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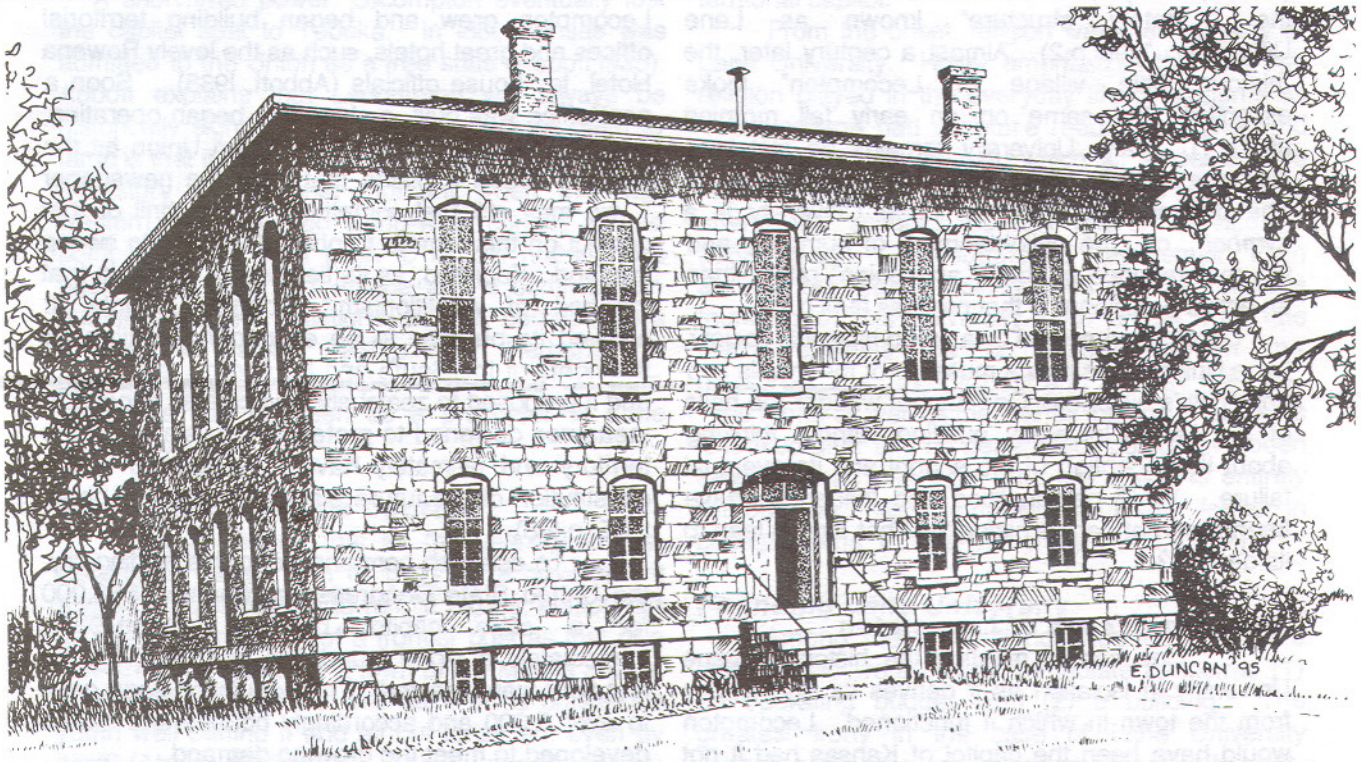

LANE UNIVERSITY

The Rise and Fall of an Antebellum College in Lecompton, Kansas

By DeAnn Gerdes Steinle

Lecompton, Kansas is a small town located between Topeka and Lawrence with a population of about 500. Among its claims to fame, Lecompton was once the home of a university. An Antebellum college chartered in 1858, Lane University was a private, church-affiliated school. The institution opened it doors in 1865 and at the height of its existence enrolled more than 500 students. Lane University's rich history is amalgamated with the town's historical significance as the first territorial capitol of Kansas as well as the Confederacy stronghold during the Civil War.

The objective of this paper is to: (1) discuss the historical significance of Lecompton and the chartering of Lane university; (2) examine the influence of the United Brethren Church; (3) analyze presidents, trustees, and faculty; (4) detail the structures and environments of the school; (5) look at the curriculum and courses of study offered; (6) describe student life and the societies that were part of Lane University; and (7) provide theories as to the downfall of Lane University.

It is difficult to imagine that the small town of Lecompton, Kansas, located between Topeka and

Lawrence, was ever the home of a university. In 1987 its population barely reached 500 , yet in the late 1890's Lane University claimed to have over 500 students enrolled in various courses of study (Hoad, 1939). Existing from 1865 until 1902, Lane University is now an important part of the colorful history of Lecompton.

In 1900, Miss Belle Morris described the "...historic little village of Lecompton" in a state normal rhetorical, a speech contest for students enrolled in teacher preparation courses (1901, p.1). She talks about looking at the town from "... an eastern slope with the first rays of the early morning sun stealing through the autumn leaves and lighting up the faces of the awaked dwellings..." (1901,p.1). In picturesque detail, Miss Morris notes the "...stately structure" known as Lane University..."(1901,p.2). Almost a century later, the "historic little village of Lecompton" looks essentially the same on an early fall morning (1901,p.1). Lane University remains as stately a structure as it did when Miss Morris gazed upon it. The difference is that now Lane University is a *symbol* of"...the enlightenment of humanity and the maintenance of liberty and union" rather than an active participant in that process (1901,p.2).

Carefully preserved by a proud historical society, Lane University is now a museum of the town's and university's histories. One cannot wander the halls of the Lane University building without thinking about the inception of the school and its eventual failure. What personalities and influences have been a part of Lane's history? What events lead to its demise?

The Significance of Lecompton

One cannot mention the history of Lane University in isolation as it derives its significance from the town in which it functioned. Lecompton would have been the capitol of Kansas had it not been for the defeat of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Lecompton was the stronghold of the pro-slavery effort beginning around 1854 when Kansas was a territory and before it was admitted to statehood. In essence, Lecompton gave meaning to the term "Bloody Kansas" (Abbott, 1935,p. 174).

Democratic leader, Stephen A. Douglas, introduced a bill opening statehood to the Kansas-Nebraska territory in January, 1854 (Abbott,1935). Abbott mentions that Douglas' bill contained a dangerous element,"... all questions pertaining to slavery in the territories and the new states to be formed therefrom are to be left to the decision of the people residing there in"(1935, p.177) Parties from the North and the South responded immediately to the bill and soon began organizing expeditions to Kansas (Territorial Days, 1980). Almost overnight, Lawrence took its place as the "Free State stronghold" and by 1855, Lecompton was chosen the permanent territorial capitol (Abbott, 1935,p.180)

After being declared the territorial capitol, Abbott notes that Lecompton became the pro-slavery stronghold for two reasons: (1) pro-slavery leaders' attraction to the seat of government and (2) Lecompton's proximity to Free State activity in Lawrence (1935). Because Congress was already committed to Lecompton as the territorial capitol, it continued to support the town despite its ties to the Confederacy. As the war waged on, Lecompton grew and began building territorial offices and great hotels, such as the lovely Rowena Hotel, to house officials (Abbott, 1935). Soon a post office was built, a stage-line began operating, and the newspaper The Lecompton Union hit the press. Abbott explains that from the newspaper "...we may still feel something of the thrill of that conflict on this remote frontier which was to sweep the land. Founded, as its fiery editor wrote, in that 'hot-bed of Abolitionism," Douglas County, it avowed its purpose to be ever found battling for the rights of the South and Southern institutions... and it proposed to zealously advocate all honorable measures designed to protect and sustain it in the territory and ultimately have it recognized in the constitution of the future state of Kansas' (Abbott, 1935, p.188)

To establish permanence to this leading city, the United State Congress appropriated $50,000 for a state capitol building (Abbott,1935). Immediately a stone foundation and walls for the first floor were erected. The population soon grew to over 5,000 and accordingly houses and stores developed to meet the growing demand.

From 1855 to approximately 1858, Lecompton was known as the "tempest in a teapot" (Territorial Days, 1980, p.3). A flurry of activities occurred as prologue to the Civil War including: the Battle of Ft. Titus which happened just outside of Lecompton, and the attack of Free State leader James Lane on the town of Lecompton. It is said the townspeople of Lecompton used the unfinished shell of the capitol as a fort when fighting off the brutal attack of Lane (Territorial Days, 1980). Interestingly, one of the most significant occurrences during this time happened not on the battlefield but in the territorial legislature. The new President of the United States, Buchanan, called for the constitutional

convention to decide the fate of Kansas once and for all. Held in Lecompton, Free State supporters refused to participate in the convention as they feared they were being tricked; hence the pro-slavery supporters arrived in force and created a constitution upholding the institution of slavery in Kansas (Abbott, 1935). Under the influence of Southern advisors, Buchanan decided to uphold the bogus constitution; however, the house rejected it and it was sent back to Kansas for a new vote. By the time a new vote was taken, the North had sent more men to populate the area, thus the Free State influence dominated the second vote (Abbott, 1935).

A short lived power, Lecompton eventually lost the capitol seat to Topeka. In 1861, Kansas was admitted to the Union as a free state (Abbott,1935). Abbott explains that Lecompton will always be historically significant because "... its sole claim to fame is that its name is bound up with a lost cause... the story of the brief moment when this little western town touched world-wide conflict at one point and then sank back to its old nothingness again, is at once a romance and a comment on human plans and ambitions, as well, perhaps, as a footnote to history" (1935,p.176). Perhaps the dramatic story of Lecompton's rise and fall from greatness can be seen as a precursor to Lane University's fate.

The United Brethren Church

Abbott reports that as the years went by, Lecompton faded from its glory as a government seat to a quiet country town. "It recalls, in fact, not so much the memory of a frontier post as that of a New England village or a town of the Middle States, quiet, secure, with the wild days of its boisterous youth well behind it and all but forgotten, even by itself" (Abbott, 1935,p.202). This quiet setting likely allowed the United Brethren Church to gain a stronghold in the town. Hoad says that the United Brethren Church was the oldest and strongest denomination in the state (1939). Hoad goes on to explain that the "...Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal organizations in Lecompton had disintegrated with the downfall of the town's political fortunes, and what was left of their congregations had gradually merged them selves with the United Brethren Church" ·1939,p. 61)

The United Brethren Kansas Conference report detailing the years 1857 to 1882, explains that Wm. A.Cardwell, a missionary of the church, summoned Solomon Weaver to investigate Lecompton as a possible college during the early part of 1864 (Cook,1942). It is said that Cardwell and the congregation had been hoping and planning for a college for many years and had already acquired a charter in 1858 (Territorial Days, 1980). When Weaver, a United Brethren college president, investigated Lecompton he deemed it a suitable location (Cook,1942). Ms. Julia Kerns, a young lady who made the trip to Lecompton with Weaver and his family, explained that Lecompton was chosen primarily "...because of the many empty buildings there"(Cook, 1942, p.41). These abandoned buildings were those which had housed legislators and pro-slavery leaders during Lecompton's time as territorial capitol.

From the onset, religion was the mainstay of Lane University. Holter emphasizes the role that religion played in the everyday life of students as "...the college had scripture reading, singing, and prayer in its daily chapel, which all students were required to attend. Students were also required to attend the school's Sunday church services..." (1969, p.92). Undoubtedly, the small town atmosphere was a selling point for the religious founding of this university. An article from late 1890's explains the correlation between the moral/religious development and a small town life: "The moral as well as the mental training of students is looked after and no better place could have been selected than this quiet little city which is entirely without the many temptations usually found in college towns" ("Lane University," 1989,p.297)

Founding Lane University

Among the many things needed to start a college, two were clearly immediate concerns: (1) an operating budget, and (2) a building. The greatest irony in the case of Lane University concerns the procurement of an operating budget. A state-wide campaign was conducted for funds to start an institution of higher learning (Hoad,1939). It was decided the school would be named for the largest contributor, in this case Senator James H. Lane (Hoad,1939: Territorial Day, 1980). As mentioned earlier, Lane was the leader of the Free State movement during the days of "Bloody Kansas."

> It seemed like the very irony that this distinction should fall to one James H. Lane, the most original, perhaps the most erratic among all that group of strong personalities that figured in early Kansas affairs.. He had led the army of humiliation against Lecompton in the troubled years of the town's early history. He finally became

> the Honorable James H. Lane, United States Senator from Kansas, but in Lecompton he was always Jim Lane. Even after Lane had laid down the sword and assumed the toga his fiery eloquence never won him many followers there, and there was perhaps no town in the State where the sight of his calfskin vest was less welcome. But a thousand dollars was a thousand, and the school began and ended its career as Lane University. (Hoad, 1939, p.61, p.1)

Other sources report Lane's contribution at $2,000 (Cook, 1942). Cook says that a donation of this size allowed the school to "...open without financial embarrassments" (Cook, 1942, p. 42).

With Solomon Weaver as president, Lane University opened on the second Wednesday of March 1865(Hill,1888). With its strong religious affiliation, the institution's mission was to educate the ministry and the laity of the United Brethren Church while meeting the educational demands of the age (Cook, 1942).

The Rowena Hotel, which had lost business since the political downfall of the town, was sold to Lane University as its first building. Once considered the "...most lavish hotel west of the Missouri River," the Rowena was a fine building for this new institution (Territorial Days, 1980, p.16) The hotel was made of stone and had three stories above the basement (Hoad, 1939). Classes were held in the large parlors and dining rooms throughout the building and the library, president's office, and faculty room were contained in the hotel office. The third floor of the Rowena was used to board students (Territorial Days, 1980). Sixty-five students were in attendance during the first term, which lasted only three months (Holter, 1969; Hill, 1888)

A New Structure with Old Tradition

Soon after Lane University's opening in 1865, the State of Kansas deeded over the remains of the old capitol building along with thirteen acres to the newly founded college (Cook, 1942:Territorial Days, 1980). The foundation for three of the capitol's wings had been laid and the center section had been completed to the top of the first story windows in 1857, when the project was abandoned. As mentioned previously, it was in this shell that citizens of the town defended themselves against James Lane's attack in 1856. The Daily Tribune, a Lawrence newspaper, reported in 1882 that the "...old territorial capitol, on which the general government expended fifty thousand dollars, has lain for years as unsightly ruin"("Dedication of Lane University," p.1).

Nearly seventeen years passed before the trustees of Lane could raise enough money to complete the structure for the purpose of becoming the main campus building. In the end, it was the citizens of Lecompton who financed the building with help from the United Brethren Church. Cook reports that 65% of the funds came from the people of Lecompton and the students of Lane, whereas only 30% came from the United Brethren Kansas Conference. By the early 1880's, the United Brethren Church had turned its attention to the construction of another college in Harlan, Kansas (Cook, 1942). Thus, it was the people of Lecompton who "...Felt a deep pride in the institution and who sacrificed themselves to it in amazing degree...it served to unite the townspeople in a really wonderful manner by giving them a piece of work to do which required their utmost efforts to perform" (Hoad, 1939, p.61).

It was decided that Lane would be built on the south foundation of the old capitol. The work was done primarily by townspeople and students and took nearly a year and a half to complete (Cook,1942) The structure was large enough for 200 students and cost around $12,000(Anonymous, 1882.) Remnants of the capitol, such as stone pillars and pine floorboards, were used to build Lane (Cook, 1942). "The simple vernacular architecture is highlighted by delicate stone arches over the windows and entry. A protruding keystone completes this detail. The windows are double-hung sash typical of the times..."(Hall, 1979, p. 12-D) A structure suited to the noble duty of higher education, the building stands today in its original splendor.

Dedication of the new building occurred on June 21, 1882; the same time, commencement ceremonies occurred. The day was described as "gala" and newspapers took interest in contrasting an institution of learning with the defeated institution of slavery (Anonymous, 1882). The press heralded the dedication speech by the Honorable T. D. Thatcher of Topeka, calling the speech "a classic"(Hall, 1979, 12-A) Thatcher remarked, "could anything more appropriate mark the vast change which has come over the country since the days of '56 and '57? A temple of learning erected upon the foundations of the old pro-slavery capitol of Kansas"(Hall, 1979, 12-A) Thatcher predicted success and longevity for Lane University.

Presidents, Trustees, and Faculty

Records exist accounting for six presidents of

Lane University during the years 1865-1902. Interestingly, it is the first and the last presidents who are mentioned most frequently in articles of the time. President Solomon Weaver and President Charles M. Brooke were apparently men of high moral character who viewed the presidency of Lane as a mission rather than a job. Solomon Weaver served one year and was succeeded by the Rev. David Shuck, who served until 1869, when Prof. N. B. Bartlett, was elected to the presidency and served in that capacity fourteen years. In 1883 the Rev. S. B. Ervin, was elected president and remained at the head of the college until 1887, being succeeded by the Rev. J. A. Weller who served four years. In 1891 Rev. C. M. Brooke, was elected president.

Solomon Weaver's obituary appeared in the August, 1888 edition of the college newspaper "College Echoes." He was described as an "...active itinerant of the United Brethren Church.." who became president of Iowa Western College before coming to Kansas and founding Lane University (Hill,1888,p.1). During the first year of Lane's existence, Weaver served as an instructor and trustee as well as president. The obituary states that Weaver "..was a man of wonderful energy, a determinate will, true to his friends and the cause he advocated. The amount of good he accomplished in starting Lane University can not be overestimated. Only eternal can reveal it." (Hill,1888, p.1)

Charles M. Brooke was an ordained United Brethren minister who served as president of Lane University from 1891 to 1902. As well as being a religious man, Brooke is credited for his financial prowess and academic ability. In 1898, the university's finances were said to be increased and the liabilities decreased ("Lane University,"1898) It is said that he raised the institution to higher efficiency. Brooke wrote for quarterly reviews and prepared work on the Christian doctrine. In addition to his religious study , Brooks was the secretary of the Kansas Association of Colleges and a member of the State Board of Education during the late 1890's("Lane University,"1898). These ties with state educational governing boards undoubtedly helped Lane University maintain a prominent position as a church-affiliated college.

It is interesting to note that the trustees of the school always included the president of Lane University, the minister of the United Brethren Church, and five to seven prominent members of the community(Territorial Days,1980). As noted in the 1976 article by Church and Sedlak,"..those men responsible for maintaining community interests in other areas would be most capable of doing so in the case of educational institutions.." (p.97). It is also interesting to note that several members of the first board of trustees are also listed as founding members of Lecompton (Territorial Days, 1980). The first board of trustees were Solomon Weaver, H. M. Greene, Solomon Bower, J. H. Bonebrake, H. D. Healy, D. E. Lawrence, Ebner M. Thorton, D. T. Mitchell and George. W. Zinn.

The faculty members of Lane University were said to be a dedicated and knowledgeable group of people. According to Hoad, the faculty "...year after year tithed their incomes and donated firewood and supplies for the dormitory, and in general scrapped together every dollar that could be spared for the perpetuation and maintenance of the school". Instructors were specifically chosen for their expertise in the course of study they were to instruct.(Hall, 1979) According to an excerpt in A Cyclopedia of State History, "..a regular corps of instructors was organized under the state laws," these laws allowed Lane to be an accredited Kansas college (Blackmar, 1912, p.103). A brief description of individual faculty members in an 1888 publication concerning higher education in Kansas included the statement "foremost rank among instructors of the State" in many of the faculty profiles ("Lane University," 1898, p. 296).

The Curriculum

Considering that Lane University only employed three to eleven faculty members during its 37 years existence, it is amazing to think that the college offered nine courses of study (Blackmar,1900); According to Blackmar,"...these courses are fully abreast of those maintained by the leading colleges." The goal of the college was to have a curriculum that "..grows to meet the demands of the age." The nine departments of study included: classical, philosophical, scientific, literary, normal, preparatory, commercial, ministerial, music, and art.

Students were placed in an appropriate course of study according to their chosen course for life. The preparatory courses of study were designed to provide students with basic secondary knowledge prior to beginning a true college curriculum. Those who were interested in pursuing a masters or doctoral degree were assigned to scientific and technical courses of study; whereas those interested in applying their skills to jobs of the time were enrolled in commercial and practical studies. Hall describes the art and music programs at Lane University as being "strong." Music courses were

offered in piano, organ, violin, guitar, cello, brass, clarinet, band instruments and voice. Students could also obtain a Kansas teaching certificate after completing a normal curriculum at Lane University.

Throughout the existence of Lane University, one of the primary missions was religion. The ministerial department sought to educate young ministers and place them in the community. Holter explains that the college provided free tuition to students of any denomination who chose to become minister of the United Brethren Church. Charles M. Brooke was one such student who pursued ministerial studies at the college prior to his career as president.

Student Life and Societies

The students were a diverse group of people and beginning in the early years, they formed the personality of Lane University. Cook states that in 1865, because the country was new and the population was unsettled, students attended college sporadically. He says that "..in those early days students rarely finished the year of school. A three month term was all that could be spared by men who were forging a life in the wilderness as well as gaining a college education.

Eventually Lane University became co-educational, although it was probably intended for that purpose from the beginning. It is likely that few women arrived in Kansas until the territory had been settled. Research lends little insight into women's education at Lane University other than what is known of the women's literary societies.

Literary Societies

Lane University had four literary societies: the Zetagathean and Athenian for men, and the Calliopean and Zaonian for women (Hoad, 1961) Hoad, a former member of the Zetagathean society, explains that the literary societies were "..analogs of the fraternity and sororities of the larger and richer schools." The literary societies were very unique as they were "..local in character and outlook, indigenous to the Lane campus. And they were exactly what their names implied, literary societies" (Hoad, 1961 p.1)

Apparently the societies had the full support of faculty and administration of the school as they were given special locations throughout the main campus building for the purpose of conducting meetings. On a weekly basis, societies met to conduct format meetings, that in Hoad's opinion were "..as ceremonious and formal as a session of the State Senate at Topeka" The men's societies engaged in public oration and debate, whereas the women's societies engaged in musical recitation in a social context. Hoad emphasizes that the women's societies, although not engaging in lengthy debate,"..were equally serious in purpose."

Recalling the formal meetings of the Zetagathean society, Hoad discusses that in every meeting there was a new song by the society's quartet and an invocation by the elected Chaplain. A program prepared in advance announced those who would deliver formal papers on a rotation basis. Specifically not on the program was the extemporaneous speaker of the meeting who was "..unexpectedly called to his feet by the Chairman". The last and most important event of the evening was the formal debate on an important issue, with affirmative and negative sides announced in advance, and followed by a "...free-for-all debate.." In conclusion Hoad recalls these programs as excellent training and goes on to say that "..I have heard many a student declare that he got more benefit from his participation in these Literary Society programs than from any formal classroom course in school".

The Eisenhower Connection

Indirectly, Lane University is connected to former President Dwight David Eisenhower. During 1884-1885, David J. Eisenhower and Ida Stover, students of Lane University, fell in love and were married. Certainly the most notable students to attend Lane, Dwight Eisenhower's parents were married in Rev. Stover's home who was Ida's uncle, whom she was living with.

Although neither David or Ida graduated from college, they stayed long enough to make lasting impressions on Fred Bartlett, a classmate of David's. Bartlett states that "..Dave came to Lane one of the cockiest kids I ever saw, I was afraid he could not get in the college building door as his head was so big". In discussing Ida, Bartlett mentions that she ".. was not pretty or specially bright, but a finer character never graced Lane University". Concluding his commentary on the couple, Bartlett states,"..twas the mother and not the father that gave character to the family of Dave and Ida Eisenhower". Today, the Eisenhowers' story adds to the interest of Lane University's colorful history.

Student Cost

The administrators of Lane University took strides to keep tuition low enough so that students of

average or lower incomes could attend. An article from 1898 states that "..many students' expenses are only $75 a year and $125 is the maximum amount needed for expenses" (Lane University, p. 296 As Church and Sedlak explain, it was not the cost of college expenses that was daunting, but the sacrifice of a good worker from the family farm or business.

Apparently this sacrifice was deemed worthwhile and Lane University gradually enjoyed a gain in student population. As reported earlier, Lane University had 500 students in the late 1890's. Given the support of the community and the increase of students, the question left to ponder is why did Lane University suddenly close in 1902? Several authors have a variety of theories on this questions.

The Downfall of Lane University

After great effort and an ambitious career, Lane University closed its doors in 1902. Campbell University in Holton, Kansas purchased the movable property of Lane for $17,000(Holter, 1969). According to a report called the Early History of Lecompton, Kansas and Its Vicinity, officials of the United Brethren Church considered Lecompton too small for a university center and opted for Holton, a wealthier community. Other theories on the failure of Lane included: (1) Lack of church support, (2) hard early years and the assumption of debt, (3) poor location and a lack of students, and (4) better railroad connections in another more prosperous community. The following is a discussion of the four theories.

Lack of Church support

The Kansas Conference of the United Brethren Church established three institutions of higher learning in Kansas between the years 1857 to 1882 (Cook,1942). Lane was the second college founded after the failed attempt in Fremont, Kansas. The third attempt was in Harlan, Kansas, which was also a failure. Cook explains that the Kansas Conference's mission was "..to have a ministry and laity educated under the sponsorship of the Church..". In order for this mission to succeed, it was important for the church to found institutions of higher learning in several places throughout the state.

Lane University was not given much support from the United Brethren Church after its initial founding as is evidenced by Hoad's statement, "..eventually it came to be supported by the Lecompton people themselves, who felt a deep pride in the institution and who sacrificed themselves to it in amazing degree". By 1881, the Kansas Conference of the United Brethren Church had turned its financial attentions to the new college in Harlan, Kansas (Cook,1942).

Funding a private college with nine departments of study was certainly not an inexpensive endeavor for the citizens of Lecompton, although for 37 years they made a valiant effort (Hoad, 1939). Although some citizens, like Frederick M. Brooke, felt that "..we people of Lecompton have gotten out of the rut.." when Lane University closed its doors, the majority of townspeople who had sacrificed and labored for the college's survival were disappointed to see it go(Greene,1982).

Lane University relied heavily upon the support of the citizens of Lecompton, but in order for these people to contribute generously they needed to make a profit for themselves. As was the case with most Kansans of this time, many Lecompton citizens supported themselves by farming, and thus the school's financial security hinged upon the harvest of crops (Green,1982). Green reports that "..there were hard years, drought and grasshoppers.." . The ailments of the farmers undoubtedly were in direct correlation with Lane's financial status. To keep the doors open, it is probable that the university borrowed money from a variety of sources. The more years crops failed, the more years Lane borrowed money (Greene, 1982).

Cook explains that "..from beginning to end, debts plagued the efforts of administration.". He mentions a letter to the editor of a United Brethren newsletter called the Religious Telescope. The trustees "..asked aid for Lane University in the form of a one thousand dollar loan at a reasonable rate of interest"(Cook, 1942). Although Cook indicates that he is unaware of whether or not the loan was granted, he mentions that a plea of this sort was not an uncommon occurrence from the college.

Poor Location-Lack of Students

Ironically, one of the major reason for Lane University's founding may have been one its major reason for failure. Solomon Weaver selected Lecompton as a likely town for a college due to its many empty buildings left from former days of prominent enough community after the Civil War, Lane University could not attract a sufficient student populations. Although a smaller town may have been an attractive quality for a college, the financial realities of the school demanded that a large student population be present as well as a wealthier community to support the college.

Although there is no known publication to support this speculation, Lane University's close proximity to the University of Kansas was most assuredly a contributing factor to the school's demise.

Better Railroad Connections in a Prosperout Community

Along with the $17,000 paid for Lane's movable property, Campbell University also offered a $100,000 endowment contingent upon Lane's relocation to Holton, Kansas (Hall, 1979). This large amount of money certainly must have been enticing to Lane University after struggling through financial difficulty year after year. Officials at Campbell University convinced trustees of Lane that because Holton was a larger, more prosperous community, the college would thrive in this new town (Hall, 1979)

Another reason for the move to Campbell University was that Holton was said to have had better railroad connections. Supposedly these connections were going to turn Holton into a major metropolitan area, capable of handling a major university(Hall,1979). As one thinks of Holton, a small town northeast of Topeka, it is evident that this theory was not accurate. Campbell University never became a major institution, and in fact it was moved to Nebraska soon after buying out Lane.

Interestingly, Lecompton was not devoid of railroad crossings until 1949. In 1872, the Atchison, Topeka, and Sante Fe Railroad constructed tracks on the north side of Lecompton, and as early as 1894, trains were passing through the town on a daily basis. It is said that the conductors in the depot attended to passengers, handled freight, and manned the telegraph. (Territory Days, 1980) Presumably Holton had more railroad connections than Lecompton which accounted for its status as a larger and wealthier community.

Conclusion and Speculation

There is probably no one reason for the failure of Lane University. Indeed as is the case of any failed relationship, Lane University and the town of Lecompton had a number of irreversible problems during their 37-year relationship. Although the combination of problems leading to the failure of Lane University may have been unique, the failure of colleges during this period was very common. Church and Sedlak's article concerning Antebellum colleges showcases institutions very much like Lane and lends insight into the reason for their existence and failure. Although not founded until 1865, Lane University was already chartered in 1858. Planned well before the conclusion of the Civil War, the mission and objectives for the college were of the same philosophical basis as other Antebellum colleges.

Church and Sedlak simply state that colleges of the Antebellum period were overbuilt and that there were far more colleges on the frontier than their were students to attend. Five major reason are given for the overbuilding of colleges during this period: (1) overoptimistic boosterism, (2) financial profit, (3) culture to prevent barbarism,(4) religious development, and (5) development of the middle class. Of those five reasons, this writer speculates that Lane University was founded specifically because of three of them: (1) overoptimistic boosterism, (2) Culture to prevent barbarism, and (3) religious development.

The town of Lecompton was a bit of a phenomenon as it became the seat of government and a metropolitan area of the times essentially overnight. Even after the capitol was relocated to Topeka, it seemed that Lecompton would remain a cultural center of the state. It is probably that the founders of the town along with United Brethren Church officials possessed the "booster spirit," meaning that they hoped to ensure Lecompton's existence as a cultural center by founding an institution of higher learning (Church & Sedlak,)

The culture that an institution of higher learning could bring to a community was thought to be a key to maintaining civilization. Church and Sedlak mention that a popular opinion of the time was that "..a movement away from the old areas of settlement and their established ways would bring about a barbarism, a lack of community, and a breakdown of culture among those who made the move". While the charter for Lane University was being obtained, citizens of Lecompton were engaging in combat with Free-State loyalists (Abbott, 1935). Undoubtedly these citizens believed that barbarism already existed. By the time Lane University was founded and war was beginning to subside, citizens of Lecompton probably believed that the institution would raise the town to a higher level of culture and that the barbaric acts of war for the reason of upholding slavery would be behind them.

The founding of Lane University for the reason of religious development is the most evident reason for its existence. As discussed by Cook, the United Brethren Church was interested in educating ministers and laity in the United Brethren faith and

in so doing, several institutions of higher learning were to be founded throughout the state of Kansas. Church and Sedlak mention the importance of denominational study and worship over the idea of a generic Christianity during the Antebellum period. Denominations sought to overpower one another by founding the greatest number of churches and church-related schools. Before founding the Lane University, the United Brethren Church had already been successful in ridding Lecompton of other denominations (Hoad, 1939). It seems that the founding of an institution of higher learning was the ultimate show of power by this denomination.

Existing longer than the average institution chartered during the Antebellum period, which in many cases was a matter of months, Lane University functioned for 37 years. Determination and sacrifice by those who believed in the college kept it open during difficult times. Eventually the college began to grow, but perhaps it grew beyond the means of this small community. It is no surprise that the citizens of Lecompton kept the college going through sheer determination as even today this civic pride is the basis for the ongoing existence of the town's and university's histories. The symbol of this determination is the restored main campus building of Lane University. The National Register of Historic Places recognizes the university as an example of the commitment made to higher education by the pioneering generations of the state (Hall, 1979).

A symbol of "..the enlightenment of humanity and the maintenance of liberty and union" (Morris,1901); these words express the mission of Lane University. Although it is no longer a functioning college, it is still a place of learning for those interested in discovering the heritage of Antebellum colleges in the state of Kansas. One might question why Lecompton has an undying attachment to Lane University. The answer might be found in the words of Daniel Webster's statement on Dartmouth College, "It is a small college, it is true, but there are those that love it. (Cook, 1942)

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ANNUAL ALUMNI BANQUET

The annual Lecompton High School Alumni Banquet will be May 25, 1996. Plan to attend.

1926

Lela Banks
Wilma Glenn
Nellie Slavens
Frances Drake
Florence Grauel

1936

Donald Baughman
Wesley Crady
Riley Goff
Madalyn McClanahan
David Paslay
Dorothy Sanford
Robert Walter
Helen Wymer
Eugene Collins
Lawrence Cree
Elsie Kellogg
Rachel Norwood
Lucille Rothwell
Glenn Simms
Cecil Welcher

1946

Beverly Bahnmaier — **Ralph Banks**
Norma Cree — **Vernon Chiles**
Lila Hartman — **Ann Morris**
Wesley Norwood — **Helen L. Smith**
Pauline Webber

1956

Elsie Bahnmaier — **Sharon L. Cole**
Richard Hamlin — **Robert Holloway**
Earl Kasson — **Larry Mathews**
Juanita Mae Kasson — **Donald Matney**
Chalice Robuck — **Orus Robuck**
Karen Sanford — **Myrna Shaner**
Juanita Webber — **Richard Wertz**
Elmer Zeeb

1966

Gilbert Bates — **Denna Confer**
Dianna Confer — **Walter Deige, Jr.**
Carolyn Foster — **Jack Harris**
Kerry Pierce — **Rodger Raybern**
Susan Reynolds — **Melvin Robuck**
Martha Russell — **Carolyn Roberts**
Marcia Robuck — **Mary Stauffer**
Larry Sumner — **Linda Traxler**
Connie Twombly

1976

Cheryl Bendure — **Joe Bidinger**
Chet Bunce — **Brenda Carr**
Jeff Goodrick — **John Hackathorn**
Danny Hatch — **Greg Howard**
Peggy Hubert — **Tom Leach**
Sharon Lewis — **Mary Mathe**
Raymond Patterson — **Valerie Pfeffer**
Tim Rothwell — **Rhonda Schimmel**
Kenny Smith — **Sam Smith**
Susan Thacker — **Yvonne Tunstall**
Kenny Wulfkuhle — **Ed Smith**
Darla Smith

1986

Michael Blankinship — **Dwight Carver**
Darrin Delfelder — **Everett Dexter**
Cynthia Glenn — **Harold Hudson**
Shawn Hughes — **Angela Ice**
Jerry Oldham — **Ronald Thacker**

MUSEUM DONATIONS

Thanks to the following for their help and donations to the museum. Your interest and concern is always appreciated.

1. Arley Leach for helping mow
2. Jeff Goodrick for work on the flag poles.
3. Monetary contribution from Hazelle Taylor Dyer's Estate.
4. Lecompton High School, church and Lane University memorabilia from Daisy Wingfield's estate-by Merta Fulton.
5. Photo and Constitution Hall dedication program-Iona Spencer.
6. Poem-Opal Goodrick "History of Constitution Hall"
7. Photos-Frances Sanford
8. Photos-Deloris Golladay
9. Proclamation from Mayor of Lecompton Jeff Good Goodrick designating Ellen Duncan "Artist of the year.
10. Pictures and obituaries from Howard McKenzie
11. Bible, Books, School programs, ration books from Ruth Rothwell Vervynck.
12. Period dresses, coats, hats, ties from Kropf Estate-Gloria Leonhard
13. Real old newspaper-Bud & Elizabeth Curran Beavers.

LECOMPTON HIGH SCHOOL RESTORED

The city of Lecompton recently received a grant for $255,000. to complete the restoration of the Lecompton High School Building. It includes funds to restore the auditorium and make the building handicap accessible. All the windows including those in the gym and over the doors have been replace. It is a thrill to drive by this building which was so important to this community and see it standing proud and tall for all to see and admire.

LECOMPTON HISTORIC BUILDINGS

As we look forward to the completion of the Lecompton Turnpike interchange and the immense name recognition and tourist attraction, this will make Lecompton. It certainly is time to look back and thank those who have worked to save and restore our historic buildings.

How easily over the years it would have been to witness the destruction of Constitution Hall, Lane Museum and Lecompton High School building. But because of the dedication and concern of individuals interested in Lecompton and from across the United States these buildings will now be available for visitors to view.

We also have in the Lecompton United Methodist Church, a once historic hotel, a restored piano, which is over 100 years old and is a piece of art and

history in its self.

As Robert W. Johannsen stated at the dedication the name Lecompton was a household word known to virtually to every informed citizen in the country in the late 1850's. Thanks to the work and contributions from you, once again Lecompton's name will be placed before the public as a major tourist attraction in Kansas and the nation.

Remember our hours are 11 to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. Constitution Hall hours are 10 to 5 p.m.Wed. through Sat. and 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays. We have been pleasantly surprised with the number of visitors through the week since we extended the hours. We have had a high number of visitors from out of state and have some tours as a result of the Treasure of Czars in Topeka. Pres. Paul Bahnmaier

*** CHRISTMAS VESPERS***

The annual vespers and reception will be held December 3rd at 2:00 P.M. The program will be by the Bell Choir of the First United Methodist Church of Topeka, Community Singers under the direction of Kim Stewart, Amanda Smith, Sarah Hinrichsen, Kallie Pennel, Wes Cottrel, Frances Sanford, Cindy Daniels, Anthony Sayler.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Just to remind you that it is time to renew your membership for 1996. Please try to have it in before the 1st of February, 1996.

We now have 686 Life and Memorial membership and 450 due paying members, making a grand total of 1, 136.

LIFE MEMBERS:

Joan "Jody" McFann Thompson

Robert Orr and Linda Traxler Orr and Richarld Traxler by parents Louis & Marie Traxler

Gary L Stauffer and Carolyn Foster Stauffer

Mary Jo Matney Thomas

REGIMENTAL WINTER BALL

The 8th Kansas Infantry, U.S.A., the Frontier Battery "B", U.S.A. and the Ladies Union Aid Society will hold their annual Regimental Winter Ball Dance in Lecompton at the Community Hall, February 17, 1996 at 7:00 p.m.

These Civil War re-enactors will be dressed in the Civil War period costumes. The musicans will play Civil War period dance music. The Community Hall will be decorated with period flags and decorations. There will be from 80 to 100 present from Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa.

The community is invited to watch this performance.

**********Please Clip and Mail With Your Check**********

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.

Dues are $4 per year for individual membership and $6 for a couple's membership. The dues are from December to December. Life membership is $50 per individual, contributions are tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to the Lecompton Historical Society, and mailed to Iona Spencer, 1828 E. 100 Rd. Lecompton, KS 66050

( ) $4.00 Annual Individual Membership

( ) $6.00 Annual Couple's Membership

( ) $50.00 Individual Life or Memorial Membership

( ) Other Contribution $_____

NAME_____Address_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

OBITUARIES

Laverne Wilson died Tues. Aug. 22, 1995. She was born March 22, 1909, at Silver Lake, the daughter of Daniel and Libby Prickett Benson. She was reared by Dave and Annie Jefferies.

She was a member of Wamego United Methodist Church, the Laclede Extension Homemaker United and the Lecompton Historical Society.

She married George F. Wilson on April 22, 1928, in Topeka. He died in 1979.

Survivors include three sons, Don, Manhattan, Ray, Olathe and Terry, Wamego, three daughters, Doris Weeks Lecompton, Ramona Rischer, Topeka & Sherry Banker, Lawrence, 13 grandchildren & 9 great grandchildren. Burial in Wamego City cemetery.

Lloyd L. Spencer 82, died Thurs. Aug. 31, 1995. He was born Aug. 3, 1913, south of Big Springs, the son of Harley and Cora Shaffer Spencer. He had co-owned and operated Spencer's Truck line. He served with an Army anti-aircraft group during World War II and served in Iceland, Scotland, England, France and Belgium.

He was a member of the Church of Christ at Stull. He was married to Elizabeth "Betty" Sutton, Mar. 18, 1948. She survives. A daughter Vickie Spencer died Jun. 23, 1979.

He is survived by a stepson, Walter Houk, Jr. Lawrence; a stepdaughter, Rebecca Houk Acheson, Shawnee; two brothers, Frank of Lawrence and Ralph, Big Springs, three sisters; Esther Spencer, Topeka, Bethel Worthington, Colo. Sprs. Colo. and Arlene Johnson, Carbondale; and three step grandchildren. Burial in Sutton Cemetery west of Baldwin.

Edna Lombard 78, died Tues. Oct. 10, 1995 in Topeka. She was born Nov. 10, 1916, in Lecompton, the daughter of Alex and Helen O'Brien Anderson. She graduated fro Lecompton R. H. School in 1934. She married Floyd Lombard in 1940 in Perry, he survives.

She was a member of the Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church.

Other survivors include two brothers, Billy Anderson, Lawrence and Leo J. Anderson, Olathe. and a sister, Teresa Griffin, Manhattan. Burial in St. Peters Catholic Cemetery, Big Springs.

Winifred D. Fudge, loving wife and mother was called home on September 26, 1995. She was born in Lecompton the daughter of William and Frances Fleenor Drake, Nov. 9, 1903. She lived in Mesa, Arizona the past25 years. She is survived by her husband Fred and son William C. Springer.

She was entomed in the Valley of the Sun Cemetery in Chandler, Arizona.

****

President* Paul Bahnmaier
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