

From Edward Fitch to Dear Parents

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Lawrence Kansas Sept. 21, 1856

Dear Parents,

My last [letter] gave you particulars, I believe up to the time Gov. Geary arrived here and then I supposed the war ended for the present and a week ago tomorrow I sent a short note giving you a hint of what had happened since I had at that time some six or seven sheets full all ready to send to different persons which I did not send because I thought they might not get through and I have not sent them yet but expect to tomorrow. On Fri night a Mr[.] Adams who came from Penn. with Gov. 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

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 (as they said) to the camp of the main body six miles below but from other things we thought that they had gone up on the other side of the Wakarusa so we came back, getting 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 O'clock we discovered a flag flying on the top of the Blue Mound 8 miles from here toward Missouri. This mound can be seen for many miles each way. It is the highest point in Eastern Kansas, I suppose.

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. 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 O'clock 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 preparation 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 men rode to the front to meet them. We then took the two prisoners almost under the guns of the

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party. They 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 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 them 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, 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.

Tues morning those Ruffians rode on toward Lecompton. They began when they got 5 miles out stealing horses, stole two of Capt[.] [Transdren]. Came to a lame man who was so lame that he had to go on crutches. They took his two horses and when he remonstrated with them they shot him so that he died the next day. 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 army went back driving away with them some 150 head of cattle that they stole all around. Some parties dispersed in different directions toward different parts of the Territory, stealing and murdering as they went. 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.

Twenty dollars will not more than cover the actual loss of what they have stolen from me and fifty more won't pay for what I have lost by having to be away from my place for the last few weeks. The cattle & hogs of Pat Meairs have destroyed my crops. It is now generally believed that Gov. Geary is an enemy to [us] and that he has about the same as promised the ruffians that he will subdue us if they will keep away and that is the reason that they have gone off as peacefully as they have. His acts in the last week seem to show some thing like this and when I see a little more of them I will write again.