



The Liberator of Kansas: Life of James H. Lane

John Speer

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James Lane left a lasting impression on Kansas and American politics of the 1850s and 1860s. As a partisan during the violent years of Bleeding Kansas before the American Civil War, he was an ardent opponent of slavery and a proponent of Kansas statehood as a free state. He was one of the first senators from Kansas.

Passionate, fiery, and dedicated to causes, when war came, Lane served the Union cause as a general. He raised the Kansas Brigade of volunteers, which was disbanded after Lane was severely criticized for the sacking of the town of Osceola. This raid became novelized in a story that formed the basis of the movie, "The Outlaw Josey Wales."

In 1862, U.S. Senator Lane recruited the 1st Regiment Kansas Volunteer Infantry (Colored). William Quantrill's Raiders made a raid on pro-Union Lawrence, Kansas with the intention of capturing or killing Lane. He escaped through his cornfield.

After fighting in the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the battles in Kansas, Lane's controversial life came to a sad end when he committed suicide in 1866. This story of his life is told by his friend, John Speer.

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