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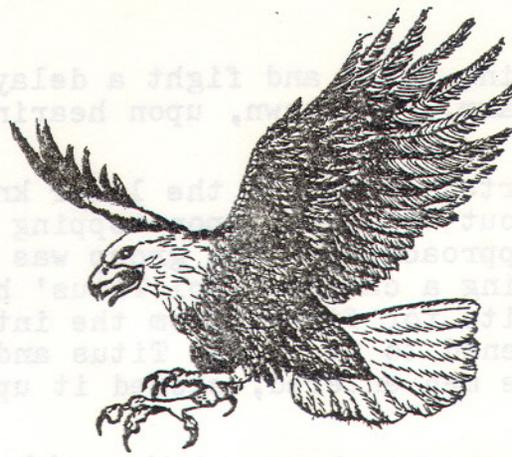
BALD EAGLE

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LECOMPTON, KANSAS

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Battle of Fort Titus

In August of 1856 the pro-slavery people had brought great privation to the free-state city of Lawrence by cutting off their incoming supplies. The only foods available were garden supplies of green corn, squash, watermelons and other vegetables; hundreds had no flour, meal or meat for days. As a result of such a diet there was much sickness. There were three nearby pro-slavery "semi" forts that were accomplishing this, Fort Franklin to the south, Fort Saunders to the east and Fort Titus to the west.

A meeting of the Lawrence people was called and it was decided to attack these forts and destroy them one by one. On August 12, 1856, Col. James Lane and Capt. Samuel Walker led an expedition to Franklin and easily subdued the few occupants of the fort by putting a load of burning hay against the building. On August 15th they approached Fort Saunders and, as their force numbered over 200, and there was only a small number of defenders, who fled without firing a shot at the free-state army, that fort was burned also.

Col. Lane left the group at this point and Capt. Walker was left in charge. The group then went to Lawrence where they decided to attack Fort Titus which was about 1½ miles from Lecompton. The group had a cannon but no cannon balls or lead with which to make them. Someone remembered about the pieces of type that had belonged to the newspaper "The Herald of Freedom" that the former Sheriff Jones had thrown in the river on order of a grand jury, as it was considered a detriment to the territory. It was suggested they retrieve it. This they did, and it was molded into the needed cannon balls.

On August 16, with their cannon and balls, the free-state force numbering between 200 and 400 started for Lecompton. Capt. Walker was told by a passing stage driver that Mrs. Titus and the two Titus children were on his stage and leaving Kansas, so there need be no fear of hurting them. So on marched the group.

By some means, word was brought to Lecompton that a large armed, unfriendly force was approaching the city from the east and that they had better prepare some sort of protection. At that time there were 13 German stone masons working on the Capitol (Later to become Lane University), including John Domm, Aloyius Rudmueller and Franz Walter. As they had had military training, they offered to take their rifles

and apprehend the on-coming force and fight a delaying action so the town would have time to arm. The town, upon hearing shooting, was to send reinforcements.

The stonemasons started south (on the later known Robert Stub farm) and after going about 1½ miles, upon topping a hill, saw the large free-state force approaching. The group was composed of mounted men and men on foot pulling a cannon. Col. Titus' home - a double walled log cabin with slits for firing from the interior - was nearby and the stonemasons hastened to it. Col. Titus and four of his men were there and, after the men entered, closed it up and prepared for battle.

The attacking force deployed around the cabin and opened fire. The defenders shot back, and no side had the advantage until the free-state cannon was brought into play. Upon shooting the cannon, someone yelled, "This is a new and different edition of the Herald of Freedom". That ball knocked the chinking from the cabin and caused one of the defenders to suggest that they blow up themselves and the cabin with a barrel of black powder they had. The others did not agree as some were of a religion that forbade suicide. One of the men tied a white flag on a rifle barrel, poked it out the door, offering to surrender. Capt. Walker ordered them to throw out their weapons and come out with their hands up.

As the pro-slavery men came out of the cabin they lined up against the wall. One free-state man became excited and accidentally shot off his gun wounding Col. Titus in the hand. Capt. Walker was angered by the mishap and yelled, "no one but a damn pirate would do a thing like that", and jerked the man's gun from his hands. This was the only casualty amongst the pro-slavery group, but a Capt. Shombre had been fatally wounded and died the next day.

On a nearby knoll the owner of the adjoining farm, Bill Young (later the Reynolds place) had been watching the battle. As soon as it was over he approached and asked what was going on. He was told that Titus and his men had been rounded up and were to be taken to a jail in Lawrence. Mr. Young scrutinized the pro-slavery group and saw some of his friends in the group -- one a close neighbor. He realized he could not help them and, as they realized the same thing, they acted as strangers. The free-staters began collecting debris and putting it against the fort. Young asked them what they were doing and, upon being told they planned to destroy it, he said "Well, by God, let's burn it", and helped collect trash to start the fire.

Men from Camp Sackett, a nearby U.S. Cavalry camp, had also been watching from a hill a mile or so to the west. They did not interfere and later used the excuse that they could not get there in time, although the fighting lasted about three hours.

The men from the cabin were lined up, and with the free-staters surrounding them, started the march to Lawrence. Darkness overcame them before they reached their destination, so night camp was made near a cornfield. During the night some of the camp guards were celebrating with their bottles and became less than alert. As a result two of the prisoners, Franz Walter and a friend, slipped into the nearby cornfield and, under its cover, left for home. The next day the rest of the prisoners were taken to a prison camp near Lawrence where they were kept until Governor Shannon, Dr. Aristides-Rodrique

and Major Sedgwick rode to Lawrence in the interest of making peace and getting the prisoners back. It was finally agreed that the Lecompton prisoners from the Titus cabin would be exchanged man for man for free-state prisoners being held in Lecompton jails. However, the free-state people would not release Col. Titus unless Lecompton returned a free-state cannon they had in their possession. This was agreed to, the cannon was brought to Lawrence, as were the prisoners held at Lecompton, the trades were made and the Lecompton people returned home.

The Lecompton prisoners, on returning home, found that the town had not had time to arm itself when the shooting started so they had crossed the river and hid in the underbrush on the north side of the river. Even Gov. Shannon was hiding there.

While the people of Lecompton were called pro-slavery people, this was not true of many. Most of the inhabitants were of free-state leanings and were fighting not the slavery question but for their homes. In fact there were fewer slaves there according to the tax records than in most towns. The federal officers that were serving as the territorial government were slavery sympathizers and this gave the town its connotation - pro-slavery.

By Sara Walter

References:

- 1) Spring, L. W., Kansas, Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. 1906
- 2) Gihon, J. H., Geary and Kansas, Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, N.Y., 1857
- 3) Booklet, Territorial Lecompton, Lecompton Territorial Committee 1954
- 4) Legends of the Early Lecompton Days as told by Franz Walter to his son.

Plan now to set aside a winter afternoon to go through that old trunk setting in the attic or in a corner of the basement, searching for old books, pamphlets, maps, letters, photographs, newspapers or flags that relate to the days of territorial Kansas, the Civil War, pro-slavery Lecompton or the Lane University era. The Historical Society is anxious to receive articles of this kind to be displayed at the Lane University Museum.

There will be a particular room designated for the display of art work as was done by students of Lane University. Also, the Music Room is designated to contain articles which pertain to musical education and entertainment of a century ago.

Remember, also, that Lecompton High School is now a part of history, and there will be space for memorabilia of that great place, too.

If you have any articles or furniture which you feel will add interest to the Lane University Museum, please contact the officers now so that appropriate plans can be made for effective displays. Dedication Day will be here before we know it.

A Fire Alarm System has been installed and there will be a Security System installed soon, with precautions taken to the best of our ability to assure the safety of any artifacts placed on display.

COLONEL HENRY T. TITUS

Col. Titus, our subject is mentioned in the story of "Fort Titus", another article in this issue.

Col. Henry T. Titus was born at Titusville, New Jersey, about the year of 1820. He came to Florida in 1850, where he married Miss Mary E. Hopkins, oldest daughter of General Edwin Hopkins. Col. Titus went to Cuba with the first Lopez expedition as an officer. He landed with his forces at Cardenas, Cuba where he was attacked by an overwhelming body of Spaniards. Notwithstanding he had but a few men, a severe battle was fought, he routed the enemy and took possession of the town. In this engagement he killed a Spanish Colonel in a hand to hand encounter. He held the town until the Spaniards came down upon him in overwhelming numbers, when he was forced to vacate and made his escape to Key West with his men in a small steamer, pursued all the way from Cardenas to Key West by a Spanish Man of War.

Col. Titus was also in command of a small body of men in the second Lopez expedition. His steamer, the Papera, came into the St. Johns River for the purpose of collecting recruits, and after enlisting a sufficiently large number of men, he left in his steamer for Cuba. After the Pampera had gone some distance outside she was chased by a United States man-of-war, and was compelled to put back into St. Johns River. She was pursued as far up the river as she could go, and then took refuge in a creek, where she was captured. This broke up the second expedition, so far as Col. Titus was concerned. Soon after this occurrence news was received that the Lopez army had been overpowered and cut to pieces.

Col. Titus then turned his attention to Kansas, which was the theatre of war. Col. Titus, then in command of a Southern regiment who was bent on making Kansas a slave state, came to Kansas and was commissioned Colonel of the Second Regiment, Southern division, Kansas militia, August 5, 1856. Col. Titus had taken an active part in the "sack of Lawrence", and had assisted in destroying the presses of the Herald of Freedom and of the Free-State, and throwing the type into the river. Early in the morning a party of Free-State men attacked Titus house, fired 7 cannon balls made of lead melted from the type of the destroyed presses, dug from the sand in the river, and forced Titus to surrender.

Later he joined General Walker at Nicaragua, where he did some hard fighting; but he and Walker finally quarrelled, and Col. Titus left, followed soon after by General Walker.

He then went back to Florida and went into the mercantile business, but after remaining there only a short time, he went to Arizona and engaged in the mining business. While living in Arizona he traveled extensively in Mexico, and occasionally amused himself by fighting Mexicans and Indians.

He returned to Florida not long before the breaking out of the late civil war and located at Jacksonville, where he remained until the war closed, when he went to Titusville, on the Indian River, where he has since resided. While at Titusville, and soon after the war, he got into a difficulty with a Revenue officer and came near harpooning him, for which he was arrested but finally was cleared in the United States Court.

He founded the town of Titusville, Florida, where it is said he kept a lot of his slaves so closely guarded that for several years they knew nothing of their emancipation. It is also stated that while he was in Kansas, he had a slave woman, named Ann Clarke, the joint property of Geo. W. Clarke, who left her master's home near Leocompton and came into the home of a Mr. Howard, near Topeka. She was secreted there and other places for several weeks, waiting for a chance to go north. Some friends of her master finding her location, arrested her and took her back to Leocompton. She finally succeeded in making her escape to Chicago.

Col. Titus died at his home at Titusville, Florida August 7, 1881 at the age of 60 years.

The above was taken from a news clipping from the Weekly Florida Union and from the Kansas Historical Collections The following was also taken from these collections:

Mrs. Eunice A. Allen, widow of Col. Hames A. Harvey, of Barnum, Colorado, gave the the Historical Society, the sword of Col. H. T. Titus, which was received by L. Harvey, August 16, 1856, at the time of the capture of Fort Titus.

By Iona Spencer

LET'S LIGHT UP OUR TOWN FOR CHRISTMAS

We hope you enjoyed the Christmas decorations on the City Hall lawn last year. A big thanks to everyone who helped make them possible. We would like to add something new each year to our display, so anyone wishing to make a donation, please send it to Jeri Skinner, Chairman, P.O. Box 56, Lecompton.

* * * * *

We are all pleased with the landscaping project which has recently been completed at Lane and do appreciate the cooperation of Unified School District #343 in allowing us to do some beautification work around a small area of the building.

Display cases are a very important part of our museum plans and we have been able to locate six large used ones in good condition, and purchased five new ones of excellent quality and construction.

The new carpeting will be installed November 9th in the chapel and office at Lane and surely this will be the biggest batch of red carpeting ever installed and will probably be the most significant change accomplished since the transformation of the dreadful basement area, and if you just an't wait until Dedication Day to see it, plan on attending a meeting soon. (One sommer-sault may be allowed!)

Darlene Paslay and Julia Springer will soon be coming out with a 1982 calendar which we're sure you will be anxious to have in your home. It not only has a picture of Lane University, but also contains birthdays and meeting dates for local events. The calendars will be available in December and will sell for \$2.50. Keep these 1982 calendars in mind when racking your brains for a special Christmas gift for your friends and relatives.

The Dedication Committee, Sara Walter, Opal Goodrick and Paul Bahnmaier had their first planning session November 6th. No midnight oil was burned that night, but before June 26, 1982 rolls around, we can count on that happening many times. So far, the best plan of the committee is to appoint all you good members to sub--committees, so you can plan on hearing from Paul, Opal and Sara, soon. WATCH OUT!

We wish to commend the Lecompton City Council for their interest and plans for getting our historic little town all prettied up and presentable for the Celebration next summer. Only good things can happen when everyone works together!

President - JULIA SEHON SPRINGER
Editor - ELLEN DUNCAN
Geneological Writer - IONA SPENCER
Historical Writer - SARA WALTER

Did you know that the Historical Society has about 2400 feet of yellow pine lumber for sale? It is of excellent quality and condition, tongue and groove, and for the very reasonable price of 25¢ a running foot. This lumber was purchased several years ago for new flooring at Lane, but Federal regulations prevented it being used only in certain areas, so we have a surplus. If you should have a need for this lumber, call Paul Bahnmaier, 887-6275.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Wright (Chuck and Sally) have expressed a desire to furnish the Music Room at Lane University and have donated an antique pump organ to be displayed there. A beautiful walnut podium has also been presented to the Historical Society by Chuck and Sally for use in the Chapel in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Stauffer.

We would like to thank the following people who helped clean Lane University in preparation for the Open House. And also those who worked to get the area around the building ready for the landscaper, and a big thank you to those who painted the pews:

Mr. and Mrs. Les Shaner
Mr. and Mrs. David Paslay
Maxine Dark
Howard Duncan
Jerri Skinner
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Goodrick
Sally Wright
Jeff Goodrick
David Lee Paslay
Mr. and Mrs. Forest Springer
LeRoy Hatch

Mr. and Mrs. Herman Banks
Mr. and Mrs. George Simmons
Edna Bahnmaier
Tom Goodrick
Doris Matney
Raymond Hoffsommer
Opal Goodrick
Rick Paslay
Paul Bahnmaier

JUST A REMINDER that the 1981 tax year is coming to a rapid conclusion and if any of you are looking for a worthwhile project to make a tax deductible donation to, DON'T FORGET LANE UNIVERSITY! The process of getting the building all dressed up and ready for Dedication Day takes extra dollars in lots of areas, and altho the officers and committees are a very conservative group, your financial support at this crucial time is very important.

Mrs. Helen Harwood, McLouth, has donated a "box desk" which was used by her grandmother, Lois Cornforth, when she was a student attending Lane University about 1895.

An Assortment of post cards, pictures and other memoriabilia has been donated to Lane by Mrs. Mildred Bellinger of Lawrence.

Ruth Steinmetz, Life Member of Lecompton Historical Society died recently at her home in Greenacres City, Fla. She was born March 11, 1907 at Lecompton, the daughter of Owen and Anna Faubion Baughman.

LECOMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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M/M Wesley Wulfkuhle
M/M Roger Zink

Mr. and Mrs. John Brodhag, (nee Gertrude Hoad), Topeka, Kansas have given the Lecompton Historical Society a large Bible that had belonged to her father, Bruce Hoad, formerly of Lecompton. It is 13 by 10 by 5 inches. It was printed in 1884, has a leather binding and is in good condition. It is a choice item for the library and one that will be treasured.

Mrs. Deloris Dittrich Gollady has presented several articles of late 19th and early 20th century clothing to the Lane Museum. There is a beautiful plush coat, blouses, skirts, a crocheted dress and some undergarments. They will be very useful when period displays are made. The garments were once owned by the Charles and Alice Buchheim Bohnmaier family, next the Anthony and Iva B. Dittrich family, and last by Deloris Gollady. We are pleased to obtain these items.

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

Individual membership is \$2.50 per year, 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 Miss Jeri Skinner, Secretary, Box 56, Lecompton, Kansas 66050.

(Please clip and mail with your check)

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