

John Brown Speech

During the spring of 1857, John Brown traveled to several Northeastern cities (specifically, in Brown's home state of Connecticut) to solicit financial support for the Kansas crusade. In the speech delivered from these handwritten notes, Brown outlined some of the many sacrifices he and others had made to give his audience a sense of what was needed and discussed the unfolding situation in Kansas Territory.

Creator: Brown, John, 1800-1859

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John Brown Speech

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KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

I propose in order to make this meeting as useful & interesting as I can:
1st to try, & give a correct idea of the condition of things in Kansas, as they were, while I was there; & as I suppose they still are. So far as the great question at issue is concerned & here let me remark that in Kansas the question is never raised of man: Is he a Democrat? Is he a Republican? The questions there raised are Is he a Free State man? Or is he a proslavery man? The machinery of a territorial government not yet in motion the proslavery settlers from the slave states, many of them turned to be the most determined Free State men; & fighting in all their battles. The comparative strength of the parties, as regards numbers, intelligence, &c. Industry, & good habits generally.

2^d Tell my own errand from the territory. Set the means of supporting my family, of supporting men finding them equipage &c. The kind of men, & emigrants I wanted to find. The effect of good or bad Pioneer emigration on new settlements.

3^d Statement of facts within my own knowledge.
I saw while in Missouri in the Fall of 1855 large numbers on their way to Kansas to Vote; & also returning after they had so done as they said.
together with four of my sons were called out to help defend Lawrence in the Fall of 1855 & traveled most of our foot; & during a dark Night a distance of 35 Miles: where we were detained with some 500 others or thereabouts from 5 to 15 days: say on average of 10 days at a cost to each per day of \$1.50 as wages to say nothing of the actual loss & suffering it occasioned. Many of them leaving their families at home sick, their crops not secured, their houses unprepared for winter & many of them without houses at all. This was the case with myself, & all my sons, who were unable to get any house built after our return. So far ~~as wages~~ in that case as wages alone; would amount to \$7500, Loss & suffering in consequence cannot be estimated. I saw at that time the body of the murdered Barber; & was present when his wife, & other friends were brought in to see him, ^{as he lay in} in the clothes he had on when killed. No very pleasant sight. I went in the spring of last year with some of my sons amongst the Buford men; in the character of a Surveyor, to see & hear from them their business into the territory. This took us from our work I and numerous others in the spring of last year travelled some 10 miles or over on foot, to meet & advise as to what should be done to meet the gathering storm. This occasioned much loss of time. I also with many others about the same time traveled on foot a similar distance to attend a meeting of Judge Cato's Court, to find out what kind of ^{law} he intended to enforce. This occasioned further loss of time.



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I with Six Sons, & a Son-in-Law were again called out to defend Lawrence May 20th & 21st and traveled most of way there on foot, & during the night, being 30 miles. From that date neither of us could do any work about our homes; but lost our whole time until we left in Oct last, excepting one of my sons, who had a few weeks to devote to the care of his own & his Brothers family who had been burned out of their houses while the two men were prisoners.

From about the 20th of May of last year hundreds of men like ourselves lost their whole time; & venting failed of securing any kind of Chop whatever. I believe it safe to say that 500 free state men lost each 120 days at \$1.50 per day, which would be to nothing of attendant losses \$10,000 dollars.

I saw the ruins of many Free State mens houses, at different places in the Territory, together with stacks of grain wasted, & burning to the amount of say \$50,000 dollars. Making in lost time & destruction of property more than \$150,000 dollars. On or about the 30th May last two of my sons with several others were imprisoned without other crime than opposition to Progers enactments; & most barbarously treated for a time. One being held about One Month, the other about four months. Both had their families in Kansas; & destitute of homes, being burned off in they were imprisoned. In their burning, all the Eight were sufferers, as we had our effects at the two houses. One of my sons had his Green taken from him at this time & never recovered them. Here is the chain with which one of was confined after the cruelty, sufferings, & anxiety he underwent had rendered him a Maniac. See Maniac.

On the 2^d of June last my son in Law was terribly wounded; supposed to be mortally; & two other Free State men at Black Jack. On the 6th or 7th of June last one of my sons was wounded by accident in Camp supposed to be mortally; & may prove a cripple for life. In Aug last I was present & saw the mangled & shockingly disfigured body of the murdered ^{man} of Deerfield, Mo; brought into our camp. I know him well.

I saw several other Free State who were either killed or wounded whose names I cannot now remember. I saw Dr. Daham who was a prisoner with the Ruffians on the 2^d of June last & was present when they wound him, in an attempt to kill him, as he was trying to save himself from being murdered by them during the fight of Black Jack. I know that for much of the time during the last summer the travel over a portion of the Territory was entirely cut off; & that none but bodies of armed men dared to move at all.

I know that for a considerable time the Mails on different routes were entirely stopped; & that notwithstanding there were abundant U S troops at hand to escort the Mails, that such escorts were not furnished as they might, or ought to have been.

I saw while it was standing, & afterward saw the ruins of a most valuable house full of good articles & stores; which had been burned by the Ruffians for a highly civilized, intelligent, & most exemplary Christian Indian; for being suspected of favouring Free State men. He is known as Ottawa Jones; or John J Jones. In Sept last I visited a beautiful little Free State town called Stanton on the North side of the Osage or Meriden river, as it is called; from which every inhabitant had fled (being in fear of their lives) after having built them a strong block house or wooden fort for their protection. Many of them had left their effects liable to be destroyed or carried off not being able to remove them. This was a most alarming scene; & like a visit to a vast sepulchre.

During last summer, & fall, desert & the war & conflict made to be met with in almost every direction south of the border. I saw the burning of Orwatonic by a body of some 400 Ruffians, & of Franklin afterwards by some 2700 men. One first named Aug 30th; the last named Sept 14th or 15th. Gov Leary had been for some time in the territory; & might have saved Franklin with perfect ease. It would not have cost the U S one dollar to have saved Franklin.

I with Five sick & wounded sons, & son-in-Law were obliged for some time to lie on the ground without shelter, our Boots, & cloths worn out, destitute of money, & at times almost in a state of starvation; & dependant on the charities of the Christian Indian, & his Wife; whom I before named.

I saw in Sept last a Mr Parker who I well know, with his head all bruised over, & his throat partly cut, having before been dragged sick out out of the house of Ottawa Jones the Indian (when it was burned) & thrown for dead over the bank of the Ottawa Creek. I saw three mangled bodies of three young men, two of which were dead; & had lain on the open ground for about 18 Hours for the flies to work at; the other living with twenty Buck shot, & Bullet holes in him. One of these two dead, was my own son.

I know that many other whose names I cannot now remember suffered terrible hardships, exposures, privations & cruelties such as I have named. I well know that on or about the 14th Sept last a large force of Missourians, & other Ruffians numbering 2000 (as stated by Gov Leary) invaded the Territory, burned Franklin; & while the smoke of that place was going up behind them; they on the same day, made their appearance in full view within about a mile of Lawrence. & I know of no possible reason why they did not attack, & burn that place except that about 100 Free State men volunteered to go out on the open plain before the town, & there gave them the offer of a fight; which they declined after getting some few scattering shots from our men; & then retreated back towards Franklin.

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I saw that whole thing. The government troops at this time, ^{were} with Gov. Leary at Leecompton; a distance of twelve miles only from Lawrence; & notwithstanding several messengers had been to advise him in good time of the approach, or of the setting out of the enemy; who had to march some forty miles, to reach Lawrence; he did not on that memorable occasion get a single soldier on to the ground, untill after the enemy had retreated back to Franklin: I had been gone for more than five hours. He did get the troops there about midnight of tomorrow, & that is the way he saved Lawrence or he boasts of doing in his Message to the Bogus Legislature. This was just the kind of protection the Administration & its tools have afforded the Free State settlers of Kansas from the first.

It cost the U. S. more than half a Million for a year past to harass poor Free State settlers, in Kansas, & to violate all Law, & all right, Moral, & Constitutional, for the sole, & only purpose, of forcing Slavery upon that Territory. I challenge this whole Nation to prove before God or mankind to the contrary. Who paid this money to enslave the settlers of Kansas, & worry them out? I say nothing in this estimate of the money wasted by Congress in the management of this horribly tyrannical, & damnable affair. Answer Questions

I am trying to raise from \$20, to 25 000, Dollars in the Free States to enable me to continue my efforts in the cause of Freedom. Will the people of Connecticut my native State afford me some aid in this undertaking? Will the Gentlemen & Ladies of Hartford where I make my first appeal in this State: set the example of an earnest effort? Will some Gentleman or Lady take hold & try what can be done by small contributions from Counties Cities Towns, Societies or Churches? I think the little beggar children in the streets are sufficiently interested to warrant their contributing if there was any need of it to secure the object. * I was told that the Newspapers in a certain City were stopped in mourning on hearing that I was killed & scalped in Kansas; but did not know of it untill I reached the place. Much good it did me. In the same place I met a more cool reception than in any other place where I have stopped. If my friends will hold up my hands while I live: I will fully absolve them from any use power over me when I am dead. I do not ask for pay but shall be most grateful for all the assistance I can get.