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How the Kansas-Nebraska Line was Established

Hadley Johnson

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it was the second city in the state and numbered 7,300. In 1880 it had 13,000 people, and in 1885 it had reached and passed twenty thousand.

When it was surveyed the nearest railroad connecting with the eastern markets was at Omaha and St. Joseph, Missouri. In 1880 it had eight diverging lines to all points of the compass, and in 1890 it bids fair to have a round dozen spokes to its commercial wheel. In *this remarkable progress, she is but an exemplar of her state and her people.* A century of improvement in twenty years is the rule in Nebraska, and has been from the day she took her place in the galaxy of the union.

HOW THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA LINE WAS ESTABLISHED.

BY HON. HADLEY D. JOHNSON.

[Read before a meeting of the Society, Tuesday, Jan. 11, 1887.]

When I received a letter from the President of your society, the Honorable Robert W. Furnas, asking me to so time a contemplated visit to Nebraska as to meet you on this occasion, although the visit had only been spoken of as likely to occur, but not positively decided on, my thoughts naturally reverted to the past; and indeed I have proved the saying to be true, at least in my own case, that in youth we are always looking forward to the future, while in old age our thoughts are more intent upon a review of the past. I recalled to mind early days in Nebraska, and many of the incidents occurring in the struggles of her earlier settlers to build up a new state appeared fresh in my memory; there came trooping up before the gaze of my mind's eye the men who were my friends and co-laborers in the work of rescuing this beautiful land from the possession of the wild animals infesting it, and to build upon its broad bosom a commonwealth of which we could feel proud, and one which would add to the material wealth, comfort, and happiness of unborn generations as well as of the people then in existence.

When, as I say, this letter of Governor Furnas was received, I did not hesitate, but at once decided that I would respond to his invitation and meet you on the present occasion and strike hands once more with such of the men of 1853, '4, and '5 whose familiar faces I might once more gaze upon in life. Of course I did not know how many of them I should meet and recognize. I was prepared to meet with many unfamiliar faces, faces of men who had never looked upon, perhaps had never heard of me. I knew that many of my old associates of those early days had crossed the silent river and joined the vast majority in an unknown land; and now as I am here and meet with you, so small a number of whom I recognize, I confess to a feeling of sadness more easily felt than described, and I beg of you to pardon me if I should seem more melancholy than the occasion will justify, for really I think that we all have abundant cause to "rejoice and to be exceeding glad" when contrasting the present condition of Nebraska with the Nebraska of 1854.

When in looking over this assemblage I fail to behold the faces of quite a number of persons who were my colleagues and co-laborers in setting in motion the machinery of this magnificent state, and who I know are no longer numbered with the living, I can readily adopt as my own the following lines written by Dr. Young, a poet of another age:

"When in this vale of years I backward look,
And miss such numbers, numbers, too, of such,
Firmer in health, and greener in their age,
And stricter on their guard, and fitter far,
To play life's subtle game, I scarce believe
I still survive."

In response to the request of your President I am here to beg your kind indulgence while I read the following crude and doubtless not very interesting paper, which has been prepared under many disadvantages, having to depend mainly upon memory for many of the facts here set down; it is quite probable that many which might be interesting to you are omitted, and others of little or no interest inserted.

If the object of the President of your society in asking me to attend this meeting was to draw from me such items concerning the early history of Nebraska as I alone may be in possession of, with the thought and wish that they might be preserved through your so-

ciety for information to the future historian, I certainly ought not to refuse to impart such information. A correct history of Nebraska cannot be written without including a portion of the history of its neighbor, and I may add its mother Iowa, and the future historian of Nebraska will not discharge his duty properly should he fail to give to Iowa and to her citizens proper credit for their endeavors in behalf of the organization of the territory of Nebraska.

The first settlement by white people to any extent in what is now Nebraska, of which I have positive proof, took place in the year 1846. In the latter part of that year a portion of a body of professed religionists, calling themselves "Latter Day Saints," but known to the world as "Mormons," having been expelled from the state of Illinois, took up the line of march westward, and arriving in small companies, numbering in all probably five thousand persons, called a halt and encamped on the Missouri bottom at or near the site of Council Bluffs, were ferried across the Missouri River at or near the trading post of the American Fur Company, managed by Peter A. Sarpy. After crossing the river they proceeded northward, and most of them located at a place called by them "Winter Quarters," now Florence. Several hundred of them, however, went north to the land of the Poncas, where they wintered. Those who located at Winter Quarters spent the winter of 1846-7 there, putting in crops in the spring of 1847. On account of exposure and want of proper food much sickness prevailed among the people while occupying the site of Florence, and great mortality ensued. About this time the Indians who owned the lands occupied by the Mormons, seeing that the latter were killing the game and using up the timber in their vicinity, made complaint to the government, in consequence of which the settlement was abandoned in 1847, a portion of the Mormons proceeding in that year to Salt Lake, while those who did not accompany them recrossed the river and settled on the Pottawatomic lands in Iowa.

I think that it was about the year 1841 that a Mr. Whitney, who was the first person to suggest the practicability of constructing a railroad to the Pacific, commenced the agitation of the subject, and from that time people, especially in the west, kept up the agitation. As you all doubtless remember, there were two lines suggested for the future great national highway. One was opposite to and was favored by the citizens of the state of Missouri, and I think was to follow the

valley of the Kaw river. The other was opposite to the state of Iowa, the route suggested being up the valley of the Platte river. This route was favored by the citizens of Iowa as being not only the best route, but probably of greater interest to that state, as similarly was the lower route to the people of Missouri.

In October, 1850, your reader, a native of Indiana, who had spent most of the earlier years of his life there, and who had read and thought much of the west and of the railroad scheme, decided to "go west," long before advised to do so by Horace Greeley, and, having faith in the ultimate construction of a Pacific railroad, as well as in the Platte route, removed to Iowa, and in 1851 located at Kanesville, now Council Bluffs.

In 1852 I was elected to the Senate of Iowa, and in obedience to the wishes of my constituents attended the session of the legislature of 1852-3 at Iowa City. In going to and returning from that place, in the absence of a public conveyance of any kind, I traveled the entire distance on horseback, going in December and returning in February. At this time there were but few houses on the route traveled between Winterset and the Missouri river, and so far apart that in several instances you would not see a house or a human being from morning until night, such houses being so located as to afford shelter at night for the few travelers who ventured across the prairies during the winter.

Under such circumstances you can readily imagine how much comfort was enjoyed by me in my lonely pilgrimage. If I remember correctly, my senatorial district included about forty counties, extending from Mills county to the Minnesota line, although my constituents did not number more probably than five thousand persons, nearly all of them in the counties bordering on the Missouri river. In the interior counties (being unsettled and unorganized) my vote was very light, inasmuch as prairie wolves were not allowed to vote.

By way of digression, and that the law makers of to-day may compare the past with the present, I will remark that I received, as my per diem and mileage, allowance for my 600 mile horseback ride and 50 days service as a legislator, the insignificant sum of one hundred and sixty dollars, which was paid in gold coin.

It may be remembered by some of this audience, that, at a previous session of the Iowa Legislature, a memorial was adopted, asking con-

gress to donate land to aid in the construction of a railroad from Keokuk to Dubuque. This route was known as the "Ram's Horn," the design being to start at Keokuk, and extending the road out into the interior of the state some thirty or forty miles, to terminate at Dubuque, both ends of the road resting on the Mississippi. Hence the term "Ram's Horn." This plan would accommodate a few populous counties, but would be of comparatively little benefit to the state at large.

One of the first, and to them seemingly one of the most important objects of the men composing the legislature of 1852-3, was to substitute for the "Ram's Horn" a more comprehensive railroad system for the state, and one better adapted to what they regarded as the future wants of a great and growing state, at the same time having in view the final location of the contemplated national highway; and in pursuance of this idea, after a somewhat protracted struggle, we succeeded in adopting a memorial to congress, embracing four distinct lines across the entire state, and asking for appropriations of land to aid in their construction, much to the disgust of a few of the friends of the "Ram's Horn."

I hope that I may be pardoned for what may seem to be egotism on my part, when you are reminded that *three* of the lines proposed were designed to strike my own town, Council Bluffs; but you will please bear in mind that I claim no special credit for the act; on the contrary, hold that it was done partly in view of the expected national railroad, in connection with the popularity of the Platte Valley route, which insured the adoption of the memorial, for I presume it will readily occur to you, that the design of the legislature in asking for this donation was to insure the construction of those several roads to a common point opposite to the Platte Valley, thus, as they reasonably argued, providing for the future initial point of the projected Pacific railroad, which would enable them to make connections with roads in all parts of the country; at all events this was my idea at the time, and although I make the suggestion, I hope, with becoming modesty, I do so with a firm conviction that the scheme was a wise one, not only for the state of Iowa, but for what has since become the state of Nebraska, as I believe that the construction of the lines of road referred to assured the more speedy developement of these states, and probably tended to hasten the construction of the Pacific Railway.

As an item of information, connected with the history of the legislation to which I have referred, I append a list of the members of the senate and of the house of representatives of the Iowa Legislature at the session of 1852-3, that it may be filed with your archives, being as I think entitled to a place in the history of Nebraska. But the brief history just read, of the acts of your neighboring state, does not furnish the only reason why she should be duly remembered by the future historian of Nebraska. As I have said, there were two routes suggested upon one of which the anticipated Pacific railroad should be built; people of the state of Missouri advocating the route up the valley of the Kansas river, while the people of Iowa advocated the Platte river route.

As early as 1848, the subject of the organization of a new territory west of the Missouri river was mentioned, and in congress I think a bill was introduced in that year, but did not become a law, and in 1852 the subject having been long discussed, a bill was introduced, but again without result. In 1852, however, the railroad question having been agitated more generally during the preceding year, during the session of 1852-3, a bill was reported to congress providing for the organization of the Territory of Nebraska, within the boundaries, substantially I believe, now embraced in the states of Kansas and Nebraska. Prior to this, however, some of the citizens of western Missouri, and a few persons residing or staying temporarily in the Indian country west of the Missouri river, took steps to hold an informal election of a delegate who should attend the coming session of congress and urge the passage of the territorial bill. This election, though not sanctioned by any law, and informal, was ordered to be held by a meeting of a number of persons held in the Indian country south of the Platte river, who fixed a day on which the election was to be held, and designated certain places at which votes would be received. Among the places named, appeared Bellevue or Traders' Point. A newspaper printed somewhere in Missouri, containing a notice of this election, accidentally came into my possession a few days prior to the date fixed for the election. On reading this announcement, I immediately communicated the news to prominent citizens of Council Bluffs, and it was at once decided that Iowa should compete for the empty honors connected with the delegateship. An election at Sarpy's was determined on; arrangements made with the owners of the ferry boat at

that point to transport the *impromptu* emigrants to their new homes, and they were accordingly landed on the west shore of the Missouri river a few hundred yards above Sarpy's trading house, where, on the day appointed, an election was held, the result of which may be learned from the original certificate hereto annexed, a copy of which was sent to the Honorable Bernhart Henn, *the* member of the house of representatives from Iowa, by him submitted to the house, and referred to the committee on elections, but for reasons obvious to the reader of the proceedings of congress immediately following, no report was ever made by that committee in the case.*

I may remark here that I consented with much reluctance to the use of my name in this connection, and for several reasons: I was poor and could not well afford to neglect my business and spend a winter at Washington; the expenses of the trip I knew would be a heavy drain upon my limited exchequer; besides I had so lately neglected my private affairs by my service at Iowa City. However, I finally yielded to the earnest request of a number of my personal friends, who were also ardent friends of the new scheme, and consented to the use of my name, at the same time pledging my word that I would proceed to Washington if chosen and do the best I could to advance the cause we had in hand. In addition to the ballots cast for me for delegate at this election, the Rev. William Hamilton received 304 votes for provisional Governor; Dr. Monson H. Clark received 295 for Secretary, and H. P. Downs 283 for Treasurer.

These proceedings at Sarpy's landing were followed by various public meetings in Iowa, (and also in Missouri) at which resolutions were adopted, urging the organization of Nebraska territory. Amongst others, meetings were held at Council Bluffs, St. Mary's, Glenwood, and Sidney, at which the actions at Sarpy's were endorsed. Earnest and eloquent speeches were made by such leading citizens as Hon. W. C. Means and Judge Snyder of Page county, Judge Greenwood, Hiram P. Bennett, Wm. McEwen, Col. J. L. Sharp, Hon. A. A. Bradford.

* BELVIEW, NEBRASKA TERRITORY, Oct. 11, 1853.

Be it known that at in pursuance of Resolutions heretofore adopted an election was held at this place on this the Eleventh day of October 1853 being the second Tuesday in said month for delegate to Congress for the Territory of Nebraska at which the undersigned were duly appointed Judges and Clerks

And we do hereby certify that the number of votes cast at said election was three Hundred fifty-Eight Votes of which Hadley D. Johnson received Three Hundred fifty-Eight votes.

MARSHALL FINLEY	} Judges.
R. P. SNOW	
MUNSON H. CLARK	
FRANKLIN HALL	} Clerks
JEFFERSON P. CASSADY	

L. Lingenfelter, C. W. McKissick, Hon. Benjamin Rector, Charles W. Pierce, Dan. H. Solomon, — — Downs, I. M. Dews, George Hepner, Wm. G. English, Geo. P. Stiles, Marshal Turley, Dr. M. H. Clark, and others.

In the month of November, Council Bluffs was visited by Hon. Augustus C. Dodge, Col. Samuel H. Curtis, and other distinguished citizens of other states, who attended and addressed meetings of the people of the town, warmly advocating the construction of our contemplated railroads, and the organization of Nebraska territory. In its issue of December 14, 1853, the Council Bluffs *Bugle* announced that "H. D. Johnson, delegate elect from Nebraska, passed through our place on his way to Washington last week."

In compliance with my agreement, I set about making arrangements to visit the national capital, which, as you may suppose, was not easily accomplished. Before starting, however, a number of our citizens who took such a deep interest in the organization of a territory west of Iowa, had on due thought and consultation agreed upon a plan which I had formed, which was the organization of two territories west of the Missouri river, instead of one as had heretofore been contemplated, and I had traced on a map hanging in the office of Johnson & Cassady a line which I hoped would be the southern boundary of Nebraska, which it finally did become, and so continues to the present time.

In starting out upon this second pilgrimage, I again faced the dreary desolate prairies of the then sparsely settled Iowa, but not as a year before, solitary and alone. B. R. Pegram, then a young and enterprising merchant of Council Bluffs, being about to visit St. Louis, it was agreed that we should travel in company to Keokuk, he with a horse and buggy, I with a horse and saddle. The trip was accomplished in safety, and on arriving at Keokuk, we took a steamer for St. Louis, shipping the horses and buggy.

On arriving at St. Louis, I tried in vain to sell my horse for a satisfactory price, and leaving him with a friend to be sold afterwards, I took a steamer bound for Cincinnati, whence I boarded a railroad train for Washington. (I remark in parenthesis that my horse was not sold, but subsequently died, to my great grief and considerable loss.)

On my arrival at Washington (early in January, 1854,) I found that a bill had already been introduced in the senate, and I think referred

to the committee on territories, of which the Hon. Stephen A. Douglas was chairman. This bill provided for the organization of the territory of Nebraska, including what is now Kansas and Nebraska, or substantially so. I also found, seated at a desk, in the House of Representatives, a portly, dignified, elderly gentleman, who was introduced to me as the Reverend Thomas Johnson. He was an old Virginian; a slave holder, and a Methodist preacher. This gentleman had also been a candidate for delegate at the informal election, and was credited with having received 337 votes. He had preceded me to Washington, and together with his friends, ignoring our Sarpy election, had, through some influence *sub rosa*, been installed in a seat at a desk aforesaid, where being duly served with stationery, etc., he *seemed* to be a member of the house.

Previous to this time, in one or two instances, persons visiting Washington, as representatives of the settlers in unorganized territory, and seeking admission as legal territories, had been recognized unofficially, and after admission had been paid the usual per diem allowance as well as mileage, and in the present case I think my namesake had looked for such a result in his own case, but for my part I had no such expectation.

On being introduced to Mr. Johnson, who seemed somewhat stiff and reserved, I alluded to the manner of my appointment to the present mission, which, like his own, was without legal sanction, but was for a purpose; told him there was no occasion for a contest between us for a seat to which neither of us had a claim; that I came there to suggest and work for the organization of two territories instead of one; that if he saw proper to second my efforts, I believed that we could succeed in the objects for which we each had come.

After this explanation the old gentleman thawed out a little, and we consulted together upon the common subject.

Hon. A. C. Dodge, senator from Iowa, who had from the first been an ardent friend and advocate of my plan, introduced me to Judge Douglas, to whom I unfolded my plan, and asked him to adopt it, which, after mature consideration, he decided to do, and he agreed that, as chairman of the committee on territories, he would report a substitute for the pending bill, which he afterwards did do, and this substitute became the celebrated "Nebraska Bill," and provided, as you know, for the organization of the territories of Kansas and Nebraska.

The Hon. Bernhart Henn, at that time the only member of the house from Iowa, who also was my friend and warmly advocated our territorial scheme, finding that the Rev. Thomas Johnson was seated in the house and posing as a member, and not wishing to see him more honorably seated than myself, interceded, I presume with one of the doorkeepers, who admitted me into the house and seated me at a desk beside my friend, the minister, who it afterwards appeared was, like myself, surreptitiously admitted to the seat occupied by him, unknown to the speaker, or perhaps to the chief doorkeeper.

The fates decreed, however, that we were not to hold our seats a great while, for one day the principal doorkeeper approached me as I sat in my seat, and politely inquired who I was, and by what right I occupied the seat; and being by me answered according to the facts, he informed me that as complaint had been made to the speaker, he was under the necessity of respectfully asking me to vacate the seat, as such was the order of the speaker. I replied to him, that of course I would do so, but, I added, as my neighbor on my left occupied his seat by a right similar to my own, I felt it to be my privilege to enquire why I should be ousted while he was permitted to remain. On this the doorkeeper turned to Mr. Johnson, who corroborated my statement, whereupon the "two Johnsons," as we were called, were incontinently bounced and relegated to the galleries.

I never learned, nor did I care to know, whether I was removed at the instance of the friends of Mr. Johnson, or whether a Mr. Guthrie, who had also been a candidate for delegate, had fired a shot at his adversary, the Rev. Thomas. If the latter was the case, in firing he hit two birds. I did not feel hurt by this event, but believe that the dignity of the other Johnson was seriously touched, and himself mortified.

I ought perhaps to mention the fact, that in our negotiations as to the dividing line between Kansas and Nebraska, a good deal of trouble was encountered, Mr. Johnson and his Missouri friends being very anxious that the Platte river should constitute the line, which obviously would not suit the people of Iowa, especially as I believe it was a plan of the American Fur Company to colonize the Indians north of the Platte river. As this plan did not meet with the approbation of my friends or myself, I firmly resolved that this line should not be adopted. Judge Douglas was kind enough to leave that question to me, and I offered to Mr. Johnson the choice of two lines, first, the

present line, or second, an imaginary line traversing that divide between the Platte and the Kaw. After considerable parleying and Mr. Johnson not being willing to accept either line, I finally offered the two alternatives—the fortieth degree of north latitude, or the defeat of the whole bill, for that session at least. After consulting with his friends, I presume, Mr. Johnson very reluctantly consented to the fortieth degree as the dividing line between the two territories, whereupon Judge Douglas prepared and introduced the substitute in a report as chairman of the committee on territories, and immediately, probably the hardest war of words known in American history commenced.

I have omitted thus far in this sketch to record a circumstance, which perhaps ought to have been mentioned in its order, and which was one of the incidents which led me to believe that the American Fur Company was opposed to our scheme, because I felt sure that Missouri men were on good terms with the Indian department.

When I first called on Col. Manypenny, the commissioner of Indian affairs, being introduced by Gen. A. C. Dodge, and after informing him that my object in calling was to request him to take preliminary steps to making a treaty with the Omaha Indians, for the purchase of their lands in order to open the country to settlement by the whites, the Colonel, in a somewhat stilted and pompous manner, replied to my request by saying: "Mr. Johnson, the Omaha Indians do not wish to sell their lands, and it would not do any good to make the attempt." As I had heard similar remarks from friends or representatives of the Fur Company, I supposed that the Colonel had received his impressions from that quarter, but in answer I said to him: "Col. Manypenny, you are misinformed, and are laboring under a mistake, for I know positively that they are willing to sell, and assure you that if you will send for some of the principal men of the tribe, you will be able at once to make a satisfactory treaty with them."

After some little delay, Col. Manypenny, who had in the meantime had an opportunity to obtain more information than he was in possession of when we had our first conversation, sent for some of the chief men of the Omahas, who went on to Washington, when, as I had foretold, a treaty was made and ratified, by which their lands were turned over to the government, and in the following July were opened to settlement, whereupon quite a stampede took place, that is after the Nebraska Bill became a law and officers were appointed whose duty

it became to legally set in motion the machinery of a territorial government.

It may not interest you to be informed that the first celebration of our nation's birthday of which I have any knowledge as having occurred in Nebraska, took place July 4, 1854 (before any whites were permitted under the treaty to permanently locate on these lands), on the hill at Omaha, near where the capitol building formerly stood, and as near as I can locate it, on a spot occupied now by Davenport street.

A small number of persons on the day just mentioned, crossed the Missouri river from Council Bluffs, taking a few articles for a picnic. I remember that on the spot named, some resolutions were adopted, and a few brief speeches made; the stand on which the speakers stood was a common wagon, owned by my old friend Harrison Johnson, now no more, who, with some of the members of his family, constituted a portion of the party.

I do not think it necessary for me to extend this sketch to much greater length, having brought these reminiscences down to a period when the territory was organized, the circumstances of which you are no doubt acquainted with. My object in writing as I have on the subject being through your Society to furnish, for the benefit of "whom it may concern," a plain and unvarnished, yet correct, account of the manner in which it became possible for Nebraska to start, at so early a period, upon a career so useful and so honorable, as I in my inmost soul believe to be her final destiny.

I deem it not inappropriate for me to suggest the deep regret which I feel in the fact that circumstances have rendered it impossible for me to share with you the financial benefits, and the honors attending the grand career of the state which I always claim as "my Nebraska."

I have introduced in my manuscript the names of quite a number of the men of Iowa and other states, who assisted in the great work of which I have been speaking, to whom credit belongs for their action; but I have not spoken of others who at a later date labored in the same direction, and I cannot conclude without naming some of them, and although probably their names already appear in the records of your Society, I will here set down the names of several persons whom I remember as active, zealous, and efficient state builders in the years of which I have written. Among them are: Dr. Enos Lowe, Jesse Lowe, B. R. Pegram, James A. Jackson, Col. Lysander W.

Babbitt,, Joseph E. Johnson, Samuel S. Bayliss, Wm. D. Brown, A. J. Hanscom, I. P. Casady, Wm. Clancy, Sylvanus Dodge, G. M. Dodge, Samuel E. Rogers, E. Estabrook, Thomas Davis, John Davis, A. D. Jones, T. B. Cuming, O. D. Richardson, Augustus Kountze. Samuel Brown, Dr. G. L. Miller, Col. Lorin Miller, George Mills, A. J. Poppleton, S. A. Strickland, Byron Reed, C. H. Downs, George Stevens, Clarke Irvine, John M. Thayer, T. G. Goodrich, R. W. Furnas, J. Sterling Morton, I. W. Paddock, A. S. Paddock, Harrison Johnson, B. R. Folsom, S. F. Nuckolls, Geo. M. Shilcott, W. W. Wyman, besides a host of others.

SLAVERY IN NEBRASKA.

BY. EDSON P. RICH.

[Read before the Society, January 12, 1886.]

It is curious and somewhat romantic to note, that this territory, which was for several years the battle ground of a constitutional struggle over the question of slavery, was, if we are to accept the theory so eloquently defended by Colonel Savage,* first pointed out to a modern race by one himself a bondsman; and that later, a patriotic slave, in order to save his own country from the ravages of the Spaniards, led them to this territory in search of the "seven cities of Cibola," in the land of Quivera. It had been the dream of the Spaniards to rob these cities of their fabled wealth, and enslave the people. The project, however, was but one of the many romantic schemes of this chivalrous race in his search after the marvelous, a disease of the age, of which the Spaniard was typical, and not confined to any particular nation. Instead of the cities whose steeples shone in the light of the sun resplendent with gold and silver, these adventurers, weary with their long journey, found only a country terrifying in its barrenness and vastness of extent, peopled by a race whose aspect was so unforbidding, and whose nature so fierce and warlike, their only wealth vast herds of untamed buffalo, that after offer-

* In lecture before State Historical Society, April 16th 1880.