

FORT SCOTT

is not only now, but destined to be for all future time the leading city of Southern Kansas, I have gathered up and present to your numerous readers all the important facts connected with its settlement, growth, &c.

The Fort from which the city takes its name was built in 1840-41, during the Harrison-Tyler administration at a cost to the Government of \$200,000. After the withdrawal of the troops the buildings, officers' quarters, etc., were sold to individuals. They were so constructed that each house accommodated two officers and their families, and when they were sold they were sold in halves, each half bringing from three to four dollars; and what cost the government \$18,000, brought back only from \$800 to \$1,400. These houses surrounded the plaza, which was known then as Carroll Plaza, and has, since the commencement of the city, been enclosed by a substantial board fence, and reserved to the city as a public park. It is laid out in beautiful stone walks and set out in thrifty trees. The houses surrounding this park or plaza are large three story ones, built after Eastern styles, and shaded by large, thrifty sugar trees, planted out when the houses were built, which makes it a handsome part of the city. Some of the residents, among them Colonel Wilson, cultivate most beautiful gardens, and, all in all, presents rare evidences of refinement, elegance, culture and intelligence.

It has been argued that the existence of a military post has been the principal cause of the rapid growth of the city. While I am ready to concede that the military post was of very material advantage to it, I do not think facts will sustain the assertion, that it owes its present standing principally to that fact. I attribute its rapid advancement not only to that cause, but in connection with it, to its location, the enterprise of its citizens, and the capital invested. And upon these may be based its hopes for the future.

The immense amount of business that has been and is transacted, is not of a mere transitory character, but such as gives an assurance of its permanency. Before the war began the mercantile establishments did a very heavy business, both wholesale and retail, and it they gave promise of becoming what it now is—the metropolis of Southern Kansas. Traders and merchants came from the small towns in Missouri, and hundreds of miles distant, to purchase their goods here. The war, in a great measure, destroyed that trade; while it gained in other respects, it temporarily lost in that. The establishment of a military post during our late war, gave a new impetus to business, which the war would have temporarily destroyed. Hence, I admit that the existence of a military post has been of very material advantage to the city. It brought employees here who have become permanent residents. It made an excellent market for all kinds of farm products, and through that drew trade from many of the neighboring counties, which, of course, created a greater demand for merchandise, and drew business men with their capital.

This much by way of preface, and the source from whence the city took its name, and I come to the early history of the place, prior to 1857.

During the early struggles in Kansas, Fort Scott and vicinity were comparatively free from the excitements, which were agitating the Kansas Valley. The population of Bourbon county was then nearly all southern. The free-state men were too few to attract persecution. At one time and for a short period a small band of Texans stopped in the Fort and carried terror among the people by their sallies into the country. Mr. Stewart, Sr., of Mill Creek, and Wm. R. Griffin, late State Superintendent of Public Instruction, were more annoyed by them than any other free-state men. For a while Mr. Griffin took refuge in Missouri. So also did Mr. Stewart. At the time of the excitement about Osawatomie, a company was raised to go and assist the arrest of the John Brown men. While on this tour the editor of the Fort Scott paper was wounded. Many amusing stories are told of this expedition. The company fell in with the notorious George W. Clarke, who was commanding a force in Linn county, with Westport and Westpoint as his base of operations, and necessarily, if not deservedly, partook of the odium attached to the burning of a store at Sugar Mound by him.

Subsequently in June 1857, the town was visited from Lawrence by George A. Crawford, of Lock Haven, Penn., D. H. Weir, of Laporte, Indiana, and D. W. Holbrook, of White Pigeon, Michigan. Norman Eddy, of South Bend, Indiana, James E. Jones and Chas. Dimon, of New York. These were the pioneers of a northern emigration. In the office of Lowman & Reynolds, in Lawrence, the idea was adopted of trying to secure the town site. Eddy, Crawford, Dimon and Weir, set out in a mule wagon, late in the afternoon, for their Eldorado—first having supplied themselves with refreshments, for the journey through a country mostly unsettled, and partially settled with Indians. That afternoon they got as far as Ottawa Jones—the chief of the Ottawas. The next day they reached Squire Means, on the Sugar near Centerville, and on the third day by the middle of the afternoon arrived in Fort Scott. There was but one hotel in the place—the old "Fort Scott" kept by the Caseys. Eddy, Crawford, Weir and Holbrook, who was already on the ground, immediately set about the purchase of claims, on which to base a town company. They bought out the claims of S. A. Williams, N. E. Werson, and others—taking Colo. Wilson and Jones in as members of the company they were forming.

A plat of the town, as laid out by the company, was afterwards made by O. Darling, as also a survey, which was carried by Mr. Crawford to St. Louis to be lithographed. This plat proved to be incorrect, as well as the survey, in many particulars, and a survey was made by Mr. Ogden Edwards, at the instance of the Town Company.

Emigration from the North began to come into the town and county, encouraged by the settlement of the Northern men at Fort Scott; Wm. Gallaher, P. P. McDonald, M. Horatio Knowles, J. N. Roach, T. R. Roberts, Charles Bull, Joseph Ray, Mm. Bantly, Orlando Darling, Thomas Blackburn, and Ed. A. Smith, were among those who came next; followed in the fall and winter by A. McDonald, E. B. Brown, A. R. Allison and others. These all boarded at one hotel and gained for it the name of "Free State Hotel."

The hotel was purchased from the

Caseys by Wm. R. Jodson, G. A. Crawford, and C. Dimon, and kept for a while by the latter. It was rented in the fall of the year to Wm. T. Campbell (late Lieut. Col. of the 6th Kansas) then living at Barnesville, who stayed down with his family and kept it for some time.

Another hotel across the Plaza was opened by a pro slavery man, and became pro-slavery headquarters. These hotels were the scene and center of many an interesting story and struggle.

The notorious George W. Clarke had gotten an appointment from Mr. Buchanan as Register of the Land Office, holding it in the name of his brother in-law, — Doak, of Butler, Mo. He moved here with his family. Gov. Ransom, of Michigan, having been appointed Receiver of the Land Office moved here also with his family, together with his son in-law, Geo. S. Clark and family. In addition to the establishing of the Land Office at Fort Scott, it was made the seat of the U. S. District Court. This brought Judge Joseph Williams, of Iowa, with his wife and four sons. Gov. Ransom ran as the Democratic candidate for Congress in 1857 and was beaten. The citizens of Fort Scott were confident their railroad and other interests would receive due attention at his hands, and they supported him very unanimously.

The presence of the notorious Gen. Geo. W. Clarke naturally drew to Fort Scott such border ruffians as Dr. Hamilton, Brockett, Harlan and others, whose crimes had driven them from other parts of the State. They made a determined stand to hold Fort Scott for pro slaveryism.

A series of crimination and re-criminations began in the fall of 1857, between pro-slavery and free state families on the Osage. Writs were applied for by the pro-slavery men. The free-state men said they could not get justice, so they took the law into their own hands and called on Capt. Montgomery for help. He came down from Linn county and joined his forces to those of Capt. Bain to resist arrests. Assassinations became frequent. A reign of terror began. An appeal was made to the Government for help. Capt. Sturgis, Lieutenants Crittenden and Otis were sent down with one or two companies of U. S. Dragoons. These struggles lasted almost to the breaking out of the war. At one time Maj. Sedgwick (since Maj. General Sedgwick) marched here with his command. Capt. Anderson and Lieut. Ingraham were in command awhile. Lieutenants, late Generals, Merchant and Merrill, were among those who were sent here to look after Montgomery and Jennison. Later Capt. Lyon, late General, and Major, now General, Wessels were sent down to enforce the execution of the laws. Gen. Harney was sent in 1860 to protect the land sales. Capt., now General, Barnard, and other officers who have since distinguished themselves, among whom we may mention Capt., now General, Wool, were here at different times.

One of the most exciting incidents of these times was the chase of Capt. Montgomery and his men by Capt. Anderson and his Dragoons, and the killing of a young German of the Dragoons near Rockford. Capt. Anderson's horse was wounded, and himself grazed by a ball. One of Montgomery's men was wounded. The soldier's comrades were sorely touched by his death. He was a good scholar and son of an eminent German Professor in Philadelphia.

The most thrilling incident of these times was the seizure of the town in 1858 by about 100 men of Old John Brown and Montgomery. Their object was to rescue Ben Rice from the custody of Sheriff Bull. Rice was kept in the Hotel of Mr. Campbell. They came upon the town about daylight, surprised it and rescued the prisoner. In the melee, John Little, who had been Deputy Marshal, was shot through the head and killed. The excitement over this affair was intense. Little was much esteemed by the free-state men of the town as a good man and citizen.

Clarke, Brockett, and the other pro slavery ruffians, were daily more and more exasperated by what Montgomery and his men were doing on the Osage, and were disposed to retaliate. This the free state men of the town, who were mostly democrats, would not allow. They took the ground that violence did not justify violence, but should be punished by the law. If a free state man were abused, they would have the law punish the aggressor. If a pro slavery man were abused, they would point him to the law for his remedy. This old fashioned policy did not suit the fast young men on either side—as the extremes of each were for taking the law into their own hands.

The consequence was that the ruffians who quartered at the pro slavery hotel became deadly bitter and hostile towards the free state boys, who lived at the Free State Hotel, across the Plaza. They made assaults upon them. Brockett once attacked W. C. Dimon with intent to kill. G. W. Clarke availed himself of a suitable opportunity, and attempted to take the life of Mr. Crawford. They laid cunning plans to assassinate him in particular, against whom their feelings were perhaps the bitterest. At one time they caught a stranger and hung him by the neck, and threatened to shoot him as a spy; promising him his freedom if he would go and kill Mr. Crawford. He escaped from them, though frequently shot at, and lived to testify before the grand jury to these and other facts.

Matters culminated in their giving notice to George A. Crawford, Charles Dimon and William Gallaher to leave town in twelve hours, or they would be killed, an attack having first been attempted, but prevented by Judge Williams and Colonel Campbell. These three gentlemen were determined not to leave. They saw that an issue of violence must come, and they, with their friends armed themselves the best they could. Hamilton, Brockett & Co., fearing that Crawford & Co. had sent for John Hamilton and his Free State company, and for Montgomery and his men, took to horse and fled. And this was the last of "The Bloody Red Society," as they called themselves in Fort Scott. There is a sequel to this incident. Falling of their murderous intent in Fort Scott, they went to Butler, Missouri, and with Capt. Charles Hamilton, led a party into the valley near the trading post in Linn county, took eleven free state men from their plows into an obscure ravine and deliberately shot them, killing five and leaving the rest on the field for dead. Hon. Asa Hairgrove, late State Auditor, was one of those who survived his wounds.

An appeal was made to Mr. Buchanan to remove Clark or Doak, which was finally answered by his making him a purser in the Navy. He has since been a quartermaster in the rebel army, and is reported to be a defaulter to a large amount.

After his departure the town began to assume a more peaceful air. The election of Mr. Lincoln in 1860, and the admission of the Territory into the Union as a State gave promise of better days to come. There were occasional sources of excitement and agitation springing up in and outside of the growing young city, but they were fast passing away.

I might extend this subject to an indefinite length, as I have only briefly glanced at it. There is plenty of material for volumes of interesting reading, or thousands of yellow covered novels, but I have written enough to give your readers a glance at what Fort Scott was before slavery was rooted out and freedom planted on every foot of our great and glorious Union, and now to the present as I am able to see it.