

**Volume 17**

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**A House Divided: (37): Kansas'  
Competing Constitutions - I**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is *A House Divided*.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In 1854 Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It established the principle of majority determination. Whoever got there first with the most in population could go a long way in**

**determining whether a territory would enter the Union free or slave. In 1855 pro-slave partisans jumped across the Missouri border and quickly elected a pro-slavery legislature and passed a draconian slave code which proscribed the death penalty for certain types of anti-slavery activity.**

**Free-soilers were late in coming but, by the beginning of 1857, the population of the territory of Kansas was had a two-to-one majority of those opposed to slavery. Nevertheless, pro-slavers refused to give up control of the so-called “official” legislature or the election machinery thereby to continue their domination of**

**territorial affairs.**

**In Washington, the newly inaugurated Buchanan administration sent Robert J. Walker in as Territorial Governor to clean up the mess, but though he was a Southerner, he could see that any uncorrupt election would yield a free Kansas. He proposed a clean referendum and was backed by Buchanan. Southern Democrats back East hit the ceiling and accused Buchanan and Walker of betrayal. They were determined to insure that Kansas would come in as a slave state whether the majority in the territory wanted it or not. Next time: competing constitutions.**

# **In Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

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**Nichols, Alice. *Bleeding Kansas*. New York: Oxford University, Press, 1954.**

**<http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/ransom.civil.war.us>**

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