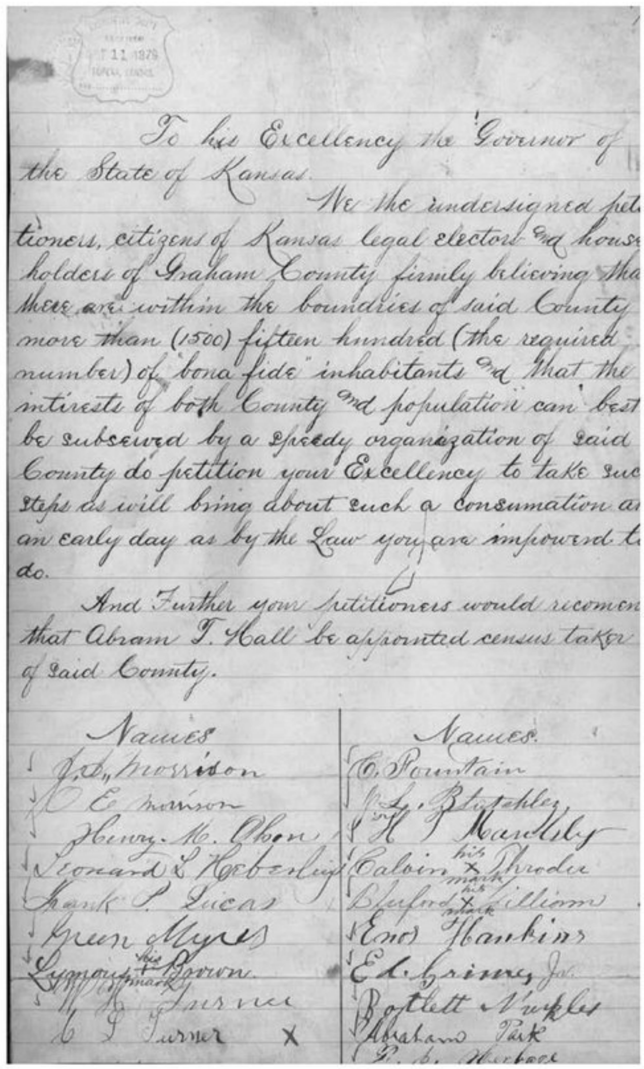
Furthermore, in January 1880, the U.S. Senate began investigating the reasons for the migration, and St. John was accused of luring blacks to Kansas. However, G. W. Carey, vice-president of the Emigrants Relief Board, introduced correspondence from St. John during the hearing and presented the governor as an able crusader for equal—rather than preferential—treatment of African Americans. Carey entered the following letter from St. John to Evan H. Harris into his testimony:

> The only inducements now offered, or that ever have been offered by the State of Kansas to immigrants are rich soil, healthy climate, free schools, and a free ballot, with full protection to the life and property of every law-abiding citizen, irrespective of race, condition, or color. . . . Kansas has done nothing to encourage the emigration of colored people from the South: she has simply said, and still says, that she will not place a sentinel at her portals to ascertain, before permitting those who desire to enter, what political party they belong to, where they were born, whether they have been sprinkled or plunged, or what particular shade their skins happen to be. All that Kansas requires of parties coming into the State is to obey the laws, be honest, sober and industrious, and join with us in helping to make a great and prosperous State, populated by a happy and free people.[37]

In accordance with his racial neutrality, St. John acknowledged Hall's superior qualifications and appointed him census taker on November 10, 1879. Even given its benefits, it was not an easy job. Census takers were considered intrusive under the best of circumstances. With Hall serving in the position, whites living in Graham County—some of whom were allegedly former bushwhackers from Missouri—were confronted with a highly educated, Shakespeare-quoting, Latin-spouting, French-speaking African American asking them if they could read and write.[38]



To his Excellency the Governor of the State of Kansas.

We the undersigned petitioners, citizens of Kansas legal electors and house holders of Graham County firmly believing that there are within the boundries of said County more than (1500) fifteen hundred (the required number) of bona fide inhabitants and that the interests of both County and population can best be subserved by a speedy organization of said County do petition your Excellency to take such steps as will bring about such a consumation at an early day as by the Law you are impowered to do.

And further your petitioners would recommend that Abram T. Hall be appointed census taker of said County.

Names	Names
J. L. Morrison	C. Fountain
O. E. Morrison	[illegible]
Henry M. Olson	H. T. Hardesty
Leonard L. Haberlin	Calvin his × mark Rhodes
Frank P. Lucas	Buford his × mark William
Green Myers	Eno Hankins
Seymour his mark Boren	E. L. Grimes Jr.
[illegible] Turner	Bartlett [illegible]
[illegible] Turner ×	Abraham Park
	[illegible]

This petition, received by Governor St. John on October 11, 1879, requested the "speedy organization" of Graham County and that Abram T. Hall be appointed census taker for a one-time census validating fifteen hundred bona fide inhabitants of an unorganized county as required by law for formal organization. The petition set off a wave of similar requests from neighboring towns, so that by March 1880 St. John was bombarded with petitions, affidavits, letters, accusations of fraud, personal visits, conflicting reports, threats, appeals to his zeal for temperance, pleas for racial advocacy, and blatant attempts to exploit his friendship by those living in the Graham County towns vying for the position of temporary county seat.

37. Testimony of G. W. Carey, *Report of the Select Committee of the Causes of the Removal of the Negroes from the Southern States to the Northern States*, 46th Cong., 2nd sess. 693, Part 3, 398. Painter speculated in *Exodusters*, 268, that letters may have been removed from the St. John papers at the KSHS to prepare for this investigation. Indeed, they were. St. John's correspondence is preserved through the testimony of Judge G. W. Carey, vice-president of the Emigrants' Relief Board, contained in part 3 of this seventeen-hundred-page report.

38. Shortridge stated that Missourians settled as clustered groups in Phillips, Rooks, and Graham counties (Shortridge, *Peopling the Plains*, 82–92). The *Hays City Sentinel* quoted from the *Troy Chief* and referred to these Missourians as "rebel bushwhackers" when discussing the murder of John Landis (*Hays City Sentinel*, September 21, 1878).