

## Statement of Wilson Shannon

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Governor Shannon; statement--

On or about the 24 of Nov. 1855, a difficulty took place between a pro slavery man by the name of Coleman and a Free State man by the name of Dow in relation to a claim which resulted in a encounter in which Coleman killed Dow. this gave rise to considerable excitement among the Free State people in that settlement which is known as the Hickory Point settlement. In this place there is about one hundred Free State and some 15 or 16 Pro Slavery families. The Excitement ran high and the Free State men threatened to take Coleman [*text stricken through*][,] try and hang him, without any legal judicial investigation by a Court and Jury of their own -- Buckley and Hargis[,], pro slavery men[,], two friends of Coleman -- and witnesses to the difficulty between himself and Dow--resided at Hickory Point.

Some time after the [*text stricken through*] killing of Dow, almost 74 men, [*text stricken through*] a portion of whom were residents of the town of Lawrence, went to Hickory Point to the residence of Hargis and demanded of these friends of Coleman what their evidence would be--they repeated the circumstances as they intended to state them--to this these Free State men, who were all armed with Sharpes rifles replied [*text stricken through*] (at the same time cocking their guns and pointing them at the hearts of Buckley and Hargis) what you say is [*text stricken through*] false, the circumstances are not so, we give you until [*text stricken through*] Monday to make a correct statement of the facts, [*text stricken through*] if you do not do it we will kill you (this was on Saturday)[.]

Before the time given arrived they burned down [*text stricken through*] the houses of Buckley & Hargis & Coleman. [*text stricken through*] in so doing they turned the family of [*text stricken through*] Buckley out of doors, [*text stricken through*] in this house [*text stricken through*] the clothing of the family [*text stricken through*] & furniture were

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burnt[,], in fact they escaped with nothing more than the clothing which they wore at the time when [this?] outrage was committed--(See Buckleys affidavit, as also that of Hargis--).

Terrified by these lawless proceedings, the 16 pro slavery families residing at Hickory Point, fled with their [*text stricken through*] women and children into Missouri, where their accounts of the treatment to which their friends had been subjected, [*text stricken through*] raised up [*text stricken through*] the most intense feelings of indignation and excitement in the breasts of the slave holding inhabitants of that state. From these stories, exaggerated as they spread, and it may be highly colored by these first narratives, the impression spread throughout the state of Missouri that the Free Statesmen of Kansas, armed with Sharpes rifles and revolvers[,], intended to expel the Pro Slavery men from the Territory by force.

it is [proper?] to [*text stricken through*] add that (it is alleged that individuals of the Free State party have [*text stricken through*] made such threats but as they do [*text stricken through*] not appear to have come from responsible individuals it would be unfair to suppose that this is the avowed purpose of that [*text stricken through*] party. In the mean time Buckley[,], Hargis & Coleman -- (who had fled [*text stricken through*] as soon as they could escape from the band who [*text stricken through*] were threatened their execution) made their way to the Executive Office at the Shawnee Mission in K.T.--to have an interview with myself. I was absent at the time[.] when I returned, Coleman had surrendered himself to Sheriff Jones who happened to be at the Mission [*text stricken through*]. Buckley & Hargis stated their grievance to me, and informed me that a man named Branson[,], a Free Statesman residing at Hickory Point with whom Dow (the person killed had resided) was one of the leaders of the band who had threatened and [*text stricken through*] sought to extort false evidence from them[.]

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Upon these representations I ordered Buckley to go before a magistrate--or any judicial officer of the Territory & make affidavit to the facts [text stricken through] as regarded the threats--of Branson--[text stricken through] obtain a peace warrant against [text stricken through] him [text stricken through] and have him [MS. illegible] [text stricken through] [over?] to keep the peace. As [text stricken through] Sheriff Jones was almost [starting?] with Coleman in custody, and Buckley and Hargis in [text stricken through] company on their way to [text stricken through] obtain a peace warrant against Branson, an express arrived from Hickory Point, which had ridden all night, [text stricken through] advising Coleman, and his two friends not to return to that settlement as they would certainly be killed by the Free State party. This came from a friend of Colemans.

Sheriff Jones, with much difficulty, and by guaranteeing their safety[,] persuaded them to accompany him to Lecompton the county seat of Douglas Co. in which all these difficulties have occurred, and [text stricken through] from whence, of course, it was necessary that the peace warrant should be signed. Buckley in pursuance with my advice went before a justice of the Peace, ([MS. blank] Cameron) made his affidavit against Branson and obtained a peace warrant which the Justice placed in the hands of Sheriff Jones for [execution?]. (Sheriff Jones summoned a posse of ten men, citizens of Douglas Co.)--

(Here copy from [MS. illegible])--

This rescue took place, [text stricken through] on Tuesday [text stricken through] at 2.A.M. The rescuing party then returned to Lawrence, where the[y] had a meeting at 8.A[.]M[.] on the same day. [text stricken through] At this meeting Branson, the prisoner [text stricken through] presided dressed as it is said in a military uniform, while [text stricken through] S.M. Wood, the leader and spokesman of the rescuing party, made speeches of an incendiary character, glorying in the temple of the Free Statemen over the laws of the

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Territory. Upon the same night, at about 8 O'clock I recd. a dispatch by express from Sheriff Jones (a copy of which is herewith forwarded) informing me that his prisoner, Branson had been arrested by an armed force[.]

This Express was brought by Mr[.] Hargis, who stated verbally at the same time, that the Free State party had that [day?] threatened to [text stricken through] rescue Coleman (then in the custody of Sheriff Jones) from the sheriff, [text stricken through] hang him and also take the life of Jones [text stricken through]. Jones [MS. illegible] asked [MS. illegible]. Jones letter was evidently written under considerably excitement and alarm.

As these facts had reached me in [text stricken through] an official manner, from sources of undoubted reliability, and were [MS. illegible] corroborated by much verbal testimony, as well as written intelligence I therefore felt it incumbent upon me to enforce the laws, and protect the [text stricken through] Sheriff and his prisoner from the violence and rescue which had been threatened, [text stricken through].

It seems proper for a full understanding of the [MS. illegible] which [text stricken through] actuated the course [text stricken through] that I felt compelled to adopt, to state, before proceeding further with the narrative of events, that I was aware that the Free State party had at various meetings [text stricken through] at Lawrence[,] at Big Spring and at Topeka passed resolutions denouncing the Territorial Legislation as an illegal [MS. illegible] body, having no power to enact laws and deciding that the laws so [text stricken through] enacted were [text stricken through] powerless, [text stricken through] void & of no effect, and furthermore that they tried, to quote from the resolution of the Big Spring meeting, resist them "even to [text stricken through] a bloody [MS. illegible]".

With all these facts before my mind I could not but believe that the [recent?] acts just committed by the Free State party were but the commencement

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of [text stricken through] a settled plan, [text stricken through] and determination to resist and bid defiance to the Territorial laws, in accordance with the resolutions just quoted.

Under all these circumstances I felt it to be my duty as the Governor of Kansas Territory to furnish Sheriff Jones with a sufficient Posse to carry out his instructions or [text stricken through] adopt the shameful alternative of leaving the Territorial Government in the hands of an armed and lawless mob. It may here be said that the Militia of Kansas were [text stricken through] then totally unorganized -the legislature had it is [true?] elected 2 Major Generals in the Southern and one in the Northern Division as well as some Brigadiers, but so far as the rank and file was concerned the organization was not even commenced.

With the view of furnishing the Sheriff with a sufficient force to carry out the serving of his [inst.?] [text stricken through] as well as to enable him to defend himself and his prisoner Coleman against the Free State party in Lawrence I issued orders to Major Genl[.] Richardson (then [residing?] ] in Doniphan Co.) to collect as large a force as he could in his Division and repair with his [text stricken through] men (with all practicable speed[]) to Lecompton, where he was directed to place his command under the orders of Sheriff Jones. This order resulted in the collection of from one to 2 hundred men.

Within six days from the date of my order, these men were [text stricken through] at Lecompton where Genl. Richardson placed himself and his command under the orders of the Sheriff[.] To the best of my [belief?] these men were all citizens of Kansas. The Southern Division of the militia being wholly unorganized I [MS. illegible]

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made a request to Brigr. Genl. Strickler (then residing at Tecumseh distant only [text stricken through] 12 miles from Lecompton) to [text stricken through] gather as many men as possible and report himself in the same manner as Genl. Richardson. This [text stricken through] request [text stricken through] bore the same date as Genl. Richardsons order & resulted in the [collection?] of [MS. illegible]. I presumed as a matter of course and intended that all these men should be drawn entirely from the Militia proper of Kansas Territory at that time as the seat of difficulty (Lawrence) is distant some 40 miles from the State Line of Missouri. it never for a moment occurred to me that the citizens of that state would cross into Kansas or volunteer their aid to carry out her laws. I at first presumed that the force collected under the orders issued to Genls. Richardson & Strickler would have been sufficient to have [enabled?] the sheriff to [text stricken through] perform the duties entrusted to him.

Upon the concentrations of the forces [text stricken through] under Genls. Richardson & Strickler at Lecompton[,] the Free State party [text stricken through] amounting in all to about 250 men, concentrated [text stricken through] their people in the lines of Lawrence until their reported strength reached an aggregate of 600 men, [text stricken through] armed, as [text stricken through] was undoubtedly [ascertained?] with Sharpes rifles, and [text stricken through] Revolvers. This would give [text stricken through] the Free Statesmen an advantage of 350 men [text stricken through] not to mention that which they derived from the [text stricken through] [MS. illegible] superiority of the repeating arms, with which they were amply furnished. while [text stricken through] Genl. Richardson forces were properly supplied with [text stricken through] fowling pieces, some few having pistols and bowie knives.

I can thus account for the intense excitement generated by these events among the pro slavery men in Missouri which finally

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resulted in their flocking to the aid of the upholders of Territorial law in Kansas. [text stricken through] Missouri has 50000 slaves [text stricken through] in the upper portions of state [borders?] upon the frontiers of Kansas Territory. these slaves [text stricken through] may be estimated at 30 millions of dollars. should Kansas become a free state it would be ruinous to the slave holding interests of Missouri. these facts are well known, to every [planter?] in the state. their slaves have been tampered with and run off by Abolitionists--they have listened to the stories of men[,] women and children who have fled from their [text stricken through] houses in Kansas Territory from which they [text stricken through] had been driven by the threats, and violence of the Free State party. Even granting that these stories were [text stricken through] exaggerated by the fancy or indignation of these narrators there was still enough of truth [text stricken through] in the representations, to excite a smoldering fire of wrath, which only required some new outrage to fan it into an unextinguishable flame.

And this came at length in the [text stricken through] reports from Lawrence. [Men?] heard that law was set at defiance, that the Sheriff of the county, a Virginia gentleman well known and highly esteemed and moreover a pro slavery man, was threatened with death by an armed Abolition mob--they heard too (for when did a rumor even lose strength as it flies) that that mob were fortifying themselves[,] drilling day by day, were throwing up entrenchments[,] were amply provided with the most deadly weapons which modern [skill?] could desire. they learned to[o] that this was no difficulty [born?] [text stricken through] of excitement and [which?] by the passion of an [hour?], it was [text stricken through] understood to be a cold blooded, long foreseen and carefully prepared for thing, and what

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has been the result--the gathering within camp at Wakarusa may best answer the question[.]

Missouri sent not only her young [text stricken through] men with the [fire?] of their years in their veins, but her gray headed citizens were there [text stricken through][,] men whose hair had been whitened by the suns of 70 winters--men too who brought with them not only their sons but even their grandsons to the fight and what was the [standing?] of these men. they had been [MS. illegible] the excitement was intense, they would come, and what course was there left for me to pursue to avoid a collision which must have been [sanguinary?] in the extreme. My policy was therefore to place these men under military control so as to bring them directly under my own guidance and authority[.]

this was only to be accomplished by [text stricken through] [preventing?] [text stricken through] a continuance of the [text stricken through] course which had already been adopted, without my knowledge, by Genl. Richardson & Strickler, that is to say the men were [MS. illegible] as they came [text stricken through] into the already organized command. [text stricken through] a [portion?] of these men, [text stricken through] who were mostly from Jackson Co[.] Mo., reported themselves to Sheriff Jones by giving in a list of their names, as willing to serve in his posse, [text stricken through] and he after taking legal advice upon the question, decided to receive them and they were accordingly enrolled. It was decided that he had a right to employ them upon the ground that being present in the [text stricken through] county the Sheriff [text stricken through] might demand their services for the preservation of law and order--and if they chose to act their service would be legal[.]

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The pro slavery forces this collected including the militia [text stricken through] amounted on the 1st or 2d of Dec. [text stricken through] (as it was then stated to me [text stricken through] at the Shawnee Mission.) to about 1500 men and that about an equal number of Free State men had concentrated in Lawrence. I became satisfied that in all probability a deadly collision must take place and that the only way to avoid that collision was to request the aid of the Genl. Government. [text

*stricken through*] To obtain this I telegraphed on the 2d of Dec[.] from Kansas City Mo. to President Pierce [*text stricken through*] that I requested to be authorized to call [MS. illegible] upon Col. Sumner, at Ft[.] Leavenworth, for military aid as would enable me [*text stricken through*] [to] preserve the peace of the Territory. I also despatched a messenger to Col. Sumner [2d?] Cavalry, at Ft[.] Leavenworth notifying him of what I had done and requesting him to hold himself in readiness in case [*text stricken through*] the orders should be recd. to this he promptly replied that he would be ready to come with his command at a moments warning so soon as the requisite [*text stricken through*] instructions should be recd.

On the [5th?] of Dec. (the [*text stricken through*] telegraph lines were down between Lexington & Jefferson City Mo. and my despatch had therefore to go by special messenger [*text stricken through*] for that distance) [*text stricken through*] I recd. a reply dated on the 4th from the President stating that the Executive would use all the power in his possession to preserve order in the Territory and to enforce the execution of the Laws, and as soon as the proper orders could be made out at the War Dept. they would be transmitted[.]

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I immediately forwarded a copy of [*text stricken through*] the Presidents telegraph despatch to Col. Sumner, requesting him to march (on the strength of that despatch) to march with his command to the Delaware crossing of Kansas 12 miles above its [mouth?], at which point I would meet him and accompany his command to the scene of difficulty. Col. Sumner replied that he would do so as it was a case of extreme emergency. (I had written him that time was everything[,]) that things were rapidly coming to a crisis--[.]

About this time a committee waited upon me from Lawrence--Messrs. [Lowry?] and Babcock (both Free State men, and representing the Lawrence people--[.] they stated that they were surrounded by a body of armed men who were threatening to demolish their town, and requested me to exercise my authority to preserve peace and save the city--they produced a letter signed by the leading men of Lawrence, a copy of which is appended. Finding that [*text stricken through*] affairs in Lawrence and its vicinity were so fast reaching [*text stricken through*] their crisis I determined to repair immediately, in person, to the scene of action. I therefore wrote another communication to Col. Sumner, apologizing to him for not meeting him at the Delaware Congress as I had promised and adding that as I was going to push on ahead I hoped that he would follow as rapidly as possible. I had wished to have had his troops stationed in Lawrence. I knew if that could be affected it would present an attack.

On the [*text stricken through*] night [previous?] to [my?] leaving for Lawrence I sent a special messenger with three separate despatches to Gl. Richardson

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and Strickler and Sheriff Jones, to permit no attack or [disorder?] of any kind. At 1/2 past 3 P.M. on the 6th of Dec[.] I left Shawnee Mission, went into Westport, Mo. and [*text stricken through*] requested Col. Boone (a grandson of Col. Boone of [*text stricken through*] [Frontier memory?]-- to accompany me to Lawrence. my object in [*text stricken through*] taking [MS. illegible] was to [*text stricken through*] avail myself of his influence to aid me in controlling the forces which were then [*text stricken through*] in the vicinity of Lawrence[.] His [MS. illegible] with the leading men of [*text stricken through*] pro slavery men of Missouri and Kansas, who were then surrounding [*text stricken through*] Lawrence [MS. illegible] [*text stricken through*] him to restrain the volunteers.

Shortly after leaving West Port we met a despatch from Col. Sumner stating that upon reflection [*text stricken through*] he had concluded [*text stricken through*] not to march until his orders for the War Dept[.] were recd. he then proceeded as rapidly as possible to the Wakarusa Camp & reached there about 3 O'clock [*text stricken through*] on the morning of the 7th.

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Strickler would have been sufficient to have protected the Sheriff in performing the duties entrusted to him but upon the concentration of the forces under *[text stricken through]* these officers at Lecompton *[text stricken through]* giving us a total of some 250 men, The Free State Party *[text stricken through]* collected their people in the town of Lawrence until their reported strength reached an aggregate of 600 men, armed as was undoubtedly *[MS. torn]* with Sharpes rifles and revolvers. This would have

*[rest of page missing]*

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*[text stricken through]* to the W. camp which I reached, about *[MS. illegible]* 10.P.M. *[text stricken through]*. I immediately sought an interview *[text stricken through]* with the leading men of that camp, *[text stricken through]* stated to them the result of my visit to L[.] *[text stricken through]* and informed them of what the camp at Lawrence would and would not do, in the matter under consideration *[So?]* *[text stricken through]* a *[MS. illegible]* of the W. Camp, *[text stricken through]* the terms offered by the Lawrence people was wholly unsatisfactory, but a *[member?]* of the leading men *[text stricken through]* although *[dissatisfied?]* with the terms offered agreed to use their influence with their companies to induce their immediate and peaceable *[text stricken through]*, withdrawal.

At 1.A.M. I learned from a reliable source that a plan was in fact to raise the "black flag" with a view of throwing off the authorities of the Territorial Exect[.] & its *[officers?]*, and attacking L. upon this one responsibility[.]

I renewed my endeavors, and with the leading men did all in our power to dissuade them from so *[text stricken through]* unauthorized a movement. On the morning of the 9th things looked still worse. I was advised by a prominent man that unless the arms were given up an attack would be made, and that I had better *[MS. illegible]* keep out of danger. My reply was that I would consider any such attack upon the population which had been made by the *[MS. illegible]*, as entirely unjustifiable, and that I should use every means in my power to *[prevent]* it.