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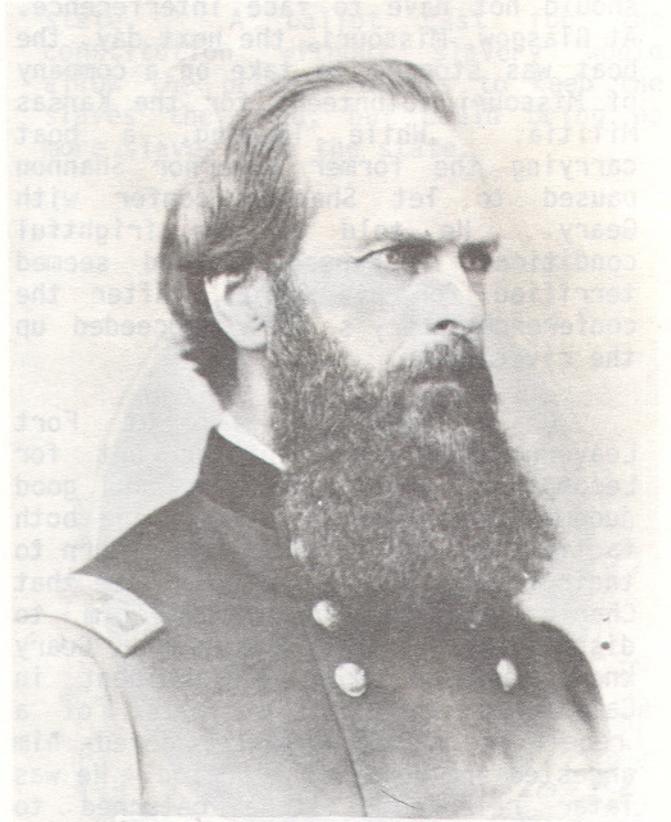
## KANSAS TERRITORIAL GOVERNORS

*This is the concluding second part on the Kansas Territorial Governors article written by Sara Walter & Iona Spencer which appeared in the Spring 1988 BALD EAGLE, Volume 14, Number 1.*

John W. Geary  
1819 - 1873

John W. Geary was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania in 1819. He served throughout the Mexican War, being in the advance army from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. Under General Scott, he participated in the battles of La Hoga, Chapultepec, and the capture of Mexico City, immediately after which event, he was appointed Colonel of his regiment and assigned to the command of the citadel of the city.

In 1848 he was appointed by President Polk, Postmaster of San Francisco, with large discretionary powers to establish mail routes, offices, etc. He was later elected Alcade and first Judge of San Francisco; was reelected, and when the city was incorporated, was elected its first mayor. He proved to be a wise and efficient administrator, and during his tenure no riots occurred, and no vigilante committees organized. He also was selected by the legislature to aid in funding the public debt. He returned to Pennsylvania in 1853 and remained in private life until appointed Governor of Kansas Territory on September 9, 1856. Like his



*John W. Geary*

predecessors, his loyalty to the democratic party and to the doctrine of squatter sovereignty were unquestioned.

His administrative ability was known to be of the highest order and his nerve and courage had been proven beyond question. He was chosen as the fittest man to quell the disorders of

the territory and thus rescue the party from national defeat in the pending presidential election, which defeat seemed certain unless the threat of a civil war and the consequent outrages in Kansas Territory could be brought to an end. His paramount duty was to bring order out of confusion.

He started for Kansas early in September 1856 and on September 5th reached Jefferson City, Missouri, where he met with the Missouri Governor to discuss Missouri and K.T. relations. He and Governor Sterling Price agreed that there should be no more blockade of the Missouri River and emigrants should not have to face interference. At Glasgow, Missouri, the next day, the boat was stopped to take on a company of Missouri volunteers for the Kansas Militia. While loading, a boat carrying the former Governor Shannon paused to let Shannon confer with Geary. He told of the frightful conditions in Kansas T. and seemed terrified for his life. After the conference Geary's boat proceeded up the river.

Geary spent a day at Fort Leavenworth before setting out for Lecompton. By his firmness and good judgment, he managed to persuade both factions to call a truce, and return to their homes. It was at this time that Charles Robinson met with him to discuss the Topeka Constitution. Geary knew Robinson from an incident in California when as a leader of a rebellion there, Geary ordered him arrested and held for a period. He was later released and he returned to Massachusetts to lead abolitionists to Lawrence.

One of Geary's aides had purchased a log house near the Kansas River from Sheriff Jones, so that Geary and his men would have a comfortable place to live. There were few homes in Lecompton in 1856. Geary was constantly bothered with spies, and it was difficult for him to have a clandestine discussion. Robinson and Geary met in the upper floor of the "Governor's Mansion" at Lecompton. Robinson suggested he go to Washington,

D.C. and persuade Congress and the President to accept the Topeka Constitution and Robinson would resign as gubernatorial candidate with Geary being appointed as his replacement. Geary agreed to this but Congress and the President did not.

The Territorial Legislature met January 12, 1857. As Sheriff Jones had resigned, it was necessary for the governor to appoint a new sheriff with legislative approval. William T. Sherrard was recommended, but due to a lack of proper forms in the office, the appointment was delayed. This so angered Sherrard that he vocally abused Geary in his office. Later he met him outside the legislative halls, drew a gun and threatened to kill him. Geary ignored him and walked away. A meeting concerning the affair was called and both free-state and pro-slavery people attended. During a scuffle several shots were fired and Sherrard was killed. This gave the pro-slavery people an excuse to threaten Geary, as the assassin was thought to be a member of his retinue. He became so concerned for his safety that about midnight, March 10th, Captain Walker heard a heavy knock on his door. There, to his surprise, was Governor Geary, with two revolvers buckled about his waist, on his way out of the territory. Walker lived near Fort Titus and was a free-state leader. Walker escorted him to the Missouri River area, so that he could find a boat and return to Pennsylvania after only seven months in office.

When the Civil War began, Geary offered his services to the Union. He served throughout the war, as a Brigadier General in 1862 and Breveted Major General in 1865. After the war he was elected Governor of Pennsylvania and served from 1867 to 1873, the year he died.

#### SPECIAL THANKS

We are indebted to the Kansas State Historical Society for the use of the photographs of the six Kansas Territorial Governors used in this article.

--- The Bald Eagle ---

Robert James Walker  
1801 - 1869

Robert James Walker was born in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, July 19, 1801. He was the son of Judge Walker of the Supreme Court of the United States, under whose guidance his early studies were conducted. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1819, and was admitted to the bar at Pittsburgh in 1821, where he practiced his profession for several years, and where he married Miss Bachi, of Philadelphia, a grand-daughter of Benjamin Franklin.

In 1826 he moved to Natchez, Mississippi, and there joined the Democratic party. From 1837 to 1845, he was a member of the U.S. Senate, being first elected as an opponent of a bitter disunionist, George Poindexter. In 1845, he was appointed Secretary of Treasury by President Polk; and was the principal author of the revenue tariff of 1846, and remained a cabinet member until 1846. May 27, 1857, he was appointed Governor of Kansas Territory, and Frederick P. Stanton as Secretary of State. Both favored the pro-slavery but resolved to let the squatters decide the question of slavery for themselves, in accordance with the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

Before their arrival in Kansas, the territorial legislature had provided for an election to choose delegates to a constitutional convention to be held at Lecompton. The free-state people refused to recognize any act of legislation of that group, so declined to cooperate. Consequently, the pro-slavery people easily won the election, and no one but pro-slavery delegates were elected.

The Lecompton Constitutional Convention had organized September 7, 1857, electing John Calhoun, surveyor-general, as president of the convention. A date of October 19 was set for a meeting of the 60 elected delegates to write a constitution. The delegates came to Lecompton on the

appointed day, but James Lane had brought a horde of free-state people to Lecompton. They surrounded Constitution Hall and refused to let the delegates enter. Governor Walker appealed to the U.S. Army at Fort Leavenworth for protection. They promised to send troops October 22nd. The army came, the convention went to work, wrote a constitution, and completed it November 3rd. It was to be submitted to the people December 21st. The catch was the voter only had two choices, both of which would allow some form of slavery. A ballot for the constitution with slavery would allow new slaves to be brought into the state. A ballot cast for the constitution without slavery would allow the present owners to keep the slaves they had, but could bring no more slaves into the state.



*Robt. J. Walker.*

The free-state people refused to vote. The unfairness of the election caused Governor Walker to go to Washington to protest to President Buchanan. He was joined by Senator Douglas, who had opposed the Topeka

Constitution because it was solely the work of free-staters. He now opposed the Lecompton Constitution because it was the work of just the pro-slavery people. The President contended that the free-state people had thrown away their opportunity by not voting and he insisted on submitting the Lecompton Constitution to Congress. Governor Walker's reaction upon finding his advice unheeded was to resign, refusing to serve as governor any longer. He then returned to his home, but did not leave the political arena completely. From 1863 to 1864 he served as financial agent of the U.S. government in Europe and succeeded in negotiating \$350,000,000 of 5 to 20 year United States bonds. During his public life of nearly 40 years, he exercised a strong and often controlling influence on public affairs.

**James William Denver**  
1817 - 1892

James William Denver was born in



*James W. Denver*

Frederick County, Virginia, October 23, 1817. He lived at the home farm until he became of age, in the meantime acquiring a better than ordinary common school education and a thorough knowledge of theoretical and practical engineering. In the spring of 1841, he went to Missouri to try to obtain a contract for surveying public lands; but not succeeding, he taught school for a time. The following year he went to Ohio and commenced the study of law, graduating at the Cincinnati Law School in the spring of 1844. In the spring of 1847, he was appointed a Captain in the Twelfth Regiment U.S. Infantry, and served to the end of the Mexican War under General Scott. He then returned to Platte City, Missouri, where he had previously practiced law. In 1850 he crossed the plains to California, locating in Trinity County. He was elected to the Senate of California in 1851, appointed a state commissioner in 1852, and Secretary of State in 1853. In 1854, he was elected Representative to the 34th Congress. In the spring of 1856, he was appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and while occupying this position was sent to Kansas to make treaties with the Indians.

Denver was first appointed Secretary of State, Kansas Territory, December 21, 1857, while the Lecompton Constitution was being debated. The free-staters were in a quandry as to whether or not to vote in the election of officers for that version of Kansas statehood. Robinson felt that the free-staters should take part in the election for he had encouraged them to vote on the Territorial Legislature and they had won control of it. He now felt that they should win the state offices, in case Kansas was admitted as a state under the Lecompton Constitution. Many free-soilers were against it. James Lane was against it and sent word by General Whitman that Civil War had begun and not to vote. This was a Lane hoax. A group of free-staters met in the basement of the Herald of Freedom, a newspaper, and picked a slate of candidates headed by George Smith.

On January 4th, when the voting took place, the pro-slavery people came within a few votes of sweeping the election. The Southerners lost the election and they also lost the election ballots. A special investigating team from Washington, D.C. came to check the election returns, and they could not be found. Calhoun who was in charge of the voting had left Lecompton and gone East. Mac Lean who was left in charge said he had sent the ballots to Calhoun. However, Charles Torrey, the office caretaker, visited Sheriff Walker during the night, and told him he had seen Mac Lean hide them in the wood pile near the office. Sheriff Walker visited Mac Lean with a search warrant, and Mac Lean told him they weren't there. Walker said he knew they weren't, that they were out in the wood pile nearby. He and his men went out to search and while they were gone Mac Lean borrowed a mule and set off for Nebraska, and escaped. Walker and his men found the votes stuffed in an old candle box in the wood pile. This affair disgusted even the southern pro-slavery proponents. On congressional vote, the U.S. Senate accepted the Lecompton Constitution while the House of Representatives turned it down. This was the death knell of that instrument.

James Denver was appointed successor to Governor Walker on May 12, 1858. While he served as governor, gold was discovered in western Kansas Territory which extended to the summits of the Rocky Mountains. A group of people in Lecompton funded an expedition to explore the area in which it was found, to lay out claims and to plat a town. By the time they had arrived there, the most productive sites were taken, so they platted a town and returned to Lecompton. The group, that had sent the wagon train west, was disappointed as to the lack of claims; but decided to name the newly platted city, Denver, after the then governor of the territory. Later, Denver, Kansas Territory became Denver, Colorado as the western boundary was

changed when Kansas became a state. Denver resigned as governor in 1858 and Samuel Medary of Ohio was named governor.

Denver and Medary both had sharp disagreements with the territorial legislature, which was by then controlled by the free-state party. Both governors maintained their offices at Lecompton, because they could be more comfortably housed and because it had been named the permanent capital of Kansas Territory. By 1858 the luxurious Hotel Rowena was in use, and a so-called "governor's mansion", a large log house down by the river was available.

They also differed with the legislature on slavery. The legislature passed a bill outlawing slavery, which Denver promptly vetoed. They again passed it during Medary's tenure, and he also vetoed it. They passed it over his veto, but the judges who had been appointed by the President ruled it contrary to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Slavery, therefore, continued as long as Kansas remained a territory.

After a brief term as governor, Denver resigned the office October 10, 1858, returned to Washington and the following spring went again to California, where he was once more appointed a state commissioner to adjust Indian claims. In August 1861, he was appointed by President Lincoln, Brigadier General of Volunteers, and remained in active service about a year. He afterward engaged in the practice of law at Washington, D.C., where he died August 9, 1892.

Samuel Medary  
1801 - 1864

Samuel Medary was appointed Governor of Kansas Territory, November 19, 1858, and arrived in the Territory and entered upon his duties at Lecompton December 18, 1858. He was born in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, February 15, 1801. He

learned the trade of printer and subsequently became the editor of the "Ohio Statesman", published at Columbus, Ohio. He held the position for many years, during which his paper ranked as one of the ablest Democratic journals. In politics, he was a staunch democrat of the Jacksonian school during his whole life.

In 1818 the Oregon Territory was placed under the joint occupation of the United States and England, as the result of a treaty. By the early 1840's there was U.S. agitation to annex the whole area. During this time Medary in his newspapers promoted the slogan "54' 40' or fight". This problem was solved amicably, but Medary became famous for his slogan. In 1844, he was chairman of the Ohio delegation to the Baltimore presidential convention. Jackson had written him a letter asking him, in the event of discord to present the name of James K. Polk for the presidency. In the midst of wild excitement Medary produced the letter, with the result that Polk was nominated by acclamation.

Medary was an ardent admirer and follower of Senator Douglas up to the division which grew out of discussion of the Lecompton Constitution in Congress, at which time he supported the administration and its policy. Samuel Medary was appointed Governor of Minnesota Territory in March 1857. On its admission as a state, he returned to Columbus, Ohio. He was appointed Governor of Kansas Territory, November 19, 1858, took the oath of office December first, and entered upon his duties December 18, 1858 at Lecompton.

The most important event of Medary's administration was the Wyandotte Convention, at Wyandotte now Kansas City, where delegates elected by the people wrote the fourth constitution for Kansas. Four of the delegates were natives of foreign lands, six of slave states, and 42 of free states. As fourteen of the delegates were from Ohio, they persuaded the convention to adopt the Ohio Constitution as a model for



*Samuel Medary*

Kansas, and the delegates included the statement, "Kansas shall be a free state."

Kansas could have been a much larger state than it is today. The people of Nebraska living south of the Platte River asked to be included in Kansas. The delegates voted against admitting southern Nebraska. They even went father and voted to cut off the western part of Kansas that is now eastern Colorado. They thought the state was too big, and that a smaller state would be easier to govern. They also wanted Kansas to remain an agricultural state. With the discovery of gold in western Kansas Territory, there would have been a necessity to administer laws governing minerals, and they didn't want to be bothered with that. They named Topeka the temporary capital. The constitution was then submitted to the people. It was passed by them and accepted by Congress.

Compared with the administrations of his predecessors, Medary's was

uneventful. The country was in a comparatively peaceful condition before the true storm and little opportunity was offered him to show either the administrative faults or virtues which he may have possessed. He resigned the office December 20, 1860 and returned to Columbus, Ohio where he remained until the time of his death, which occurred November 7, 1864.

By Sara Walter and Iona Spencer

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## TERRITORIAL DAY

Territorial Day will be June 25th. This year many 19th century crafts will be demonstrated during the day. Some of the other events will be the Kid Games at 9:00 A.M., Methodist Church Meal at noon, Parade at 1:30 P.M., Ice Cream Social at 5:00 P.M., and Street Dance by R.F.D. 4 at 9:00 P.M. If you have any suggestion contact Chairperson Connie Robertson at 887-6238 or Lila Bartels, Chairperson of Booths, at 887-6316. This will be a great day to visit Lecompton and celebrate our historical past.

Paul Bahnmaier

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have had a number of tours this Spring. The groups have taken the grand tour of our historic community. This includes Lane University, the Lecompton Post Office, United Methodist Church, and the Jail. With the completion of Constitution Hall this city will be a great tourist attraction to people all across this country. We have much to take pride in sharing with visitors. But it would not be possible if it were not for the fantastic loyalty of past and present residents of Lecompton.

Thanks to the following people for donating time to clean and paint at Lane University and the Lecompton High School: Maxine Dark, Glen-Vicki-Bud and Owen Mallonee, John & Vern Bartell, George & Nancy Davis, Pat & Aurelia Ista, Clyde Kampschroder, Dorothy Shaner, Opal Goodrick, Sara Walter, Sally Wright, Richard & Richie McConnell, Lavina Hanna, Janice Rake, Vicki Roberts, Bob Goodrick, George & Arloene Simmons, David & Darlene Paslay, Cimmaron Evans, Ralph Davis, and Mae & Wally Holderman. For mowing the grounds: Ralph Davis, and Mae & Wally Holderman. Tour guides: Sara Walter, Joyce & Bruce Beresford, Jeri Skinner, Margaret & Ross Wulkuhle, Iona Spencer, Mae Holderman, Ruth Ice, Opal Goodrick, Arloene Simmons, Darlene

Paslay, Maxine Dark, Elizabeth Johnson, Sally Wright, and Lydia Long. Bruce Beresford for planting chrysanthemums. Our volunteers are the greatest.

The following items have been placed in the Lane University Museum: Lecompton Masonic Lodge No. 13 history by Howard Duncan, doll dishes and display case from Minnie Sutton, original Lecompton Post Office painting by Ellen Duncan, Kansas rock collection by C.C. & Marcella Williams, Rick L. Blanton and Corwin & Irene Sperry, books by Ronald Caruthers, handmade objects by Mae Holderman, barbed wire collection by Lee Brunton. Thank you for your continued interest in your museum.

## POSTAL POSTINGS

At our April meeting a very large crowd was present to witness Vicki Roberts take the oath of office as the 27th Postmaster of Lecompton. Janice Rake gave a most informative speech about the history of the postal service in Lecompton. It was a great evening for all. Congratulations Vicki Roberts! Paul Bahnmaier

## OLD SETTLERS' ASSOCIATION

Note: The following article was taken from the Kansas State Historical Society collections and was part of the address made by W.C. Simons, Publisher of the Lawrence Daily Journal World before the Old Settlers' Association of Lawrence on September 15, 1924.

To one who knows something of the early history of Kansas, Lecompton is a place of interest. It took its name from Samuel D. Lecompte, of Maryland, first justice of the supreme court of the territory, whose proslavery activities caused him to be hated by all antislavery men. The town was laid out to be the capital and metropolis. Like ancient Rome it stood upon the seven hills, and strange as it may seem to us of today who have seen its growth

of woods, it was a prairie country with but one tree, a great oak, later destroyed by lightning.

The capitol was begun. There were four large hotels and three smaller ones, a promising business district, residence streets which extended a mile or more into what are now well-tilled farms, and a section set aside for negro quarters, Lecompton at the time being a southern city in its beliefs and appointments. At one time Lecompton had a population which is said to have reached 9,000. Of all of this glory there now remains a portion of the foundation of the capitol building, the old land office, constitution hall, a part of the old jail, a stone building that was once a place of importance, and probably quite a number of the residences some of which have been remodeled or moved to other sites. No more beautiful spot for a city could have been selected.

The four large hotels were the Virginia, the National, American and Rowena. One was famed for its seven basements and seven cisterns. Many of the buildings were torn down and the lumber carted to Lawrence. The mansion erected by Gov. Frederick P. Stanton, east of Lecompton, was for some years the most expensive residence in the state and still stands as a monument to those early days.

Mrs. Gertrude Hoad, for sixty years a resident of Lecompton, knows much concerning its early history. Her son, Prof. W.C. Hoad, was formerly a member of the engineering faculty at the University of Kansas and is now at Ann Arbor, Mich. Daniel Woodson, of Virginia, the first Territorial secretary for Kansas, and several times acting governor of the state (Territory), married her aunt, and in excusing his proslavery acts, Mrs. Hoad states that he was forced to do as he did by President Buchanan and national Democracy, which at the time was ardently sympathetic with the South.

Mr. and Mrs. Francis I. Hoad, parents of Mrs. Hoad's husband, took an

active part in early day struggles. For a time they kept the Gillis House at Kansas City, and while there Mrs. Hoad faced down a mob which came for one of her guests. Going out on the veranda she looked over the crowd and began calling them by name. To one she said "Bill McGee, who was it who nursed you through typhoid fever?" she herself having been the nurse. The others she called in a similar manner, calling attention to kindly acts she had done for them, until at last the mob left without its intended victim.

Later the Hoads moved to Brownsville, now known as Auburn, some ten miles south of Topeka, where they built a long log building, the front part of which was used as a store, the next room back as a dining room, and with other rooms still further back.

One day a band of Indians came to the store. One bought a quarter's worth and another fifty cents worth of sugar. When the one buying the smaller amount noticed that his sack was smaller than the other, he hurled it at the head of Mrs. Hoad, who instead of being afraid, grabbed up a butcher knife and chased all of the Indians from the store.

One day, while her husband was away and she was alone at the store, a band of border ruffians arrived and demanded that she prepare dinner for them. "We shall be back in an hour," they said, with the threat that if dinner were not ready they would tear the house down around her ears. "It will be ready," she calmly replied, and set to work preparing it. When they returned dinner was already on the table, but before sitting down they noticed horsemen coming, and fearing them to be free state men, which they were, the ruffians escaped.

When the free state men arrived they found the dinner ready, and they also found that in the cellar directly under the table there was a keg of powder, from which there was a trail of powder leading to the back yard. Mrs.

Hoad had not only prepared a dinner, but it was to have been their last.

Mrs. Francis Hoad, the brave pioneer, in spite of hardships endured, lived to the great age of ninety-seven and died at Perry, Kansas, at the home of a daughter. Mrs. Gertrude Hoad, her daughter-in-law, saw the bolt of lightning strike the lone oak tree and destroy it, and also has seen buffalo from the plains cross the river at Lecompton.

A story is told of an early official at Lecompton who was a great hand to entertain at his home, and whose southern wife always responded as best she could, that, at one time he brought Judge Elmore, of the supreme bench out to dinner, without previously notifying his wife. She called her dusky maid, saying, "Stir around 'Lisbeth and help get something to eat, but the Lord only knows what it will be." Then turning to her husband, she said, "Why didn't you ring a bell or blow a horn to let us know you were coming?"

### **FORT TITUS STILL NEWSWORTHY**

An article recently appeared in the Kansas City Times and was mailed to us by Mary Agnus Wolken. This editorial describes the reporting of the modern press versus the press of the 1850's. The major comparison used was the Battle of Fort Titus at Lecompton. It is great a large newspaper selected an event in Lecompton for comparison of the written media. Thanks to Mrs. Wolken for sending the newspaper article.

Paul Bahnmaier

The Kansas State Historical Society has requested anyone having very old photographs of Constitution Hall to please notify the Society. They are needed to verify the original design of the building.

Paul Bahnmaier

FORMER LECOMPTON MINISTER

The Reverend Harold R. Megill died December 20, 1987 in New Mexico. He had retired to a farm there in 1962 after a career of serving Kansas churches and communities. Born in 1896 near Cherryvale, Kansas; he became a popular minister while still in his early twenties. In the early 1920's Rev. Megill persuaded the United Brethren Church to sell their church (now Lane University museum) and buy the Winsor Hotel to convert to a new church. That new church remains in service some 65 years later as the

Lecompton United Methodist Church.

During World War II Rev. Megill served as a chaplain in the European Theater of Operations.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

- John G. Hoad
- Arley Leach
- Annette (Calhoun) Leach
- H. Grant Ritchey, D.D.S.
- J. Charles Plumb

THE LECOMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Lecompton, Kansas 66050 is a non-profit corporation for the preservation of Historical Sites. We are eager for continued membership and new members!

Individual membership is \$3.00 per year, from December to December, while a household membership is \$5. Life membership is \$50 per individual. Contributions are tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to the Lecompton Historical Society, and mailed to Mrs. Iona Spencer, R.R.#1, Lecompton, Kansas 66050.

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