



An Illustration of the Free State Hotel ruins, Lawrence, Kansas Territory, 1856, copied from *Kansas: Its Interior and Exterior Life* by Mrs. Charles Robinson.

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SACK OF LAWRENCE - 1856

During the severe winter of 1855 and the spring of 1856 minor conflicts continued in the territory. Another free state man, Barber, was killed and Sheriff Samuel Jones was wounded. The two anti-slavery newspapers in Lawrence angered the proslavery leaders. A proslavery grand jury decided that the newspapers in Lawrence should be shut down and Sheriff Samuel Jones and his group of armed men were more than happy to oblige. On May 21, 1856, U.S. Deputy Marshal Fain and his guard entered the settlement of Lawrence, arresting three free-state men, G.W. Deitzler, G. W. Smith and Gaius Jenkins, who had been indicted by the grand jury for treason. Mr. Eldridge, proprietor of the new hotel, invited them to dinner. While in Lawrence, Fain was presented with a letter from the Committee of Safety addressed to I. B. Donaldson, United States Marshall Kansas Territory. It stated, *“For the private property already taken by your posse, we ask identification, and what remains to us and our citizens we throw upon you for protection, trusting that under he [the] flag of the Union, and within the folds of the Constitution, we may obtain safety.”* Fain and his posse accepted the dinner invitation, left with their prisoners without paying for their dinner and returning to the headquarters at Mount Oread. Marshal Fain announced to his soldiers that their duties were at an end, adding, *“Sheriff*



Jones, has writs yet to be served, and you are at liberty to organize as his posse, if you desire to do so.”

Sheriff Jones, leading about twenty men, proceeded to Lawrence, arriving about 3 p.m. Sheriff Jones stopped in front of the hotel and called for General Pomeroy and demanded that the settlement’s arms be given up. Pomeroy consulted with the other members of the Committee of Safety. They offered to surrender the cannon, refusing to give up their rifles, which were privately owned and not under the authority of the committee. The cannon and a few muskets were surrendered to Sheriff Jones and he and his men left the settlement to rejoin the others back at Mt. Oread that were preparing to ransack the settlement of Lawrence. The following is an account of the Sack of Lawrence taken from William G. Cutler’s *History of the State of Kansas*, first published in 1883 by A. T. Andreas, Chicago IL:

“The two printing offices were first gutted, the presses destroyed, and the types thrown in the river. The semi-legal work was finished by destroying the Free State Hotel. The first shot fired at it from a cannon plated on the opposite side of Massachusetts street, was aimed by the tipsy Atchison, [Missouri ex-Senator David Atchison] but failed to hit the building. About fifty shots were afterwards fired, with but little effect, upon the solid walls. Next it was attempted to blow it up. Several kegs of gunpowder were exploded within, with no appreciable damage to the walls. Its destruction was finally effected by the torch of the incendiary, and in the early evening it stood a roofless and smoldering ruin. The legal work was done. It was followed by petty robberies all through the defenseless and half-deserted town. Late in the evening the curtain fell, the last act being the burning of Robinson’s private dwelling on Mount Oread, by the now irresponsible and lawless marauders, who had been released from all restraint when dismissed by the Sheriff.”

“Jones revenge was complete. As the work of destruction went on, he was in ecstasy. ‘This,’ said he, ‘is the happiest moment of my life. I determined to make the fanatics bow before me in the dust and kiss the Territorial laws.’ As the walls of the burning hotel fell, he ejaculated, ‘I have done it, by ---, I have done it.’ Turning to the soldiers, he said, ‘You are dismissed, the writs have been executed.’” ...

... “The loss of life was summed up in the murder of two free-state men, Brown and Stewart, and in the death of one Law and Order man, who was accidentally killed by a brick or stone which fell from the burning hotel. Two other members of the posse were wounded; one, by the accidental discharge of his own gun; the other, by being thrown from his horse while in pursuit of a free-state man whom he had mistaken for Gov. Reeder.”

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