

A Short History of Kansas Admission to the Union

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On January 29, 1861 President James Buchanan signed the bill allowing admittance of Kansas as the thirty-fourth state of the Union. This followed almost six years of political manipulations, the like of which has never been seen before or since, involving potential statehood.

The Kansas Territory was created by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. This act allowed proposed states, including Kansas, to decide the question of slavery themselves. This was called "popular sovereignty." The possibility of continued expansion of slavery into Kansas spurred both Free State (no slavery) and Pro-Slavery immigration into the territory.

The first Kansas Territorial elections to consider a constitution and elect a legislature were scheduled for March 30, 1855. New settlers recruited by the New England Immigrant Aid Society arrived almost daily in the weeks preceding the election, and were expected to swing the election to the Free State position. But in the few days before the election more than 5,000 Missourians, led by Missouri U.S. Senator David Atchison, crossed into Kansas. There was considerable violence in and around the polling places and allegations of voter fraud by both sides. The Missourians, of course, voted on election day and elected 37 out of 38 legislators supporting the Pro-Slavery position. This *Bogus Legislature* convened at both Pawnee and the Shawnee Indian Mission and passed almost 1,000 pages of laws. But bills allowing admission of Kansas into the Union as a state allowing slavery failed to pass the U.S. Congress.

Later in 1855 the Free State interests convened a "shadow" convention in Topeka and attempted to elect a legislature and set up a government. This *Topeka Constitution* was not accepted by the Federal Government and, in fact, their actions were considered acts of rebellion against the Federal Government.

In 1857 a constitutional convention was called for by Free State forces and met at Lecompton. Pro-Slavery forces boycotted the activities and the *Lecompton Constitution* never became law, nor did it result in admission of Kansas into the Union.

In 1858 a constitutional convention was convened at Leavenworth. The *Leavenworth Constitution* provided new rights for African Americans, women and Native Americans, but the resulting statehood bill failed to pass the U.S. Congress.

Yet another constitutional convention was convened in 1859, meeting this time at Wyandotte. The *Wyandotte Constitution* was considered a compromise document and progressive sections involving women, blacks and Native Americans were removed - but slavery was outlawed. The constitution was submitted to the U.S. Congress on February 14, 1860 for consideration.

Procedural delays, called "filibustering," postponed any vote on the Kansas Statehood bill until January 1861. By that time five southern states had already withdrawn from the Union, and several more were to quickly follow.

On January 21, 1861, 10 U.S. Senators, including Jefferson Davis of Mississippi and David Atchison of Missouri, withdrew from the Senate. Scarcely had they left the hall before Senator Seward of New York called up the Kansas Statehood bill and it passed by a vote of 36 to 16.

Eight days later Buchanan signed the bill and Kansas entered the Union.

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