

James W. Denver to his dear wife

James W. Denver, Governor of Kansas Territory, wrote from Lecompton, Kansas Territory, to his wife, Louise Rombach of Clinton County, Ohio. The two married in 1856 and had four children. Denver mentions the January 4, 1858, election on the Lecompton Constitution. He describes the tendency of Kansas Territory residents to exaggerate claims of violence, the Legislature's lack of a quorum, and his dissatisfaction with his current situation.

Creator: Denver, James William, 1817-1892

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Leecompton K. T. Jan. 4th 1858.

My Dear Wife,

This is the day of election and every thing is going off very quietly here, and, as far as I can learn, such is the case every where. The day is delightful - mild and balmy - too warm for overcoats. Indeed the weather thus far has been as fine as heart could wish. It could not well be finer this side of the Rocky Mountains.

I was much gratified at the receipt of your letter of the 14th ult, ^{which} was here awaiting my arrival from Leavenworth. It is the only letter received since leaving Washington, except those of an official character and a private one from Mike Delany. He wrote that he arrived at home the evening of the day we left, and was met at the depot by Mrs. D. who told him that we had had a terrible quarrel with her and had left. He would not believe it until they arrived at home when sure enough we were gone. She amused herself at his vexation for a long time before undeceiving him. It must have been decidedly rich. I can well imagine how he acted.

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I began writing this before noon - it is now after dark and I have only got thus far - being interrupted every minute or two by persons on business or loafing. Many people here seem to think that the Governor is all powerful and if one man makes mouths at another he must run with a complaint to the Governor about it. If a desperado is to be taken it is expected that the Governor will do it. Today a Justice of the Peace came to me for a posse comitatus to arrest a desperate character who had attempted to kill his wife. He said every body was afraid of him and no one was willing to go and make the arrest. I sent eight soldiers along with a special constable and about dusk they brought him along - a poor miserable little creature, not near as large as Bert Hibben. That was the desperado.

This country beats all creation for reports of every hue and description. A quarrel between two men is soon magnified into a battle in which a score or two are killed. Putting reports into circulation and exciting the public mind has become a business here, and people are beginning to understand them. Nothing can be believed until it is corroborated by well established facts.

James W. Denver to his dear wife

They are all beginning to have confidence in me and I think now I will be able to get along with them.

The Legislature was to meet here today but there was not a quorum and did not organize. In a day or two I suppose they will be fairly under way, and then you will see how I will get along with an abolition Legislature. I am greatly in hopes that the whole thing will be closed up in this month and let me off. If they will only let me turn over the government to some of them in four or five weeks I will give them a pledge never to put my foot inside of their Territory again. Heavens! the place it seems to have been cursed of God and man. Providence gave them no crops last year scarcely and now it requires all the powers conferred on me by the President to prevent them from cutting each others throats. Were I not a very patient man they would almost tempt me to swear, but I endeavor to call philosophy to my aid to resist the temptation. Among them there is one continual struggle for the ascendancy, and all means are resorted to, fair or foul, to effect their object. They are ready to cheat, to swindle, to violate their word of honor given in the most solemn manner, in fact they are in good part a most rascally set.

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Well it is a busy life to lead, and if you could only be near I would not be so much ~~less~~^{less} satisfied, but that can't be, and therefore I must get along as well as I can for a month or two. I believe I made a very foolish request of you in one of my letters—that was, to meet me at St. Louis. It will only take one day more for me to reach you at home, and when I made the request I forgot how the rail road cars always affected you. Don't do it, but wait patiently for me, unless you would like to see St. Louis and are willing to ^{go} through with another attack of sea sickness.

I have written by snatches and while people are continually talking to me, and you must correct all errors. I tried to make a correction above but found the correction incorrect and had to correct it over again, and then I quit.

Write as often as you can to this place, and don't forget to give me all the news.

Give my love to all the family and believe me as ever

Your Will.