

Crawford vs. Clarke-Background Material

George A. Crawford

George A. Crawford, a well-known editor and public man and several times a gubernatorial candidate, was born in Clinton County, Pennsylvania on July 27, 1827, of Scotch-Irish-German stock. After receiving an academic education and graduating from Jefferson College, he taught school in Kentucky and Mississippi, when he returned to Pennsylvania to study law. While still reading for the bar, he became editor and proprietor of the Clinton Democrat. During the early years he took an active part in politics against the Know-Nothings and in 1855 was a delegate to the Pennsylvania Democratic State Convention. In the spring of 1857, he came to Kansas; landed at Leavenworth and accompanied Dr. Norman Eddy, United States commissioner for the sale of Indian lands, to Lawrence. Crawford, Eddy, and other associates purchased 520 acres of land and organized the Fort Scott Town Company, of which Mr. Crawford was made president, a position he held for twenty years. He was opposed to the agitation kept up by the border factions but did not change his free-state views and several attempts were made to assassinate him.

George W. Clarke

George W. Clarke came to Kansas in 1855. He was a Pottawatomie Indian agent, slave owner, and ardent slavery supporter. Clarke was also a notorious pro-slavery leader during the "Border Wars" period of Kansas's history, when opposing forces sought control over the state based on the issue of slavery. Clarke had been suspected of killing a free-state man, Thomas W. Barber, near Lawrence in 1855 during the Wakarusa War but was never convicted. In the fall of 1856, Clarke led a party of 400 Missouri Border Ruffians into Linn County on the eastern edge of the state, where, in the words of a fellow pro-slavery man, they "plundered, robbed and burned out of house and home nearly every Free-state family in Linn County, while [Clarke's] hands were steeped in innocent blood, and the light of burning buildings marked his course."

In 1857, Clarke began work as register in the U. S. Land office in Fort Scott under the name of William H. Doak, because he was under indictment for the murder of Thomas Barber. His appointment was very displeasing to the free state men. Clarke led the border ruffians in Fort Scott. He and his men developed a hatred for George Crawford and his men. Clarke slapped Crawford on the face at one point in the early spring and Brockett hit Dimon with a chair. Crawford was a free stater, but he had several friends who were conservative proslavers. Together they formed a coalition against the radicals on both sides. Clarke was an extreme proslavery advocate, and often used violent means to achieve his goals. A rift had developed between Clarke and Crawford because Clarke tried to interfere with the business of the Town Company, of which Crawford was president. The rift continued until April 27 when Clarke tried to make good a threat against Crawford's life.

April 1858

As noted above, trouble began between Crawford and Clarke in the early spring of 1858 with a feud that developed in the Fort Scott Town Company. George W. Clarke was continually concocting some scheme to its injury, and on several occasions in Trustee meetings an angry debate occurred, in which George W. Clarke and George A. Crawford were the principal opposing disputants.

By April of 1858, things had heated to a boil and several incidents converged to create a volatile situation in Fort Scott.

1. Montgomery and his men began driving pro-slavery settlers from farms along the Osage and then the Marmaton Rivers. While active along the Marmaton about twelve miles west of Fort Scott, they engaged U.S. Cavalry troops under Captain Anderson at Paint Creek. When encountered by the troops, Montgomery and his men withdrew to a position along Paint Creek. The soldiers pursued them; Montgomery told them to stop; the soldiers and Montgomery's men exchanged gunfire. Two of Montgomery's men were injured in the exchange. Among the soldiers, two were injured, several horses were shot, the horse belonging to Captain Anderson was killed, and most significantly, gunfire claimed the life of one soldier, Alvin Satterwaite.
2. A series of resolutions, purported to have been written by Montgomery, threatens the life of nearly every proslavery man in Fort Scott, including Captain Anderson and his soldiers. Some evidence suggests that this document was forged by the border ruffians.
3. In retaliation, border ruffians (*radical proslavery men*) began attacking the farms of free state men along the Marmaton River. Some of Captain Anderson's soldiers joined in on this raid.
4. The editor of the Fort Scott Newspaper writes a letter to the territorial governor, recommending the removal of Clarke from his position at the land office.
5. A young man by the name of Potts is arrested as a spy and is accused of carrying messages between Crawford and Montgomery. He was supposedly executed by the ruffians.

The Crawford Incident

Using the Potts affair as a catalyst, Clarke and his men made their move on Crawford while he was a guest at the Fort Scott (Free State) Hotel; they commenced an attack on Crawford but were thwarted by Judge Williams and Marshall Little. The next day, the ruffians sent a letter to Crawford signed by George Hamilton. The letter invited George Crawford, William Gallaher, and Charles Dimon to leave town in twenty-four hours. Crawford refused, said "I don't exchange messages with horse thieves." (*It is not clear whether he was referring to the border ruffians as horse thieves, or to the allegations that he was trading messages with Montgomery*). He then gathered his friends around him and prepared for an attack.

It was now plain that Crawford & Co. or Hamilton & Co. must go. Crawford & Co. decided to stay, let the consequences be what they might. It was not long before the new state of affairs was generally understood, and a force of about twenty-five well-armed men collected to prevent the execution of the Brockett-Hamilton programme.

On account of the killing of young Satterwaite the week previous, it was feared the soldiers would take sides with Hamilton's crowd, but investigation proved that only three had been induced to do so. John Little and B. F. Brantley arrayed themselves on the side of Mr. Crawford, as did also Capt. Anderson and all of his soldiers except these three. Next morning, when they were found to be missing, a Sergeant with a guard was detailed to find them. The Sergeant proceeded to the Western Hotel, where he found Brockett and demanded of him the deserters. Brockett at first flatly refused to surrender them, but the Sergeant, who with his men was well armed, told Brockett he should have the deserters, even if he had to tear down the hotel to get them. Brockett yielded, the men were taken to camp, given their breakfast, and ordered by their comrades to leave town within one hour, under penalty of death. This order they promptly obeyed.

The forces of moderation prevailed and many of the border ruffians left town. It is not certain whether Clarke also left. If he did, he returned shortly because he was arrested and promptly released during an incident involving Montgomery in May of 1858. After some effort, Crawford was successful in having Clarke removed from office in August of 1858, at which time Clarke apparently left Fort Scott for good.

In a 1904 interview, a Judge Margrave gave the following account of George W. Clarke during this period: "[He] was practically registrar of the land office but there was a story afloat, and I guess it was true, that he had killed somebody up near Lecompton and the government wouldn't appoint him directly but appointed somebody else and Clarke performed the duties." Clarke continued his pro-slavery activities in Fort Scott and in nearby Missouri until he was finally driven out of the state and into southwestern Missouri in August 1858. "[Clarke] was a border ruffian of the worst kind," recalled Margrave in 1904. "If he wasn't killed before he got away from Kansas it was a mistake on the part of the people who knew him."

Brockett, Hamilton, and most of the other border ruffians left Fort Scott for good and were not again heard of there until after the Marais des Cygnes massacre, in which they played a leading part.

Crawford vs. Clarke-Narration

On April 27, Clarke tried to make good a threat against Crawford's life. It was rumored that a spy, Mr. Potts, had been carrying messages between Crawford and Montgomery. Clarke used this rumor to convince his friends Brockett, Hamelton, and others in joining him in his quest to get rid of Crawford.

Clarke and his men made their move on Crawford while he was a guest at the Fort Scott (Free State) Hotel; they attempted an attack on Crawford but were stopped by Judge Williams and Marshall Little. Brockett even aimed a gun at the Judge's chest, but the Judge stood firm. The next day, the ruffians sent a letter to Crawford signed by George Hamilton. The letter invited George Crawford, William Gallaher, and Charles Dimon to leave town in twenty-four hours. Crawford refused, crumpled the letter, and said, "I don't exchange messages with horse thieves." He then gathered his friends around him and prepared for an attack. Twenty-five men stood with Crawford as did Captain Anderson and most of his soldiers.

However, three soldiers had been discovered going around with the border ruffians as they drove free state settlers out of their homes. These three soldiers were dealt with severely. Their fellow soldiers took them at the Western Hotel, where Brockett was hiding them. The three soldiers were taken to camp, given their breakfast, and ordered by their comrades to leave town within one hour, under penalty of death. This order they promptly obeyed.

Crawford and his friends prevailed and many of the border ruffians left town. Brockett, Hamilton, and most of the other border ruffians left Fort Scott for good and were not again heard of there until after the Marais des Cygnes massacre, in which they played a leading part. Of Clarke, it was said that "he was a border ruffian of the worst kind." and that "if he wasn't killed before he got away from Kansas it was a mistake on the part of the people who knew him."

Crawford vs. Clarke-Historic Document (optional)

Instructions to the reader: Read everything that is printed in blue.

List of resolutions supposedly made by Montgomery's men after the Battle of Paint Creek

WHEREAS, A body of Government soldiers and border ruffians did, on April 21st. fire upon some Free-State citizens, who were peacefully traveling on the highway, and being incited to commit *this* outrageous and unlawful act by other ruffians living in Fort Scott;

Resolved,

1. That Judge Joseph Williams, the corrupt tool of *Slavery*, be required to leave this Territory in six days; after that period, he remains at the peril of his life.
2. That Dr. Blake Little, J. C. Sims and W. T. Campbell, the traitors who were elected by fraud and corruption to the bogus Legislature, be required to leave within six days
3. That H. T. Wilson, G. P. Hamilton and D. F. Greenwood, the swindlers of the Lecompton Convention, who forged a *bad* constitution, be hung to death if they are caught in this Territory ten days from date.
4. That E. Ransom and G. W. Clarke,, have six days to leave this Territory, under penalty of death.
5. That J. H. Little, James Jones, Brockett, B. McDonald, A. Campbell, Harlan, and the ruffians who accompanied the soldiers to assist and witness the massacre of Free-State citizens, be sentenced to death.
6. That Kennedy Williams and D. Sullivan, who *through legal means* stole horses of Free-State citizens, be sentenced to whipping and branding and then be driven from the Territory.
7. That after the departure of the Judge and Marshal, no other officers shall be allowed to administer the law but those elected under the Free-State constitution.
8. That Judge Griffith, Maj. Montgomery and Capt. Hamilton be directed to carry out the orders of this meeting.
9. That Capt. Anderson shall be hanged to the highest tree in Bourbon County, and every soldier put to death wherever he may be found.
10. That a copy of this notice be served on the people of Fort Scott.

This document has been edited for clarity.

Cast of Characters-Instructions for Placement-Props Needed

Crawford vs. Clarke

Setting

Free State Hotel April 1858

Characters

- George Crawford-Stands on second floor on porch facing parade ground. He holds a crumpled-up piece of paper and has the hand with the paper raised in the air.-Wears hat.
- Dimon-Stands beside Crawford on porch facing parade ground with gun. Wears hat and carries gun.
- Judge Williams-Stands on officers' row facing parade ground in front of officer's quarters-Wears top hat.
- Marshal Little-Stands next to Judge facing parade ground, holding and aiming a gun-Wears hat and carries gun
- Brockett-Stands facing Judge Williams with gun pointed at Judge's chest.-Wears hat and carries gun.
- Hamelton-Stands next to Brockett, facing same way and aims gun. Wears hat and carries gun
- Clarke-Stands behind Brockett and Hamelton facing same direction. Holds gun-Wears hat and carries g
- Gallaher-Stands on porch with Dimon and Crawford facing parade ground with gun-Wears hat and carries gun.
- Captain Anderson-Stands on porch with Crawford but somewhat separated-Wears hat and carries gun.
- Soldiers-Three soldiers stand a fair distance back from Clarke, Brockett, and Hamelton. -All have guns and soldier hats.

Reader

- Montgomery- A student reads portions of the document threatening practically every person in town purported to have been written by Montgomery-Reader wears hat.

Props Needed

- Nine Civilian Hats
- Four Soldier Hats
- Ten Guns
- Crumpled up Paper

Materials Needed

- Historic Document
- Placement Map
- Narration