

FROM BORDER WAR



TO CIVIL WAR

More Letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch, 1855–1863

Part One

edited by John M. Peterson



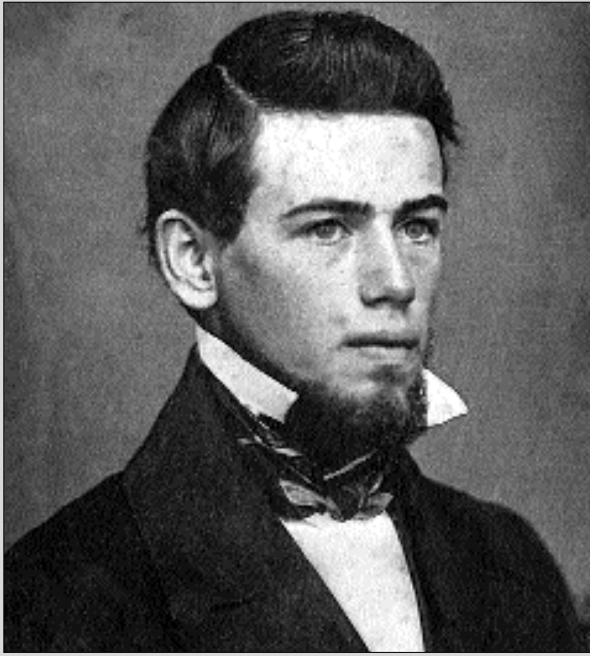
"Border Ruffians 'Going Over to Wipe Out Lawrence,'" an illustration from J.N. Hollaway's 1868 History of Kansas depicting proslavery Missourians heading toward the antislavery stronghold.

Edward P. Fitch came to Kansas from Massachusetts in October 1854, only a few months after the Kansas–Nebraska Act opened those two territories to settlement. Along with other westbound settlers he saw the newly opened territory as both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge resulted from provisions in the Kansas–Nebraska Act reserving the decision to permit or forbid slavery to the residents of the territory when they framed a constitution and requested statehood. The opportunity came from the realization that most of the region had good soil and sufficient water to make farming possible and that in time much good land would become available at low prices.

Edward's parents, John A. and Lucy Howe Fitch, lived on a farm near Hopkinton, Massachusetts. They were leaders in the local antislavery society, which undoubtedly influenced Edward to become a strong free-state partisan and to want to help prevent Kansas from becoming a slave state. The Fitches had five sons, and Edward realized his best chance of having his own farm was to obtain cheap land on the frontier. Thus both practical economic motives and idealistic political motives led him to Kansas.

Many of the ordinary trials and successes of settlers in a strange and newly settled land are revealed in the letters Edward wrote to his parents and other family members. Even more noteworthy are his descriptions of and comments on events that began when proslavery and antislavery

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Edward P. Fitch arrived in Lawrence in 1854. His letters to his family in Massachusetts provide insights to the early settlement of Lawrence and the political conflict during the Bleeding Kansas period.

forces realized that the political balance in the U.S. Senate, carefully maintained by the Missouri Compromise since 1820, had been placed in jeopardy and that "squatter sovereignty" now could determine which side would dominate the U.S. government. Although the term Bleeding Kansas may not have been fully justified, violent threats and lawless acts foreshadowed the outbreak of national civil war only a few years later.

When Edward arrived in 1854 Lawrence had only a few log buildings, some tents, and several sod-walled structures with hay roofs. The town had few stores or other businesses, no newspaper, and only irregular communication with eastern states. Edward observed or participated in significant political events during his years in Lawrence, which he described and commented on to his parents. Despite his free-state stance, his descriptions of actual events generally appear accurate, although his comments sometimes are quite partisan. Even so, at one time or another he criticizes the actions of almost every free-state leader from Jim Lane to Charles Robinson. An effort has been made to retain some of the detail concerning his varied attempts to make a living and to acquire land and other property, as well as of his courtship of Sarah Wilmarth and his enjoyment of life with her and their children. Sarah's infrequent contributions mostly are on domestic matters, but they reveal her positive per-

sonality and realistic acceptance of living conditions on the frontier.

In 1979 Roger K. Fitch of Omaha, Nebraska, great-grandson of Edward Fitch, gave copies of about sixty letters from Edward and Sarah to his parents and his brother Appleton to the Elizabeth M. Watkins Museum in Lawrence, Kansas. Sarah's chief contribution was the heart-rending final letter to Edward's parents after he was killed by Quantrill's raiders. A considerable portion of those letters was published in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* in 1989.¹ Later another cache of Fitch letters was discovered in upstate New York. Roger Fitch again gave copies to the Watkins Museum, but only in the last two years has a comprehensive effort to transcribe and edit them been undertaken.² Because about 140 letters are in this set, some short and some very long, only a selection of letters and parts of letters can be presented here.

The goal of this transcription has been to provide a faithful but readable text. Edward's penmanship deteriorated decidedly when he was excited or in a great

1. John M. Peterson, ed., "Letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch, Lawrence, Kansas, 1855-1863, Part I," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 12 (Spring 1989): 48-70; "Part II," (Summer 1989): 78-100, hereafter cited as "Fitch Letters I" and "Fitch Letters II," respectively. For Sarah Fitch's letter to her husband's parents, see "Fitch Letters II," 94-100.

2. Carol Graham initiated this effort by taking on the time consuming and sometimes difficult tasks of organizing, transcribing, and formatting the new set of letters, which she has completed with occasional help from other Watkins Museum volunteers.

hurry, his punctuation is minimal, and his capitalization rather erratic. Where there was doubt he has been assumed to have spelled correctly and followed the usual rules of capitalization. Punctuation has been provided where necessary for readability. Editorial additions are enclosed in brackets; deletions are indicated by ellipses. Edward's archaic or unusual usages such as "staid" for "stayed," "thot" for "thought," and an "s" for a "z" generally have been preserved.

In the spring of 1855 Edward, having lived in Lawrence for seven or eight months, returned to Massachusetts for a visit. While in Lawrence he had taught the town's first school, worked in Charles Stearns's boardinghouse, invested in some city lots, and staked off a quarter-section land claim south of town. On his return trip to Kansas in July he agreed to conduct a group of settlers' families to their new homes.

Steamer Buckeye State, Lake Erie
Thursday, July 26, [1855]
Dear Friends . . .

We are here. Our party which numbers just 20 including myself started in due time Tues P.M.

They are all women and children except two, who are a young gentleman and young lady. The gentleman (?) being myself of course and the lady being a Miss Davis from Pawtucket who I suppose would not much care to be called one of the children. . . . We left Boston at half past one. . . . Arrived at Albany about ten in the evening and left there by the N.Y. Central R. R. about eleven. Rode all night and at half past ten the next morning, twenty one hours from Boston, found us at Buffalo, 500 miles being 25 miles an hour leaving out the hour that was stopped at Albany. . . . We took dinner and supper at the Rail Road Hotel, Buffalo. I saw all our baggage safe on board . . . and procured three State rooms for the party and slept in the Cabin myself. We had got nicely settled in a berth etc. last night when there came up a tremendous storm of wind thunder and rain, which gave us a

start out of our sleep but it was soon over and this morning we are out of sight of land and all in good spirits. . . .

I remain with respects to all readers.

Edward P. Fitch

3 O clock PM.

We are just entering the Detroit River and shall be at the dock soon. . . . I have got to look close after the baggage. Two of the trunks belonging to the party are now broken open, mine remaining whole yet.

Yours Edward P Fitch,
Conducting Agt Kansas Party

Steamboat Martha Jewett

Monday, July 30, 1855

Mo River, 220 miles above St Louis

Dear Friends

. . . We staid in Detroit till nine O clock Thurs eve. when we took the cars for Chicago and, riding all night we arrived there about nine AM on Fri. We staid in Chicago till nine in the evening and started for St Louis. The road [bed] from Chicago to St Louis is very bad indeed; some of the women were almost killed, they thought. The cars jumped up and down nearly a foot. We got to . . . St Louis about 2 P.M. Sat. I found our Boat The Martha Jewett going to start right off for Kansas and engaged open passages The Martha Jewett is one of the tip top Boats (wine for Dinner every day) and has some good officers. . . . If we have good luck now we shall be in Kansas City Wed. which will be a quick trip. I paid all our passages up [river] on the Boat and it amounted to \$156.00. . . . We have Col [Edwin V.] Sumner and family going to Leavenworth . . . [and] also some Southern folks who have tried to insult me and my party in every possible way.³ They will set down and stop up one passage in the aft Deck and have told some of our folks that the second class did not belong on that side.

3. Colonel Edwin V. Sumner (1797–1863), commander of troops in the Department of the West with headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, had been in the army since 1819 and was a veteran of the Mexican War and the frontier military. In Kansas history he is remembered as the officer

Miss Davis is enough for them however and gives them as good as they sent. . . . The Soldiers we have on board are all from Georgia.

But the musquitos belong in Mo.

Yours externally internally, eternally and Fraternally
Edward P Fitch

Lawrence K.T., Wed., Aug 8, 1855 5 O'clock A.M.

Dear Parents

As I wrote before; we arrived in Kansas City the first. . . . The river is still very low . . . and all three of the Boats that tried to Navigate the Kaw are stuck on sandbars—two above and one below Lawrence.⁴ I arrived here before noon on Sat. the 4th. . . . I found a great deal of alteration in the looks of things since I left here. The Hotel is up almost three stories beside the basement and makes a fine appearance. . . . There are many other good buildings now here. . . .

Thurs. was a hot day. Fri. was hotter & Sat/ was the hottest day I have seen. The thermometer stood at 105 in the shade, that is some! . . . We have a mail now three times a week. It comes Tues. Thurs. & Sat nights & goes Mon. Wed. and Fri. mornings. . . .

Your afft. Son Edward P. Fitch

Lawrence Thurs. Aug 9th '55

Dear Parents and Brother Appleton- no one else

. . . I have got into a tight place and I expect in order to get through and come out square I shall have to have some more money. First with regard to my claim. I think that perhaps I shall be able to hold it but I can't tell yet. If I do I shall have to go on to it and do

who reluctantly dispersed the Topeka legislature as ordered by President Franklin Pierce on July 4, 1856. He led an army expedition against the Cheyennes in the spring of 1857, and during the first two years of the Civil War, Major General Sumner commanded an army corps at Antietam and other major battles, during which he was wounded three times. See *The National Cyclopedia of Biography* (1891; reprint, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1967), 183.

4. Navigating the Kansas (or Kaw) River was a chancy enterprise from its beginning, especially in periods of low water. Within a few days rain seems to have solved the navigation problem temporarily. After a week of "glorious rains," the steamer *Lizzie* stopped at the local wharf on August 20 and started on for Kansas (Kansas City) the next day. See *Lawrence Free State*, August 13, 20, 1855.

some things that will cost money . . . or else give up entirely the \$225.00 that I have paid for claim & interest and begin new again. . . .

I find that Haskell took my frame off of the claim and sold it and at the same time offered to sell the claim with it to which he had no more shadow of a title than I have to the city of Boston. Next Wise got on to the claim but his house was torn down and he went off. Then Mr. Mott went on to it not knowing who it belonged to, as there was no frame on it and he had an acre of the grass turned and planted it with beans. . . .

Soon after about the Fourth of July his house was torn down and the eighth of July a Mr. Moore from Illinois went on to it. . . . [He] put up a log cabin and is now living in it with his family⁵ . . . I went to see him Tuesday. He seemed to think he had a right there but when I told him the circumstances he was a little less sure . . . I have consulted Esqr. Emery and he thinks I shall be able to hold the claim. He is going to see the man himself and see what he can be made to do.⁶

Your Edward P. Fitch

Edward's letters during the fall and winter of 1855–1856 covering a serious proslavery threat to Lawrence and other events of the first phase of the so-called "Wakarusa War" were included in the spring 1989 issue of Kansas History. We pick up the story here with mention of Sheriff Samuel Jones's raid and the Pottawatomie Massacre by John Brown and others in May 1856.

Lawrence, May 26, 1856

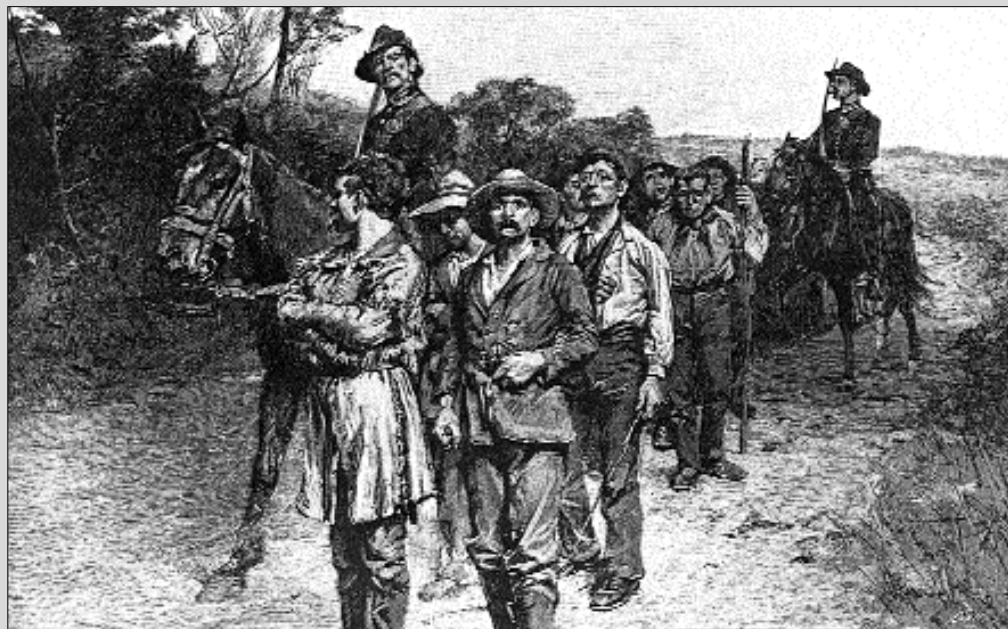
Dear Father,

. . . I wrote some time ago to you about sending me a revolver. I want you to send me a first-rate Colt re-

5. Edward's recital of the many attempts to take over his claim in the two or three months he was absent illustrate the extent of "claim jumping," which took place where no official survey had been made and no government land office was available where claims could be recorded. The "frame" to which he refers was a minimal cabin frame that claimants built to meet the requirement for "improvements" on a claim under the preemption law.

6. James S. Emery, a Lawrence lawyer, assisted Edward in solving problems concerning his city property and his land claim.

Many of Edward's letters focus on the proslavery/free-state conflict in the Lawrence area, which involved skirmishes, burnings, and murders. This sketch from an unidentified eastern publication depicts free-state prisoners being taken in 1856 to the proslavery stronghold of Leecompton.



volver six-inch barrell with the moulds and powder flask all complete. If you can get a thousand of his metallic cartridges to go with the pistol, get them. . . . I will pay you sometime when I get more money, if I am not killed. I have not dared to go on to my claim for a week for I have a bitter enemy in a Pro-Slavery man for my next neighbor. I am going out tomorrow but shall not dare to stay at my cabin without a rifle or gun at my bedside.

Last Wednesday the ruffians came into town and burnt the hotel, destroyed both printing offices and robbed the town, burnt Dr. [Charles] Robinson's house. They stole five dollars out of Mr. [Charles] Stearns house that belonged to Mr. [Martin] Stowell.

They have done all the mischief they could and now [Governor Wilson] Shannon has called out the troops to protect him for fear we should rise up and exterminate him and the Pro-Slavery party in general. The intelligence has just come in that 5 Pro-Slavery men have been killed about forty miles south of here. . . . I have written four sheets, the size of this, full, giving an account of the war. I have sent it to Appleton and he is to show it to anyone . . . that takes an interest in Kansas.⁷

Kansas has now I think reached its turning point. If the North doesn't now arouse and do more than she has done yet, Kansas will be a slave state and we

7. Unfortunately no trace of this narrative has been found.

(the Free State party) shall be wiped out. The next thing they are going to do is to bring us a paper to sign that we will obey the laws of the Bogus Legislature or leave the territory or be hung and they are going to give us sixty days to do it in⁸. . . . The Pierce administration must be broken down and we must have a Republican president or else we must dissolve the Union, anything to abolish slavery.

Yours from Kansas free, Edward P. Fitch

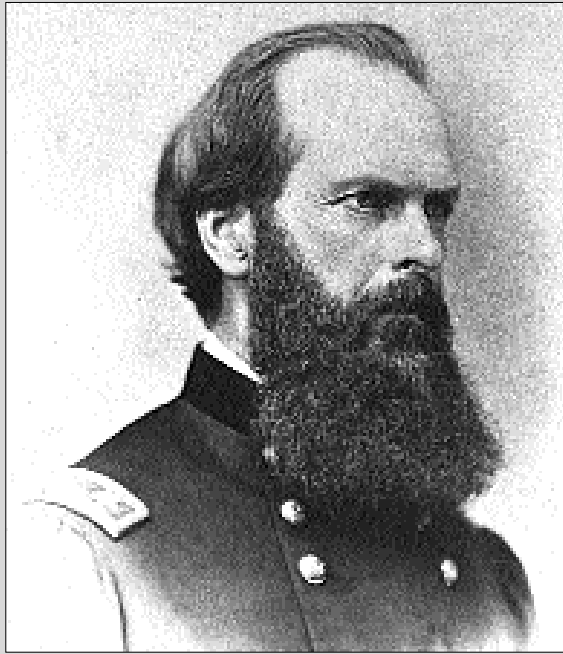
Lawrence, June 15, 1856

Dear Mother,

. . . I have not been engaged in any battles yet, because I have been planting and fencing ever since Lawrence was burned or rather the hotel, but I want some pistols badly and must have them. . . . At any rate, there are now about six hundred or more Missourians about Palmyra, about twelve miles from here, and Colonel Sumner is concentrating his forces there. We may get into a fight this week. If not, we shall in July.

. . . I am so much excited that I cannot write. Men are being found dead more or less every little while.

8. The proslavery legislature of 1855 set severe penalties for enticing, decoying, or carrying a slave of another person out of the territory, writing or printing anything to induce slaves to escape or rebel, or denying the right of persons to own slaves in the Territory. However, lawmakers failed to pass the type of "test oath" Edward feared was in the offing. See *Kansas Territory Statutes* (1855): 715–17.



As Edward described in his letter of September 21, 1856, John W. Geary, territorial governor from September 9, 1856, to March 12, 1857, was actively involved in subduing the conflict between free-state and proslavery forces.

A man was in here yesterday with whom I am acquainted, who was robbed of his horses a few miles from here and these three men . . . fired at him and he fell. Two of the men then ran away and the other came at him to beat his brains out with the butt of his musket. The man made out to get his gun away from him [the attacker] and he left. The wounded man then wandered three days without anything to eat and finally got here. He has the ball in his side yet. Such are some of the outrages perpetrated upon Free State men here every day. Rob a man and then kill him.⁹

From you[r] affectionate son, Edward P. Fitch

Lawrence, July 6, 1856

Dear Parents,

. . . That you may know how my time is filled up, I will tell you. I have to get up in the morning between four and five, take the horse, and go bring the oxen four yoke. They are turned loose on the prairie at night. Sometimes I have to ride three or four miles to get them and generally get back about breakfast . . . (which consists of johnny cake and a kind of milk gravy). We go to plowing; one to drive, one to hold,

9. This man was identified by Sara Robinson as a Mr. Bailey, and she located the attack in the vicinity of Cedar Creek near the Douglas–Johnson county line. See Sara T.L. Robinson, *Kansas: Its Interior and Exterior Life* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols and Co., 1856), 283–84.

the third man now plows out corn with the horse. . . . The fourth cradles wheat and rakes it or some such work. . . . We . . . have dinner at twelve . . . [and] some days we do not go to work again, when very hot, until three, . . . Our dinner is mostly hasty pudding and milk. So you see, we don't live very high. I don't probably eat a pound of meat in a fortnight nor half of it.¹⁰

When I go after the oxen in the morning, I ride through grass that is as high as my knees when on horseback. . . . Wednesday morning I was driving an ox and I was close behind him when he ran over a rattlesnake, who jumped at his hind leg but probably did not bite him. I had a whip, so I whipped round and got the snake to coil up and then I got off to kill him. All at once he was gone. I whipped all around, but could not find him. Not daring to go around in the grass on foot, I got on my horse again and rode him around whipping among the grass. Soon up came a snake with all vengeance and rattled away like fury. I got off and killed him, and his rattles I send in this letter. . . .

Your affectionate son, E.P. Fitch

10. Edward was working with others for his neighbor Joseph Savage, plowing, tilling corn, and harvesting wheat. His pay for each month's work was to have an acre of wheat planted for him on Savage's ground. He was afraid to plant on his own claim due to uncertainty about survey lines.

Lawrence July 19, 1856

My Dear Parents,

. . . I have had another consultation with Emery and have finished up my business except drawing on you for money to pay up. I have got my notes up and am to pay Wood fifty dollars more and give up all claim to all the [town] lots except the one on which I have built which makes that lot cost me 240\$ and Emery says it is worth 250 now. I hardly think it could be sold for that now.¹¹

Yours affec. Edward P Fitch

Lawrence, Aug 10, 1856

Sunday eve

Dear Parents,

. . . I have just been loading up all the guns that we have got about the house and we don't know what night we may be attacked. We shall keep every firearm well loaded at our bedside all the time. . . . The ruffians are now 150 strong but they are receiving reinforcements every day. Eleven went up today to join them. My neighbor Whitlock is among them & I expect nothing less than that my house will be burned if nothing worse befalls me.

Yesterday I was down on the Wakarusa to get plums and first heard of this expected foray and today I have been over to the other side of the valley. The settlers there are arming to defend themselves as well as possible. The military company of Lawrence and the Wakarusa have both gone to Osawatomie and have been gone a week so we are not able at present to rout this force. . . .

Wed. P.M. Last night a force of Free State men went down to Franklin and attacked a lot of Pro Slavery men that were there in a log cabin. They had a cannon and a lot of muskets. Our boys succeeded in dislodging them and capturing the cannon and a large number of muskets. One of our men was killed and two more quite badly wounded. Today the

11. Edward is referring to the Lawrence "city interest" that he bought from Samuel N. Wood. See "Fitch Letters I," 53, footnote 12.

troops have gone down there. Col. Lane was with them it is said. I have not seen him.¹²

Yours truly
Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Aug 25 1856

Dear Parents,

. . . In regard to my sickness I will say that I was not very sick after all being able to sit up most of the time. I might say all. I had a first rate nurse in the person of a young Lady who wrote that part of the letter which I did not, and my apartment was my own house where she lives. She took the best of care of me, read to me, and did everything to make me comfortable. Her name is Sarah Wilmarth. . . .¹³

Yesterday Capt Shombre's funeral sermon was preached. He was mortally wounded in the attack on Titus Fort a week ago Sat. and died a week ago this morning. He was buried with military honours last Tues. afternoon. . . . Mr [Ephraim] Nute gave notice that he should, next Sabbath, preach the Funeral sermon of his Brother-in-law, who was murdered on his way to Leavenworth a week ago today.¹⁴ He remarked

12. After a long ride from the north and swimming the Kansas River at Topeka, Lane led the attack by free-state forces on the proslavery stronghold near Franklin on the night of August 12. See Wendell Holmes Stephenson, "The Political Career of General James H. Lane," *Kansas Historical Publications* 3 (1930): 75-76.

13. So far as we know this was Edward's first mention to his parents of his future wife although he had known her since the previous November.

14. The case involving Nute's brother-in-law has been described by many individuals, but no two versions are quite the same, and no general agreement prevails even on the spelling of the two principals' names. Briefly, the facts appear to be as follows: (1) Reverend Ephraim Nute's brother-in-law, William Hopps/Hoppe, was killed, and possibly scalped, in or near Leavenworth the night of August 27, 1856; (2) Charles Fuget/Fugit was charged with the murder but eluded arrest; (3) Reverend Nute and his sister went to Leavenworth with two or more Lawrence men and all were held by private parties, presumably proslavery, for varying periods of time but all emerged unscathed; (4) Reverend Nute wrote many letters to friends and newspapers in the East giving particulars of the case, many of which were published. Other free-state partisans gave the event maximum publicity with not too much concern as to the accuracy of the details they reported. None of Reverend Nute's original letters are known to exist. (5) Fuget was arrested in May 1857, tried in the U.S. First District Court, Kansas Territory, and acquitted by the jury on June 17 for lack of evidence. Charles R. Denton, "The Unitarian Church and 'Kansas Territory' 1854-1861," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 30 (Winter 1964): 466-71, is the source of much of this note and provides many references; see also Michael D. Pierson, "'A War of Extermination': A Newly Uncovered Letter by Julia Louisa Lovejoy, 1856," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 16 (Summer 1993): 122-23.

that three men had, within a little more than a week, gone out of his house to their death; viz, his brother-in-law, Mr Hopps, Mr Jennison & Major [David S.] Hoyt, who was killed at Washington Creek. . . .¹⁵ Mr Jennison was sent to Kansas City after lumber and was waylaid and killed on his way back here. The particulars I do not know. We are very short of provisions, that is bread stuff, in town now. No flour to be had anywhere in the city at all. I have, or we, used the last flour last week and dont know when we can get any more. . . .

Lawrence Kansas Sept. 21, 1856

Dear Parents,

. . . On Fri night a Mr [Theodore] Adams who came from Penn. with Gov. [John] Geary came to Lawrence bringing the Gov. inaugural address and proclamation ordering all armed bodies to disperse. While he was here the news came that the Missourians [were] advancing on Franklin, intending to take that place and then advance on Lawrence. My Reg & the 5th were immediately ordered to march to Franklin to keep them back for a time. There were around 100 horsemen of them and they reported at Fish's ten miles from here that they were the advance guard of 1500 that were coming right on to Lawrence.¹⁶

Mr. Adams immediately sent word to the Gov. at the same time that we marched to Franklin. When we got there we sent our scouts down as far as the crossing of the Wakarusa where they found out that these men had gone back . . . so we came back, getting

15. The killing of Major Hoyt while he was trying to arrange for peaceful discussions between the Lawrence forces and the proslavery stronghold called Fort Saunders outraged the free-state side. See Richard Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas From the First Settlement to the Close of the Rebellion* (Lawrence, Kans.: E.F. Caldwell, 1895), 113; Stephenson, "The Political Career of General James H. Lane," 85. No corroboration of the Jennison incident or name has been found. Obviously he was not the well-known Lane associate and border-raider Charles R. Jennison who was still active many years later.

16. This was the second time a large body of armed men, many from Missouri but supplemented by proslavery Kansas settlers, had gathered near the hamlet of Franklin and threatened to destroy Lawrence. The previous threat in December 1855 was mediated by territorial governor Wilson Shannon. Once withdrawal was accepted, it took place immediately, due at least in part to the onset of a spell of bitterly cold and snowy weather. See "Fitch Letters I," 57–59.

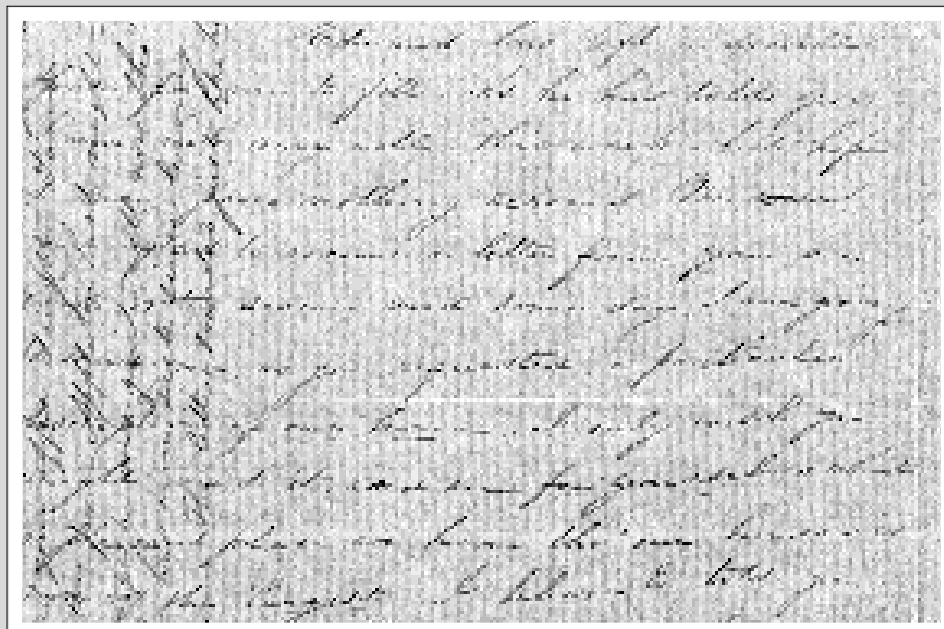
home just before daylight and just at sunrise. Gov G with 300 troops came riding into town but hearing our report they returned to Lecompton. The Gov had an interview with our officers and told us we might keep up our military organization for our own defense until he could get things straightened and then he would prevent any invasion of the Territory. Here we rested secure but at night (Sat night) an express came in from Lane saying that he wanted help and about 100 of our best fighters all armed with Sharps Rifles went out to his aid leaving about 250 men in Lawrence and these not all armed. Things stood just in this shape on Sunday when about 10 Oclock we discovered a flag flying on the top of the Blue Mound 8 miles from here toward Missouri. . . .

The flag meant this "The enemy are in sight and marching toward Lawrence." We waited anxiously the arrival of a messenger from that point. Soon Dr Still's son who lives on the mound came.¹⁷ He said this advance guard of about 100 were near Blue Jacket 8 miles from here and the main body were some four miles behind them moving this way in wagons, on horseback and some on foot. He said there could not be less than 1200 and he knew of a body of some three to five hundred just south of him who would probably join them beside the advance guard, in all something like 2000 men. He had a first rate spy glass to look through. Soon messengers began to arrive from other points where the enemy was advancing, all telling about the same story. At twelve Oclock a messenger was sent to Lecompton for the Troops or rather telling the Gov. the facts and asking for Troops.

We then began to think of preparations for defense. We had a large fort on the hill but our cannon was gone with those who went to help Lane. About 4 P.M. the advanced guard was near to Franklin and three of our men rode out to see them. Two of their

17. Abram Still was an M.D. as well as a Methodist minister and missionary. The messenger who came from Blue Mound may have been his son Andrew T. Still, later the founder of osteopathy, although Andrew doesn't mention the event in his autobiography. More likely it was one of Abram's younger sons: Thomas, who was only twenty-three, or John, who would have been only twenty. See Virginia G. Markham, *John Baldwin and His Son Milton Come to Kansas* (Baldwin City, Kans.: Baker University, 1982), 204–7.

As paper was a scarce and expensive commodity, early letters often contained cross-writing, which allowed more information to be included on one page. Edward employed this technique in a May 1857 letter to his parents.



men rode to the front. . . . We then took the two prisoners almost under the guns of the party and started toward Franklin with them when one of them fired at one of our men and knocked his hat off. He immediately turned and shot him dead. The horse ran into Franklin. The other prisoner got away. There were but 15 [of our] men in Franklin. They soon had to leave and then the enemy took possession of the town. The first thing they did was to burn the steam saw & grist mill & one or two houses.

About 20 horsemen from here went down to see what was going on. They were at about five P.M. driven in by about 4 times their number of the enemy's Cavalry. They came to within the city limits and made a stand. The enemy halted about half a mile from them. They stood so for a few moments when another body of ten enemy was seen approaching but they did not dare to come any nearer to the hill than they were (a little over a mile) for they thought we had big guns there, so the two parties backed off and went round to come up by the river out of reach of our fort. A small party, about a dozen with Sharp's Rifles, went out on foot to meet them and they with the horsemen had quite a little skirmish with them just before dark. About fifty of our men with the canon went out to see if they could put some grape into them but the enemy upon that commenced a retreat back to Franklin.

We kept scouts out to keep watch all night. I was in the saddle almost all night myself. The troops arrived here soon after dark. On Mon morning we saw [the enemy] coming up again. The troops formed into battle array and our men, too, and we were ready for them but they halted, in sight, but two miles off. The Gov. and Col. Cook [Philip St. George Cooke], commander of the troops, went down to see them and went to their camp and staid all day making & listening to speeches. Just before night the Gov. came back and said there were 2800 of the enemy but they were going home again. Some were going up by Lawrence toward Lecompton and some directly back the way that they came and in a few moments a number of them, 200, came up and camped close by the troops. Soon word came up from below that they were burning houses and committing other depredations north of Franklin but the Gov. could or would not do anything about it.¹⁸

Tues morning those Ruffians rode on toward Lecompton. They began when they got 5 miles out

18. Vigorous action by Governor John Geary backed by U.S. troops brought about an agreement and the promised withdrawal of proslavery forces. Pleasant weather, in contrast to conditions of the previous December, allowed some of them to return home by circuitous routes and presumably to engage in the depredations Edward mentions. For further details, see Shalor Winchell Eldridge, "Recollections of Early Days in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Publications* 2 (1920): 107–9; Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas*, 131–34.



In his December 17, 1856, letter, Edward refers to the "rescue of Branson," which is illustrated in this 1868 sketch. In 1856 Jacob Branson was rescued by a party of free-state men from the custody of the proslavery sheriff of Douglas County, Samuel Jones. The aftermath of this incident was of great political importance, precipitating the "Wakarusa War."

stealing horses. . . . Came to a lame man . . . took his two horses and when he remonstrated with them they shot him so that he died the next day.¹⁹ The Gov. saw him just after he was shot and rode rapidly to overtake his murderers who he said he would bring to justice but we cannot learn that he has yet. That day the [proslavery] army went back driving away with them some 150 head of cattle that they stole all around. . . . They broke into my cabin and stole all my things—blankets hatchet, hammer, etc so that I have lost all the bed clothes I had, some 25 or 30 dollars worth. . . .

One man told me today that I must write to my friends to be ready to come out here immediately after the Presidential election for that would be our only safety to have men enough here to fight all Missouri and . . . to lay up a store of provisions to stand a siege of a few weeks and then if we don't get help we must fall. God only knows what we are coming to.

Your affect son Edward

19. The lame man killed was David C. Buffum, a free-state settler from southwest of Lawrence who had been injured in an accident while on guard in one of the forts in Lawrence. See Eldridge, "Recollections of Early Days in Kansas," 118–19. Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke in his report to Leavenworth headquarters states he saw "little appearance of any depredation, but for a man shot down for refusing to deliver a horse." He did stop to take an affidavit and admits the man (Buffum) undoubtedly was mortally wounded. See "Correspondence of Governor Wilson Shannon," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1886–1888 4 (1890): 499–501.

By the fall of 1856 the proslavery/free-state conflict had moderated and Edward began thinking of other matters — getting married, securing aid for the numerous settlers left destitute by destruction of crops and homes during the "war," taking advantage of some of the presumably profitable investment opportunities in new towns and settlements, and having to live on his claim to hold it.

Mon., Sept. 29th 1856

Dear Mother,

. . . Last November . . . just about the time that I was finishing my house in the city a Mr. Wilmarth arrived here from Providence, R I. . . . He came to see me about my house but although I liked his appearance much I could not just then let him have my house but he moved into Mr Stearns house. . . . I found his family to consist of himself (Mr. W) about 55 years old, his wife about 34, a daughter 22 and a son 13 but much larger of his age than [my brother] Calvin. With the family, I was much pleased especially as I found all but George to be singers and not only that but good singers and very fond of singing. Mr [Franklin A.] Muzzy was with me considerable at that time and he is a very good tenor singer. My singing powers you know are not extra but I am fond of singing. After I first went there we, that is Muzzy & I, used to go down there [to

the Wilmarths] and sing about two evenings in a week besides singing some on Sunday. . . . I was at first more than commonly interested in Miss W or rather Sarah as I chose to call her and took her with me to one or two social parties that we had here. She also seemed to like my company and now I know it to be a fact for within a few weeks she showed me this passage written in her journal last Dec just five weeks after she first saw me. She writes "Five weeks ago tonight I well remember the acquaintance then formed will, I feel, influence my entire life much. How, I cannot imagine." And this was no idle talk for she is a girl of high, very high, moral intellectual endowments and faculties [*sic*], but the real outgoings of her heart. . . . [I]n writing to . . . a cousin of hers she mentioned my name and incidentally said I was from Hopkinton, Mass. In a letter . . . her cousin says "About Mr. Fitch, I am glad you have made his acquaintance for Grandmother says she is acquainted with him and he is a fine young man. His mother was old Priest Howe's daughter and his great grandfather was the second minister of Hopkinton, so you see he is of ministerial descent. He has received an excellent education and is a very intelligent young man!" She said polite, also, but I leave that out for fear you would not believe it. . . . [T]oday in talking with Mr. W. he said that last winter he found that folks he used to board with in the East knew my parents and he found that I came of a good stock and so he cultivated my acquaintance and I have very much benefitted by his larger experience I think.

Mr. W. opened a bookstore and moved his family into a part of the same building sometime in Dec or the first part of Jan. I was in the store almost every day and sung about as often as before perhaps not quite as often on account of the cold. About the middle of Feb. Mrs W was taken sick— so sick that she was not able to sit up, yet she wishes us to sing just as before and whenever she felt able she used to join us. . . . She sunk gradually until the 21st of April when she left this world of sorrow for a better one as we fondly trust. . . . After her death I was still intimate with the rest until I went to my claim to live in May

from which time I did not see them so much. About the middle of June Mr W with Sarah & George moved into my house [in Lawrence]. I was gone so much that I saw Sarah but about once a week. The thought whether I loved her enough to try to make her my wife was often on my mind. I had never said a word to her on this subject and from some appearances I thought perhaps her feelings were not enlisted on me as I supposed but a talk or two showed me, although she did not say so, that she was at least interested in me and after that week that I was sick and she took care of me, we came to such an understanding that, that gold ring that I had last year when I was at home was transferred from my hand to hers. . . . Mr W wishes to have George go East in order to have the advantage of a school that cannot be had here and as he is too young to send alone. . . . he thought Sarah would have to go with him and she could stay until spring and then come back. She does not want to go unless I can go too. . . . Do you say you would know whether she is a Christian? She is, I truly think not only a professor but a possessor of true religion. She has been a member of a Congregational Church for six years about. She is worthy of a good husband. Whether I shall make her such a one remains to be seen. I know this much we love each other dearly and we shall try to make each other happy. . . .

Your ever affectionate Son, Edward

Lawrence Oct 12th 1856

Dear Parents

I have recd no letter from you since I wrote last but hope to receive by tomorrow's mail an answer to my first letter in which I spoke of coming East this fall. I dont expect to come however for Sarah has concluded not to go but to send George under charge of a Mr Farren who is going to New Haven. . . .

Things are peaceable here now. (How long they will remain so I cant tell.) We have a Com[pany] of Soldiers camped here all the time, foot soldiers they are and not Cavalry. . . . I tremble for the result of the Election in Penn this week. If the Reps are successful,

I am afraid they will relax their efforts and the Democrats will redouble theirs and they will yet carry the state for Buchanan.²⁰ What we shall do if he should be elected I dont know, but we must fight any how. Is there a Buchanan man in Hopkinton? If there is tell him for me that if he votes for Buchanan, some of the blood shed in Kansas will be found at his door.
Your aff son Edward

Lawrence Kansas Oct 16, 1856
Dear Parents

If this letter ever gladdens your eyes it will be brought probably by George O. Wilmarth, a young man of my acquaintance in Kansas who being at the East and being about the age of Elijah & Calvin I thought could not spend a week more pleasantly any where perhaps than at Hopkinton with my friends. . . .

He has with him for you, Mother—a Daguerreotype of a Soldier in the Kansas wars of 1855 & 6 which I hope is natural enough to have you know who it is meant for. You will see I had the Sharpes rifle and revolver sent from Hopkinton and another revolver. Those, with my Cartridge box containing some fifty rounds of ammunition, were my load generally on the march. Sometimes a blanket was added. Tell Mr Webster that it is the picture of a Sabbath School Teacher in Kansas.²¹

The other, which is also for you, is the exact likeness of one who is dearer to me than anyone else on Earth. I think it to be a most excellent picture and it is so natural that I think that you would know her if you should meet her in the street. I also send by him an Indian flute which you can put among your curiosities. I got it of a young Delaware Indian, son of Sicoxie, one of the chiefs of that nation. Their land is across the

20. The election of 1856 was close. As Edward feared, James Buchanan won Pennsylvania, and in all he captured 174 of the 296 electoral votes. However, he won only a minority of the popular vote as John C. Fremont, the Republican, and Millard Fillmore, the American Party (Know-Nothing) candidate, together had over 350,000 more votes than did Buchanan.

21. Reverend John G. Webster was the minister of the Congregational church the Fitches attended in Hopkinton, Massachusetts.

river from Lawrence. . . . He [George] was in the war, stood guard considerably with his Father and others. He tried hard enough to be at the Battle of Titus Fort but was a little too late to see the fun. He can tell you all the minute particulars about the war. . . .

Yours as ever Edward

Lawrence Nov 17th 1856
Dear Parents,

. . . . The bbls [barrels] that you were so kind as to send me have, three of them, come to hand, No. 1, 2 & 3. . . . I have distributed quite a lot of clothing where I think it will do some good.²²

We are still in doubt as to the result of the Pres. Elec. but most now think that Buch [James Buchanan] & Breck [John C. Breckinridge] have gone in. We are sanguine however of making Kansas a Free State at any rate. You cant begin to have any idea of the interest we take on the returns as the reports come in each day. One day we are sure Fremont is chosen; then we feel well. The next day we find that the Old Buch's chances are the best and by the next day every body says the election has surely gone into the House [of Representatives].

Yours in haste.
Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Kansas Nov 30th 1856
Dear Parents

. . . . I have got those two bbls [barrels] of clothing that were last sent from Hopkinton directed to Mr. Blood and I have given away many of the things. So I now have recd six bbls in all and it has been no small task to see to it all and I have had to pay the Freight on them from Leavenworth to here. . . .

22. The reference to clothing donations in this and the next letter reflect Edward's participation in efforts to help settlers who had lost crops and personal belongings during the period of armed conflict. His parents and others in Hopkinton, his home town, sent barrels of used but serviceable clothing to Edward for distribution. Cash for other necessities also was received in small amounts from relatives and friends. *See also* Edward's letter of January 11, 1857.

In 1855 Edward became acquainted with Otis Wilmarth, who opened a book and stationery store in Lawrence in early 1856. In this example Edward is using Wilmarth stationery to address a letter to his father. In 1857 Edward married Wilmarth's daughter, Sarah.



Most of our Kansas men who have been at the East Electioneering for [John C.] Fremont have come back and all seem to feel encouraged at the prospect for Freedom. I have heard the statement within a few days that Buchanan had declared in favor of free Kansas but did not give much credit to such statements as Mr Buch cant make it a Slave State if the men of the Free States do their duty and send us help enough money, clothes, & men. . . .

Your aff Son
Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Dec 12th 1856

Dear Parents

. . . . I have settled up my claim matter in this way. I have agreed to divide with Kitchenman thus giving me a clear right to 80 acres and that I consider now better than the chance that I stood for the whole, so that now I probably shall not have but 80 acres but if I had known as much about the Preemption law six months ago as I know now I might just as well have had 160. I may possibly get it now but I hardly expect to. I enclose a map of the claims around here with some remarks. . . .²³

23. After the official survey set true boundary lines Edward was able to hold only half of his original 160 acres, the north half of the southwest quarter of section 12, township 13 south, range 19 east.

I have bought some flour . . . now because it is low and I know of many who need the article and I intend to give them some. I wish that I had two hundred dollars to help the poor with this winter. . . .

your aff Son Edward

Lawrence, Kansas Dec 17/1856

To Those Gentlemen and Ladies who so generously responded to the appeal for help, from the suffering poor in Kansas.

. . . As you were promised that if your donations ever came into my hands you would be advised of their disposal, I feel it my duty to render to you an account of my stewardship. . . . I have tried to make every article tell for the comfort of someone who, without it, might have suffered, and I trust I shall have succeeded so well, that if it is ever necessary for you to repeat the effort, you will be encouraged to do so by my report of benefit that your charities have been this time.

I have kept a Record of account of what had been given and who has rec'd the different articles and . . . shall try and give some account of some of the families that I have helped most. . . .²⁴

24. In all Fitch provided details concerning fifteen families or individuals to whom he had distributed clothing, of which only two are mentioned here. He frequently expressed his opinion that the official relief endeavors of the New England Emigrant Aid Company were inefficient and even tainted with some fraud.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

CITY OF QUINDARO.

AN ACT Incorporating the City of Quindaro.

As it created by the Governor and Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Kansas:

TITLE I.

Of the Boundaries of the City of Quindaro.

City of Quindaro incorporated.

SECTION 1. The district in the county of Leavenworth, contained within the boundaries hereinafter described, shall be a city by the name of Quindaro, and the citizens of Kansas from time to time, inhabitants within the said boundaries, shall be a corporation by the name of the City of Quindaro.

Boundaries.

SEC. 2. The boundaries of the city of Quindaro shall be as follows, to wit: Commencing at the south-west corner of the south-east quarter of section thirty-six, thence east two and one-

When Edward became interested in property investments, he deliberated between the towns of Quindaro and Wyandotte. He eventually selected the former and stated in his February 27, 1857, letter, "I am convinced that Quindaro is going to be a place. I have therefore invested there." Although Quindaro presented bright prospects in 1857, the boom began to decline by 1858, and the town did not prosper.

Mr Mears was another of those concerned in the rescue of Branson for which crime he, like Mr Jones, must suffer.²⁵ The Sheriff harassed him all last winter, and all the fore part of summer, so that he could not get his crops in, but has never been able to catch him yet. . . . I gave him pants & a coat, also a dress for his wife, sent by Mrs. Perry, and some clothes for his children, of which he has three, all small.

Mr. Sam Reynolds came from New York to Kansas a little more than a year since. He has had a hard time with sickness and the war. He has always been on hand to fight when needed. He has a family of three children and last winter he had no sugar nor flour all winter but lived on corn bread and molasses & coffee. I gave him a coat sent by Mr Baker and some smaller articles, some boots or shoes for all three of his children. . . .

25. Jacob Branson was "rescued" from the custody of proslavery sheriff Samuel Jones by a threat of force from a group of free staters. This incident was said to have set off the "Wakarusa War." Jones never lived down having given up his prisoner so easily and made trouble for all those identified as being among the rescuers. Samuel N. Wood, one of the leaders, said Mears was there but another major participant, Charles Dickson, claimed that Mearis, as he spelled the name, was not a rescuer but took part in some of the night's events. Both names probably refer to William Mearis, a very early settler in the Blanton Bridge neighborhood where the rescue occurred.

Paul Jones, a blacksmith and experienced frontiersman, was a member of the rescue party and was imprisoned at LeCompton under conditions that were said to have ruined his health. See Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas*, 46-56; Charles H. Dickson, "The True History of the Branson Rescue," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1913-1914 13 (1914): 285, 294-95.

In conclusion let me express for all those who have benefitted by your liberality (among whom was myself for I have two coats and a vest that were sent, one by Artemus Johnson) our heartfelt thanks and our prayers that your charities be returned in blessing on your heads fourfold for "They that give unto the Poor, lend unto the Lord."

Edward P. Fitch

Lawrence January 11 1857

Dear Parents

I don't suppose that you can form any adequate idea of the suffering that is experienced here during this cold weather but to help you form an idea I want to just have you compare the modes of building here with that of the East. There you board your houses over first and then clapboard them over that. Here . . . shakes, which are nothing more or less than clapboards, . . . [are] nailed on to the posts fitting them as close as possible but it is impossible to fit them so but what the wind will have free passage through. . . . Then the roof is often covered with shakes too and they will let the rain in all the time that it rains. . . .

A week ago today I was told of a family that were sick and I was asked to go and see them. I went and found the man sick abed where he had been for three weeks and . . . his wife and six children were in one

room with him. They had nothing to eat in the house except a little flour and sugar. She had all the clothes she had on . . . and they had no wood, tho it was cold, except a few sticks.

I helped them to wood for that night and on Mon, the next day, I . . . gave them three dollars and a half to pay for a load of wood that they had brought and got them six dollars & a half in provisions and groceries. . . .

I went there again today and found the man much better and I guess he will get along now. I gave the woman a dress and several articles of clothes for the children. They were very thankful. . . . All the trouble with me is that I dont have money to supply the wants of those that I find destitute. . . .

It has been a terrible rough day today. The snow has blowed terribly we have only been out enough to fodder the cattle. . . .

Yours Edward P Fitch

Sun Jan 18

Last night was the coldest night of the season. This morning the thermometer stood at 26 deg below 0 We don't have any outside coats in this country. I came very near freezing my feet last night. Edward

Dear Father Lawrence Jan 19 1857

. . . . Now about that Quindaro Stock. When I wrote about that it was from the fact that about that time the stock was very high having gone up from 150. to five hundred dollars. . . . Quindaro is on the Missouri River 7 miles above Kansas city and immediately opposite to Parkville Mo. It has come up very suddenly and shares are now selling at 5 & 700 dollars. The title to the land comes from the Wyandotte Indians but the title is not yet perfect. . . . I think that it will go down sometime as rapidly as it has come up. If I had the money I should invest I think in Wyandotte City which is three miles above Kansas City Mo and directly at the mouth of the Kansas river. It has a good location for having the trade of the Territory. . . . The

Trade must go to the river somewhere and either Wyandotte or Quindaro must be the place and in all respects except the mere landing place, I think W. has the advantage of Q. The town there contains about 640 acres and is divided into shares 10 lots each and will be ready to open the sale of shares in a short time, three weeks at least, perhaps less. . . . In all probability there will be two or three steamboats plying on the Kansas river between this place and those places next season. I should like if the shares open as low as 300. to get two shares then and sell one when it will bring enough to pay for both. . . . I don't think that shares there will rise as rapidly as they did at Quindaro but they will be more sure. . . .

But beside all this chance for investing in Wyandotte there is a good chance to invest in Lots in this city now and make 50 per cent on the money invested in three months. I have got two lots now within a short time that I can make a little on but they are cheap lots and I shall not make much. . . . Another way to invest money here is to buy Delaware Trust Lands. That is a sure thing, gives you the title direct from Government and they cant help rising in value. . . . Then there is another good chance for a paying speculation that I know of. There are four new towns just laid out and the Trustees have agreed to sell some shares at 50. per share. I can get a share in all four for 100.\$ It will be secure property but will not rise very fast probably would pay 20 per cent. There is a city called Palmyra half way and directly between here and Osawatomie that is a good place to invest and sure but will not pay so fast as Wyandotte. These are all sure; my experience has taught me to look for sure titles.

Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Jan 21st 1857

Dear Mother

It is now ten O'clock and I have just been out with Sarah who is to watch with Mrs. Ladd tonight and have now sat down to answer your letter of January 4th. I gave that coat of F. Harrington to a Welsh Congl [Congregational] minister by name of Lewis and with

this I send the letter that he wrote to you. . . .²⁶ The Lewis house was burned the same night Judge [John H.] Wakefield's was. I was up there with our regiment at the time or rather a few hours before it was burnt and also a few hours after. . . . I bought a lot at auction tonight and gave 88.\$ for it. The circumstances are these. Mr Wilmarth owns the lot 111 N. H St . . . and I wanted to get one that joined Mr Wilmarths. . . . The lot is easily worth 100. and by spring will be worth probably double what I paid. . . . It takes every cent of money that I have got and some that I have not got to pay for this but I have worked one day and shall work some more on the ice where I got 1.75 per day so I can earn a little spending money.

. . . You ask how long before you can say you have a daughter; probably the last part of April will be as soon as that event will happen. I am not entirely ready to be married yet and I don't think it is best to be in any hurry about it. . . .

Your affectionate son Edward

streets. After they had got through some of the sellers who were mad as they could be, let some of the drinking men have a team and they went down to Franklin and brought up about half a bbl of whiskey which they passed around the streets and let everyone drink (that wanted to). Such a hideous, yelling, hooting & 'sick' you never did see. It seemed as tho all the fiends from the bottomless pit were let loose for a time but just about night they had all got dead drunk. I never saw and hope never to see again such a sight as I saw then. Boys from 10 to 15 years old so drunk that they could not stand alone but tumbling down on the street and lying there until some of their friends took them home and put them to bed. . . . Loud threats were made that all the houses in which those ladies lived who were engaged in spilling the liquor should be burnt before the next morning and that the Herald of Freedom Office should be torn down. But the next morning found them all standing and safe. . . .²⁷

Edward

[no greeting] [February 1857]

On Sat the 24th day of Jan 1857, the women of the city of Lawrence Kansas met together for the purpose of devising some means to put a stop to some of the drunkenness that prevailed here. They thought that the best way would be to spill all the liquor that they could find in town. They first visited a liquor shop kept by a Mr. Rowley, where they found quite a lot of Whiskey and other Liquor, which they spilled on the floor. . . . Then they went to a Bakery kept by a Mr. Fry and found a lot of ale which they spilt. . . . The ladies visited in succession some six places where intoxicating drinks were kept and spilled all that they could find. After they had got almost through, one of the sellers said that they had not found his liquor and they . . . searched his place and under a bed found five bbls of whiskey hid away nicely. This they very soon made to weep tears of firewater out into the

Lawrence Feb 27 1857

Dear Mother

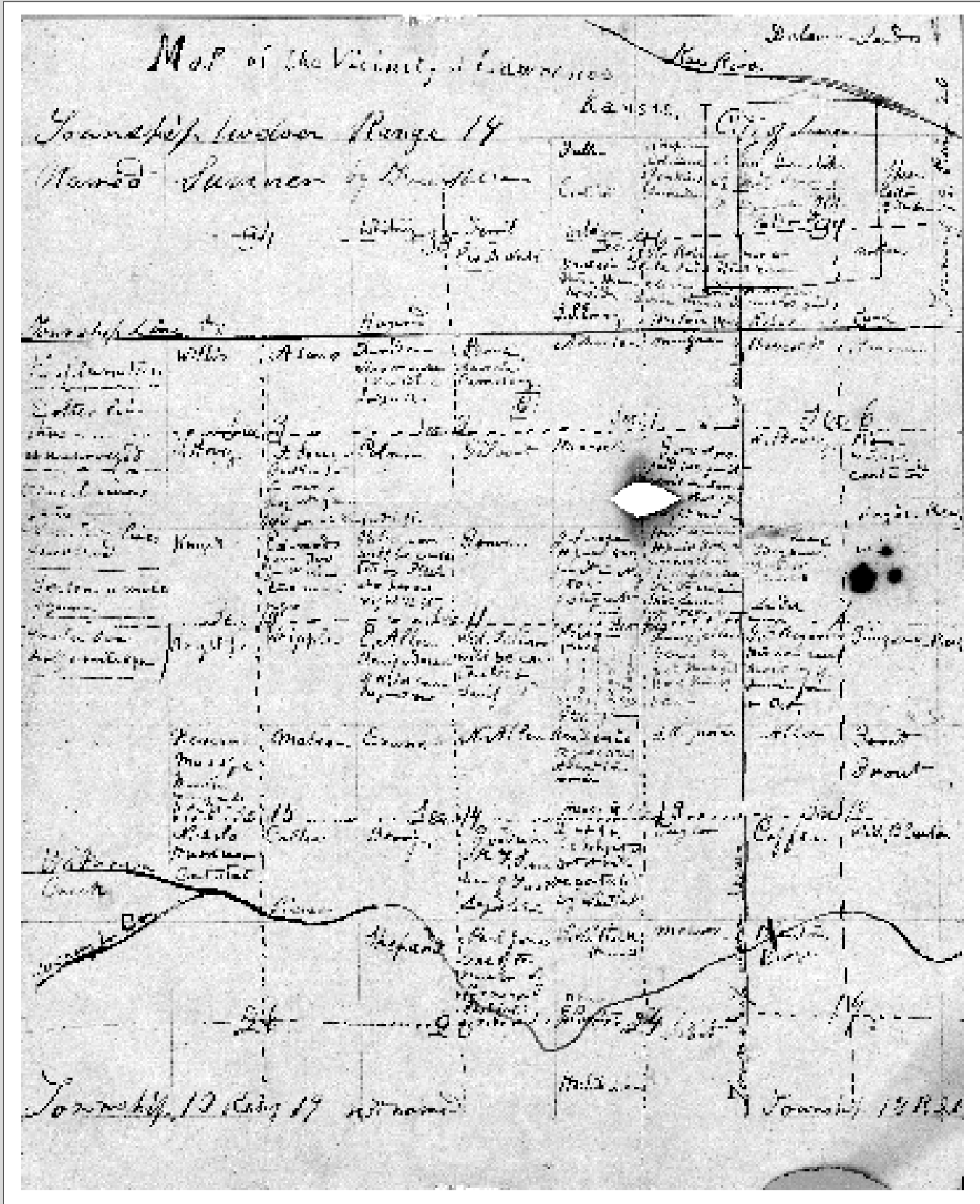
. . . You speak of having some [property] in Lawrence and some in one other town. I have some in Lawrence and shall probably keep a little here and I have some property in four other towns beside Quindaro. . . .

I started from here Monday morning for Quindaro, rode pretty fast, arrived at the Delaware Baptist Mission at half past two. There were twelve of us. Gov Robinson, Mr Grovenor, Mr Hunt, Whitney and Attorney Emery, five of us, stopped at the Mission over night.²⁸ The rest went through, I should have

27. The *Herald of Freedom* published a long story on this event similar to Edward's account but lacking some details such as the spectacle of boys too drunk to walk. The Lawrence Temperance Association on January 26 passed a resolution of thanks to the ladies for performing a great public service which, if needed, should be repeated. See *Herald of Freedom*, January 31, February 3, 1857.

28. Probably most of this party, like Edward, were visiting Quindaro to evaluate its prospects as an investment or speculation. Charles Robinson was a major investor in Quindaro, in part because the free-state leaders wanted to encourage the development of a free-state port on the Mis-

26. The letter written by Reverend George Lewis was published in "Fitch Letters I," 68-69.



In late 1856 Edward sketched a map of the Lawrence area, showing his claim and surrounding properties south of town. The Fitch claim is in the upper left of the lower right quarter of the map and bears the legal description southwest quarter of section 12, township 13 south, range 19 east.

gone through but my horse gave out and could not stand it. The next day my horse could not go so I walked to Q and got there about two O'clock. That night a Boat came up there and left some passengers. We were pretty full before but like an Omnibus were not quite full and made room for all. The next day I walked back to the mission and yesterday rode to Lawrence again. . . . If I live on my claim this summer I shall need a horse for I shall have all my water to draw more than half a mile. . . .

From your ever aff Son
Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Kansas Feb 27 '57

Dear Father

I arrived back at Lawrence last night from Quindaro after a absence of four days. After looking the subject over I am convinced that Quindaro is going to be a place. I have therefore invested there.²⁹ I think now that I should rather have property there than in any other place in Kansas just now. I should rather have it in Lawrence only there is a flaw in the title and we dont yet know whether we have got any title or not. If we had a sure title here, property would immediately be worth double what it is now. . . .

The chief reasons why it [Quindaro] is better than Wyandotte are it is higher, better landing and they can have a ferry which they cannot have at Wyandotte and Wyandotte is a Whiskey town.

souri River, but also as a private investor. He was treasurer of the town company, and Governor Robinson Avenue was the name of a major street. The other named members of the party most likely were Gurdon Grovenor, Lawrence merchant; James S. Emery, Edward's attorney; Morris Hunt, a lawyer prominent in the free-state "Topeka government"; and T.L. Whitney, proprietor of the Whitney House in Lawrence. See Don W. Wilson, *Governor Charles Robinson of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975), 55–59.

29. Edward vacillated for some time trying to decide whether to invest in Quindaro or Wyandotte. Quindaro probably was the wrong choice even though one commentator claims that "during 1857 Quindaro had the brightest prospects of any town on the river" and business lots on Kansas Avenue selling for \$500 to \$1250 "were considered dirt cheap." Quindaro's boom began to tail off in 1858 and eventually its remains were termed the "Pompeii of Kansas" while Wyandotte prospered and became a nucleus of Kansas City, Kansas. See Alan W. Farley, "Annals of Quindaro: A Kansas Ghost Town," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1956): 311–16; *Kansas City Times*, July 16, 1987.

. . . Gov R says there will be some \$50000. invested there [in Quindaro] this year beside what the Company are going to invest. They have got the largest Hotel, except one, in Kansas almost done and have a large number of men at work grading the streets and they are putting up the steam mill, two or three large ware houses and other buildings. . . . I found a man who was in want of money now and bought his share and Simpson told me that the three first lots of that share as it is now drawn are worth now \$1000.00 which is more than the whole cost to me. . . .

I have looked the matter over and dont see how I can lose by the operation of this stock.

Edward P. Fitch

Lawrence Feb 28th 1857

Dear Father

. . . And if you could sell your place for what it is worth and Mother is willing to come I dont know but the best thing you can do is to come. For instance if you can get 6000. for the farm you, I believe, could put that 6000 into property here that would double in three years at the farthest. . . .³⁰

In regard to the money that Mr Fitch pays you and I invest, you can tell him that the property that I have put it in is sure I think and will pay at any rate. . . .

I bought a horse today and gave 125.00 cash. It is a very good animal from all accounts or any way she is a splendid saddle horse easy gentle and smart. . . . Kitchenman told me today that my claim was going to be jumped if I did not go onto it immediately and I am going on Monday.

Yours truly
Edward P. Fitch

30. For several months in 1857 Edward urged his parents to sell their Massachusetts property, even if at some loss, and move to Kansas. But he received little response. Another optimistic Kansas settler, Daniel R. Anthony of Leavenworth, only a few months later advised his father in New York state to come to Kansas if he could sell his property there for two-thirds of its value. See Edgar Langsdorf and R.W. Richmond, eds., "Letters of Daniel R. Anthony, 1857–1862, Part Two, 1858–1861," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 24 (Summer 1958): 202.

March 29 [18]57

Dear Parents

. . . I am building a house on my claim and plowing getting ready to plant. We are going to plant some next week, or this rather, probably earlier than you will plant in Mass.

. . . You speak of not depending too much on Gov R. [Robinson's] statements about Quindaro etc. I don't depend much on any body's but take all together and look at all sides. . . .

I have no more time to write. Mr Webster sent a letter in which he says he supposes I have given up this being anything but a slave state. You can tell him that we have no more idea that Kansas will be a Slave state than that Mass. will be.

Yours Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Apr 13th 1857

Dear Mother

. . . . And I think that I shall not enter much more into speculation in city property for I am now as deep as I can wade without drowning. And I am sure I don't

want to draw Father down any more than he is. I wish he and you would come out here and live. It is just the best country under the sun. . . .

Your aff. son

Edward

Dear Father [April 20,1857]

If Mr Fitch of Boston has got any more money that he wants invested or any body else, or if you have got any that you want put where it will pay, I want you to send [it] on to me by the first of June and I will use it to buy some of the Trust lands that will be sold on the twenty fifth of June or there abouts. . . . Yesterday was my wedding day so I cannot write any more.

Edward.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Part two, the conclusion of "From Border War to Civil War: More Letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch, 1855-1863," will appear in the summer 1997 issue of Kansas History.*

