

## The Missouri State Pro-Slavery Convention

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July 12-13, 1855

The Missouri State Pro-Slavery Convention met at Lexington, Mo. on July 12-13, 1855 in the interim between the Pawnee and Shawnee Indian Mission sessions of the Kansas Territorial Legislature.

Representatives from more than 25 Missouri counties, mostly from along the Missouri River, were present. In total there were some 226 delegates, including some from as far away as St. Louis. Col. Samuel H. Woodson of Independence (Jackson County) was elected president pro tem of the convention. Committees on resolutions were appointed.

The convention might be styled as a meeting of the pro-slavery wing of the Missouri Democratic Party. Among those attending were two former governors of Missouri, namely M. M. Marmaduke (Saline) and A. A. King (Ray). Also attending were Alexander Doniphan (Clay), David Atchison (Platte), Sterling Price (Chariton), Claiborne Fox Jackson (Saline), James Chiles (Jackson) and the Reverend James Shannon, who was president of the University of Missouri.

The Reverend Shannon's two-hour address on day two of the convention was a biblical defense of slavery, mixed in with a rendition of his many personal experiences with abolitionism in Boone County.

The several resolutions unanimously adopted by the convention included support for the lawful 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act. One resolution pointed out that "Abolition companies chartered to colonize Kansas" are attempts by other state legislatures (read Massachusetts) to "thwart the Law of Congress" to settle Kansas with bona fide settlers.

Another resolution pointed out what was at risk. The 18 Missouri counties along the Kansas border had an estimated 50,000 slaves worth an estimated 25 million dollars. All that property would become "valueless" if Kansas "was made the abode of hired fanatics, recruited, transported, armed and paid for the sole purpose of abolitionising [sic] Kansas and Missouri."

Other resolutions pointed out that outside interference with slavery is an attack on the reserved rights of the slaveholding states, and any interference with those rights might result in dissolution of the Union. The appeal was to Missouri and the other parts of the South to put down the anti-slavery disaster. Lastly, the convention urged the General Assembly of Missouri to pass retaliatory measures against those states (read Massachusetts) that passed laws attempting to nullify the Fugitive Slave Act.