

TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

1897-1900;

TOGETHER WITH

ADDRESSES AT ANNUAL MEETINGS, MEMORIALS, AND
MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS.

ALSO,

A CATALOG OF KANSAS CONSTITUTIONS, AND TERRITORIAL AND STATE
DOCUMENTS IN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY.

EDITED BY GEO. W. MARTIN, SECRETARY.

VOL. VI.

TOPEKA:
W. Y. MORGAN, STATE PRINTER.
1900.

THE NEW ENGLAND EMIGRANT AID COMPANY AS AN INVESTMENT SOCIETY.

An address by WILLIAM H. CARRUTH, before the Kansas State Historical Society, at twenty-first annual meeting, January 19, 1897.

A LARGE part of this paper appeared in the *New England Magazine* for March, 1897, and is reprinted here with the consent of the publishers. "It will be just as well for you not to mention the fact that you are from Boston," said a Harvard man of the class of '36 to a friend of mine who arrived in Lawrence twenty years ago to take a position as teacher. Maybe there was a bit of cynicism in the remark, but there was surely much practical wisdom based on experience. To those who have heard or read only of the large part taken by New England in the settlement of Kansas, this must seem strange, even incredible. There is no doubt of the existence of this feeling for some years after the incident referred to, although I believe it is now quite imperceptible. Some inquiry touching the source of this suspicion or hostility of Kansas people towards those of New England, and especially of Boston, has led to the present paper. Mr. Godkin's recent explanation of it as a general distrust of Western people toward Eastern people, due partly to the fact that the latter wear socks and tailor-made clothes, is not entirely satisfactory. For the sock habit has spread in Kansas, so that there are some addicted to it in nearly every community. In large degree, the true explanation is to be sought in the history and dealings of the New England Emigrant Aid Company.

A complete account of this extraordinary movement is still wanting, despite Mr. Thayer's own publications in his pamphlet histories and his book, "The Kansas Crusade." The rough data of the situation to be made by the Kansas-Nebraska bill were: A fertile territory opened to settlement; the extension of slavery, or perhaps the beginning of its extinction, to be determined by the settlers themselves; pro-slavery settlers near at hand, but few and naturally slow, agrarian, and their belongings not easy to move; anti-slavery settlers distant, but plentiful, aggressive, more mechanics and town dwellers. To winning that fertile territory and achieving that victory for freedom, the one obstacle seemed to be the element of distance, for there the opposition had an immense advantage. Pondering these elements in his study at Oread Home, Worcester, and in his seat in the general court of Massachusetts, Eli Thayer evolved the plan of a society which should offer to anti-slavery emigrants inducements sufficient to offset this advantage held by the other side. Already, nearly ten years before this, Rev. E. E. Hale had considered the greater fecundity of the Yankee, and had proposed to locate the surplus of New England population in Texas, teaching thus "How to conquer Texas before Texas conquers us." But Texas was further away and quite cut off from the free North, and the North was not yet roused by the discussions of 1852 and 1854.

Mr. Thayer's plan was an epitome of Yankee characteristics—thrift and devotion to principle. He did not propose to win Kansas with hirelings, but to show the natural aggressiveness of the Yankee an outlet for his energy at once honorable and profitable. And thus, also, the company he proposed was not to be a charitable labor entirely, as religious missionary societies mostly are; but he asked: Why is it worse for a company to make money by extending Christianity, or suppressing slavery, than by making cotton cloth? The company which he planned was intended to be an investment company, giving and taking

advantages with those whom it induced to go to Kansas, and incidentally crippling slavery. The plan was plausible; it is still so; and, omitting the war for principle, is pursued by the railroad and irrigation companies of the West to-day.

April 26, 1854, more than a month before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, Mr. Thayer procured a charter for the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company,* with a capital limit of \$5,000,000. Immediately he set to work holding public meetings, and advertising what Horace Greeley dubbed "the plan of freedom." It caught the attention of the already roused North; it grew into the lurid image of a last judgment in the suspicious imagination of the South. The capital stock of \$5,000,000 became, to the excited Southerners, a cash corruption fund whereby to fill Kansas with hireling voters. On July 29, 1854, just after the Emigrant Aid Company's first party of twenty-nine members had passed through Kansas City, the Platte County Self-defensive Association, meeting at Weston, resolved: "That this association will, whenever called upon by any citizens of Kansas territory, hold itself in readiness to assist and remove any and all emigrants who go there under the auspices of the Northern emigrant aid societies."

The trustees of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company discovered legal weaknesses, as they thought, in the charter, and preferred to work as a private company, until, in the spring of 1855, a new charter was obtained, and the name changed to the New England Emigrant Aid Company. Meantime Mr. Thayer was indefatigable. He was writing and speaking constantly and organizing local leagues. The subscriptions to the stock of the company were liberal and prompt, amounting to about \$100,000 before June, 1856. Among the largest subscribers were Charles Francis Adams, Amos Lawrence, J. M. S. Williams, W. B. Spooner, Eli Thayer, and W. M. Evarts. The company advertised its work well. In July, 1855, a special appeal was made to churches to take shares for their ministers. The call was signed by Lyman Beecher, Starr King, Hosea Ballou, Calvin E. Stowe, Leonard Bacon, and Horace Bushnell, among others. It added less than \$2000 to the stock of the company, but it interested 200 ministers in the cause, which was said to represent not only freedom, but temperance, education, and religion.

In September, 1855, the company issued an address to the people of Missouri, some of whom had expressed a desire to hang Mr. Thayer. Like all manifestos from this source, it was moderate and appealed to reason. In the senate report of the thirty-fourth congress, Stephen A. Douglas, chairman of the committee on territories, made a report, in which the Kansas troubles were ascribed largely to the machinations of the Aid Company. Again the company put forth an "Address to the People of the United States," admirable in its tone and content. "The language of the senate report," it said, "would lead to the inference that the Kansas-Nebraska act was especially designed for the benefit of those individuals and societies who seek to render the institutions of Kansas congenial to those of Missouri. Their action is spoken of as simply defensive, while that of the Massachusetts society is characterized as aggressive." Another device of the company for arousing interest in its work was the prize of fifty dollars, offered in February, 1855, by the secretary, Dr. Thomas H. Webb, for the best poem on the subject of the emigration. This was won by Lucy Larcom, at that time a teacher in Wheaton Seminary, at Norton, Mass., over eighty-eight competitors. Before her authorship of "The Call to Kansas" was publicly announced, she was surprised at being greeted one morning with the presentation of her song by a chorus of her pupils.

*See notes on page 96.

Whittier's beautiful "Hymn of the Kansas Emigrants" was a gift to the cause. It appeared in 1855.

But the most powerful literary agency enlisted for the winning of Kansas was the New York *Tribune*. Mr. Thayer tells in his book how he labored with Horace Greeley, and the files of the *Tribune* from that time on show with what complete success. Doctor Webb, secretary of the company, in his office at 3 Winter street, Boston, kept the newspaper record of the fight for Kansas, with which he filled twenty large folio scrap-books—an invaluable collection, now in possession of the Kansas State Historical Society. The work done by the New England Aid Emigrant Company toward determining the nature of the institutions of Kansas was, without doubt, the most weighty factor in making Kansas free. But much of this result was accomplished indirectly and incidentally. The agitation of the cause and the advertising of the country probably started many towards Kansas who never heard of the company. Mr. Hale's book, "Kansas and Nebraska," published in 1854, and Mrs. Dr. Robinson's account of her experiences, "Kansas, its Interior and Exterior Life," both prompted indirectly by the company, were powerful agents in accomplishing the final result.

But now we come to the subject of the company's standing in Kansas, and the reasons for its financial failure.

The report of the committee on organization, while assuring the company's stockholders of "that satisfaction, ranked by Lord Bacon among the very highest, of becoming founders of states, and, more than this, states which are prosperous and free," alluded confidently to "an investment which promises large returns at no distant day." This hope of dividends flickers up from time to time even as late as May, 1861, when the executive committee, in a report to the directors, said: "It must be shown that the free-state system of settling a new country pays well in money. This we do not absolutely despair of doing, even in the case of Kansas." But in the following June, Doctor Russell, better informed, in a meeting of the directors, quenched the hope with a "might-have-been." Yet this very rational expectation was made a subject of reproach against the company by some supersensitives who alluded to "money-changers in the temple."

The Aid Company's emigrants were not the first free-state men on the ground. By the end of 1856 they were not in a majority—if, indeed, they ever were. Of course the pro-slavery men, from among whom there were, and continued to be, many *bona fide* settlers, did not love the Aid Company's people. The free-state men from the rest of the North brought from home, even then, a bit of prejudice against the superior refinement and provincial pronunciation of the down-easters, and to this was now added in many cases a mild jealousy. It was generally believed that the Aid Company's emigrants had been assisted, and had thus an unfair advantage over their brethren from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The Aid Company's agents, Charles Robinson and S. C. Pomeroy, were cautious and law-abiding, yet firm in the defense of their rights. So there were some settlers who thought the Aid Company had unnecessarily aroused Southern opposition, and others again who claimed to think that it was timidly conservative. Furthermore, among the New England emigrants themselves there was more or less dissatisfaction with the company because they were not aided more than they were, or because the company did not keep its agreements as they understood them. For instance, the fare from Boston to Kansas City was advertised as twenty-five dollars—six dollars less than it is to-day. In some cases parties arriving at St. Louis were charged anew for transportation to Kansas City. Mr. Pomeroy refunded this double charge to some, but others did not know enough to demand it, and did not get it. Then, again, with the third and later parties

were some kid-gloved gentlemen, who had come out expecting to live on the fat of the land. These, of course, were disappointed and cursed the company. Some of them returned; others were unable to do so, and stayed.

So it will be seen how many elements there were to supply open or secret ill will towards the company. That such a feeling existed, and that right early, is manifested by the passage of the following resolutions by the Lawrence Town Company, January 16, 1855:

“Resolved, That the organization of the Emigrant Aid Society has been of exceeding great benefit in the transmission of emigrants to the territory, and their establishing an agency in this city and their investment of capital herein has been a decided advantage to the place, and we believe their efforts thus far have been entirely disinterested; we, therefore, most cordially invite them to remain and continue their operations among us, assuring them of our sincere approval of the past, and of our cooperation in the future; that we, as citizens of Lawrence, particularly approve of the course pursued by the Lawrence Association toward the Emigrant Aid Society in extending an invitation to that company to invest their capital here, and the basis upon which they are allowed to operate; and we shall duly respect their city rights and support them in all lawful and liberal movements.”

Clearly these resolutions protest too much. The “basis” referred to was at first a grant of one-half of all the town lots, which was not too much considering that Branscomb, the company’s agent, paid \$500 to purchase one-half of the original town site. But soon the company’s proportion was reduced to one-fourth, and in the spring of 1855, while Doctor Robinson, the local agent, was absent in the East, the company was finally assigned eight out of 220 shares into which the town stock had meanwhile been divided. Of the three free-state papers in Lawrence, one openly and constantly antagonized the movements and policy of the Aid Company, while the *Herald of Freedom*, which was equipped by money borrowed from the company, considered it policy for a time to deny all connection with the New England propagandists. In later days the obligation to New England has been so generously acknowledged in Lawrence that it is almost forgotten how hard New England had to fight even her own friends. Here, as everywhere, was felt the combined love and jealousy of foreign capital.

Now consider briefly what the Aid Company actually did, aside from agitating and advertising. It established a Boston office, where intending settlers could get information and gather for the start. Here they became acquainted and learned the watchword which, Mr. Hale says, ought to be the motto of Kansas, “Together.” The character of Mr. Thayer’s appeals and the nature of the case brought together “men of industry and enterprise, who believe in hard work and are accustomed to it”; men who could not fail to “carry with them a love for the institutions which recognize the dignity of labor and allow to every man the just rewards of his toil.” While many local auxiliaries openly proclaimed their purpose to aid only free state emigration, the company never questioned those who purchased tickets through their agent as to their attitude on the slavery question. In New England that was unnecessary. An amusing result of this policy, however, narrated in detail in Mr. Speer’s account of James H. Lane, was that Governor Walker and Secretary Stanton, both of whom denounced the transactions of the Emigrant Aid Company, came into the territory on the Aid Company’s cheap tickets.

While the Aid Company must be credited for something of the high tone of the New England emigrants, it is a common error to suppose that these emigrants came to Kansas expecting to win martyrs’ crowns. I have questioned many of them as to their motives, and the uniform answer has been: “We went to Kansas to better our condition, incidentally expecting to make it a free state. We knew

we took some risks; but if we had foreseen the struggles and hardships we actually underwent, we never should have gone." This is about what Mr. Thayer calculated on.

The company then secured its passengers a low rate of transportation—a reduction of about fifteen per cent. It erected hotels and sawmills, thus providing immediate accommodations for the new arrivals, and materials for building homes. These institutions were calculated to be profitable, and to serve as nuclei for towns. Schools and churches were to be encouraged, but not out of the company's stock funds. The company did not propose to speculate, or to loan money, though it did so rarely in aid of semi-public enterprises. The company did not pay the transportation of any but its agents. It did not advance money to intending emigrants. It "never invested a dollar in any implements of war." This is the sworn testimony of Mr. Lawrence and of Mr. Conway, the company's agent, before the Harper's Ferry committee. It is difficult to see why a plan so wisely made did not succeed better.

What, then, became of the Emigrant Aid Company's money? Let us see. The journal and ledger for the first two years are not at hand. From May, 1857, to the close, kept in the beautiful figures of Anson J. Store, the assistant treasurer, they are in possession of the Kansas Historical Society, by the gift of Mrs. Amos A. Lawrence. The stock account shows a total paid in of \$136,300, to which must be added donations of about \$9000—in all, \$145,300. Sales and rents brought in, all together, \$26,918. Thus there is \$172,218 to be accounted for. The total expenses of the Boston office for the eight years of the company's activity in Kansas were \$30,465. This leaves us \$141,753. In Kansas the company had as agents: Charles Robinson, 1854-'56; C. H. Branscomb, 1854-'58; S. C. Pomeroy, 1854-'62; M. F. Conway, 1858-'62—all receiving alike \$1000 per annum, expenses, and commission. The last items are not summarized in the ledger, but some items given seem to warrant an estimate of fifty per cent. for them. This will make the expenses of the Kansas end of the management \$27,000, and leave \$114,753, or more likely under that, as the amount actually invested. Of course, the treasurer charged up, and very properly, all expenses of management to these investments, and his invoice of the company's property, footing up \$126,616.27, may be read clearly in the ledger now in possession of this Society. A similar invoice, made in March, 1862, makes the total valuation \$143,322.98. But alas! the gap between debit and credit is often wide. On the 27th of February, 1862, all the company's property in Missouri and Kansas was sold at auction to John N. Noyes, for Messrs. Adams & Ayling, of Boston, for \$16,150—not much more than enough to pay outstanding claims. And so, as Mr. Hale said in 1879, "no subscriber to that fund ever received back one cent."

And still we have to answer the question, Why? While Mr. Thayer himself declares that the money was contributed "mainly as a charity, and without hope of returns," and Mr. Hale says of the stockholders, "some of them did and some of them did n't" expect dividends, it can easily be shown, in more detail than I have done, that the management steadily hoped at least to pay back the original investment; and besides, there is the testimony of various officers and agents that the company "never gave a cent toward any man's passage," "never hired a man to go to Kansas, or offered any inducement if he did not mean to go," "but we invested capital."

The company's financial agent was S. C. Pomeroy, afterward senator from Kansas. Mr. Pomeroy was not, however, a financier. Some mild-mannered Westerner once warned a stranger against trifling with Wild Bill, explaining that he was "reckless with firearms." Mr. Pomeroy was reckless with drafts. The

books do not show for what many of these drafts were drawn, but it is fair to presume that all bargains were construed liberally in behalf of the emigrant. "We understood the Aid Company to be a benevolent institution," said an old-timer to me, "and we regarded anything of the company's that came in our way as a gift." Pomeroy always paid liberally. He was not the man to make a sharp bargain for the company. Very likely the company would have dismissed him if he had done so. Three mills, costing in New York \$4000, paid in freight \$2146, and an additional \$583 for storage. The proprietor of the *Herald of Freedom* repaid his loan of \$2000 in territorial scrip, which was never redeemed. An agent of the company, in making settlement, turned in ten shares of Quindaro town stock at \$3578, which was then really rated high, but soon became worthless.

The temporary sod and thatch hotels at first erected in Lawrence were soon superseded, and were thus a loss. The largest single loss to the company was the destruction by Sheriff Jones of the Free State hotel. A grand jury, deriving its instructions from a United States district court, found the following indictment: "We are satisfied that the building known as the Free State hotel, in Lawrence, has been constructed with a view to military occupation and defense, and regularly parapeted and portholed for the use of cannon and small arms, and could only be designed as a stronghold for resistance to law, thereby endangering the public safety and encouraging rebellion and sedition to the country; and we respectfully recommend that steps be taken whereby this nuisance may be removed." A United States marshal brought a posse of Missourians to the city, and then turned them over to the vengeful Jones, who, acting directly on this indictment, without any order from the court, proceeded to destroy the hotel and other property belonging to the company. When the sale was made, in 1862, the company reserved its claim against the government of \$20,000 for the destruction of the Free State hotel. The claim has never been allowed, but a juster one was seldom made.

Resuming my report of the company's capital at the point where the operating expenses had been deducted, you will recall that we had left \$114,753 to account for. Among the definite items of loss which I have noted are the \$20,000 for the Free State hotel, \$2000 for the *Herald of Freedom*, and \$3578 in Quindaro town stock. At least \$1000 worth of other property belonging to the company was destroyed in the sacking of Lawrence May 21, 1856. This makes a total of \$26,578, direct loss, which, deducted from \$114,753, leaves \$88,175 to be accounted for. How an investment of \$88,000 can shrink to twenty per cent. of that amount scarcely needs any explanation to those who lived through the disastrous boom of 1856 to 1859.

Finally came the "collapse of the boom." The year 1857 was a boom year in Kansas. The sacking of Lawrence and other outrages, in 1856, so increased interest in the Kansas cause that the following year saw an astonishing influx of settlers and capital. But the bottom went out soon. Investments made that year could not find a purchaser at twenty per cent. in 1858. Things did not get much better until, in 1860, they got much worse. Of course the beginning of the war did not raise Kansas values. So it is not hard, even without any sinister suggestions, to see how the company's \$172,000 finally shrunk to \$16,000. A careful manager would have made this result very much more favorable, but it is doubtful whether, under the best management, the stock could have been made to pay dividends. Of the total, about \$100,000 passed through the hands of Pomeroy. Only \$17,000 was handled by Robinson. Yet, without doubt, the latter would have been a better manager for the company. If his advice had been taken, the company would have had, for \$3000, the site of the union depot in Kansas City, now worth several millions.

The Yankees of the New England Emigrant Aid Company who expected to make money by the Kansas venture were disappointed. Those in Kansas who made money out of the company contributed, naturally enough, to the distrust of New England and the prejudice against Boston. But it is pleasant to know that the chief of those who made that investment regarded it still, as did W. M. Evarts, as "the best I ever made," and that they can say with Rev. E. E. Hale, "All the same, we received our dividends long ago." They came in Kansas free, a nation free; in the emancipation of four millions of black men, and in the virtual abolition of slavery the world over.

EARLY KANSAS AID COMPANIES.

The reader of early Kansas history is apt to confuse the many organizations formed in the East to assist in the settlement of Kansas.

Or, while recognizing that the number of them was great, it is a common error to suppose that they were all practically charitable or missionary movements. Let me attempt to enumerate and disentangle these organizations.

In the order of their formation, they are:

1. The Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company (April, 1854).
2. The New England Emigrant Aid Company (successor to the preceding, March, 1855-'62).
3. The Emigrant Aid Company of New York and Connecticut (affiliated with Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company and absorbed into New England Emigrant Aid Company, July 18, 1854).
- 4a. The Union Emigration Society (spring of 1854; members mostly members of congress).
- 4b. The Kansas Aid Society (Goodrich, of Massachusetts, president, Fenton, of New York, vice-president; just after passage of Kansas-Nebraska bill; probably identical with 4a). Some subscriptions made—probably absorbed by New England Emigrant Aid Company; issued appeals to emigrate.

5a-2. Kansas Leagues (number indefinite). Organized by Mr. Thayer under auspices of Massachusetts or New England Emigrant Aid Company, from summer of 1854 to 1856 or 1857; such as Worcester County Kansas League, its object to promote emigration—talked up Kansas, organized party to go, probably assisted individuals by neighborly acts; the Oberlin Kansas League, etc.

Of these, 2 absorbed 1 and 3 and 4 so far as they represented the investment idea, and it was and remained the chief organ of the propagandist idea represented partly in 3 and 4, and wholly in 5.

After the sack of Lawrence, May 21, 1856, there sprang into existence a number of organizations in which the investment idea was unknown, but which were prompted by the two purposes of relief to the settlers and defense of the free-state cause. These were:

6. The National Kansas Committee, or the Kansas National Committee, Thaddeus Hyatt, president; appointed at a mass meeting held at Buffalo, N. Y., May or July, 1856. This committee is also referred to by some persons as the General National Kansas Aid Committee, to distinguish it from certain state auxiliaries (8a-m).

The National Kansas Committee held but one meeting in New York, in January, 1857, but it appointed an executive committee of three citizens from Illinois, known as the—

- 6b. National Kansas Executive Committee, who transacted all the business of the greater body. J. D. Webster, chairman; H. B. Hurd, secretary; Horace White, assistant secretary.

This committee collected and disbursed about \$120,000, but never formally dissolved, and never had a final accounting. Agents in Kansas: W. F. M. Army, E. B. Whitman, T. B. Eldridge, et al.

- 7a. The Boston (Relief) Committee, or Faneuil Hall (Relief) Committee, S. G. Howe, chairman; organized at a meeting in Faneuil Hall, May, 1856; collected considerable money and clothing; merged into—

- 7b. The Massachusetts State Kansas Committee, G. L. Stearns, president, July, 1856; virtually dissolved in 1858, but never formally. Raised cash, \$50,000; supplies, \$30,000.

8a-m. State auxiliaries to 6—working partly through the National Executive Committee, and in part directly; such as the Kansas Aid Society of Wisconsin, and Female Aid Society of Wisconsin, Aug. Wattles, agent.

9. Finally there were Southern Kansas aid societies of pro-slavery men, suggested by Colonel Buford, of which I have no details.

The name of the first of these organizations, Emigrant Aid Company, is responsible for much of the confusion between the two groups. It was in fact a company not to aid emigrants, but to aid emigration.

The confusion was further fostered by the fact that many persons prominent in the first set of societies were also active in the second group, the relief societies, and that the officers and machinery of the Emigrant Aid Company were used by the relief organizations of 1856 and 1860.

Finally, further misunderstandings in the matter are due to the fact that leaders in the Emigrant Aid Company, as well as in the relief societies, acted often on their own responsibility. Amos A. Lawrence gave to leaders in the free-state cause more than the amount of his stock in the Emigrant Aid Company. George L. Stearns, president of the Massachusetts State Kansas Committee, gave more on his personal responsibility for the purchase of arms and the support of John Brown's movements than he contributed through the committee.

As an illustration of this confusion, I call attention to a letter of George W. Deitzler, read at the quarter-centennial celebration of the settlement of Kansas, and printed without direct correction on page 123 of Robinson's "Kansas Conflict," in which it is stated that the executive committee of the New England Emigrant Aid Company gave an order for 100 Sharp's rifles, which were shipped to Kansas as books.

Now, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Thayer, Mr. Hale and various other officers of the Emigrant Aid Company have declared repeatedly, under oath and otherwise, that the Emigrant Aid Company never spent or appropriated a dollar for arms, or even to pay the expenses of any one save its agents. This testimony must stand, and the seeming contradiction is explained by the facts I have cited. Mr. Deitzler and the common impression are wrong. The Emigrant Aid Company did not give those Sharp's rifles, but they were given by individual subscriptions from Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Williams, Mr. Thayer, and others.