

The Dr. Doy Rescue

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Dr. John W. Doy was part of the first New England Emmigrant Aid Society company to enter Kansas Territory in 1854. Doy, who was English-born, immigrated to Kansas most directly from Rochester, New York where he had become active in the abolitionist movement. Doy resided at Lawrence, Kansas.

On January 25, 1859 Doy was apprehended by a Federal posse near Holton, Kansas on the old Lane Trail-Underground Railroad route through Northeastern Kansas, as he was leading a party that included 13 so-called ex-slaves out of Missouri. There was no evidence that Doy had liberated the ex-slaves himself.

Nevertheless, Dr. Doy was transported to Weston, Missouri and charged with 13 counts of kidnapping or stealing slaves. The 13 ex-slaves were returned to their masters or prepared for removal to New Orleans for sale.

After minor legal delays, the Doy case was transferred to Platte City, Mo. with trial scheduled for March 20, 1859. The Kansas Territorial Legislature appropriated \$1,000 for the Doy legal defense effort to be lead by Wilson Shannon, an ex-governor of Kansas. Shannon suggested to the court that slaves had been known to run away on their own, and thus Doy should not be found guilty. The perception was that Doy could not receive a fair trial in Platte City and the case was eventually transferred to St. Joseph. Dr. Doy was then lodged in the St. Joseph jail.

The first attempt to try Doy in St. Joseph resulted in a hung jury. At the second St. Joseph trial Doy was convicted on one count of slave kidnapping involving the slave of the mayor of Weston, Benjamin Wood. For that offense, Dr. Doy was sentenced to five years hard labor in the Missouri Penitentiary. The remaining 12 counts were continued for later adjudication.

On September 23, 1859, only a few days before the Missouri Supreme Court was to render judgment on the case and set further sentence, an armed party of Kansans (not carrying Sharps Rifles because that would make it obvious they were abolitionists) entered the St. Joseph jail under the pretext of signing in a horse thief, overwhelmed the jailer and escaped with Dr. Doy across the Missouri River into Kansas. The armed party who freed Dr. Doy is called the "Immortal Ten."

Dr. Doy was back home in Lawrence within 24 hours. He was not repentant.

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