

## THE KANSAS MEMORIAL.

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### PRELIMINARY.

**T**HIS book is a report of the meeting of the Old Settlers of Kansas, held at Bismarck Grove, on the line of the Kansas Pacific Railway, near Lawrence, September 15th and 16th, 1879. The meeting was held as a celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the settlement of the State, and as such was of extraordinary interest.

The first Old Settlers' celebration at Lawrence was held September 15th, 1870. A celebration was held annually thereafter until 1877. Up to this time these gatherings had been of a local character. At the meeting in 1877, it was determined to have no celebration in 1878, but to make that for 1879, a more general one for the whole State of Kansas, and to make preparations for it on a scale commensurate with the importance of a gathering intended to commemorate the lapse of a quarter century since the settlement of Kansas was begun. To take charge of such preparations, the following committee was appointed:

James Blood, Robert Morrow, E. A. Coleman, Joseph Savage, C. L. Edwards, Joseph P. Root, Cyrus K. Halliday, Charles B. Lines, Joel Grover, Ferdinand Fuller and Charles W. Smith, the last named gentlemen being chosen secretary of the committee. At a meeting of this committee held April 10th, 1879, a committee on invitations was appointed, as follows:

James S. Emery, Robert Morrow, and Charles W. Smith. Charles Robinson was also appointed a committee to confer with railroads in relation to transportation. At a meeting held August 6th, the State Historical Society was requested to cooperate with the committee in making arrangements for and conducting the

proceedings of the celebration. J. S. Emery, Sidney Clarke, and O. E. Leonard were added to the committee on transportation at this meeting, and it was determined that the Celebration should continue through two days, Monday and Tuesday, September 15th and 16th, 1879. On the 20th of August the following officers and committees were designated:

President—Charles Robinson. Marshal—Samuel Walker. Assistant Marshals—H. B. Asher, and John P. Ross. Committee on Barbacue—E. O. Coleman, C. L. Edwards and T. H. Kennedy.

There are reasons why a brief history of Kansas would be appropriate in connection with this report. There are reasons to the contrary. In the opinion of the editor the time has not yet arrived when a full and impartial history of the stirring events which transpired during the territorial government of Kansas, culminating in the admission of the State to the Union as a free State, can be written. For, while the line of demarcation between the pro-slavery and free state parties was strongly defined, and the issue clearly made up, yet neither side brought to the contest a solid organization. Each party was composed of factions, agreeing probably upon the main issue involved, but differing, often widely, upon minor points. There were free state men who demanded total abolition; others who were content to save Kansas alone; and still others who cared little for the slavery question, one way or another, but much for the preservation of the Union, whose danger they wisely comprehended. On the other hand there were pro-slavery men who believed in the institution of slavery on general principles; others who maintained, with Douglas, that the doctrine of State's rights was paramount to that of universal human liberty; and yet others who lost sight of the slavery question in their anxiety to dismember the Union. On both sides, also, there were adventurous men without convictions of any sort, and selfish men who sought only their own supereminence, being regardless alike of private and public welfare. Of the chief actors in the early troubles, many are now alive, and, as participants in the exercises at Bismarck Grove, gave in their own words, as recorded here, their version of the story of Kansas. But the testimony is by no means all in, and for the editor now to say which of the many conflicting statements and opinions is best substantiated by the weight of evidence, would be a premature and, under the circumstances, an ungracious task. It must be many years, there-

fore, before this snarl can all be disentangled and the mysteries of it made plain.

Certain facts, however, in regard to the general outline of Kansas history should be borne in mind; and first, there are in Kansas history the four following well-defined divisions:

- I. The period prior to January 1st, 1857;
- II. The period subsequent to January 1st, 1857, and prior to January 1st, 1861—practically to the commencement of the rebellion;
- III. The period subsequent to January 1st, 1861, and prior to January 1st, 1865; and
- IV. The post-bellum period, from 1865 to the present time.

Within the first period are included the pioneer days proper, and the struggle for free soil. This struggle was squarely ended by the date above given. The second period may be characterized as the period of political organization, during which occurred the bitter struggle for leadership among the old free state leaders. This culminated in the election of Lane to the Senate, April 4th, 1861. The third period was the war period, during which the people of the State were in an uncertain, turbulent condition, isolated from other parts of the country, unsettled in their purposes, and apprehensive of calamity of every sort. The fourth and last period covers the years since the war, during which the immediate effects of the war have been almost wholly obliterated by the wonder-working hand of progress. These years, though not without their times of trouble and discouragement, have been years of peace and prosperity, witnessing an era of material advancement the like of which has rarely been recorded on the pages of history.

Kansas in 1854: What was it? Only a vast unexplored territory stretching from the Missouri river westward to the Rocky Mountains. A few settlements clung to the eastern border; agriculture had scarcely pushed a rifle's shot into this wild domain; Indians roamed at will over the great plains, swooping down now and then upon the scattered settlements with murderous intent; buffalo in countless herds tramped the boundless prairie to the hardness of pavement; a few faithful missionaries established schools among the tribes; the people were heterogeneous, poor and almost purposeless. Politics stepped into the arena, and the air was filled with strife. The territorial government was formed, and armed conflicts took place; fire, rapine, pillage, bloodshed,

robbery and a general chaos enveloped Kansas. Bleeding Kansas they called it then. After awhile, Kansas was erected into a State. People flocked into the new Commonwealth and a new era was inaugurated.

Out of the smoke and clouds of the earlier conflict has arisen a Commonwealth greater in its present achievements and far greater in its inevitable future than the most sanguine pioneer could have prophesied. A quarter of a century denotes but a small part of the world's duration. Locate it back beyond the days of our grandfathers, and it would, perhaps, cover but few important events; but that quarter of a century which marks the early days of Kansas, is an era of moral and material progress unexampled in the history of nations. Whatever of strife the exigencies of politics may have engendered in the past; whatever differences of opinion may have been entertained; whatever of local disturbances may have occurred in the earlier days of Kansas, happily for her and happily for all the people, the acerbity of those days belongs to the past alone and serves only as a milestone in the history of the State. There were times of strife, now the hour is one of peace.

Something should be said here in regard to the place where the old settlers assembled—Bismarck Grove. One of the best brief descriptions of it was by Noble L. Prentis, author of "A Kansan Abroad," who wrote: "One of the things which may be considered worthy of a little Kansas self-gratulation at this quarter-century celebration is the creation of such a place as Bismarck Grove. Originally, we believe, a beer garden and dedicated to Gambrinus, it has been transformed into a beautiful place, one of the finest for out door gatherings in the West. It has afforded an opportunity to gratify a Kansas passion—that for advertising. The glaring poster and the modest but insinuating 'dodger' have made Bismarck Grove much better known in Kansas than the names of the four Evangelists. The Kansas Pacific has become, in a business way, a promoter of free speech, and every variety of it. Here in Bismarck Grove, in the course of a few weeks, the friends of temperance have held the greatest meetings in the interests of that reform. Here clergymen and laymen have labored on the bulwarks of Zion, and, following them, came the Liberal convention, where the opponents of orthodoxy marshaled their forces, all classes of dissent being represented, from the mildest

protestant against eternal punishment, to those so bitter that they recalled a criticism on Lord Amberly's infidel book, 'What can Jesus Christ have done to Lord Amberly, that he assails him with such violence?' Speaking of Bismarck materially instead of spiritually, the trees are broad in their shade, the grass is green, the tents, the cottages and the tabernacle afford ample shelter, while the lakes, wells and fountains furnish an abundance of water for all purposes. Bismarck is a good place, and a credit to Kansas."

In conclusion, those who may chance to be interested in this book should write with the editor in thanking Hon. F. G. Adams, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, for having performed the most important part of the work of preparation. To him and the Society, which he so ably represents, the people of Kansas are indebted for that which none but future generations will know fully how to appreciate.