

# FROM BORDER WAR



# TO CIVIL WAR

# More Letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch, 1855–1863

## Part Two

*edited by John M. Peterson*



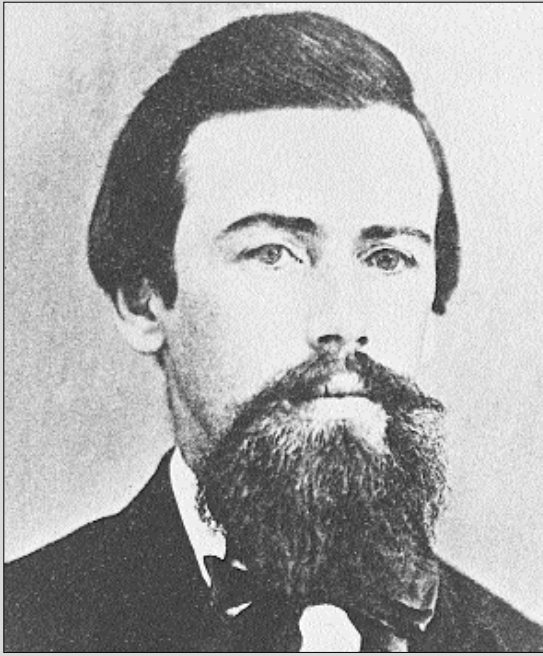
*Edward Fitch made Lawrence, Kansas, his home from 1854 until his death in 1863. This early 1860s view of Lawrence is taken from Mount Oread looking southeast.*

**T**he last letter in part one of the Edward and Sarah Fitch letters was written the day after Sarah and Edward's marriage in Lawrence on April 19, 1857. Edward had come to Kansas Territory from his home on a farm in Massachusetts late in 1854. As a strong opponent of slavery he wanted to help bring Kansas into the Union as a free state, and he also hoped to acquire a good farm at a modest price, something he had little chance of doing in his home state. Sarah came to Lawrence with her father, stepmother, and stepbrother from Rhode Island late in 1855. Her father, Otis Wilmarth, opened a store selling books and paper products, which proved quite successful. Edward, during his first two years in Lawrence, worked as a schoolteacher, store clerk, and at other jobs, served in the free-state volunteer defense forces, and claimed land just south of the city. Shortly before his marriage he moved to a small cabin on his claim to hold it. After the wedding Sarah and Edward set up housekeeping there. Edward tried to make a living by farming his land and working for neighbors and also continued to invest in a small way in the promotion of new towns in the region.

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John M. Peterson is an alumnus of the University of Kansas and since his retirement from budget work for the U.S. government in the Washington, D.C., area, he has devoted much of his time to Kansas history and archeology. Part one of "From Border War to Civil War" appears in the spring 1997 issue of *Kansas History*.

The full text of the letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch will be published by the Watkins Community Museum of History, Lawrence, Kansas, and will be available July 1, 1997. With footnotes, illustrations, and a subject index, this publication will contain more than three hundred pages and will include the Fitch letters published in *Kansas History* in 1989 and 1997, as well as many others.



*In 1857 Edward P. Fitch married Lawrence resident Sarah Wilmarth. The couple kept a regular correspondence with Edward's family in Massachusetts informing them about life in Kansas during the territorial period and early years of statehood.*

'HOME' near Lawrence K T May 23 1857  
Dear Parents

'Firstly' . . . my wife is sick, . . . threatened with a billious fever I think. . . . I am going to see the doctor about it this P.M. I believe this is the first time I have written to you since I was married. Well the eventful [April] 19th has passed and I am a Married Man!!! Wonderful, ant it? . . . .

I suppose that George Wilmarth has not been to Hopkinton yet unless he is there now but he will be there soon I expect and . . . . I want you to see if he can bring Ed Whittemore's brass horn, "B flat Barritone Tuba" or rather "Sax Horn". Whittemore said he would send it to me if he had a chance . . . . I want it because I now belong to a "Brass Band." We played in front of the Morrow House last evening and are going to town to play at a Concert this evening. I now beat the Bass Drum but should blow a Horn if I had one.<sup>1</sup>

And there is one thing more important than all the rest and that is if George W. has not been vaccinated when he comes there I want you to see to having it done immediately on his arrival there and have him stay until it gets through being sore and the effects are entirely gone. The small pox is quite preva-

1. Edward joined the Lawrence band early in 1857 and remained a member for several years. Otis Wilmarth, Muzzy, and the Savage brothers were fellow members. Whether he obtained the brass horn was never mentioned. See Edward Bumgardner, "The First Kansas Band," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 5 (August 1936): 278-81.

lent here now and on the Missouri River too and he would be exposed to it coming up the river and it might be too late to be vaccinated when he arrives here . . . .<sup>2</sup>

I was vaccinated yesterday and I shall not let my wife go to town again until she, too, for it is very dangerous so many have got it here. . . .Yours in haste,  
Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Kansas August 9 [18]57  
Dear Parents,

. . . . I take the Lawrence Republican which is by far the best paper in the Territory. We had a State Election last Mon and voted on the Ratification of the Topeka Constitution. The Constitution got more votes in this district and Quindaro, Wyandotte and Leavenworth than were polled for Delegates to the Lecompton Const. Convention in the whole territory. That looks almost like a Free State Majority . . . .<sup>3</sup>

2. Edward's urgent plea for a smallpox vaccination for George suggests a serious outbreak of the disease in the Lawrence area, but a search of existing Lawrence and Topeka newspapers reveals no account of an epidemic. The only mention of the disease is a quote from an out-of-state newspaper saying smallpox had broken out in Lawrence and had visited the family of the editor of the *Herald of Freedom*. Editor George W. Brown's comment made fun of the story saying that the out-of-state editor should watch out or he might take the infection. See *Herald of Freedom*, May 27, 1857.

3. The two elections to which Edward refers are the election of delegates to the Lecompton Constitutional Convention on June 15 and a referendum resubmitting the constitution written by the free-state "Topeka

Monday 17th  
My Dear Mother

Edward has left this page for me to finish. He is so busy now that he hardly finds time to write a word. He & my brother are now out busily at work 'breaking' up the prairie just west of the house. I sometimes fear his friends will think that some way or other, I am accountable for his negligence in writing since he was married—but it is not so. I believe he has been too busy to find spare time this summer . . . . Please write as often as you can find time . . . & accept much love from your Daughter

Lawrence Aug 23, 1857

Dear Parents

. . . There seems to be one item of news (not good) that I have failed to communicate and that is the Death of Mrs Savage. She died the 17 day of June, just ten years from the day she was married. . . . She was one of the best women that I ever knew and we miss her very much. Mr S. [Joseph Savage] feels very sad indeed. If you would write him a note of sympathy I think he would feel grateful. . . . I think you are brave to talk of wanting a place in the shed for your stove when you have a whole house full of rooms . . . I should be rich if I had two rooms. All the place we have is one room 12 x 16 ft. We have moved the table out of doors once or twice to eat but as there is not a tree within two miles it is not very pleasant. . . .

In regard to Gen. Pomeroy, he has lost the confidence of many of the people here. He lost it from the time when on the 21st of May he told Sheriff Jones where the Cannon was and not content with that he went and hauled it out of its place of concealment with his own hands.<sup>4</sup>

Government" in 1855 to the approval of Kansas voters on August 3, 1857. Freestaters generally ignored the first election and only twenty-two hundred votes were cast. The referendum on the Topeka Constitution was ignored by proslavery forces resulting in an approval margin of 7,257 to 34. Comparing total votes in the June election with that in only four districts in the August referendum, Edward saw what he hoped was the beginning of free-state dominance. See William F. Zornow, *Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1857), 75–77; Kenneth S. Davis, *Kansas: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1976), 69; *Lawrence Republican*, May 30, August 6, 1857.

4. Shalor Eldridge, who was present, disagreed with Edward's criticism of Pomeroy's actions during the "sack of Lawrence" contending that

About the 20,000 I cant tell. I have heard from pretty good authority that he has been unable to account for some of the funds placed in his hands. . . . Your aff Son Edward

Aug 24th Monday P.M

Dear Mother

As usual, Edward has left his letter for me to finish. . . . As E. has said we have but one room, with the chamber over it of the same size—Large enough for two beds—with the sundry trunks, boxes, chests,—etc. in which we dispose our clothing, bedding, etc.—closets & bureaus are things yet to be—When I look back sometimes to the days at the East, & think how I used sometimes to complain of "want of room"—that I then almost had a palace . . . . Please write often. Love to all.

From your aff. daughter Sarah

Lawrence Oct 4th 1857

Dear Father

You are apprised by the papers ere this that the Free State men of Kansas have agreed to vote at the Territorial Election tomorrow. I think as I always have that it was impolitic to vote at all but now that the party is going into the Election I am bound to vote at any rate, if possible. We have got to go to Lecompton to vote and all the F.S. [Free State] men are going in a body from this part of the district. From here we have got to start at daylight. We all go armed as it is feared that there may be disturbances, but I hope not. . . .

"humiliating as the act may have been Pomeroy, in surrendering the arms, did the only wise thing possible under the conditions." Rumors of shortages of funds, however, may very well have been true. The executive committee of the New England Emigrant Aid Company found he responded very reluctantly to requests for an accounting for funds and frequently spent more on a project than had been authorized. One observer summed up the subject by saying that "Mr. Pomeroy was reckless with drafts." Although the public considered Charles Robinson the company's chief agent, historian Edgar Langsdorf stated that Pomeroy likely was the company's "principle Kansas agent" and notes that Thomas H. Webb, Emigrant Aid Company secretary, described his position in those words in a January 1856 letter. See Shalor Winchell Eldridge, "Recollections of Early Days in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Publications* 2 (1920): 50–52; Albert R. Kitzhaber, "Gotterdammerung in Topeka: The Downfall of Senator Pomeroy," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 18 (August 1950): 251; Edgar Langsdorf, "S.C. Pomeroy and the New England Emigrant Aid Company, 1854–1858," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 7 (November 1938): 389–95.

Sun Oct 11th The Election has passed and probably the Free State men are victorious. They are if the returns shall be taken as they are and not tampered with but I am a little afraid yet.<sup>5</sup>

. . . Wed I was at work when a man came to the field and introduced himself as Mr Morse. Said he saw you and he made me quite a call but did not bring his wife with him. He came again next morning and got my horse and is gone with him some two hundred miles more or less to see where to locate. . . . I suppose meanwhile I must ride on foot. Keep a horse and walk!! . . . [no signature]

Lawrence Kansas Nov 19 1857

Dear Mother

. . . Mr Savage arrived here last night but contrary to the expectation of us all he brot no wife with him. It seems that he got all ready to be married; the day was set which was to be Mon. the 2nd of Nov. He waited three weeks for her to get ready and then the Fri. before they were to be married she gave him the mitten so he is now no better off than if he had staid here. . . .

I arrived at home last night too. I left John at Sumner on Tuesday morning and came to Leavenworth on Tues and came from there yesterday.<sup>6</sup> The roads were so bad that it took me about twelve hours to ride from Leavenworth here. That is a pretty long time to sit in the saddle. I rode in company with or rather escorted Gen Lane from Leavenworth. He

5. The Free State Party was badly split on the question of whether to participate in the October 5 and 6 election to select a territorial delegate to Congress and a new territorial legislature, but the members decided to do so at a convention in Grasshopper Falls on August 26. In the subsequent election the free-state candidate for delegate, Marcus Parrott, won by a two-to-one margin, and after Governor Robert Walker threw out fraudulent votes in Johnson and McGee (now Cherokee) Counties, the Free State Party was assured of majorities in both houses of the legislature. See Franklin A. Sanborn, "Some Notes on the Territorial History of Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1913-1914* 13 (1914): 251-58; David E. Meerse, "The 1857 Territorial Delegate Election Contest," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 4 (Summer 1981): 96-113.

6. Edward here refers to his younger brother John W. Fitch who had been at Sumner for some time. Contrary to the usual situation, the Fitch family knew his whereabouts. John presumably was there because John P. Wheeler, that settlement's chief promoter, was from Hopkinton, Massachusetts. The John A. Fitch who signed the Sumner company's constitution could have been Edward's father, but he was not Edward's brother John W. as stated in John M. Peterson, ed., "Letters of Edward and Sarah Fitch, Lawrence, Kansas, 1855-1863, Part II," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 12 (Summer 1989): 83, n. 121, hereafter cited as "Fitch Letters II."

made a speech there and had been threatened pretty severely but I dont suppose there was much actual danger from their threats. Be that as it may we were not molested . . . .<sup>7</sup> I traded some property that I had off for a share in Sumner myself and I wish that I could get some money to pay Father toward what I owe him. . . . My Quindaro property is not going to be so profitable as I anticipated. . . . Sumner is more sure property I think now. . . . The townsite is somewhat rough but they are making it look better fast. It is . . . in such a position that it must draw some trade. . . .<sup>8</sup>  
Your Affectionate Son, Edward

Lawrence Kan. Dec 23 1857

Dear Parents

. . . I had a very good time as for the first Thanksgiving spent at my own home (that is if my debts were paid.) . . . . I had Father W, George & Muzzy here to dinner Thanksgiving. We had baked beef and potatoes to eat and pie (to look at). . . .

I got back from Sumner on the 18th. John and I had dug and piled up and covered up about 60 bush[els] of potatoes and that night (17th) they all froze. . . . My potatoes were all that I raised this year that I had to sell as I have only what corn I shall want to use myself so it has just spoilt my summer's work and I am poorer than ever. . . . I think that it is very likely that Father could easily find places for a company of boys here if he would come in the spring. I am going to inquire around and see how many I can

7. Lane's speech in Leavenworth was part of his campaign against the proslavery constitution that had been adopted on November 3 by the convention in Lecompton. Traveling by horseback he is said to have made as many as three speeches a day at points separated by as many as thirty miles. Leavenworth, still in the proslavery camp, did not provide a very friendly welcome. See Wendell Holmes Stephenson, "The Political Career of General James H. Lane," *Kansas Historical Publications* 3 (1930): 90.

8. Sumner, a new town on the Missouri River just below Atchison, was founded as a free-state alternative to such proslavery ports as Leavenworth and Atchison. John P. Wheeler from Hopkinton, Massachusetts, was the chief promoter. John J. Ingalls was shocked when he first saw Sumner and found little resemblance to the sketches and descriptions in its advertisements. Later he became a leading citizen and in late 1858 believed that Sumner would outstrip Atchison within four years. Unfortunately for Fitch's investment, Sumner's good landing was surrounded by steep hills, and its "ultimate doom" became clear when it was bypassed by the railroad. See Burton J. Williams, "John James Ingalls: The Sumner Years," *Essays in Kansas History in Memoriam, George L. Anderson* (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1977), 159-62, 167, 170, 185 n.

*Edward became friends with the neighboring Savage family, and at times he worked for Joseph Savage (right). In his letters, Edward occasionally updates his parents on the Savages' activities.*



find in the neighborhood and let you know. I have found two or three now and all say if he would bring a lot of girls he could find plenty of places for them. I hope he will come. What would be the age of boys generally? I want to tell folks here. And what are the conditions that they are placed under when they are sent to places? Please answer the questions as soon as you possibly can as it may materially assist me in finding places for some . . . .<sup>9</sup>

Yours in haste Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Feb 7 1858 Sunday eve

Dear Parents

. . . Today it seems to be growing colder and feels as though we might have some ice to save. Last year at this time I was at work putting up ice and hundreds of tons were put up here. This year there has been none put up. Hoping to see you but won't very soon. Sarah & the baby are very well.<sup>10</sup> We think some of

9. This is an early suggestion of the possibility of "placing out" children in Kansas. Placing orphaned or abandoned children of eastern cities in states east of Kansas occurred as early as the 1840s and 1850s, and the practice moved westward as the railroads spread. However, the first group placement in Kansas did not occur until 1867. See Marilyn Irvin Holt, *The Orphan Trains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 31, 39, 41, 48. No information has been found regarding any follow-up action by Edward's father; possibly he dropped the idea due to poor transportation facilities in the territory, even though Edward felt there was a demand in Lawrence.

10. The Fitch's first child, a daughter, was born on January 12, 1858. They soon decided on Julia as her first name but did not seem to have set-

calling the baby Julia Ann Sumner. Wheeler says he will give her a lot in Sumner if we name her after the town.

I remain your aff son Edward P. Fitch

. . . Mr [Richard] Cordley and Mr [S. D.] Storrs were ordained at Quindaro last week. . . Mr Cordley staid with me Fri. night. I like him very well. He is a fine singer. He is liked very well I believe by everyone. If he lives ten years he will make his mark on Kansas or somewhere else!

Lawrence Feb 23rd 1858

Dear Parents

. . . I have been chopping wood in the woods today and quite a good deal of the time for a week or two. I take my gun with me to the wood and I have got within a week or two, a doz rabbits & some quails. I got six rabbits in one day. They have kept me in meat for quite awhile. . . .

I am thinking some of leaving my farm and going into the city to live and tend store. . . . But one thing is certain, I cant get along here another year as I have the year past. I have had to borrow money and then have nothing after all. . . . Father Wilmarth thinks that

bled on Sumner as her middle name until shortly before her baptism on July 5.

**THE**  
**Lawrence Republican**

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Two Dollars per annum in advance, or, if desired for six months, \$1.00.

Advertisements by week to standing advertisements every communication should be addressed to the Editor of the Free State or Law will be inserted in the Free State Directory and year for the year.

All business letters should be addressed to the Editor.

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**Business Directory.**

**The Topeka Constitution.**  
CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF KANSAS

**PREAMBLE.**  
We, the People of the Territory of Kansas, by our delegates in Convention assembled at Topeka, on the 31st day of October, A. D. 1855, and at the Independence of the United States the eighteenth year, having the right of admission into the Union as one of the United States of America, consistent with the Federal Constitution and by virtue of the treaty of cession by France to the United States of the province of Louisiana, in order to secure to ourselves and our posterity the enjoyment of all the rights of life, liberty and property, and the free pursuit of happiness, do mutually agree with each other in form submitted into a free and independent State, by the name and style of the State of Kansas, bounded as follows, to wit: Beginning at a point on the western boundary of the State of Missouri where the thirty-seventh parallel of north latitude crosses the same; thence west on said parallel to the eastern boundary of New Mexico; thence north on said

§ 14. The right of the people to life, liberty and property, shall not be violated; and no warrant shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by oath and affirmation, particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

§ 15. No person shall be imprisoned for debt in any civil action, or process, unless in cases of fraud.

§ 16. All courts shall be open; and every person for an injury done him in his land, goods, persons or reputation shall have remedy by due course of law and justice administered without delay or denial.

§ 17. No arbitrary imprisonments, how long or privilege shall ever be granted or authorized by this State.

§ 18. No power of suspending law shall ever be exercised, except by the General Assembly.

§ 19. The payment of a tax shall not be a qualification for exercising the right of suffrage.

§ 20. Private property shall ever be held inviolate, but subject to the public use. When taken in time of war

*In August 1857 Edward noted, "We had a State Election last Mon and voted on the Ratification of the Topeka Constitution." Although the majority of voters were in favor of the free-state "Topeka Government," the constitution was never officially adopted. A copy of the constitution appears in the July 9, 1857, issue of the Lawrence Republican, which, according to Edward, was "by far the best paper in the Territory."*

we might do quite a business in his store if we would go into it. He is doing quite well now. . . .

Sun P.M.  
. . . There is room enough for quite a reformation here. The Sabbath is not observed at all by many people here unless it is to go shooting or at the time the Legislature was in session here they did as much work on Sunday as any day except that they did not have sessions but the Committees did, I think. There is plenty of drunkenness here now. Two men have died of "delirium tremens" within a few weeks one of them a member of the Legislature and at one time acting Gov. under the Topeka Constitution. . . .  
Your aff son Edward

Lawrence March 16th 1858  
Dear Parents  
. . . Sarah and the baby are quite well and so am I. The baby grows nicely. She is nine weeks old today and she laughs and plays very prettily. I never knew little babies were half so pretty before. Her forehead is like mine, her eyes like Father Wilmarth's, her nose like Sarah's and her mouth like George's so you can tell just how she looks. . . .

They called a Constitutional Convention which meets next Mon. There has been a great strife over the

Election of delegates to that Convention. One part of the Free State party trying to elect men that would reenact the Topeka Constitution and another part trying to have an entirely new Constitution. I believe the Maj. are in favor of the Topeka and I hope they will readopt it. . . .<sup>11</sup>  
Your aff son Edward P Fitch

Dear Parents Sumner Kansas, March 22, 1858  
I . . . arrived here Sat noon stopping at night at Leavenworth. I find folks here all well. . . . I heard tonight that the President has issued his proclamation for the sale of Govt. lands here so that we shall have to pay for our land before the 5th of July or lose it. Now how I am going to pay for mine within that time I am sure I dont know. There will be a great many poor Free State men in the same fix . . .<sup>12</sup>

11. Edward refers to the convention called by the 1858 territorial legislature to develop a free-state document to submit to Congress as an alternative to the proslavery Leecompton Constitution. The Leavenworth Convention first met on March 9, 1858, in Mineola, Franklin County, Kansas, but soon adjourned to Leavenworth. On April 3 a document, generally known as the Leavenworth Constitution, was completed. It was approved by Kansas voters on May 18, 1858, and presented to Congress on January 5, 1859, but no action was taken by either house. See Rosa M. Perdue, "The Sources of the Constitution of Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1901-1902 7 (1902): 132-33 n.; Stephenson, "The Political Career of General James H. Lane," 95.

12. Under the preemption law of 1854 settlers were permitted to buy claims for \$1.25 per acre prior to the land being offered for sale at public auction. Due to the Panic of 1857, President James Buchanan decided to

It is a shame there are lands in Minnesota that have been settled much longer than this that the right of preemption has not run out on but just on this hard time Kansas settlers must pay for their land or lose it!! Buchanan ought to be shot—to do that is too good. He ought to be hung, drawn, & quartered. . . .

Lawrence Apr 19th, 1858

Dear Parents,

. . . I have been at work this past week for Mr [Joel] Grover, one of my neighbors carrying the hod. He is building a large stone barn (not very large either, 30 x 40 feet). I began to work for him Wed morning and that was the hardest day of work I had done for more than a year . . . . Sat morning we got our gangway plank fixed to carry up the stone to the second story or rather onto the scaffold of the barn and in carrying up the second load of stone the plank gave way with Mr Grover and my self on it. I was up the farthest and as Grover let go of the hand barrow it struck my foot and knocked me down but I jumped from the plank before it struck the ground and I struck on one foot and one knee hurting my knee some, not so much but that I worked all day. But yesterday it was difficult for me to walk much. It is a little sore today . . . .<sup>13</sup>

Your aff son E.P. Fitch

Lawrence Apr 30th 1858

Dear Parents

I suppose you will begin to think it is time to hear from me again by this time. It is just a year tonight since Sarah and I first came to this house. It was a rainy night very much such a night as tonight. . . . Mr Savage got home from the East three days since with

expedite land sales to increase government revenue. See Paul Wallace Gates, *Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts Over Kansas Land Policy, 1854–1890* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), 6, 74–75.

13. A review of Joel Grover's laconic diary reveals no mention of Edward Fitch or an accident while building his barn. He does mention on April 16, 1858, laying out a runway used to carry stone up the barn walls and taking it down on April 26, but must have considered the accident not worth mentioning. Part of the foundation and walls of Grover's barn were used in a new Lawrence fire station built on the site in 1982. See Craig H. Crosswhite, "The Grover Barn: A Proposal for Preservation" (Watkins Community Museum of History, Lawrence, typescript).

his new wife. He was disappointed last fall you recollect. Well just before he left Springfield to come back he saw a young Scotch woman whom Mrs. Hood his sister introduced and recommended to him. He was pleased with her and has corresponded with her during the winter[;] he left here the 2nd of Apr, was married the 14th and got back here the 27th. She appears to be a fine woman just a month older than Sarah and he is 35. . . .

Your aff son E.P. Fitch

*Edward gave up trying to support his family by farming in May 1858 and went to work in his father-in-law's book and stationery store in Lawrence.*

Lawrence May 10th 1858

Dear Father,

. . . I have no time for news as I have to go to town right off to see about hiring a house as I expect to let my house and land and go into town to live myself. I intend to go into business with Father Wilmarth. I shall have a stated salary and a certain share of the profits of the business. . . . E P Fitch

Lawrence May XVI 1858

Dear Parents

I went to the Land Office last Wed to preempt my land but was unable to "prove up" because I had no witnesses to the fact of my first settlement on my claim. I took the claim in Apr 1855 before I came East, and had three persons as my witness at the time. One of them is dead, I believe one in California and the other I dont know where he is . . . when I told at the Office all the circumstances they told me how to evade or rather how to 'get round' the preemption Law and said that by making a new settlement in presence of witness and moving out of my house and then moving back I might preempt without building another house and that is what I have got to do now. . . .

Perhaps before you get this Mr Muzzy will have been at Hopkinton to see you. If not he will be there



soon. . . . I think I have mentioned him in my letters to you. He has been with me almost all the time since we came to Kansas, that is near me. We lived together at Mr Stearns store all the winter of 55 & 6 except when we were both in our quarters during the war. . . . Then we lived together at Mr Savages during the summer of 56 and fall and . . . He seems like a brother almost, in some respects. When he does come to see you have lots of puddings, for he is as great a hand for pudding as I am. He comes here, or did come, almost every Sunday to get a piece of pudding. . . .  
Your aff Son Edward P Fitch.

Lawrence May 20th 1858

Dear Father

. . . I preempted my claim yesterday using the Warrant and 60.\$ of the 100. that Appleton sent me. I could not have preempted at all without more than the warrant of course. The Warrant paid for 120 acres. 50\$ in cash paid for 40 acres and it takes 9.50 to get through the office that is for fees . . . .<sup>14</sup>

English's Bill or rather juggle has passed Congress. . . . I am sometimes seriously afraid it will be accepted or at least so declared by the Gov. . . . English Bill is worse than Lecompton-Walker for it gives us less land. It is worse because it leaves the matter wholly undecided. It settles nothing, ends nothing only keeps the matter open and leaves it in a worse shape than ever . . . .<sup>15</sup>

14. On December 12, 1856, Edward wrote that he had arranged to split his claim with another preemptor, who contested his right to the land. Why on May 9, 1858, he paid for 160 acres is unclear; possibly he agreed to do so and then deed half of the quarter-section to the other claimant. In any case, estate records show Edward owned only eighty acres when he was killed in 1863. The warrants to which he refers were land warrants given to veterans of the War of 1812 by the U.S. government. They were still valid and transferable. Edward paid only \$120 for the 120-acre warrant he used. See Deed Records, February 26, 1866, Book O, 352, Office of the Register of Deeds of Douglas County, Lawrence, Kansas.

15. In February 1858 President Buchanan sent the proslavery Lecompton Constitution to Congress recommending it be accepted despite the fact that two votes in the territory had shown that several thousand more residents were against it than for it. To break the ensuing deadlock, Representative William H. English proposed a third referendum in which "yes" meant admission as a slave state and "no" meant delaying statehood until the population increased considerably. This proposal was decisively defeated by Kansas voters, and as Edward predicted, a later Congress admitted Kansas as a free state. See Zornow, *Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State*, 77–78; E. Duane Elbert, "The English Bill: An Attempt to Compromise the Lecompton Dilemma," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 1 (Winter 1978): 219–34.

For my own part I should rather remain a territory for the next fifteen years than to come in under the "Lecom Cons" but I believe that the next Congress will be such a one as will admit us as a Free State if we reject this Constitution—the English Bill to the contrary notwithstanding. . . .

I have let my Farm to a couple of families from Indiana who have come on here with their families. . . .  
[no signature]

Lawrence June 5, 1858

Dear Parents

. . . The great tragedy of this week has been the killing of Mr [Gaius] Jenkins by Gen [James H.] Lane and the circumstances are as follows.

First however the parties: Mr Jenkins was one of the head men of the town. . . . He was one of the treason prisoners confined with Gov Robinson in the Summer of 56 at Lecompton. He had a wife and four children. . . . Gen Lane you know something about. . . .

Jenkins & Lane both lived on and claimed a qr Sec of Land lying partly within the city of Lawrence. . . . There has been considerable animosity growing out of this difficulty between Lane & Jenkins. They both lived on the claim but in houses some 30 rods apart. Each one had a lot fenced in around his house. There was a well in Lane's yard from which both families had been in the habit of getting water. But a short time ago Lane forbid Jenkins coming there after any more water, for if he did he would shoot him and for a few days he did not get any there, but on Thurs last (the 3d inst) Mr Jenkins said in town just before dinner that he was going to get some water out of Lane's well if he got shot. He went home about noon and sent his man over to get a pail of water. The man went but Lane would not let him get any and told him if he or Jenkins came again he would shoot them. The man went back and told Jenkins. Jenkins said "I will go and get some myself. I guess there will be no trouble about it." But he took his pail and took a rifle and an ax with him and then took other men with him armed with revolvers. They went to Lane's gate. Meanwhile Lane had nailed the gate up so that they

*In May 1858 Edward wrote of his intention to go into business with his father-in-law Otis Wilmarth, who owned a book and stationery store in Lawrence and eventually a second shop in Topeka. This advertisement for the Lawrence store is from the Lawrence Republican, August 1, 1861.*

**O. WILMARTH,**  
**BOOKSELLER & STATIONER,**  
 AND  
**PERIODICAL DEALER.**  
 ———  
 Wholesale and Retail—  
**School, Miscellaneous and Children's**  
**BOOKS.**  
**STATIONERY**  
 In great variety, including of Foolscap, Legal,  
 Letter and Note Papers.  
**ENVELOPES:**  
 Legal, Heavy and Common, of various qualities.  
**Music and Instruction Books,**  
 For the Violin, Piano, Guitar, &c., &c., and the  
 usual variety of books, generally kept  
 in Stock.  
**Periodicals & Papers.**

could not get through. One of the men with Jenkins took the ax to cut down the gate but Jenkins thought that he was not quick enough and so he set down his rifle and took the ax himself and chopped the gate down and then started for the well which was right between the gate and Lane's house.

As Jenkins advanced toward the well Lane came out to meet and told him not to come to the well. He said "The relation between you and me are such that we had better have nothing to do with each other and I do not want you here and wont have you." He was at this time unarmed. What reply Jenkins made to this I do not know but Lane went on to say "Jenkins, if you come up to this well or advance any further I will shoot you." Jenkins still came on and Lane then stepped into the house and took out his gun and fired at Jenkins. He threw up his arms and said O!! and fell Dead! on his tracks. At the same moment almost one of the other men with Jenkins fired at Lane the first time wounding him pretty severely in the leg and the second time the ball going through his hair close to his ear. The reports were so near together that men at work close by could hardly tell whether there were three or more or less reports. Some said that they fired first at Lane but he said he fired first. He said he knew that if he did not kill Jenkins, Jenkins would kill him, but I am not sure that it is so. Jenkins had been drinking pretty freely that day and was under the in-

fluence of liquor at the time no doubt, while Lane is now and has been for some time a member of the Temperance Society of Good Templars. It seems that they had both sort of made up their minds that that day was to decide about the well trouble, for Lane bought some caps that forenoon and said "I don't know but I shall have to kill a man before night," while Jenkins said that day that he was going to have some water out of Lane's well if he shot him. . . .

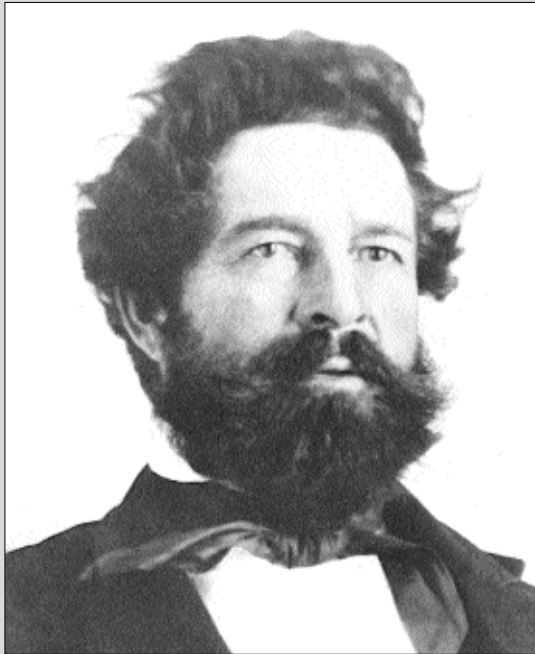
Mr Jenkins funeral was attended at the Congl Church on Sunday afternoon. Mr Cordley preached the funeral sermon, said to be very good. I did not go but staid at home so that Sarah might go. He was followed to the grave by the largest procession that I ever saw here. . . .<sup>16</sup> Edward P. Fitch

Tuesday Eve. July 13th, 1858

My Own Dear Mother

. . . I suppose you know long before this of our removal to town . . . I was happy on the claim, but I must confess that always having been accustomed to near neighbors & friends I did sometimes feel a little

16. Neither Lawrence newspaper published closest to this event reported some of the details that Edward wrote to his parents on June 5. See *Herald of Freedom* (Lawrence), June 5, 1858; *Lawrence Republican*, June 10, 1858. For daily reports on the trial of James H. Lane for the homicide of Gaius Jenkins, see "The Lane-Jenkins Claim Contest," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1923-1925 16 (1925): 128-76.



*On June 5, 1858, Edward recorded that "the great tragedy of this week has been the killing of Mr. Jenkins." One of many violent incidents that occurred in territorial Kansas was the fatal shooting of Gaius Jenkins (left) by General James H. Lane, precipitated by a land claim dispute.*

lonely. I am so glad to have my Father & brother in once more at home with us & they enjoy it so much. I would love to show you our [rented] home. It is very pleasant. We have two rooms below with a small chamber. Our sitting room is a very pleasant room. Large, airy, comfortable. The kitchen, tho I suppose you would scarcely term it a very nice room, answers all necessary purposes very well. We have very pleasant neighbors. . . . It seems to me sometimes as tho I must come & lay our baby, our precious little Julia in your arms. You would love her I know for she is a very lovable little thing—always so pleasant & good—always a smile for every one who comes in. . . . The first Sabbath in July we had baby baptized—by the name Julia Sumner. The day previous was observed as the 4th and a very pleasant celebration we had. A picnic, with oration, Dinner etc was the order of the day. . . . One thing would have looked strange to you Eastern people—and that was a group of Indians in their gayest dresses looking on with curious interest—enjoying with the rest. I would love to describe some of the fanciful dresses of the women but could hardly do it upon paper. . . .  
your Affectionate Daughter

*Edward and Sarah visited New England during the summer of 1859, added a boy to their family in the spring of*

*1860, and, with Mr. Wilmarth, built a house in Lawrence. Edward attempted to alleviate the suffering caused by the severe drought of 1859 and 1860 in Kansas by distributing clothing and money supplied by family and friends in Massachusetts.*

[early spring 1860]

Dear Mother

. . . We are now about starting a Branch establishment at Topeka. George is going up there to attend to it. We are in hopes that we may get off some of our old stock by that means as well as sell some new.

We are building a house, have got a good cellar & well all finished and most of the lumber on the ground and we expect the house to be put up next week and if we have good luck we hope to move into it by the first of May, but we may not be able to do so.<sup>17</sup> . . . "We", that is the Anti-Lane Republicans, met at the Court House to nominate a City Ticket. The 'Lane' men came into our Caucus and tried all they could to control it and when they found they could not do that they bolted and got up a ticket and headed "Regular Republican nomination." They worked hard but we beat them and the Democrats together

17. A description of the house that the Fitches and Otis Wilmarth built is included in Edward's letter of November 18, 1860. See "Fitch Letters II," 89–90.

by ninety majority. . . . We elected every man on our ticket except one. . . . I send two or three tickets so you can see how they mixed up the things. There were no less than a Doz diff. kinds of mixed tickets. . . .<sup>18</sup>  
Your aff Edward

Lawrence Kansas Apr 18 [1860]

Dear Father

. . . We have never been quite so hard up as at present, and it is in a great measure owing to the way we have been served by the Government Officials.

Sec Walsh [is] refusing to pay the Bill of the Legislatures that have been bought of us. The bill that he bought himself this winter (1860) amt to some \$150. He refuses to pay or rather says he has not the money to pay it with. . . . And the Bill of last winter 1859 they now refuse to even give us script for. We are about to sue the Government for it. . . . We put it into a Lawyer's hands and he is to have ten per cent for collecting if he gets it. . . . Yours Edward P Fitch

Lawrence Apr 20th [18]60

Dear Father

. . . You will very likely hear by the paper that a United States Marshall has been killed while in discharge of his duties at Topeka. It is so. The facts are these, as near as I can ascertain this morning. Last night just before night Dep Marshall Arms went to the house of Mr [John] Ritchie in Topeka and told him he had a warrant for him. Mr R. said he could not arrest him on it as it was for some Political Offence in [18]56. Mr. Arms said he should do his duty. Here some say he, R., shot Arms dead in his tracks and some say they both went into the house and both drew Revolvers, but at any rate Arms is dead—shot thru the throat.

18. Charles Robinson and James H. Lane worked together only as long as a threat of proslavery dominance existed. When that threat lessened in 1857 the former Free State Party began to disintegrate, and the conflict between Robinson who had favored peaceful resistance and Lane who at times advocated violence and outlawry became a factional conflict within the Republican Party, established in Kansas during the spring of 1859. This conflict even extended to Lawrence city elections. See Don W. Wilson, *Governor Charles Robinson of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975), 54, 67–68; Stephenson, "The Political Career of General James H. Lane," 106, 160; Davis, *Kansas: A Bicentennial History*, 79–80.

He was the same man that undertook a month or two ago to kidnap a Negro woman from a house in this city but was driven off without getting her. It is a very unfortunate affair at any rate to say the least . . .<sup>19</sup>  
Your a[ff] Edward P Fitch

Nov 1st [1860]

Dear Parents

. . . Do you feel very much alarmed about the prospects of the secession of the South after Lincoln's election? The papers just now before election are full of what they will do but when the time comes they will wait.

. . . Little Charlie will be five months old the day Lincoln is elected President. . . . O I wish you could see him, you would be delighted with him I know. Julie remembers you, both of you. She gets your picture (Mother) very often and kisses it and says "I love my Grandmother way down to Hopkinton" and then she says "poor Grandpa got a sore hand 'too bad'". . . .

There is going to be and there is now a great deal of suffering in Kansas this fall and winter. . . .<sup>20</sup>

I know of a family where there are eleven children and a woman died near them leaving one little child without a Father and they took that into their family making 12 children and now coming on cold. All the clothes that these children had was some made by the mother from an old wagon cover and all

19. The deputy U.S. marshal killed was Leonard Arms. The warrant, if he had one, presumably was for Ritchie's escape from imprisonment in Lecompton as a member of Colonel J.A. Harvey's force arrested by U.S. troops in 1856. Ritchie gave himself up on April 20, was tried for homicide on April 21, and was released when the court judged his action to be a justified homicide. James H. Lane was attorney for the defendant. Ritchie was a free-state leader, a member of the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention, one of the founders of Washburn University, and a donor of lots and cemetery land to ex-slaves who settled in Topeka. See *Lawrence Republican*, April 26, 1860; A.T. Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883), 150, 172–75.

20. The drought of 1859–1860 was the first extended dry spell encountered by early settlers of Kansas. Reverend Richard Cordley recalled that it lasted from September 1859 to October 1860; others say from May 1859 to November 1860. Seeds planted in the spring of 1860 never came up, the Wakarusa River stopped running, and Cordley could not buy or beg water for his horse on the road from Wyandotte to Lawrence in July. One-third of the population of the territory left; conditions were especially bad in the newly settled areas. See Richard Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas From the First Settlement to the Close of the Rebellion* (Lawrence, Kans.: E.F. Caldwell, 1895), 160–72; Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 178.

they had to eat was a little corn meal and what nuts & roots they could find in the woods.

I know of another place where there is quite a little settlement that are living entirely on nuts and herb tea. In the south part of the Territory there are very many who have not clothing enough to keep themselves warm in only moderately cool weather. What they will do in the winter I don't know. . . .

These are the poorest class. There are thousands who have left the Territory to winter in Iowa or Missouri or Illinois, most of those who had teams and could by any possibility get away have gone. . . .

The whole that I got from my farm this year for my 1/3 of the crop was \$2.50 and my taxes this year were about 12\$. . . . There was no wheat raised this year so there is none for seed next year. That is a great difficulty. . . .

Take it together we are a great deal worse off than we were in '56. Then there was some money in the county. Now there is none. Then there was good crops where the Missourians did not destroy them, now there are no crops at all. . . .

Now after all this prelude I have got this to say that if you will send out some clothing or any money to me I will put it where it will be doing some good to the poor in this Territory. . . .

God help the Poor is the prayer of your Edward P. Fitch

Lawrence, December 23 1860

Dear Parents

. . . There is nothing talked or thot of here but Secession and its effect on business. Business in Cincinnati & St Louis is allmost Suspended. Exchange in the East is worth from five to 10 percent and that will smash any kind of business.

. . . We have got a smart government. They can hang any quantity of Methodist ministers in Texas and other Southern States but when we in Kansas hang two or three horse thieves and murderers the Army must be sent right down to wipe out Montgomery. . . .<sup>21</sup> Kansas

21. James Montgomery was a leading free-state activist in southeast Kansas and at times a senior officer in James Lane's army. In November

would not submit to Lecompton Constitution etc. and the Government must come down on us and force us to submit but South Carolina can secede and the Old Public Functionary say[s] the Government has no power to coerce her into Submission. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Your aff Son Edward

*The Civil War became real to Lawrence residents when local men were casualties in the Battle of Wilson's Creek. While Edward served only in local defense forces, two of his brothers joined the Union army. Fortunately the family was unaware that Edward was destined to become a casualty of the conflict.*

Lawrence Apr 14th 1861

Dear Mother

. . . I expect, if nothing happens to prevent, to go to St. Louis on Wed of this week. I wish I could come on and see you. . . . We have been pretty busy for some time on account of the Legislature at Topeka, etc. We have also been sending quite a lot of stuff to the Mines in Colorado Ter. where your third son is sojourning for the time being. . . .

. . . We had pretty stormy times here in politics electing Senators etc. They have finally elected Lane & Pomeroy, neither of them were my choice but they did not mind what I said, but went and did just as they chose. . . .

Your aff Son Edward

Monday Evening [April 15]

. . . We have got the news of the Great fight at Sumpter and its fall. It may make some difference

some of Montgomery's men in Linn County hanged two "border ruffians" after "trials" by a vigilante committee. Montgomery mentions these events in letters but does not say that he took part. Troops including U.S. dragoons were sent to the area to "restore order," but Montgomery was supported by local sentiment and never was taken in. See Sanborn, "Some Notes on the Territorial History of Kansas," 262-65; Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 70-72.

22. President Buchanan, the "Old Public Functionary," blamed current political problems regarding slavery in the Southern states on the long continued and intemperate interference of Northerners. He held that

Edward lost several friends in the August 10, 1861, Battle of Wilson's Creek, which he reported was "a hard fight but our Kansas troops sustained their reputation for fighting pretty well."



with my going East, tho I think I shall go. Civil War! I did not think that I should ever live to see that. Where will it end. God only knows.

Lawrence, Apr. 24th [1861]  
My Dear Mother

George starts for the East tomorrow, & will come to see you. I must prepare a little note to send you. . . . There is one thing I must ask you for that I intended to get when I came away but forgot, that was a pattern for pants, so I can make E. some this summer. . . .

I feel as tho I could fight when I read of the outrageous conduct of the South. The men here are forming companies for home protection & we hope we shall not have much trouble even if our Missourian neighbors do persist in "seceding." They had better let Kansas alone I think or they will get into trouble. . . . Yours as ever S.A. Fitch

Lawrence Apr 28th [18]61  
Dear Parents,

. . . All the arms in Kansas have been drained off by

the principle allowing a state to leave the Union was inconsistent with the history and character of the United States, but he advised that military force would be used only if the federal marshal in South Carolina could not execute civil or criminal processes or if an attempt were made to take over U.S. property by force. See "Synopsis of President's Message," *Topeka Tribune*, December 8, 1860.

the Pikes Peak folks.<sup>23</sup> There are lots of arms at Fort Leavenworth and we expect to get them after a while but the Officers there have had no orders to give them out yet. . . . Here in Lawrence we have 5 Companies, four of them newly organised and without arms as yet. The other is the famous Stubbs with their Sharps Rifles. One company is Cavalry, and one Artillery, that I belong to. We are in hopes to get our cannon and small arms within two or three weeks. At any rate the companies drill every night at their armories. . . . We may have some trouble with the Indians on our South & West Border. The troops have been taken away, so many of them, there has been a little trouble. Now the Cherokees & Choctaws will fight with and for the South. . . . The Delaware and Pottawatomies will fight for us but there are but few of them, but a great many Cherokees. . . . Your aff son Edward

Lawrence Kansas May 12th, [1861]  
Dear Parents

. . . Yesterday P.M. just before night some one came in

23. "Pike's Peak" was the name generally used to refer to the Colorado gold rush even though most of the rush was to locations considerably north of that mountain. The rush started in 1858 but accelerated greatly in 1859 and continued at a high level in 1860. Edward may be referring to the purchase of arms in Lawrence and other outfitting centers in northeast Kansas by persons headed for the gold fields, leaving little such merchandise available locally when the war started.



*General John C. Frémont was dismissed as commander of the Western Department for issuing a proclamation confiscating property and freeing slaves of Confederate activists in Missouri. Wrote Edward of the removal of his hero Frémont, "it was the most stupid thing that has been done . . . [and] one of the greatest outrages on the American people."*

to the store and said How are you? I looked up and beheld John stood looming up. . . . I dont know how long he may stay here. He never tells any of his plans, as you know. . . . We are now prepared to fight here, having just recd last Thurs 1000 stand of arms & 50,000 rounds of ammunition from Fort Leavenworth and 100 kegs of Powder. . . .

We are all in our usual health. Charlie is creeping around the floor. . . . He will walk I guess by the time he is a year old or soon after. Julie gets along finely, is now sitting in Uncle John[s] lap & telling him all the news and singing Dixie for him.<sup>24</sup> It rained tremendous hard all last night as well as night before and today it has rained almost all day. There is no danger of a drought this year, but in some places the wet will destroy the crop. . . .

Your aff Son E.P. Fitch

Lawrence Kansas

May 28th 1/2 past 3 P.M. [1861]

Dear Parents

. . . As I write the music of the fife and Drum (or not

24. "Dixie" was written in 1859 by Daniel Emmett, a native of Ohio, for Bryant's Minstrels. It was first heard in New York and soon became popular. In January 1861 it was introduced in New Orleans and a month later was played at the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as president of the Confederacy. Its popularity spread rapidly in the South, and it soon became the Confederacy's unofficial national song but continued to be pop-

much music) keeps up a continued racket. The town is full of soldiers or men that want to be. . . .

The Soldiers are having a regular spree tonight. All hands will be tight. They are going around with all the Drums and Fifes playing and drinking at every whiskey shop and there are about 20 such shops in town. . . .

Your aff Son E. P. Fitch

Monday, Lawrence K. Aug 26 1861

Dear Mother

I sent you a paper containing an account of being shot at on the Cars and I wrote to you from Chicago, so you may be anxious to know how I got home.<sup>25</sup> I left Brother A. last Tuesday night at nine Oclock and arrived safe at home on Friday night at nine. . . . I found the folks at home all well and very glad to see me. Julie has not stopped yet saying every few minutes when I am at home "O I'm so glad you have come." Charlie celebrated the event by commencing to walk. . . .

ular in the North. See Fletcher M. Green, "Dixie," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967), 7:522.

25. Edward reported that volley after volley were fired at the Hannibal and St. Joseph train he was riding while it passed slowly over the Crooked Creek bridge. Women and children were aboard but "no person connected with the military." The passengers dived to the floor when the shooting started, and no one was injured. See *Lawrence Republican*, August 15, 1861.

O, I do wish you could see the two children. They make noise enough to carry a sawmill. Charlie is trying to dance as Julie does and is jumping up and down till he falls. Then he gets up and goes at it again. . . .

I made enough clear to buy a share in Sumner and if I had only kept it then I should have hit it, but I ventured once too much and lost all. . . .

It [the Battle of Wilson's Creek] was a hard fight but our Kansas troops sustained their reputation for fighting pretty well. They get lots of praise all around. There were several of my friends killed in that battle and a great many that I know killed & wounded in the Kansas Regiments. It seems like bringing war close to home. I have seen many of the wounded who have got home, some that are going back and some that are not. One that came over with me in the Cars the other day had one finger and part of another shot off, one Ball thru his arm and one in his side. Lieut Jones who was killed was a friend of mine. He was killed before he had been under Infantry fire three minutes . . . . Sergt Lewis Litchfield, a friend of mine and Cousin of Muzzy's was shot thro the lungs and only said Good Bye Boys & died. He leaves a wife and one child to mourn his loss . . . .<sup>26</sup>  
Your aff Son Edward

Lawrence Dec 8th 1861

Dear Mother

. . . We had a very good time Thanksgiving. . . . this year I conquered my predudice and bought a turkey for dinner. We had it baked and it was first rate. Our family that day consisted of Father W., Brother George and a young friend he brot with him from Topeka, Mr & Mrs Hanscom (It was the first Thanksgiving dinner she ever ate, she being a New Yorker and always having kept Christmas), Sarah, our three children and last but not least a young man whom you may have known at some former period of life—

26. Lieutenant Levant L. Jones and Sergeant Lewis T. Litchfield were killed in action August 10, 1861, along with many other members of the First Kansas Infantry Regiment, at the Battle of Wilson's Creek in southwest Missouri. See *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861-1865*, vol. 1 (Leavenworth: Bulletin Co-operative Printing Co., 1867), 35, 57.

named Edward Payson.<sup>27</sup> We did up the dinner after the most approved style, said dinner consisting of turkey with stuffing, sweet and Irish potatoes, onions, & cranberry sauce, mince, grape, squash, & Whortleberry pies of Sarah's best make. . . . There is a good deal of fear among some of our folks here . . . that we are in more danger than ever before etc but I dont really think yet that we are to be overrun here . . . they may be led to do it in retaliation for what Lane has done in Mo. . . . He is a great blow tho he has done some good things, but his course in Missouri has not been just right. In fact it has been all wrong. He has stolen any amt of money and goods of all kinds and taken them without any authority. . . .<sup>28</sup>

You want to know what I think of the removal of Fremont. Well, I think just this, that it was the most stupid thing that has been done. The whole campaign on the west or in Mo. has been a farce and the removal of Fremont right in the face of an enemy was one of the greatest of outrages on the American people. When I heard of it I did not care how quick I heard Lincoln was dead and let Hamlin take hold and see if he could not do something someway as it ought to be. He at least would not have a traitor wife to be telling the plans of the Government to the Rebels . . . .<sup>29</sup>  
Your aff Son Edward

Lawrence Jan 9th 1862

Dear Parents

. . . You complain of high taxes. We think we have to pay pretty high tax out here. My tax on my Land this year was a little over 25\$ beside the Highway tax of

27. Over the years Edward mentions special Thanksgiving dinners with family and friends, but in his letters written just before or after Christmas, he never mentions a Christmas dinner or celebration or even a special church service. It seems likely that the Fitch family still conformed with the New England Puritans' attitude toward Christmas and "kept Thanksgiving" but did not "keep Christmas."

28. Edward's comments undoubtedly refer to actions of Lane's army in Missouri in September, in particular the burning and looting of Osceola. As Edward feared, this action is thought to have greatly inflamed Missouri's hatred of Lane and Kansans and may have played a part in the selection of Lawrence as a target for Quantrill's raiders. See Davis, *Kansas: A Bicentennial History*, 82-84; Stephenson, "The Political Career of General James H. Lane," 110-11.

29. General John C. Frémont was dismissed as commander of the Western Department for issuing a proclamation confiscating property and freeing slaves of Confederate activists in Missouri, which was in direct conflict with the president's policy of seeking to keep the border



between 4.50 & 5.00 and my Ministers tax, or rather what I pay to support the minister is 20\$ per year making 50\$ on the Little property that I have got to pay on and taxes are going to be much higher here next year on acct of the Domicil tax . . . if it does cost us high taxes for a few years and slavery is put out of the way it will be a good thing. . . .

We are having quite an excitement here just now over the question—who shall be our next Governor—Robinson claiming to hold over and Crawford claiming to have been Elected this fall. . . . I think Robinson ought to hold over but I dont know but the court will Decide different.<sup>30</sup>

Lane is doing every thing he can to that end and has been all the time. He worked against us for the Capital and gave it to Topeka by that means just to spite Robinson & his friends for Lane has more property here than any where else in Kansas. . . .

Edward

3 Oclock A.M. Lawrence Kan Feb 13th [1863]

Dear Mother

You will perhaps think this a queer time to be writing letters—and perhaps it is. I have just got up after having lain down an hour or two while Sarah sat here with the children, for they are both quite sick. Julia is very sick indeed. . . . and for the last 24 hours

states in the Union. Frémont refused to modify his proclamation when requested, and he was relieved of his command early in November. Many of his troops objected but a majority of the president's cabinet backed this action. Edward's extreme reaction, and his repetition of the canard that Mrs. Lincoln was in collusion with the enemy, reflects his frustration at the lack of progress of the Union cause and the firing of his hero Frémont. See *Kansas State Journal* (Lawrence), November 7, 1861; Cornish, *The Sable Arm*, 12–15; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 352–54.

30. Edward refers to George A. Crawford, a Democrat who took part in a scheme designed by Lane and his followers to drive Charles Robinson from the governorship after serving only one year of his two-year term. A technical error in the state constitution had been corrected by an act of the 1861 legislature, but the Lane group claimed that enactment to be unconstitutional. Crawford was nominated as the Republican candidate to fill the supposed upcoming vacancy. As he was unopposed he claimed the victory, but the State Election Board refused to count the votes. The Kansas Supreme Court refused his request for a writ of mandamus and held the legislative act to have been constitutional. See Albert Castel, *A Frontier State at War: Kansas, 1861–1865* (Lawrence: Kansas Heritage Press, 1992), 68–70.

has hardly spoken and she is not able to raise her head. . . .

Wed. Feb 18th. . . . Julie is considerably better so as to be able to sit up considerable of the time, but Charlie was taken much worse this week Monday and from that time until now has been very sick. . . . He has, we think, the Whooping Cough . . . . we are looking every moment now for the Doctor. He has not been here yet today.

Sunday Feb 22nd Charlie . . . is evidently much better. He had no fever last night at all and would have slept pretty well if it had not been for his cough. . . . Julia is gaining fast. . . . I have not been at the store, only a few minutes at a time, for two weeks now. I expect in a day or two the children will be well enough for Sarah to get along with them alone. . . . I expect to go to Chicago & St Louis soon, say about the middle of March. I may go as far East as Cincinnati, tho I hardly expect to now.

Your aff son Edward

Lawrence Mar 11th 1863

Dear Father

. . . I have just now tonight finished up a statement of acct to send to a man that we have sold considerable to. We have bought and paid for and sold to him alone within the last two years over 8000\$ worth of goods. . . . By this you can see that we do some business, whether we make much money or not. . . .

Four or five days ago I had a letter from John. He is now at Springfield Mo, or was then. The Reg he belongs to was in Blunt's fights at Cane Hill, Prairie Grove & Van Buren, but he was not in any of them being sick at the time.<sup>31</sup> He . . . has had Billious fever, then Small Pox or Variola, was sick so as not to be on Duty over two months. . . .

Yours Edward

31. John Fitch returned from the Colorado mines and joined the Kansas troops in the Union army. He was a sergeant in Company E, Thirteenth Kansas Infantry. His younger brother Calvin joined the Union army sometime in 1862, served in North Carolina, and, as is mentioned in the July 16 letter, had nearly served out his enlistment by that date.

A letter to Edward's mother announces the birth of Sarah and Edward's third child Edward Payson Jr. on May 26, 1863.

Lawrence May 27<sup>th</sup>  
Dear Mother  
It is a Boy  
and weighed 9 lbs.  
Julie says she is going to  
have the whole care of it  
for Mother is sick and  
beside she has so much

Lawrence May 27th [1863]

Dear Mother

It is a Boy

and weighed 9 lbs.

Julie says she is going to have the whole care of it for Mother is sick and beside she has so much to do that she has not time to take care of it. Sensible girl. He came by the 1/2 past nine train yesterday morning (Tues). Sarah is very well considering.

Edward

Lawrence, June 29, 1863

Dear Mother

. . . The baby grows finely.<sup>32</sup> He is a great boy now, I expect will be a clerk in the store soon. The rest of us go on as usual in the even tenor of our way as you said. Work, eat, & sleep and so on day after day. . . . Dear here comes the baby and I must hold him and write because Sarah cant sew with him in her arms. So he lies in my arms and I talk to him and write and he laughs. Charlie is not up yet tho breakfast is nearly ready. Julie is out helping the girl get breakfast, I suppose.

Yours, Edward

32. Sarah and Edward's third child, Edward Payson Jr., was born on May 26, 1863.

July 16th [1863]

Dear Parents

. . . Tues. P.M. . . I recd a letter from John. He was enough better to have left the hospital. His letter was dated Adjutant Office of 13th K.V. . . .

I see by the paper that Calvin's Reg has come home so I suppose he is at home now but will he not go in again to that new Corps that they are raising and get his 320\$ Bounty. I should think he would. . . . Yesterday the children were playing outdoors and Julia stuck the little garden hoe into Charles head cutting quite a little hole but Charles is around this morning nearly as usual. He will get all over it today, I think, tho it may not all heal up. E.

*Five weeks after Edward wrote the above letter he was shot and killed by one of Quantrill's raiders while Sarah and the children looked on. The raiders would not even let Sarah remove Edward's body before setting fire to the house. (See "Fitch Letters II," 94-100.) Sarah and her children lived in Lawrence with Otis Wilmarth until 1869 when she remarried and the family moved to Kansas City. All three of the children lived to adulthood but only Charles married. He was a grandfather of Roger Fitch, who made the Fitch letters available to the Watkins Community Museum of History, Lawrence, Kansas, and permitted their publication.*

