

Kansas History

A Journal of the Central Plains

Volume 36, Number 1 | Spring 2013



*A collaboration of the Kansas Historical Foundation
and the Chapman Center for Rural Studies at Kansas State University*

Kansas in the Civil War



As most, if not all, readers of this publication know, Kansas was admitted to the Union as the thirty-fourth state on January 29, 1861, in the midst of the secession crisis that soon led to civil war. A prelude to that tragic conflict played out in Kansas during the five preceding years, with the “Kansas War” at its most intense locally and nationally during the late spring, summer, and early autumn of 1856. Not coincidentally, this tumultuous year coincided with the presidential election of 1856, which pitted the first ever Republican nominee for this high office, John C. Frémont, against the Democratic Party’s candidate, James Buchanan. The oversized, thirty-three-star flag pictured above—which measures roughly four and half feet high and eight and half feet wide and is on display at the Kansas Museum of History in Topeka and at kansasmemory.org/item/209863—was reportedly used at a Frémont rally in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Frémont lost the election, Kansas was denied admission under the controversial free-state Topeka Constitution, and the “thirty-third star” went to Oregon when it was admitted on February 14, 1859.

Later that same year, the campaign for Kansas admission began anew with the ratification of the Wyandotte Constitution, under which Kansas would eventually join the Union of states. This new free-state document was ratified October 4, 1859, and

official copies of the proposed constitution were prepared and sent to the president of the United States, the president of the U.S. Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives. The House acted first. A bill for Kansas admission was introduced on February 12, 1860, and passed within two months, but it died in the Southern dominated Senate. With the election of Abraham Lincoln that fall—an election in which the “Admit Me Free” flag was unfurled once again—Southern states began to leave the Union and opposition to Kansas admission decreased. When the senators from Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida withdrew from Congress on January 21, 1861, the Northern states took control and passed the Kansas bill that same day. A week later the House passed the bill as amended, and it was sent to President Buchanan for his signature.

Kansans were overjoyed with the news, but there was little time for celebration. Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, as Southern states continued to secede. The first Kansas State Legislature convened on March 26. In little more than two weeks, South Carolina troops fired on Fort Sumter and soon civil war commenced in earnest. The battle for Kansas was finally over, but the conflict, which for the past six years had caused the shedding of Kansas blood, now engulfed an entire nation.

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Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.
ISSN 0149-9114

Printed by Allen Press,
Lawrence, Kansas.



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KANSAS

& NATIVE AMERICANS

INDIANS, ALCOHOL, and the ROADS to TAOS and SANTA FE



WILLIAM E. UNRAU

Indians, Alcohol, and the Roads to Taos and Santa Fe

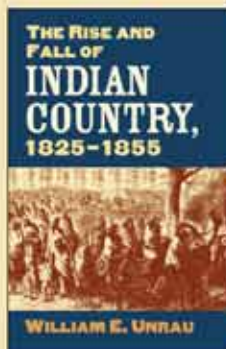
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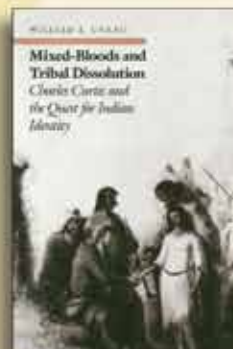
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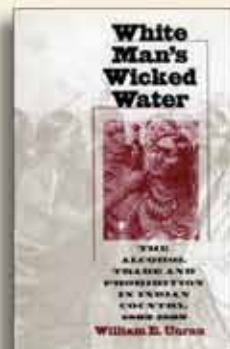
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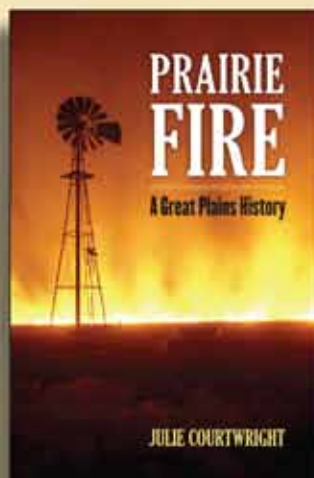
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