

**Volume 17**

**Number 023**

**A House Divided: (35) Mr. Brooks'  
Cane - 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: All during the winter and spring of 1856, the major topic of political discussion and anger in the United States was Kansas. Two years before, the Kansas Nebraska Act had enshrined the concept of**

majority choice as to whether a state would come into the Union as slave or free. In Washington there was gridlock. Free soil Republicans controlled the U.S. House and pro-slavery Democrats, the U.S. Senate. Neither side would yield and allow the other to admit Kansas as either slave or free. Therefore, partisans on both sides of the slave issue flooded on to the distant prairie to force a reality that could not be worked out politically in Washington. Kansas became “Bloody Kansas.” Both sides committed atrocities, but the pro-slavery forces seemed particularly vicious and played into the hands of the free state propagandists who were

**determined to have Kansas be free.**

**Through all this U.S. Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was stewing. He saw the way Kansas was being torn apart as outrageous and determined to have his say. Over two days, May 19-20, 1856, he rose in the Senate and delivered an impassioned but hardly politic address, “The Crime Against Kansas,” In it he derided “murderous robbers from Missouri,” “hirelings picked from the drunken spew and vomit of an uneasy civilization” who had ‘raped a virgin territory, forcing it to embrace slavery.’**

**I was an awful speech, with**

**rhetoric designed to enflame not engage. Even Republican reaction was muted. What happened after that, however, made Sumner a hero. Next time: Mr. Brooks' cane.**

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

**Resources**

**Catton, Bruce. *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*. New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1960, 1988.**

**Donald, David. *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War*. New York, Knopf, 1960.**

**Gienapp, William E. "The Crime Against Sumner: The Caning of Charles Sumner and the Rise of the Republican Party," *Chronicle of Civil War History* 25 (1979): 230-232.**

**Mayer, George H. *The Republican Party, 1854-1966*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.**

**McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.**

**Nichols, Alice. *Bleeding Kansas*. New York: Oxford**

**University, Press, 1954.**

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

**Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.**