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**A House Divided: (36): Kansas'
Competing Constitutions - II**

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: With a pro-slavery legislature in LeCompton representing a decided minority and a large anti-slavery population demanding a free and clear referendum on statehood, Kansas

in 1857 was a deep trouble.

When Kansans went to the polls that year to elect a legislature, the initial returns seemed to indicate a huge pro-slavery victory. Then state authorities began reviewing results and discovered that two distant districts with only 130 actual voters returned almost 2900 ballots. In reality, local election officials had copied 1600 names from a Cincinnati city directory.

Governor Walker threw out the results and seated a powerfully free-state legislature in LeCompton. In the meantime, the overwhelmingly pro-slave constitutional convention had

produced a constitution for submission with the state's petition for statehood that not surprisingly asserted that the right of property (slaves) is higher than any constitutional sanction. I denied that any change to the constitution could be made for seven years and that no change could be made that might threaten slave ownership.

The new free soil legislature proceeded to write its own Constitution without the egregious pro-slavery provisions. The result was that two constitutions arrived in Washington and the fate of Kansas shift back to a hopelessly deadlocked Congress. Next time: The free state of Kansas.

In Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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