

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Dissertations, Theses, & Student Research,  
Department of History

History, Department of

---

Spring 4-13-2015

# Philanthropy and The New England Emigrant Aid Company, 1854-1900

Courtney Elizabeth Buchkoski  
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historydiss>



Part of the [History of Gender Commons](#), [Intellectual History Commons](#), [United States History Commons](#), and the [Women's History Commons](#)

---

Buchkoski, Courtney Elizabeth, "Philanthropy and The New England Emigrant Aid Company, 1854-1900" (2015). *Dissertations, Theses, & Student Research, Department of History*. 81.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historydiss/81>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, & Student Research, Department of History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Philanthropy and The New England Emigrant Aid Company, 1854-1900.

By

Courtney Buchkoski

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: History

Under the Supervision of Professor Kenneth Winkle

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2015

PHILANTHROPY AND THE NEW ENGLAND EMIGRANT AID COMPANY, 1854-  
1900.

Courtney Buchkoski, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2015

Advisor: Kenneth Winkle

This project examines the New England Emigrant Aid Company colonization of Kansas in 1854 as a solution to the growing debate over popular sovereignty and slave labor. It uses the Company as a lens to reinterpret the intellectual history of philanthropy, tracing its roots from Puritan ideas of charity to the capitalistic giving of the nineteenth century.

It argues that the Company's vision was simultaneously capitalistic and moralistic, for it served both as an imposition of "proper" society upon the West and South, but also had the potential to benefit the donors financially and politically. Using a settler colonial framework, it examines how domestic colonization project created hierarchical relationships between white men, Native Americans, women, and freed slaves. This includes an examination of how the seemingly liberal idea of philanthropy resulted in the removal of Native Americans from Kansas in the 1850s and discouraged the entry of freed slaves into the territory, despite the Company's moral claims. It also studies the NEEAC's expansion into Florida, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia, both before and after the Civil War. Finally, this project examines the public memorialization of the NEEAC and Bleeding Kansas.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to extend special thanks to my advisor, Kenneth Winkle, as well as my committee members, Margaret Jacobs and Timothy Mahoney, for their guidance and support on this project.

Special thanks go to my family for their continued support during this project. Thank you for remaining curious in my ideas, and Jessica, thank you for all of the long hours you spent editing drafts.

And to John, this project truly would not have been possible without your humor, critique, and encouragement. *Caritatem fraternitatis invicem diligentes, honore invicem praevenientes, sollicitudine non pigri, spiritu ferventes, Domino servientes...*



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	pg 1
Chapter One: Ideological Origins.....	pg 10
Chapter Two: Settlement.....	pg 31
Chapter Three: Beyond Kansas.....	pg 56
Chapter Four: Memory of the NEEAC.....	pg 83
Conclusion.....	pg 105
Bibliography.....	pg 108

### List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Samuel Seymour, “War Dance in the Interior of a Konza Lodge,” 1820...pg. 54

Figure 2: Titan Ramsay Peale, “Movable Tent Lodges of the Kaskaias” 1822.....pg. 54.

Figure 3: Banknote from Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory, 1856. Kansas State Historical Society.....pg. 55.

Figure 4: Wyandott contract, 1856. Kansas State Historical Society.....pg. 55.

Figure 5: Kansas land claim debt, James Emery Papers, 1859. Kansas State Historical Society.....pg. 55.

## Introduction

As Eli Thayer neared the end of his life, long after the Civil War and political reconstruction ended, he continued to defend an institution created in his youth. The New England Emigrant Aid Company (NEEAC), which was still in the process of trying to colonize Florida, had begun nearly thirty years earlier in the town of Worcester, Massachusetts when Thayer had been struck by a divine vision. A zealous—and sometimes overbearing—man, in his youth Thayer chased his ideological dreams with a passion. A man of fire and brimstone, but also capitalism, Thayer embodied a long forgotten nineteenth century variant of philanthropy, which heartily mixed financial improvements with moral ones. He summarized the accomplishments of the NEEAC, which gathered hundreds of followers, thusly:

1. It stopped the making of Slave States.
2. It made the Republican Party.
3. It nearly elected Fremont and did elect Lincoln.
4. It united and solidified the Northern states against slavery, and was a necessary training, to enable them to subdue the Rebellion.
5. It drove the slave-holders, through desperation, into secession.
6. It has given us a harmonious and enduring Union.
7. It has emancipated the white race of the South, as well as the negroes, from the evils of Slavery.
8. It is even now regenerating the South.<sup>1</sup>

The NEEAC, Thayer claimed, achieved its success because of Northern superiority, and the power of free labor. Born and raised in Massachusetts, Thayer attended Brown University, where he subscribed to the liberal progressivism of the Unitarian faith. He then spent the majority of the 1840s founding and running the Oread Institute, one of the first collegiate programs for women. In 1853, Thayer joined the state legislature, and by 1854 he presented his bill for the New England Emigrant Aid Company (NEEAC) to the Massachusetts State

---

<sup>1</sup>Eli Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company, and Its Influence, Through the Kansas Contest, Upon National History* (Worcester, Mass: F.P. Rice, 1887), 47.

Legislature. Like many Americans Thayer found the national tensions over slavery to be an unavoidable problem, especially when the Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed the two newly formed territories to decide via popular sovereignty the legality of slavery within their borders. Many Northerners disparaged the Act for its direct contradiction of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited slavery in the Louisiana Territory north of the thirty-sixth parallel. Foreseeing the eruption of sectional challenges, Thayer reasoned that organizing a Northern emigration to the region would swing the vote toward the addition of a Free State to the Union.<sup>2</sup> A full month before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Thayer launched his plan for an Emigrant Aid Company to the State Legislature of Massachusetts. He planned to create a society that would colonize Kansas with Northern settlers who possessed “the highest types of Christian manhood” to “prepare a way for a civilized community.”<sup>3</sup> On April 26, 1854, he received the Governor’s signature on the Company’s charter, but by June his Massachusetts funding fell through. He sought his final charter from the Connecticut legislature, which allowed the company up to five million dollars worth of revenue toward colonization.<sup>4</sup> The legislature’s astronomical five million dollar cap on the organization created phenomenal propagandist hype, and when Southerners saw such massive funding provided by a Northern state government for the colonization of Kansas, the sectional conflict over the region erupted into a political upheaval that dominated the entire session of Congress in 1854, 1856, and 1858.<sup>5</sup> This violent conflict known as Bleeding Kansas bluntly foreshadowed the violence of the Civil War and escalated mounting sectional tensions. In the midst of this conflict, Thayer believed that the transference of Northern morality, rooted in the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening and the superiority

---

<sup>2</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade: Its Friends and its Foes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1889), 18.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Tribune*, May 30, 1854; Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that corporations in this period were often chartered by states for very limited purposes that encompassed both (but not exclusively) monetary and moral endeavors.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Miner, *Seeding Civil War: Kansas in the National News* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2008), 1.

of a free labor economy, would triumph in a nonviolent colonization of the West and ultimately the South.

By tracing how Thayer and the many other members of the NEEAC thought about philanthropy and colonization before and after the Civil War, we are able to understand a fundamental ideological thread in Northern culture. The idea of using New England philanthropy to civilize the West and South was steeped in years of intellectual debate, and the project came to revolutionize and typify a new way to incite a moral crusade. While various personalities and organizations offered solutions to the central antebellum conflict over slave labor, the NEEAC mobilized New Englanders to fund, both by capitalistic investment and donation, a northern emigration to secure Kansas from pro-slavery interests. They sought to impose their “vision of good society” upon the undecided, uncivilized West by implanting Northern ideals of anti-slavery, temperance, education, and religion upon the current inhabitants. As the company successfully transplanted thousands of Northerners into the West over its first few years, the goals of their philanthropy expanded. The company reasoned that if the West could be civilized, why not pour Northern intellect and money into the South, where the evils of slave labor stifled the economy and the morality of its inhabitants? Even after the war, the Company continued to push their agenda into other ideological frontiers, including Florida and Oregon.

The idea that money should be distributed to those in need was an idea as old as the nation itself. Puritan theology focused on providing charity on an individual basis to those who deserved it—widows and orphans—but spurned those they deemed lazy or unworthy, often able bodied men. Puritan charity relied on the donor knowing the recipient well enough to judge whether they deserved aid. As the population of the Massachusetts Bay Colony increased exponentially over the next century, however, individualized charity became more difficult to

maintain, especially with the emergence of urban areas. By the nineteenth century, the idea of philanthropy, a sort of collective charity, sprang forth from its earlier roots. Philanthropy allowed members of society to donate money to a cause they deemed moral, but put the responsibility of finding the recipient in the hands of the company.<sup>6</sup>

This idea germinated in the heart of the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening, when the Protestant majority threw off the shackles of Calvinistic predestination in favor of a more Arminian belief in the power to earn their own salvation. This religious revivalism fundamentally changed the landscape of Northern culture and played a pivotal role in the emergence of Thayer's colonization scheme. As the nineteenth century progressed and industrialism flourished, Americans struggled with the growing pains of self-definition, particularly when it came to their morality. America's battle to define its morality was daunting, particularly for those who saw the promises of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence contradicted in the legal practice of slavery. The moral difficulty was exacerbated by a massive population boom between the Revolution and 1845, which expanded America's population from two and half million to twenty million people.<sup>7</sup> Many new immigrants from rural areas settled in newly industrialized Northern cities, and as city populations grew, so did crime, alcoholism, and other such vices that had previously gone unnoticed by the mostly rural religious majority. This apparent increase in sin and immorality led to a movement that Nathan Hatch described as "religious populism."<sup>8</sup> Religious populism challenged individuals on issues of morality, sin, and most importantly slavery. It was a grassroots movement of people toward moral change and served as "an inhibitor of genteel tradition and a recurring source of new

---

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie, *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 3.

religious movements.”<sup>9</sup> The seed of this new revivalism, and the advent of the Second Great Awakening, lay in the struggle between Calvinistic and Enlightenment rationalist views of religion. While the former stressed natural depravity and God’s wrath, the latter focused on innate goodness, free will, and reasonableness.<sup>10</sup>

This desire not merely with achieving personal salvation but also with shaping the morality of the surrounding world stemmed at least in part from the rising popularity of millennialism. Millennialism in the Second Great Awakening suggested that if people collectively behaved correctly, they could facilitate the Second Coming of Christ. Various strains of millennialism also held that the Second Coming would incite a golden age of a thousand year period during which Jesus would rule the Earth, a notion that Baptist minister William Miller further intensified with his prediction that the Second Coming would occur in 1843. The fervor of the Second Coming of Christ mixed with the Second Great Awakening’s emphasis on free will excited notions by the religious to not only expunge themselves of personal sin, but to eradicate collective sin via spirited opposition to immorality.

The principles that the Second Great Awakening emphasized were free will, the purification of national sins, and the immediacy of salvation, which played a fundamental role in shaping Thayer’s ideas about the colonization of Kansas. Thayer claimed that he conceived the notion for the society from a divine intervention from God, a theological idea that Calvinists considered evidence of damnation, but Second Great Awakening revivalists championed as a sign of God’s benevolence and free will.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 99.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1954).

As these strains of religion demanded that individuals examine their own behavior more stringently, many Northeasterners expanded this mission beyond the private sphere, seeking to both mend their own souls and the collective soul of the nation. Unlike the Puritanical vision of personal giving to the poor, philanthropy, under the paradigm shift of the Second Great Awakening, required the giver to take a more significant, broader approach. This meant that philanthropy encompassed more than just serving the poor; it could fight atheism, illiteracy, or drunkenness, making it the perfect tool with which to save the nation's collective soul. Lawrence J. Friedman argues in his essay "Philanthropy in America: Historicism and its Discontents" that early philanthropists sought "to impose their vision of good society through collective missionary-like (religious and secular) ventures."<sup>12</sup> Inspired by this new way of transforming the morality of the nation, benevolent associations for all sorts of social ills and moral evils sprang up around the country, determined that money could create a unified, Christian nation.

This re-envisioning of philanthropy also reflected the increasing popularity and importance of utopian colonies in this era. Between 1825 and 1860, Americans, particularly those from Millennial religious sects, formed over one hundred utopian colonies in the Northeast and Midwest.<sup>13</sup> Many revivalist Protestant sects, bolstered by their millennial desire to create a morally pure nation before the Second Coming of Christ, believed that model colonies "could peacefully reshape its competitive society into an order resembling the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood."<sup>14</sup> Thayer's plans for settlements in Kansas did not breach social conventions in the way one might consider Oneida colony's principles of free love, but it did possess some semblance of communalism and idealism. Within the context of revivalist views on

---

<sup>12</sup> Friedman and McGarvie, *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth Century America* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Carl Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth Century America*, 12.



morality and theology, Thayer's colonization scheme both satisfied the utopian ideal of creating pure Christian communities and worked toward the redemption of the souls of the fallen nation. Thayer wrote that the NEEAC's duty was to "spread Christianity over the world, it is a precedent obligation resting on us to prepare the waste places of the earth for its reception."<sup>15</sup> The idea of colonization garnered the support of Northern religious subscribers through its focus on purifying American sin caused by the evils of slavery.

This project examines the NEEAC as a lens through which to reinterpret the intellectual history of philanthropy, tracing its roots from Puritan ideas of charity to the capitalistic giving of the nineteenth century. In the historiography of philanthropy, most work has focused on the twentieth century, and work on the nineteenth has been almost exclusively urban-focused. Robert H. Bremner's 1960 book *American Philanthropy* defines philanthropy as the desire by the philanthropist to seek "improvement in the quality of human life."<sup>16</sup> This definition of philanthropy is too broad, as it fails to see the hierarchical relationships created by philanthropists to "improve" the lives of others through practices of settler colonialism. Bremner also "assumed that Americans had always debated within the context of a general and fundamental consensus or accord on the values of liberal capitalism, political democracy, and marketplace."<sup>17</sup> This project will demonstrate that nineteenth century perceptions of philanthropy were shaped by the specific constraints of the period.

Since Bremner, other historians have argued that philanthropists sought solely to control the lower class and gain profits.<sup>18</sup> While this view is enticing, it ignores the fact that

---

<sup>15</sup> Thayer, *The History of the New England Emigrant Aid Company*, 31.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Bremner, *American Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Friedman and McGarvie, *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*.

<sup>18</sup> David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971); Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

philanthropists honestly believed in their missions, and it was not unusual for them to believe wholeheartedly in the inherent morality of capitalism.

My project steps outside of these constraints by contextualizing the NEEAC's colonization projects within the nineteenth century, to explain how they justified their "civilizing" mission against slavery, while also examining the effects its colonization had on the people it sought to change. This study looks at the specific conditions of the nineteenth century, especially on the Northeastern states, to provide a more complex ideological structure of philanthropists both before and after the Civil War.

In chapter one I argue that the Company's vision for colonization was simultaneously capitalistic and moralistic, for it served both as an imposition of proper society upon the West, but also had the potential to benefit the donors morally, financially, and politically. It investigates the NEEAC's ties to republicanism, free labor ideology, and religion as they convinced Northerners of their project's importance.

In chapter two, I examine Kansas as a settler colonial enterprise through the lived experiences of the settlers who went to Kansas with the Company. The NEEAC's founders and settlers envisioned their settlements as benevolent enterprises that would only benefit the territories. They sought to improve the "vacant" land with familial migration. As colonial theorists Ann Stoler and Carole McGranahan note, however, in this process colonists "create new subjects that must be relocated to be productive and exploitable, dispossessed to be modern, disciplined to be independent, converted to be human, stripped of old cultural bearings to be citizens, coerced to be free."<sup>19</sup> The NEEAC's aim to transform the West into a reflection of New

---

<sup>19</sup> Ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, Peter C. Perdue, *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 8.

England necessitated the creation of a region free of “uncivilized” Native culture, to be obtained either through removal or assimilation.

Chapter three examines NEEAC projects in West Texas, Virginia, Florida, and Oregon. This chapter demonstrates the Company’s commitment to furthering their ideologies of philanthropic colonialism into areas they deemed in need of civilization. It examines the shifts in their philosophies after the war and further complicates the image of the NEEAC, which is most often only associated with their work in Kansas. I demonstrate that these ideas went beyond the Civil War and continued into the postbellum generation.

Chapter four examines the historical memory of the NEEAC, and specifically how Thayer sought to form the memory of the company in the public sphere. I examine a debate between Thayer and the followers of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison after the war. I argue that the ideological differences between the two groups from the antebellum period persisted well after the Civil War.

Overall, this project seeks to understand the ideologies of nineteenth century philanthropy and its connections to capitalism, morality, and colonialism. The NEEAC, while perhaps remembered most fondly for its role in perpetuating Bleeding Kansas, provides an excellent lens through which to trace American ideas about philanthropy and progress as they moved West, immigrated South, fought in a Civil War, and tried to rebuild a nation.

## Chapter One: Ideological Origins

Hush, my babe, lie still and slumber,  
 ‘Only’ Wise will guard thy head  
 From the Abolition Thayer,  
 Who on little boys is fed.

Black Republicans are coming  
 To devour us, hip and thigh,  
 But our good old sword of State will  
 Chaw them up at Phillippi.

So, my babe, snore on in safety,  
 Eli Thayer won’t eatch you yet---  
 And, when he approaches near us,  
 A sound spanking he will get.

For our Wise is brave and valiant;  
 Very fond of fight is he,

And, if Eli Thayer ain’t cautious,  
 Tarred and feathered he will be.

*-The South Side Democrat, March 9, 1854*

When Eli Thayer opened the doors of the New England Emigrant Aid Company (NEEAC) in May 1854, his company immediately entered a political firestorm. Southerners, like the writers of this poem, vehemently opposed the anti-slavery mission of the company. The followers of William Lloyd Garrison, who supported immediate abolition, also rejected the Company’s commitment to the gradual abolition of slavery. Despite the opposition from these more radical factions of society, the Company’s mission embraced ideas that were popular to the common New Englander—non-violence, popular sovereignty, gradual abolition, free labor, and republicanism.

The Company opened with one goal—to make the Kansas Territory a free state. The founders reasoned that a steady immigration of New Englanders to the Kansas Territory would

“establish the reign of justice and humanity” that would “come off triumphant in the great struggle against slavery and governmental might.”<sup>1</sup> By financially supporting emigrants to the territory, the Company hoped that New England values of free labor and republicanism would sway the vote toward freedom and transform the undecided West into a reflection of Northeastern values and morals. While their goal was singular, the idea of using New England philanthropy to civilize the West was anything but simple. The ideological roots of the NEEAC’s mission were part of a hotly contested battle between anti-slavery gradualists, abolitionists, capitalists, and utopianists, all of whom sought the best solution to the problem of slavery.

The idea of using colonization to gradually rid the nation of slave labor imitated a slightly different, but popular idea. Thayer’s scheme harkened back to the American Colonization Society (ACS) movement, which famously sought to colonize Liberia with freed slaves as a way to gradually eradicate slavery. The NEEAC, in many ways, promoted a similar idea. Both societies favored a gradual form of emancipation by colonization so as to avoid violence and presented relatively little inconvenience to Southern plantation owners, as the method did not stipulate mandatory participation. The NEEAC differed from the ACS, however, in its attempt to colonize white settlers domestically. Rather than remove slaves, thus removing the problem altogether, the NEEAC focused on an ideological transformation. Unlike the ACS, which tried to remain neutral on sectional issues, Thayer insisted that his stream of Northern immigrants, “clothed with moral power, enjoying the confidence, and wielding the pecuniary resources of the whole body of Anti-Slavery men in the North” would transform the South with popular

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Webb to Unknown, Nov 19th 1855. Joseph W. Snell, and Eunice L. Schenck, and George T. Hawley. *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909, In the Holdings of the Kansas State Historical Society*, Microfilm (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1967); Thomas Webb to Unknown, February 22, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

sovereignty to embrace not only Northern conceptions of morality, but also free labor.<sup>2</sup> The difference between the ACS, which reached its pinnacle of popularity in the early nineteenth century when it successfully founded Liberia in 1822, and the NEEAC, which functioned in the mid-nineteenth century, showed the immense changes that the Second Great Awakening brought upon American Protestantism and the increasing intensity of sectionalism over issues of free versus slave labor.

Historians have generally been skeptical of the NEEAC as a morally motivated company and instead surmise that its proposed ambitions were merely a front for land speculation in the West. In some of the most comprehensive overviews of the Kansas-Nebraska conflict, the NEEAC is dismissed as a minor episode in a much larger political battle, and the founders are portrayed as opportunistic businessmen. In *Bleeding Kansas*, Nicole Etcheson argues that contributors to the NEEAC and their emigrants thought slavery was immoral, but this was secondary to their primary concern of obtaining land.<sup>3</sup> In his book *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War*, James Rawley is similarly dismissive of the "futile" company, noting that the members were largely anti-abolitionist and that Thayer's sole purpose was to make money.<sup>4</sup> Samuel Johnson's *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The New England Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Crusade* focuses on the economics of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, and Johnson argues that Thayer believed he had a moral task, but that he used the company mostly as a political ploy, losing interest part way through the project. Overall, the scholarship on the NEEAC has been apprehensive to admit that the company could have sincere moral objectives along with their financial ones.

---

<sup>2</sup> Eli Thayer, "The Suicide of Slavery." Speech to Congress, February 24, 1859.

<sup>3</sup> Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 1.

<sup>4</sup> James Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 84.

Despite doubts on the sincerity of the morality of the NEEAC's mission, the company truly believed that morality and capitalism could and should be intertwined. The NEEAC showcased the centrality of capitalism and republicanism to the ideology of Northerners in this era, as well as the power of philanthropy as a colonizing force. Unlike a modern day philanthropic organization, the NEEAC was anything but "non-profit" and Thayer asserted that the company "was meant to be a money making affair as well as a philanthropic undertaking."<sup>5</sup> Morality and capitalism were intrinsically tied in the republican belief that individualism, even in charity, was essential to the creation of a good society.

Immediately after forming the company, Thayer called upon various Boston philanthropists and businessmen to make up the backbone of the NEEAC. Notable company members included Amos A. Lawrence, a wealthy merchant and famous philanthropist who supported a variety of causes and bankrolled early company efforts. With Lawrence as the business connection, Edward Everett Hale, a Worcester resident and well-known Unitarian minister, connected the company to the money and support of New England churches. Original company members had diverse careers, as doctors, lawyers, merchants, politicians, and journalists, but always tended to have some means.<sup>6</sup> While Thayer mainly played the role of visionary and promoter, the secretary of the Company Thomas H. Webb handled the majority of the work in informing settlers of the Company's benefits, which included reduced fare to the territory and assistance upon settlement.

Thayer and Lawrence quickly disagreed ideologically on the best way to raise funds for the Company's mission. For Thayer, the plan was "to form a business company, to be conducted upon business principles, able to make good dividends to its stockholders annually, at its close a

---

<sup>5</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 29.

<sup>6</sup> For a monograph that focuses exclusively on the businessmen, see *Cotton and Capital* by Richard H. Abbott.

full return of all the money originally invested,” whereas Lawrence saw the company as nothing more than an expense charity.<sup>7</sup> The fundamental disagreement stemmed from a basic difference in the ideology of the two men, mainly that Thayer subscribed to the increasingly popular ideology of republicanism, whereas Lawrence rejected it.<sup>8</sup>

The republican model for good society focused extensively on the concept of free labor, and not only decried slave labor as immoral, but also served, as Eric Foner argues in *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* as “an affirmation of the superiority of the social system of the North—a dynamic, expanding, capitalistic society, whose achievements and destiny were almost wholly the result of the dignity and opportunities which it offered the average laboring man.”<sup>9</sup> Republicanism focused on increasing workers’ social mobility and held this value as the pinnacle of success. Slavery, at its very base, clashed with the ideology of free labor, as it did not provide the institutions or opportunities for workers to improve their conditions.<sup>10</sup> The West became essential to the practical application of Free Labor ideology in the antebellum period as it served as an outlet for those seeking an improved condition.<sup>11</sup> Republicans reasoned that if the population growth in urbanizing cities drove the prices of goods up, emigration to the West could relieve the pressure of growth and expand the economic opportunities to those who most needed it.

It is important to note, however, that although as a whole the NEEAC leaders subscribed to what they called republicanism, they shunned partisan politics. The company voted, in fact,

---

<sup>7</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 58; Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Richard H. Abbot, *Cotton and Capital: Boston Businessmen and Antislavery Reform 1854-1868* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 53.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Although as Eugene Berwanger argues in *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* this often did not extend to freed slaves, who were banned from Western territories in some cases.



that “the NE Emigrant Aid Company disclaims all interference in Party politics and its list of subscribers shows the names of representatives of every political port in New England.”<sup>12</sup> This dismissal of politics followed the stagnation of Congress, in which Company members, especially Thayer, saw the Republican Party either being too aggressive (abolitionists) or too willing to compromise. Thayer thought that abolitionists wanted “to put slavery to rest by destroying the church, the constitution, and union.”<sup>13</sup> He took the position that while immediate abolitionists like Garrison were impractical, radical, and violent, his plan was more carefully thought out. Thayer called the moderate Republicans “political Cassandras” a reference to the daughter of the Trojan King Priam, who due to a curse could see the future, but could do nothing about it.<sup>14</sup> Thayer found the Free Soil Party, which opposed slavery extension from a legal perspective equally as ineffective as moderates. He called them a “feeble organization,” which by 1854, “had scarcely increased at all, either in influence or numbers.”<sup>15</sup> In both cases, he reasoned that ignoring partisan politics and pursuing a republican grassroots movement of the people was the best way to free Kansas.

The NEEAC’s first settlement in Lawrence featured communal farming equipment including “steam sawmills, gristmills, and other such machines as shall be of constant service in a new settlement, which cannot, however be purchased or carried out conveniently by individual settlers. These machines may be leased or run by the Company’s agents.”<sup>16</sup> The Company also provided a communal boarding house for the colonists until they were able to settle in the area, a newspaper that explained the company’s moral values and expectations, and a company run

---

<sup>12</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Unknown, March 1, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Everett Hale, Introduction to *A History of the Kansas Crusade*. “Kansas Emigration Almanac and Guide for 1855,” *Eli Thayer Papers*, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>14</sup> Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company, and Its Influence*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Thayer, *The History of the New England Emigrant Aid Company*, 4.

hotel. These amenities worked toward two purposes: they provided an economic incentive for emigrants to settle in the area and to utilize the services of the NEEAC, and they emphasized that even if northerners did not move to Kansas for explicitly ideological purposes, their inherent Northern morality would transform the land nonetheless via their press and established churches.

These utopian ideals, however, did not clash with the capitalistic goals of republicanism, which promoted the idea that morality and capitalism were connected, and the best way of serving God on Earth was the pursuit of wealth.<sup>17</sup> As a proponent of republicanism and Free Labor, Thayer noted retrospectively that, “I had not then, and have not now, the slightest respect for that pride in charity which excludes from great philanthropic enterprise the strength and the effectiveness of money-making...Why is it worse for a company to make money by extending Christianity than by making cotton cloth?”<sup>18</sup> For Thayer and other New England philanthropists, Christianity and capitalism did not need to be exclusive, and the transformation of theology assisted in their argument. Thayer criticized Lawrence and other more traditional philanthropists, who had seen the enterprise as charitable, rather than philanthropic. He criticized them as figments of the past, “who did not think it wise to ‘lower the Christian standard’ so much as to reap a profit from Christian work to insure further Christian progress.”<sup>19</sup>

In the end, the Company compromised on their strategies for obtaining funding. When it dealt with ministers and church organizations, the company appointed “an energetic and unsuspecting man” to persuade the congregations to make charitable donations, a more traditional form of personal philanthropy.<sup>20</sup> That man was the Reverend Edward Everett Hale, whose efforts at fundraising reached 3,050 New England ministers. When the Company issued a

---

<sup>17</sup> Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Thayer, *The History of the Kansas Crusade*, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Eli Thayer, *The History of the Kansas Crusade*, 60.

<sup>20</sup> L.B. Russell to Edward Everett Hale, September 13, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

circular to clergy in 1854 asking for money, they asked the recipient's "particular attention to the encouragement which divine Providence has given to its efforts."<sup>21</sup> The NEEAC had four intentions for its colonies in Kansas listed in the following order—freedom, religion to bolster the notion of freedom (they "understood that to make a free state, they needed, first of all the Gospel"), education, and temperance.<sup>22</sup> It is clear from these letters that the NEEAC was first and foremost concerned with making Kansas a free state, but also that they were innately concerned with the spread of their moral program.

Many New Englanders celebrated and supported this mission with zeal. One minister proclaimed that they should insert "an anti-slavery spirit into that swelling population" and yet another prayed that God "will deliver us from servile, Judas-like rulers, who 'unbind not the heavy burdens of the poor.'"<sup>23</sup> The response was immense, especially in the early days of the Company, and Hale's speaking tours increased the Company bankroll. One company member was so impressed by Hale's ability to raise funds that he said that Hale "put the paper bullets into them till they surrender [their money]."<sup>24</sup> Far from picky about where they received funding, the Company accepted money from any Protestant denomination. In their appeal for funding, Hale's committee was "fully impressed with the importance of hastening forward every good work," regardless of denomination. This idea was clearly influenced by the greater acceptance of Arminianism in the Second Great Awakening, which promoted working toward perfection, and also proved a handy tool in obtaining maximum returns on the appeal.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> "Kansas Emigration Almanac and Guide for 1855," *Eli Thayer Papers*, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>22</sup> "Kansas Emigration Almanac and Guide for 1855," *Eli Thayer Papers*, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>23</sup> Rev W. C. Jackson to Eli Thayer, July 1855; A.F. Jameson to Eli Thayer, September 1855; *Eli Thayer Papers*, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>24</sup> John G. Brown to Edward Everett Hale, August 21, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Webb to Martin F. Conway, July 24, 1858, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

These churchgoers had a more traditional view of philanthropy, one that more closely mimicked Puritan ideas of charity, but to those potential donors who subscribed to republicanism and Free Labor ideology, the company offered a more lucrative financial option. Investors could buy shares in the NEEAC and when the Company sold its land investments after ensuring Kansas's freedom, investors would be able to cash out their original investment for a profit. The Company charter stated, "The capital stock of said corporation shall be divided into shares of one hundred dollars each; but no more than four dollars on the share shall be assessed during the year eighteen hundred and fifty-four, and no more than ten dollars on the share shall be assessed in any one year thereafter."<sup>26</sup>

To attract these business-minded men, the company employed various strategies. Thayer made an extensive speaking tour around New England. He promoted the venture to men's clubs, city councils, and universities, and the Company also sent letters to the most prominent members of their societies, stating as in this letter from December of 1855:

We wish you to consult with your monied men, and appoint an evening, Sunday next week, when we can have an interview with them, at your counting room, or residence, in order to make a plain statement of facts, and obtain from them some substantial evidence of their sympathy and interest in the success of the glorious enterprise in which we are engaged.<sup>27</sup>

These form letters, much like the fundraising techniques of a modern non-profit, specifically targeted those who had enough money to make large donations. By 1858, the Company was so reliant on stock subscriptions for its operations that Secretary Thomas H. Webb wrote, "Our sole reliance for successfully carrying out the great enterprise in which we are engaged is for the future upon what we may realize from the investments which have been made

---

<sup>26</sup> *Charter of the New England Emigrant Aid Company*, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>27</sup> John G. Brown to Thomas H. Webb, December 19, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

in the territory.”<sup>28</sup> At the same time, however, the letters did not present the venture as purely economic. They called on the donors’ sympathetic spirit and promised a moral and financial benefit from subscribing.

To both charitable givers and stock subscribers, the Company did not believe they were merely providing an opportunity for land or settlement. Rather, they believed this to be a moral service to the men who donated, and to the families they sent to Kansas. Company agent John Brown<sup>29</sup> reasoned that New Englanders were “willing to do something dignified to take up a cross to deny themselves,” and with but a grain of faith, “men can build a railroad—they can fit out ships for northern papers—they can skew millions to carry a presidential campaigns, and can’t they do something for Christianity? Can’t they build up the colleges and churches and Institutions?”<sup>30</sup> Brown reasoned that because businessmen would presumably already be involved in Western land speculation, they might as well obtain the spiritual benefits of expanding Christianity. Aside from the personal financial benefits of giving, Brown figured that “it would do men good to give,” and not only affect the undecided nature of the “uncivilized” West, it would provide aid for the donor’s personal salvation.<sup>31</sup>

The Company founders also believed that the settlers would benefit both morally and financially. Ephriam Nute, a Unitarian Minister in the first colony of Lawrence, wrote to Amos Lawrence in 1855 reminding him that the best way to ensure the freedom of Kansas was “to give us a few thousand of the substantial men with families early next spring and induce your capabliest [sic] to invest, invest, invest. Loan funds to the settlers. Taking good security and

---

<sup>28</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Unknown, May 15, 1858, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>29</sup> This was not the same John Brown from Harper’s Ferry.

<sup>30</sup> John S. Brown to Thomas H Webb, July 17, 1860, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>31</sup> John S. Brown to Thomas H Webb, July 17, 1860.

reasonable interest help them benefit their claim and get a start at farming.”<sup>32</sup> True to republican ideology, this philanthropy was not synonymous with charity. The company would provide inducements for settlers to emigrate, which mainly included a reduced fare and also sought to provide services once the settlers arrived. The company charter stated that the purpose of the company was to:

carry them to their homes more cheaply than they could other- wise go - to enable them to establish themselves with the least inconvenience, and to provide the most important prime necessities of a new colony. It will provide shelter and food at the lowest prices after the arrival of emigrants, while they make the arrangements necessary for their new homes. It will render all the assistance which the information of its agents can give.<sup>33</sup>

The Company even expected that its own agents to improve themselves and encouraged them to pursue their own private interests while on the job. Samuel Pomeroy, who became an agent of the Company in Kansas and later one of the State’s first Senators, exemplified how free labor ideology translated into practical application. When he wrote the Company on May 21, 1854 to request employment, his goals were two-fold. He wrote that he, “had a special interest in the location of a Roads and mills and of ascertaining the natural facilities for the water power,” but also that he was “anxious to have the right impetuous given to its [Kansas’s] early settlement. That the best principles of our resting fathers may be transplanted there and that thus our untold domain may be saved from the blighting—withering—deadening—damning influence of American Slavery!!”<sup>34</sup> While Pomeroy was certainly interested in the moralizing quality of the operation, he did not view philanthropy as an idea that excluded personal gain. The Company

---

<sup>32</sup> Ephraim Nute to Amos Lawrence, November 15, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>33</sup> Ephraim Nute to Amos Lawrence, November 15, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel C. Pomeroy to Unknown, May 21, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

responded to his inquiry positively, giving him permission on April 28, 1855, “to make investments in Kansas Territory for his private benefit.”<sup>35</sup>

Although the Company desired its agents to help the immigrants first and foremost, they fully anticipated that they would skim money off the top of their investments or start their own side ventures. This happened so often, that sometimes the agents could not be found by the settlers because they were roaming the territory tending to their personal business. On one occasion this left an entire company of German immigrants stuck at the Company hotel for a week while Pomeroy was located.<sup>36</sup> Charles Robinson, the first Governor of Kansas, originally came to the region as an agent of the Company, and used his power as an agent to gain political power. When he left his post with the NEEAC to pursue a full time career in politics, the company noted that he could “serve Kansas better” if he were to pursue his private interest.<sup>37</sup>

This advice extended beyond even the Company agents, but served as a personal philosophy for all workers. In a private letter, Thomas Webb advised Martin F. Conway, a correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun* in Kansas, that he had “done quite your share of public labor” and advised him to focus “more exclusively to profession and business attentions” in order to improve his material possession and public advancement.”<sup>38</sup>

In terms of the moral expectations of the Company, Thomas Webb argued that they could not win “merely pitting men and money against men and money” but that they “must stem the tide, and turn back the torrent by intellectual and moral power.”<sup>39</sup> It was truly important to the

---

<sup>35</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Martin F. Conway, July 6, 1858, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>36</sup> E.B. Whitman to Edward Everett Hale, April 25, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>37</sup> The Office of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, October 4, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel C. Pomeroy to Martin F. Conway October 7, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Webb, September 19, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

founders that their employees made both moral and financial gains. Pomeroy, who would become a famous name in the railroad speculating business after the Civil War, and is often viewed as a Company member who cared very little about anything but his personal gain, in fact exhibited his commitment to Protestant, republican morality in numerous circumstances, especially when it came to temperance. Once, when asked to prove the character of the Southerners in Kansas, he recalled a time that he met up with some of them at a Kansas hotel. The Southerners asked him, “a thousand and one times to drink with them,” which he politely declined.<sup>40</sup> He later chastised this behavior as an example of their barbarism and inferiority to Northerners. In this way, although many NEEAC agents were gallivanting in their own private interests, they often represented the ideological goals of the Company.

This Company policy did backfire on a few occasions, however. Agent Charles Branscomb skimmed money from the profits of the communal Company mill. Although the Company did cut off his funding in April 1858, when Thomas Webb frantically wrote M.G. Coming that rumors about Branscomb had “shaken the executive committee’s confidence in Mr. B,” they did not seek his formal dismissal.<sup>41</sup> Further speculation fell on Company Agent B. Slater, who personally asked Amos Lawrence for an unauthorized bonus. Thomas Webb kindly wrote Slater, remarking that he was “somewhat perplexed” at seeing that he had taken a suspicious amount of money from the Company accounts.<sup>42</sup> Slater immediately proposed “deferring the matter until next July,” at which Webb became irate.<sup>43</sup> In both cases, neither man was fired, nor was any legal action taken by the Company against its rogue agents. They had set the parameters, and they seemed frustrated but unsurprised at the fraudulent actions.

---

<sup>40</sup> Samuel C. Pomeroy, December 19, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas H. Webb to M.G. Coming, April 27, 1858, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas H. Webb to B. Slater, March 24, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas H. Webb to B. Slater, April 24, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.



The Company even had to fight to get its loan back from George Washington Brown, whom they had helped start the first free press in Lawrence. When Webb wrote Brown in 1857, reminding him that, “prosperity having smiled upon you, and a cheering prospect presenting for the future, this is deemed a fitting time to call your attention to the subject.”<sup>44</sup> Brown responded that the Company had not assisted him in the least, and that “it seems to me you do one gross injustice for you to claim that ‘we established’ that office when the only thing that ‘we’ did was to loan me some money to enable me to hurry my movements Kansas.”<sup>45</sup> Eventually the Company tried to cut ties with many of their problematic agents, and revised their instructions to agents to be harsher. However, in the early days of the Company, the policy of letting agents do whatever they needed to in order to improve led to disorder and financial losses.

Despite these internal struggles, the Company truly wanted settlers to improve their condition upon moving to Kansas and assist in building a Christian colony that mimicked New England values. The Company members genuinely cared about providing the best land possible for their settlers, because it was their mission to help these settlers improve their material possessions on Earth. When settlers wrote to inquire about where to settle, the Company continually responded the same way, by encouraging the settler to see the land before they bought it, so that they would not be disappointed or feel swindled.<sup>46</sup> The settlers anticipated emigrating at a reduced rate, and having the Company take extensive care to provide them with grist and saw mills, a hotel, and other amenities that would assist in their settlement.

---

<sup>44</sup> Thomas H. Webb to George Washington Brown, February 28, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>45</sup> George Washington Brown to Thomas H. Webb, April 20, 1858, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Everett Hale to CJ Wigginton, August 17, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

Although the NEEAC provided some inducements for settlers to move to Kansas, they also found it imperative that they not extend their giving into charity, but remain within the parameters of philanthropic giving. Webb reminded Nute:

The importance of furnishing to our Kansas friends employment at fair wages as the best means of affording them relief. I doubt not that you will agree with me, that as a general rule the giving away outright is the bestowal of almost the very worst charity and in the long run would prove injurious to the settlements and ruinous to the recipients; in fact it would prove a premium for idleness; the trusty worth would be held back, and the most deserving, perhaps be overlooked.<sup>47</sup>

The answer to helping settlers lay not in giving them money, but rather in giving them opportunities to improve their own condition through capitalism. Although the Company continued to have sympathy for settler families, especially those too proud to ask for money (a feeling that “could not be prevented”) the answer to building a New England in the West lay in the promotion of capitalism.

The base of this conception of philanthropy remained rooted in a belief in New England superiority. The Company’s founders inherently believed that the Northern system of free labor was both morally and financially superior to the Southern slave power. Thomas H. Webb asserted that Northern emigrants would be “so strengthened in numbers, so well fortified in position, and so well provisioned, clothed, and munitioned” by New England philanthropy that “it would be worse than useless to attempt to impede the onward march of liberty, justice, and humanity.”<sup>48</sup> Webb firmly believed that the power of Northern morals and practices would supersede the flawed viewpoint of Southerners, especially slaveholders. The problem with Southerners was not so much their own behaviors, but the negative influence of their politicians. Webb wrote that Missourians were “encouraged and led on by characterless, reckless, headless,

---

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Webb to Ephriam Nute, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Thaddeus Hyatt, September 24, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

broken down politicians, and unprincipled, soulless, worthless partisans,” which left room for Northern morality to shape and change the minds of the common Southerner.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, the Kansas-Nebraska Act convinced New Englanders that the only way to win and tame the West was the transference of Northern morality. Webb wrote that it was “desirable that New England principles and New England influences should pervade the whole Territory” and, “no matter how heterogeneous the great living mass which flows in the territory may be, it will all eventually be molded into a symmetrical form, and the benefits resulting there from will be such that generations yet to come will bless the memory of those through whose efforts the boom of freedom, knowledge, and pure and undefiled religious were secured from them and their posterity.”<sup>50</sup> By reimagining the West as a copy of New England, the NEEAC asserted their belief that their values and culture trumped all other societies. This idea inherently suggested that the West was a blank slate, ready to be molded by Northern ideals. Thayer wrote in a later history of the Company that, “its duty is to *organize emigration to the West and bring it into a system*.”<sup>51</sup> As demonstrated in the next chapter, this idea of the West as a blank slate was undoubtedly false, and the practical settlement of the area could not follow this ideal that the Company once thought possible.

To this end, the Company did not care whether or not the settlers actually exhibited the Northern qualities that they promoted. Even if emigrant families displayed no anti-slavery or republican values, Company officials believed that their New England roots intrinsically provided the morality needed to transform areas that they reasoned, had not been morally formed. Additionally, Thayer was convinced that principles of Northern morality and free labor

---

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Webb to Amos Lawrence, September 8, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Samuel C. Pomeroy, October 30, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>51</sup> Thayer, *The History of the New England Emigrant Aid Company*, 4.

would convert any non-believers, even Southerners. Thayer wrote in 1858, after the Company had successfully settled various towns in Kansas that:

I assert, on the best authority, that the majority of the inhabitants of Kansas, who went there from the slave states, are today Free State men. They came in contact with these Northern communities, they learned some facts for which they were not before cognizant, and they made up their minds that it was best for them and their children that Kansas should be a free state.<sup>52</sup>

This idea was not just popular among Company men; it also captured the imagination of other New England moralists. In the early years of colonization, especially when the media heavily promoted the NEEAC's Kansas ventures, other settlement groups imitated the Company's model. While some colonization societies directly cited Thayer as their inspiration for domestic colonization and mimicked the NEEAC's anti-slavery desire, others used this model to attack other signs of immorality. In both cases, the societies were attracted to Thayer's idea of a colonization effort that encompassed northern ideals of morality and labor.

Emigrant Aid Societies to benefit Kansas and supplement the work of the NEEAC popped up all over New England, often as unofficial local branches of the Company. Although the New York and Connecticut Emigration Societies both failed at the hands of, "self-seeking politicians," their very existence signals that Thayer's idea was both attractive and plausible in the Northern popular imagination.<sup>53</sup> Though most branches proved unsuccessful, the Kentucky Kansas Association of Covington did succeed in colonizing Ashland, Kansas, with about sixty immigrants.

After seeing the success of the NEEAC in Kansas, the Reverend John G. Fee wanted to establish a colony in Kentucky where, "anticaste, antislavery, and antisectarian education would

---

<sup>52</sup> Eli Thayer, "The Suicide of Slavery."

<sup>53</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 66.

be taught.”<sup>54</sup> Fee reasoned, “will not the same principles of action which prompted free-state men to go to Kansas *exclude* slavery, lead others to come to Kentucky to help abolish slavery?”<sup>55</sup> He eventually sought out Thayer on a speaking tour who promptly supported his endeavors as an extension of his plans to colonize Southern states.

The Company also placed particular importance on European immigration to Kansas, with the hope that they could siphon people out of the growing Eastern cities to move west. This was philanthropic because it gave a home to immigrants, but also continued the Company’s mission to make Kansas free. Eli Thayer corresponded with a company of Germans who had immigrated to Cincinnati under the guidance of A. Ostreicher. Ostreicher, who eventually did migrate to Kansas with one hundred people and the help of the company, wrote Thayer that,

Although the majority of our members are Germans by birth or descent, we all regret and detest slavery as one of the more direful plagues of this our adopted country, and we are determined therefore, to exert all our influence, power, and means for the reduction of this great evil in general and especially for its exclusion, as far as possible, from Kansas territory.<sup>56</sup>

Ostreicher’s ideas fit perfectly into the scheme of the NEEAC, and he also had further plans for his Germans in the territory. He offered Thayer their services in the creation of a German newspaper to recruit more settlers from his Native lands to Kansas. Frederick Olmstead, who had studied German settlements in Texas, wrote the company that this would be a wise investment because, “The great want of the Germans is capable to purchase the begging of a stock...Every German farmer worked gladly and faithfully.”<sup>57</sup> The German publicity seemed to have worked, because by 1857, F.M. Serenbetz wrote the company after reading a circular

---

<sup>54</sup> Victor B. Howard, *The Evangelical War against Slavery and Caste* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 94.

<sup>55</sup> Victor B. Howard, *The Evangelical War against Slavery and Caste*, 94.

<sup>56</sup> A. Ostreicher to Eli Thayer, September 23, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>57</sup> Fred L. Olmstead to Edward Everett Hale, February 4, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

signed by an “agent of your Club for Germans.”<sup>58</sup> When Serenbetz contacted the agent, he was told that so many Germans were responding, that it would be best to contact the Company directly. Upon learning that the town was of good Christian character, Serenbetz revealed to Hale that he was a Congregationalist minister, and that “to lay the foundation at a large Christian community among my countrymen, has long been a subject of deep anxiety with me, and I feel I have a mission to which under God’s blessing I hope to fulfill.”<sup>59</sup> Serenbetz then set the conditions by which his colony would live, first and foremost of which was to “uphold the free institutions of this grand Republic which we have chosen as our adopted country.”<sup>60</sup> The Germans planned on living communally for two years, then sell their shared equipment to individual families.

These successful companies of emigrants inspired the Company to send another pamphlet in 1858 to Germany and “confidently state that we are making preliminary arrangements to direct a large emigration of Germans from their Father Land to Kansas.”<sup>61</sup> At this point mention of Germans drops off in the Company letters, and it is unclear how many more came to Kansas with the Company.

The Company also looked into removing orphans from New York to the territory. Foreshadowing the orphan train movement of the late nineteenth century, the New York Children’s Aid Society offered to “pay the expenses of the children there, and their board for a

---

<sup>58</sup> F.M. Serenbetz to Edward Everett Hale, March 1, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>59</sup> F.M. Serenbetz to Edward Everett Hale, March 12, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>60</sup> F.M. Serenbetz to Edward Everett Hale, March 12, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas H. Webb to George Washington Brown, March 11, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

few days in it in some suitable poor family and you if you are willing!”<sup>62</sup> Again, there was no sign that the Company actually pursued this, but it does demonstrate the popularity of the NEEAC’s ideas to use emigration as population control.

Although other colonies do not mention Thayer specifically as their inspiration, his model of domestic colonization for moral purposes became increasingly common. Some emigration companies, such as Henry S. Clubb’s Vegetarian Kansas Emigration Company, which began in 1855, used similar propaganda techniques and fundraising strategies. Clubb, like Thayer, championed the improvement of the moral fiber of American culture, but also economic enterprise. Clubb wrote that the colony would only accept “persons of good moral character,” and that the colony was “formed on the principles of freedom and morality as the surest foundations for the prosperity of the settlements and welfare of the country.”<sup>63</sup> Clubb also viewed Kansas as an opportunity for financial gain, stating that the cooperative principle was adopted, “to *promote*, and not supersede, individual enterprise.”<sup>64</sup> In 1854, Frederick Douglass proposed an emigration plan to Kansas, “by which one thousand free black families from northern cities would be resettled,” like the NEEAC, through the philanthropy of Northern donors.<sup>65</sup> The wave of emigrant societies that cited Thayer directly for their inspiration and the independent societies that subscribed to his ideology indicates that his ideas fit into the popular imagination.

The popularity of Thayer’s idea reflected the popularity of republican philanthropy. Rather than promoting a selfless philanthropy, the leaders and settlers of the NEEAC fully

---

<sup>62</sup> New York Children’s Aid Society to Edward Everett Hale, September 21, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>63</sup> Henry S. Clubb, “Constitution of the Vegetarian Kansas Emigration Company,” Reel #3984, Microfilm Collection, Western America Collection, Research Publications Inc, Connecticut.

<sup>64</sup> Henry S. Clubb, “Constitution of the Vegetarian Kansas Emigration Company.”

<sup>65</sup> David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass’ Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 48-9.

expected to financially and morally gain from the colonization movement. The rise of the benevolent associations in antebellum America not only served the needy or sought to impose a vision of proper society, they also had the potential to serve their founders morally, financially, and politically. Even though the Company still accepted charitable donations from New England churchgoers, it was the modern philosophy of mixing morality and capitalism that carried the Company financially. But despite the popularity of philanthropic, domestic colonialism, the practical application of these ideas often blurred the lines of ideology. When the NEEAC actually unleashed its idea of philanthropy onto the American West, they soon realized that it was far from a clean slate in which they easily could supplant their culture.



## Chapter Two: Settlement

In 1813, as white Americans ventured westward and encroached upon Indian lands, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Alexander von Humboldt about his solution to the “Indian problem.” He wrote “the benevolent plan we were pursuing here for the happiness of the aboriginal inhabitants in our vicinities. We spared nothing to keep them at peace with one another. To teach them agriculture and the rudiments of the most necessary arts, and to encourage industry by establishing among them separate property.”<sup>1</sup> As President, Jefferson supported assimilation for Native peoples, and many white Americans thought it only natural that Natives would prefer to forgo their “savagery” for civilization.<sup>2</sup> Later in the letter, however, Jefferson revealed what would trample the ideology of assimilation and turn national Indian policy toward extinction—problems in the West. He wrote, “they have seduced the greater part of the tribes within our neighborhood, to take up the hatchet against us, and the cruel massacres they have committed on the women and children of our frontiers taken by surprise, will oblige us now to pursue them to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach.”<sup>3</sup> The language of the Natives as “seducers” constructed them as violent and manipulative, ready to pounce upon noble white farmers. In particular, he noted the danger of allowing Natives near women and children, whom it was the sworn duty of the masculine pioneer to protect.

From the age of Jefferson to the bloody conflict of the Civil War, Americans thought that westward expansion held the key to the upkeep of democracy, and also the solution to growing problems of industrialization and sectional tension. By the 1850s, the Kansas territory in particular became a battleground of sectional tensions, exacerbated by the immigration of

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, December 6, 1813.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, December 6, 1813.

thousands of white settlers. Congress organized the territory on May 30, 1854, and it extended more than six hundred miles west of the Missouri River. Although settlers of the NEEAC often viewed the territory as a blank slate ready to be molded by their institutions and values, it was far from an empty canvas in which white settlers could transplant their culture.

The white settlers who immigrated to Kansas under the auspices of the NEEAC were not simply occupying and improving empty land, they were participating in a settler colonial enterprise. Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis defined settler colonialism as a society in which, “Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic, and racial terms.”<sup>4</sup> Settler colonial enterprises often form hierarchical relationships with Natives, focus on family migration to ensure the longevity of projects, and present their ventures as philanthropic or beneficial. This differs from extractive colonization, in which a mostly masculine colonizing force comes not to settle, but to control and appropriate resources.<sup>5</sup> Historian Margaret Jacobs argues that the difference between settler and extractive colonization should not “be seen as a strict dichotomy but as a continuum.”<sup>6</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Kansas territory gradually transformed from a space of extractive colonization to one of settler colonialism, and the NEEAC was essential to the process. The white settlement of Kansas heavily depended on advertisement and propaganda to attract further settlement on this land. In the early nineteenth century the advertisements and pictures sent back East from Kansas

---

<sup>4</sup> Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis. *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*. (London: Sage, 1995), 3.

<sup>5</sup> An example of extractive colonization would be the American colonization of the Philippines, as described in Warwick Anderson’s *Colonial Pathologies: American tropical medicine, race, and hygiene in the Philippines*.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 3.

constructed the West as a masculine space fit for extractive colonization, but by the 1850s the NEEAC shifted the focus more toward the settler colonization of Indian lands with families.

Historians of the antebellum conflict in Kansas tend to focus on the sectional conflict between Northerners and Southerners.<sup>7</sup> Although understanding this tension is vital to a proper history of the Civil War, it can implicitly perpetuate the vacant land theory by ignoring Native removal, which occurred just a year before white settlement. Understanding Native removal in Kansas provides a unique lens with which to view the West's role in the antebellum conflict and its relationship with the North. Examining the West as part of the sectional conflict and understanding the viewpoint of white settlers toward Native Americans helps construct a more complete analysis of Northern ideology before the war.

The NEEAC's founders and settlers envisioned their settlement in Kansas as a benevolent enterprise that would only benefit the region. They sought to improve the "vacant" land with settler, family migration. Settlers and investors were working to discourage the spread of slavery, but they also believed that they were graciously and industriously imposing their vision of proper society on Western lands. In order to transform the Kansas territory from a space of dangerous settlement, only fit for masculine extractive colonization, to one that promoted family settler colonialism and thus Northeastern values, the NEEAC had to feminize and "pacify" the region.<sup>8</sup> As colonial theorists Ann Stoler and Carole McGranahan note, however, in this process colonists "create new subjects that must be relocated to be productive and exploitable, dispossessed to be modern, disciplined to be independent, converted to be human, stripped of old cultural bearings

---

<sup>7</sup> Excellent histories of Kansas that overlook Native conflicts include Gunja SenGupta's *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals, Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Alice Nichols's *Bleeding Kansas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954); Eric Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> See Brie A. Swenson's dissertation, "Competition for the Virgin Soil of Kansas": Gendered and Sexualized Discourse about the Kansas Crisis in Northern Popular Print and Political Culture, 1854-1860" For a discussion on feminized rhetoric about the Kansas territory.

to be citizens, coerced to be free.”<sup>9</sup> The NEEAC’s aim to transform the West into a reflection of New England necessarily demanded a region free of “uncivilized” Native culture, to be obtained through either removal or assimilation.

Through letters, published diaries, pictures, and newspapers, the NEEAC in many ways succeeded in promoting Kansas as a space suitable for family settlement. Like many other settler colonies, their prejudice was often “camouflaged under protestation of ‘pity’” for the fate of the Natives they dispossessed of land, but their pity did not halt their efforts to wrestle away the West.<sup>10</sup> The Kansas territory was useful to Native peoples long before Eli Thayer decided it was suitable for Northerners. In order to examine the transformation sought by the NEEAC, we must first examine the territorial history of the Kansas Indians.

In 1819, Major Stephen Long embarked on an exploratory mission to the Kansas territory in order to study and report on the Indians already present on the lands. Long depicted Kansas on his map as part of “the Great American Desert,” a name that Easterners would use to describe the plains for the next half century.<sup>11</sup> This expedition was the first to bring along a professional artist, Samuel Seymour, to produce depictions of the west for a curious eastern audience.<sup>12</sup> Seymour produced 150 landscape views and perhaps the first white depiction of Kansas Indians. His depiction “War Dance in the Interior of a Konza Lodge” (Figure 1) shows an Indian ceremony inside a Native lodge. In the engraving, several Konzas men in war attire dance around a fire with weapons to the beat of a drum. Two white men watch on the left side, close to the

---

<sup>9</sup> Ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, Peter C. Perdue, *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Nyle H. Miller, *Kansas, A Pictorial History* (Topeka: Kansas Centennial Commission, 1961.)

<sup>12</sup> Gary Allen Hood, *After Lewis and Clark, the Forces of Change* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 16.

dancers, but not participating. A woman and child are shown leaving the ceremony, very clearly removed from the masculine space of the war dance.

Seymour constructed the war dance, and thereby Kansas, as a masculine space. The Indians in the territory are the majority outnumbering the white men, and still powerful as they show their readiness for battle. Although white men are the casual observers of this dance, they seem to be viewing it as a spectacle, rather than a threat. The spectacle of Indian culture promoted and harkened back to Long's claim that Kansas was part of a "Great American Desert," wild and not fit for family settlement or colonization. Seymour indicates that Kansas is still an uncivilized masculine space full of barbarity and war.

Seymour used his sketches as memory aids, and made his sixty paintings later upon his return to the East.<sup>13</sup> The publishers of the official account of the exploration deemed this particular painting worthy enough to engrave and place in the published account. The article that accompanies the engraving tells the story of a band of Konzas who were at war with the Pawnees.<sup>14</sup> The author described the evening:

In the evening they retired to rest in the lodge set apart for their accommodation, when they were alarmed by a party of savages, rushing in armed with bows, arrows, and lances, shouting and yelling in a most frightful manner. The gentlemen of the party had immediate recourse to their arms, but observing that some squaws, who were in the lodge, appeared unmoved, they began to suspect that no molestation to them was intended. The Indians collected around the fire in the centre of the lodge, yelling incessantly; at length their howling assumed something of a measured tone, and they began to accompany their voices with a sort of drum and rattles....after dancing around the fire for some time, without appearing to notice the strangers, they departed...This ceremony [was] called the *dog dance*...<sup>15</sup>

In this account of "War Dance" women play a special role in signaling to the white settlers that no violence would come to them. The white explorers assumed that the Native

---

<sup>13</sup> Hood, *After Lewis and Clark, the Forces of Change*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Hood, *After Lewis and Clark, the Forces of Change*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Hood, *After Lewis and Clark, the Forces of Change*, 16.

women culturally fulfilled the same domestic role that they did in American society. The author described the men, however, as “dogs” that participated in a primal war dance to entertain white explorers. In Seymour’s visual depiction, however, the women and children are leaving the dance, presumably because it is not their role to participate in the masculine war dance. The idea that the woman, the symbol of peace, was leaving the ceremony provides a more exciting narrative for the reader. Seymour’s decision to paint the women this way exoticized Indians and titillated curious audiences by depicting a violent male subculture. Because Seymour drew his painting based on a sketch and memory, he most likely based this picture on what he knew would get published in Boston. Therefore, Seymour’s illustrations reflected the popular Northeastern vision of the Kansas territory as a dangerous and uncivilized location.

This same expedition hired professional artist Titan Ramsay Peale, whose art also appeared in the published exploration narrative. In this engraving (Figure 2), Peale shows three teepees, with a woman and child in the foreground. The teepees are in a vast open space, but still appear to have some qualities that a European American would notice as domestic. For example, each tent was set up in a way that afforded privacy with the cover of a door, but the tents were close enough together to be in a community. Peale placed the woman in the domestic sphere with her child. Like Seymour’s depiction, this engraving hints toward a lifestyle similar, but not equal to a white American one. The woman fulfilled the duty of raising children, but the “movable” nature of the home signaled toward a nomadic relationship to the land. This picture perpetuated the idea to Easterners that the West was vast, and that Native Americans were not fully utilizing the land by white standards. Finally, Peale’s depiction of a Native woman who was almost, but not quite, domestic by European standards signaled that missionary work could be successful in assimilating Indians into white culture. Peale and Seymour’s early illustrations of the Kansas

Territory reflected Northern views of the area as vacant but dangerous land only fit for extractive enterprise or missionary work. In order to promote the area for family settlement, the NEEAC would have to dispel rumors both of the aridity of the land and the character of the locals.

Aside from the tribes already living in the Kansas territory that Peale and Seymour described in 1819, many more soon flooded the region. Between 1820 and 1860, the U.S. government ‘forcefully encouraged’ thousands of Native Americans from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Missouri to move to eastern Kansas.<sup>16</sup> In exchange for annuities and agricultural tools, the tribes native to Kansas ceded thousands of acres to the emigrating Eastern tribes.<sup>17</sup> More than ten thousand Kickapoos, Delawares, Sacs and Foxes, Shawnees, Potawatomis, Kansas, Ottawas, Wyandots, Miamis, Osages and various smaller tribes occupied the eastern part of the territory, where whites had promised they could live peacefully.<sup>18</sup> From the Shawnee Treaty of 1825 to the Sac and Fox Treaty of 1843, the eastern Native tribes understood Kansas as the end of their struggle, but it was only the beginning. In March 1853, a bill in Congress authorized the president, “to enter into negotiations with Indian tribes west of the states of Missouri and Iowa...for the purpose of extinguishing the title of said Indians in whole or in part to said lands.”<sup>19</sup> When the territory opened in 1854 to white settlement, the United States was in the process of what historian Paul Wallace Gates called, “one of the most complex and confusing arrays of policies affecting the distribution of public lands and the transfer of white ownership of Indian land-rights that have emerged in the continental United

---

<sup>16</sup> Kristen T. Oretel, *Bleeding Borders: Race Gender and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Kristen T. Oretel, *Bleeding Borders*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Craig Miner and William E. Unrau, *The End of the Kansas Indian* (Lawrence: The Regents Pres of Kansas, 1978), 3.

<sup>19</sup> Miner and Unrau, *The End of the Kansas Indian*, 6.

States.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, the government opened an area to white settlement that it technically did not own. With the floodgates open to white expansion, the messy process of removing the Kansas tribes to Oklahoma and Arkansas began, as did the process of settler colonization that usurped previous notions of the region as a masculine space of extractive colonization.

When the Kansas-Nebraska Act further exacerbated the immigration movement to Kansas in 1854, the NEEAC sent thousands of New Englanders to a land to which they had no legal claim. A central concern for the NEEAC and its clients was learning from the federal government when the reservation land, particularly of the Shawnee, would be open to preemption. Preemption was a process by which, “It is expected that every settler will occupy his claim, and within a reasonable time (no fixed period) erect a building, that being the best evidence of his intention permanently to locate.”<sup>21</sup> The Indians would allegedly get to choose which lands they wanted to keep, but many settlers preempted without consulting treaty agreements. Thomas H. Webb figured in 1856 that, it would “not be before Mid-summer, or Fall, inasmuch as the Survey is not yet complete, and the Indians have three months after the approval of the Survey, in which to make their selections.”<sup>22</sup> Numerous potential settlers wrote to Webb requesting information about preemption of Indian lands, a clear signal that white Northerners understood that Natives had possession of the best lands and that they would be ignoring Native preferences.<sup>23</sup> Webb informed a potential settler that the Delaware Trust lands, which that government pledged to “dispose of” for the “benefit of the Delawares” were of a “very superior

---

<sup>20</sup> Paul W. Gates, *Fifty million acres: conflicts over Kansas land policy, 1854-1890* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Ernest E. Levie and Co., March 5, 1858, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas H. Webb to S.M. Cook, March 5, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>23</sup> This followed a long New England tradition of assuming Native lands were the best and valuing them more highly. For an explanation of this in the post-Revolutionary War period, see Alan Taylor’s *William Cooper’s Town*.



quality.”<sup>24</sup> Indian land was known as, “some of the richest and most desirable tracts to be found in that region.”<sup>25</sup> Charles Robinson, though without the money to purchase it himself, pushed the company to purchase the Wyandotte reserve lands in order that, “some arrangement may be made, mutually advantageous to the proprietors and to the Co. whereby one of the mills owned by the latter may be located on the land of the former, or in the vicinity.”<sup>26</sup> Just two weeks later, the Executive Committee decided to sell one of their large mills to S.N. Simpson, who started a town in the Wyandotte Reserve.<sup>27</sup>

Webb boasted that the lands would be valuable, “the moment they come under cultivation, and any man possessed of northeastern energy, enterprise, and industry who may invest funds in those lands cannot be otherwise than opulent thereby, in a very few years.”<sup>28</sup> Because of the NEEAC’s republican emphasis on capitalistic improvement, they put a higher value on the improvement of the land by white settlers, diminishing the Native hold on the land by arguing that they had not cultivated it properly.

In order to entice settlers to come to a land previously described as fraught with danger, the Company became acutely aware of the importance of media in their venture.<sup>29</sup> Even more so, the Company knew the importance of controlling the media. They knew that if their venture appeared favorable to those living in Northern cities, they would get more stock subscriptions, donations, and settlers. To this end, the company provided a loan to George Washington Brown, who became the editor of the NEEAC approved paper, *The Herald of Freedom*. Brown wrote to

---

<sup>24</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Lyman Barlette, September 10, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas H. Webb to J.M. Robb, February 8, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas H. Webb to S.N. Simpson, October 25, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Halem Page, November 8, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas H. Webb to W. Willis, October 11, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>29</sup> In *Seeding Civil War: Kansas in the National News*, Craig Miner argues that the press coverage of Kansas was even more important than the violence itself in sparking national debate.

his first wife and cousin Mrs. Walker, that he wanted to, “appeal to the people of the free North to rally around me, and together we would beat back the incoming tide of slave holders and their human chattels, and rededicate its sacred soil to freedom.”<sup>30</sup> After reading a New York Tribune article outlining Thayer’s plan for colonization, he wrote Thayer begging for the Company’s blessing. Brown immediately had competition from Miller and Elliot of the Kansas Free State and John & Co. Speer of the Tribune. The competition was so fierce that Brown even accused his competitors of backdating their papers by seven days, “to deceive by appearance, and make theirs appear earlier than mine to those who knew nothing of the facts.”<sup>31</sup> The rush among these New Englanders to establish the first press in Kansas signaled an intense awareness of both the growing importance of Kansas politics, but also the importance of advertisement.

*The Herald of Freedom* became an unofficial arm of the NEEAC in a mutually beneficial arrangement. The NEEAC provided and promoted subscriptions, and Brown got seed money.

Brown’s mission aligned closely with that of the NEEAC:

It is not any intention to engage in a slavery discussion—my purpose being to furnish our certain friends facts and figures, as I see and can learn them, touching Kansas. As the country is desirable I think there will be a heavy emigration.<sup>32</sup>

Like the NEEAC, Brown did not want to engage in politicking, rather, he preferred to promote immigration and development. In the early years of the paper, before the violent excitement of Bleeding Kansas bankrolled *The Herald of Freedom*, Brown sought even more assistance from the people of New England who he believed “promise more than [they]

---

<sup>30</sup> George Washington Brown to Mrs. Walker, January 14, 1893, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>31</sup> George Washington Brown to Mrs. Walker, January 14, 1893, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>32</sup> George Washington Brown to Edward Everett Hale, December 27, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

perform.”<sup>33</sup> The NEEAC found the paper essential to their publicizing mission. Thomas H. Webb wrote to Samuel C. Pomeroy in 1854, “and so important the Trustees consider it, to rightly and directly control that paper” that they would donate two thousand dollars on top of what they had already given.<sup>34</sup>

Brown’s editorials in *The Herald of Freedom* perpetuated the idea that the “Indian problem” in Kansas was resolved, promoting opening the area to further migration. One author wrote Brown, “Emigrants need be under no apprehension of personal injury from a village or large body of Indians. Among them, honor, morality, and religion have a preponderance over vice and crime.”<sup>35</sup> Aside from publishing these assurances, Brown also provided a guide to the best lands to highlight, “the importance of the extinguishment of the Indian title to all the lands...The interests of Kansas demand that they should take active steps to reclaim this vast Territory from the control of the Indians, and deliver it into the hands of the white man, who will cultivate it, improve it, and make it subservient to the genteel prosperity of our country.” Brown listed tribal lands in order of importance, Delaware for their “unsurpassed” access to water and natural resources, Pottawatomie half of whom were “nearly civilized” and the other “wild and savage,” then Kickapoo, Sac and Fox, and New York in order of land size.<sup>36</sup> Brown continued to publically support the work of the NEEAC and further their goals by propagandizing to Northern audiences.

In their other media ventures, The NEEAC simultaneously presented Natives as a disappearing race and in need of Christian salvation. A pamphlet produced by the NEEAC that

---

<sup>33</sup> John G. Brown to Edward Everett Hale, August 21, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Samuel C. Pomeroy, October 16, 1854. *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>35</sup> John Cussons to G.W. Brown, March 12, 1859, *The Kansas Herald of Freedom*.

<sup>36</sup> G.W. Brown, November 20, 1858, *The Kansas Herald of Freedom*.

sought to attract colonists by propagandizing Kansas contained various references to Indians as “half breeds” and “a shiftless and thriftless race of beings.”<sup>37</sup> The pamphlet oscillated between proving that the Indians in the area were “friendly” with “minds above the ordinary stump” and that, “they must be brought under the influence of civilization and Christianity, or they’ll continue to melt away, until nothing remain of them.”<sup>38</sup> While the NEEAC promoted emigration to prevent the spread of slavery, it also hastened the cultural disappearance of “hideous” Natives.<sup>39</sup> Although the NEEAC appeared to have at least some sympathy for the Natives and wrote that they “might wish the fate of the Indian to be different,” they quickly added that it was “irrevocable...We may not wish to have them blotted out from among the peoples, but it is unavoidable.”<sup>40</sup> Another pamphlet produced by the company deemed Kansas a “garden of Eden” that was “about to be re-occupied by the descendants of Adam.”<sup>41</sup> This not only asserted that the Indian people were outside of the creation of God, it also promoted assimilation policies to diminish non-white bloodlines.<sup>42</sup> These ideas illustrate the concerns of the settlers from New England, who at least feigned concern over the plight of the Indians, but overall sought to shape and “improve” both the land and its occupants.

Settlers promoted this idea not only in their writing, but also with physical objects. For example, Figure 3 shows several different currencies of “The City Bank” of Leavenworth City. Printed in 1856, the dollars demonstrated their value not only with a standard number, but also with images of a man reaping wheat with a small cabin behind him.<sup>43</sup> (One man reaping on the one-dollar bill, two on the two bill, and so on.) These images confirmed the white settlers’

<sup>37</sup> Geo S. Park “Notes of a Trip Up Kansas River, Including Observations on the Soil, Climate, Scenery” 1854, 14; Nebraska and Kansas Report of the Committee of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company (Boston, 1854), 23.

<sup>38</sup> Geo S. Park “Notes of a Trip Up Kansas River”, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Geo S. Park “Notes of a Trip Up Kansas River”, 24; 15.

<sup>40</sup> Geo S. Park “Notes of a Trip Up Kansas River”, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Nebraska and Kansas Report of the Committee of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company (Boston, 1854).

<sup>42</sup> This idea echoes in many ways the “Curse of Ham” argument among pro-slavery Americans.

<sup>43</sup> James Emery papers, Kansas State Historical Society.

valued in coming to Kansas. The dollar showed improvement of the land with physical structures, unlike the temporary homes of Natives, and the possibility of successfully farming crops. It also illustrated the construction of a domestic space, further promoting Kansas as a realm in which men could bring their families and provide for them.

Despite the focus of white settlers on the cultural erasure and removal of Natives, some NEEAC founders understood that their relationships in the West depended on a philanthropic reciprocity. The so called humanitarian act of “civilizing” the Natives and paternalistically taking Native lands came with an expectation that they would mutually benefit. White settlers did not expect Natives to disappear right away, but rather sought to integrate useful aspects of their culture into the new white settlements. Thomas Webb, for example, argued to Amos A. Lawrence that towns in Kansas should retain their Indian names. He wrote, “I have a great desire, as far as practicable, to retain Indian names, when euphonious and expressive.”<sup>44</sup> By wanting to keep the Indian names for cities, Webb acknowledged the presence of Natives and their cultural erasure by the current practice of naming of towns after white men like Amos Lawrence. Webb also reasoned that Natives, “seldom select a name unless there be a significance in it.”<sup>45</sup> Keeping Indian names for towns presented them as exotic to those in the Northeast, perhaps enticing settlement.

In rare cases, white settlers were able to forge alliances with Kansas Indians, but these friendships often resulted in Indians ceding their land to settlers. One instance of interracial marriage occurred between Abelard Guthrie and Quindaro Nancy Brown, a Wyandotte woman. Because of his ties to both societies, Guthrie worked as a clerk and aided in the treaty that removed the Wyandotte from Ohio. He also obtained a special arbitration role in the Kansas

---

<sup>44</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Page, December 3, 1856, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Unknown, October 16, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

land disputes of the 1850s. Figure 4 shows a contract between the Wyandott Commissioners and a man named Solomon Kayrahoo providing him ninety acres of land. In the left corner of the contract, there is a drawing of two Native men in front of a teepee. One is standing shirtless and in a headpiece, while the other kneels before him in full Native attire, reaching out his hand. Both men are staring into the words of the contract, casually holding their bows and arrows.<sup>46</sup> In a treaty allotting land from Wyandotte claims, the choice to paint a Native American on a land contract acknowledges the original ownership of the land, but also Native passivity in letting the land go. Unlike the open space depicted by Peale, the NEEAC sought to confine their colonial subjects onto parceled out pieces of land, or send them further west.

Webb, in particular, understood that white settlers could not only gain from Indian lands, but also from their trade. In 1857, a potential settler referred to as Mrs. C.J. Nichols wrote Webb asking why the white settlers in the area were not doing more to take advantage of Native trade. Webb responded that he had “often called attention to the subject of the value and extent of the Indian trade, but do not think our Kansas friends, and those who propose moving to the Territory are sufficiently impressed with its importance.”<sup>47</sup> Webb clearly could gain little traction among members of the NEEAC to promote peaceful interactions with Natives, who saw them more in terms of removal and assimilation than cooperation.

Aside from formal media promotion, many people, particularly women, wrote home. Their letters mirrored the dual economic and moral goals of the company, while simultaneously maintaining myths about empty land and the inevitability of Native extinction. Sara Robinson, the wife of Charles Robinson, who moved to Kansas in the first NEEAC party, wrote an essential promotional piece titled, *Kansas: Its Interior and Exterior Life*, to send back to Boston. She

---

<sup>46</sup> James Emery Papers, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Mrs. CJ Nichols, March 4, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

wrote that before leaving Boston, she harkened back to her childhood understanding of the territory as the “Great American Desert, inhabited only by savages and wild beasts.”<sup>48</sup> Her work then showed Kansas as cultivated and like New England. Robinson depicted the land nearly always in contrast to New England and noted the possibility of transforming the land to match “dear New England” “where art and taste had labored long.”<sup>49</sup> For Robinson, it was natural that emigration would “flow into Kansas from the North and East” because “this Eden of America” held the promise of self-improvement and also the opportunity to civilize the region with Christianity.<sup>50</sup>

Like many settlers, Robinson saw her mission not just to improve the land, but also to benevolently improve the local people. In one story, Robinson met Dr. Barker and his family, who she immediately knew to be Easterners. “One glance at the room” she wrote, was sufficient evidence of this, because “books, pamphlets, pictures, vases, &c., were on all the tables, walls, and everywhere.”<sup>51</sup> Satisfied by these symbols of civility, Robinson went on to praise the Barkers, who “worked indefatigably for the best good of the Shawnees.”<sup>52</sup> She further lauded his paternalistic care of two Indian girls and a former slave, whom he had freed. Although media on Kansas had previously constructed it as a dangerous masculine space, Robinson’s account served to feminize it and promote family migration. In her account, even the most “savage” (Indians) or “backwards” (former slaves) could be brought into the white nuclear family and tamed into a picture of Northeastern civility.

---

<sup>48</sup> Sara Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life: Including a full view of its settlement, political history, social life, climate, soil, productions, scenery, etc.*, (Lawrence, 1856), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 26.

In Robinson's account, the only true threat to the creation of another New England was Southerners. She showed Northeastern readers the danger of not winning Kansas with the stories of mysteriously devious southern characters, one of whom even "said Stephen A. Douglas was a better man than Jesus Christ, made his appearance with his friends, and used every effort to break up the New England settlement."<sup>53</sup> Robinson's industrious Northeastern workers prevailed, however, "proceeded with their improvements, erecting a saw-mill, boarding-houses, and stores."<sup>54</sup> Through improvement, Robinson believed that Kansas could also tame undesirable whites.

Robinson's view of the Indians illustrated to her audience the hierarchies of civilization in the territory. While she declared that the Kaws were "the most uncultivated of all" she praised the Shawnees for making "good advances in civilization" because "they have houses, cultivate their lands, and wear the dress of Americans."<sup>55</sup> She also approved of the Delaware, who she saw "daily in our streets" "with their gay dress, half-civilized, retaining always the Indian blanket."<sup>56</sup> She maintained that other, "less civilized" tribes pitched their tents further away from town, only coming for supplies, thus affirming that the only Natives that a family would encounter would already be assimilated to white culture. As for the "less civilized" tribes, Robinson depicted them as in need of benevolent, civilizing missions. She was especially critical of Native women and their childcare, writing about infants, "the poor little human, too, is encased in a red flannel bag, and carried on the back of the mothers."<sup>57</sup> Once again, Robinson promoted the need for white settlement in Kansas, not just because the land would offer opportunities for self-improvement, but also because it would result in Indian assimilation to white culture.

---

<sup>53</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 182.

<sup>57</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 182.



Proving that religion pervaded the region, especially among Natives, was an essential point in demonstrating to white readers that benevolent philanthropic enterprises were civilizing the region's inhabitants. Robinson's depiction of a Native American church service particularly demonstrated the effect of Christianity when she,

Attended the little white church upon the rolling prairie today. Standing as it does upon quite an elevation, overlooking a great extent of woodland and prairie, being built with spire pointing heavenward, it reminds one of dear New England, and her pleasant villages scattered through all her valleys and upon all her hillsides. Being early, I noticed the Indian worshippers. Many of the men seated themselves in little groups upon the grass, and entertained each other in their odd-sounding dialect. The women came upon horseback, and, after tying their horses to the fence near by, came into the church, and maintained most strict decorum throughout the entire service. With the exception of the handkerchief upon their heads, in place of bonnet, their style of dress differed in no way from our own. They admire rich materials, and gay colors, and the most of those I saw at church were clad in chameleon silks. The service, although we could understand only an occasional word, was very impressive. The speakers, especially the interpreters, had rich mellow voices. Their quick and varied intonations, their rapid mode of enunciation, their graceful and most expressive gestures, singularly enchain the attention of the hearers, and impress upon them the substance of the discourse.<sup>58</sup>

Robinson was careful to present the service as a slightly different version of a typical New England gathering. From the physical description of the church, to the attire of the Native women, Robinson's account demonstrated to New Englanders that settlement had resulted in the assimilation and conversion of the Natives. Even though Robinson could not understand the Native language, she approved of their tone, especially of the most assimilated speakers, the interpreters. Other Christians also wrote home with similar tales. Reverend W.D. Haley reminded readers of the desirability of introducing Christianity "at an early day in the settlement of the territory."<sup>59</sup> He continued with a call to action, promising that he would personally "spend

---

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> W.D. Haley to Edward Everett Hale, July 24, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

two months out of the year in Kansas preaching whenever and I am fit a hearing week day and Sunday; and establish churches.”<sup>60</sup>

These accounts sent back to the Northeast served several purposes. It helped transform an “unsettled” territory in the minds of readers from a masculine space to one that promoted the settler colonization of family migration. Accounts like Robinson’s were essential media arms of the NEEAC’s philanthropic mission because they dispelled notions that the West was dangerous. Robinson’s depicted the West as a more open version of New England, where whites had tamed “uncivilized” factions of society. She presented the West as an inviting place, with the threat of Natives diminished by philanthropic benevolence. Accounts such as Robinson’s portrayed Kansas as both an economic opportunity, depicting the environment as a land of milk and honey full of “soil for richness that can be surpassed in no country,” but also as a just religious movement that would “bring the civilization” to the land and sow “the seeds of harmony and good-will.”<sup>61</sup>

Julia P. Lovejoy, a devout Methodist, exhibited a similar duality in her diary about the reasons her family moved to Kansas with the NEEAC. She wrote “every New England heart throbs for freedom” and “therefore we are glad we can labor for God and freedom here, where sin abounds...must be redeemed and saved, and we want a hand in helping on the good work.”<sup>62</sup> In addition to her religious goals, Lovejoy found herself pleased with the beauty of the land and the fact that “a man can build himself a comfortable residence, by doing the work himself, for \$150 or \$200, without plastering.”<sup>63</sup> Like Eli Thayer and Sara Robinson, Lovejoy demonstrated new constructions of family migration justified for both religious and economic reasons. William

---

<sup>60</sup> W.D. Haley to Edward Everett Hale, July 24, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>61</sup> Robinson, *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life*.

<sup>62</sup> Julia Louisa Lovejoy Diary, 1856-1864. Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>63</sup> Lovejoy Diary, 1856-1864.

Goodnow, whose brother Isaac moved to Kansas via the enticements of the NEEAC, also espoused this idea, and pegged the chief benefit of moving that it “would place you in a condition to be above *want & care* which is now the chief burden of your life.”<sup>64</sup> Settlers clearly understood the NEEAC’s plan as not only a less expensive option for emigrating to the West but also as an opportunity to spread their religious morality and principles of free labor to a “less civilized” area.

Thomas Webb confirmed the importance to the NEEAC that women and families accompany men into the region. Family migration would not only be more permanent thus giving the enterprise validity, it would promote philanthropic benevolence because women were essential to the creation of a moral settlement. Webb wrote that the women who settled New England were “of the true New England stamp, who will impact a high moral tone to the settlement, and be sure to train up the rising generation in the way they should go.”<sup>65</sup> By moving West, Webb also thought that women would become powerful pioneers once liberated from the confines of urban, genteel living. The NEEAC continuously clamored for the women of their parties to send back, “sketches of Interior life” because they “are capable of affecting an infinite deal of good this way by means of the pen.”<sup>66</sup> Even more importantly, the NEEAC believed that women were the key to maintaining settlement in Kansas. Webb wrote:

We need communication of strong minded, [sic] women, to put to shame if possible the weak-minded, fainthearted men, who having mistaken their calling, and finding themselves unfit for pioneers, return whence they came, and flood the papers with dolorous accounts of what they saw and what they could not find in the new territory. One of this capable minded ...has given the public the results of his short-lived expensive in a letter nominally addressed to men, tho’ neither the original nor a printed copy has ever been furnished me. He sounds the alarm, and may excite the fears of some who have

---

<sup>64</sup> Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era*, 41.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Charles Robinson, November 20, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Charles Robinson, November 27, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

relatives and friends in Kansas, by declaring that those who remain through the winter will see sufferings almost beyond description before Spring.<sup>67</sup>

Female emigrants to Kansas took on an essential role in the NEEAC's mission because they had an ability to keep men in the West and ensure that they would achieve settlement. Webb believed that women hold the moral fiber and strong minds necessary to settle the West, which would provide the moral instruction necessary to perpetuate the longevity of the colony.

Part of presenting Kansas as a territory open to family settlement also included ensuring the exclusion of free blacks. Even though the NEEAC considered itself anti-slavery, they were by no means abolitionists. In fact, Eli Thayer was a staunch anti-abolitionist, which at the time was a more popular and socially acceptable than abolitionism.<sup>68</sup> In the West, discrimination against freed slaves reached its height between 1846 and 1860, precisely the moment when the prohibition of slavery was most hotly debated.<sup>69</sup> Although members of the NEEAC generally promoted anti-slavery, they did not necessarily want to have a large population of freed slaves in their territory. There was even a faction of anti-slavery, anti-black settlers who saw in the movement the chance to exclude "all freed slaves from Kansas."<sup>70</sup> Although settlers with the NEEAC saw themselves engaged in a moral struggle against slavery, they had no real desire for racial equality. Thayer himself wrote that some of his emigrants' motivations were tinged with a certain distaste for African Americans whom he claimed settlers had very "little pity for."<sup>71</sup> One settler named T. H. Cunningham wrote the company, "As a great will I detest slavery, but what

---

<sup>67</sup> Thomas H. Webb to Charles Robinson, November 27, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>68</sup> Eugene Berwanger's *The Frontier Against Slavery* bolsters this argument by demonstrating that emigrants from the Old Northwest and New England carried their ideas about race and miscegenation to the West as an explanation for why westerners preferred anti-exclusion acts toward free blacks rather than civil rights. Also see Leonard Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>69</sup> Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery*, 4;5.

<sup>70</sup> Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery*, 98.

<sup>71</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 32.

will you do with the Kansas slave if it is abolished? They can't hold there own and if given a fair land would ruin it and relapse into African barbarism. I have the same kind of antipathy although not to great degree, to a black man or woman that I have to a monkey.”<sup>72</sup> Although Thayer was a bit more understanding of anti-slavery, he openly scoffed at the abolitionist cause and noted, “the best and more trustworthy emigrants in the cause of free Kansas...hated slavery as much as any one, but they had not exhausted their strength in deploring the ‘great sin of slavery.’”<sup>73</sup> In fact, Thayer admonished the abolitionists who came to Kansas with his company saying that they “wasted all their energies in sighing and weeping for the ‘poor slave,’” and on future trips advised these “tearful specimens to stay at home.”<sup>74</sup> Two abolitionist settlers from an NEEAC company confirmed this attitude when they wrote home. One said that he was “much disappointed in the character of the emigrants here” and another wrote that most in his company were “not remarkably strong abolitionists.”<sup>75</sup> Thayer himself never sought provisions for the inclusion of freed slaves, and the sheer absence of their mention in the literature of the NEEAC suggested the desire to create a model society that would not require civil rights. The Topeka Constitutional convention on October 23, 1855, which NEEAC leaders like Charles Robinson attended, confirmed this belief when they added a “negro exclusion” clause to the Constitution. Anti-slavery Kansans approved the Constitution 1,731 votes to 46 and the “Negro provision” 1,287 to 453.<sup>76</sup> Although the government took no actual steps toward this end, the exclusion clause demonstrated the seemingly paradoxical opinions of the settlers regarding African Americans.

---

<sup>72</sup> T.H. Cunningham to Edward Everett Hale, June 18, 1854, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>73</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 89.

<sup>74</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 89.

<sup>75</sup> C. Stearns to William Lloyd Garrison, March 16, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>76</sup> Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery*, 111.

After 1856, the Kansas Territory became a battleground for the coming Civil War and the complex Indian treaty processes faded into the background. While earlier land grants had acknowledged the presence of Native peoples, by 1859 official papers promoted the success of white settlement. Figure 5 shows a land claim debt for James G. Emory. It had been only four years since the Wyandotte claim paper, and yet it showed pictures of industrialization—a train billowing past a picturesque countryside and a large, developed building. In some ways, this change signaled that white colonists believed that their project was complete. These later land claim papers presented Kansas as a white space, fit for families and further migration. Just like the NEEAC settler who worried that the Indians would “melt away,” the white settlement of Kansas had erased their connection to the Natives. From its foundations as the “Great American Desert” which constructed the West and Kansas as a masculine space of conquest to the beginning of the Civil War, Kansas increasingly moved from a space of extractive colonization to one of settler colonialism. The erasure of Indians and exclusion of free African Americans from documents and illustrations was essential to the process of constructing Kansas as mirror of Eastern civilization.

In a letter to Thayer, Theodore Park summarized how many New Englanders felt about minority groups: “It seems to me you have hit the nail on the head; for we can’t prevent the spread of an industrious, thoughtful, and enterprising people into the domains of an idle, heedless, and unprogressive people, but can prevent the fitting out of hordes of pirate. We can organize emigration, and send men to the barbarous country who will do much service to themselves, to it, and to us.”<sup>77</sup> The NEEAC immigration to Kansas was a settler colonial enterprise meant to “improve” the land and the locals, while excluding “undesirables.” The Company promoted family migration to Kansas through advertisements and propaganda in order

---

<sup>77</sup> Edward Everett Hale, Introduction to *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, Guide, March 15, 1889, xvii.

to mold Kansas into a reflection of New England, which led to exclusion of free blacks and Indian removal. Soon, these undesirables that needed benevolent Northern conquering would not just reside in the West, but the South.

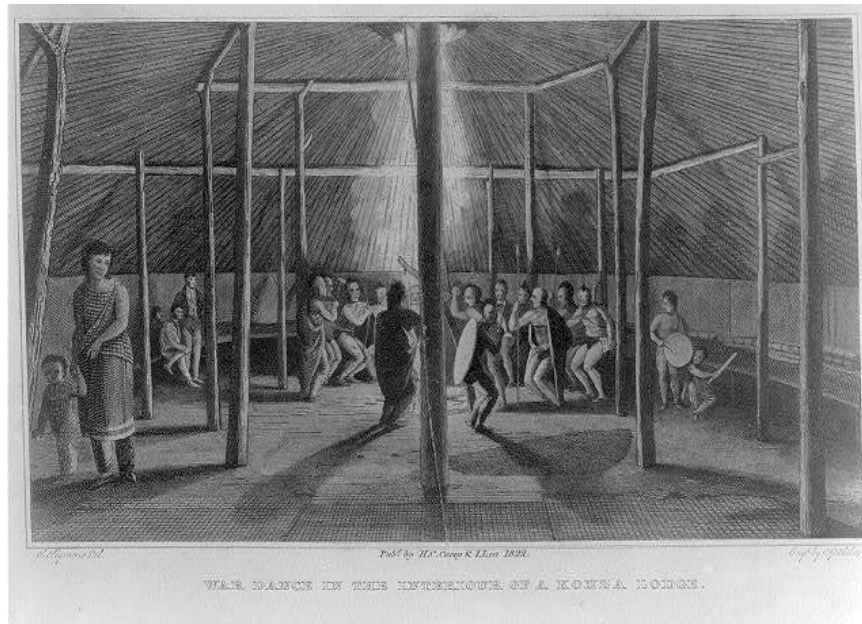


Figure 1: “War Dance in the Interior of a Konza Lodge” by Samuel Seymour.



Figure 2: “Movable Tent Lodges of the Kaskaiahs” by Titan Ramsay Peale.



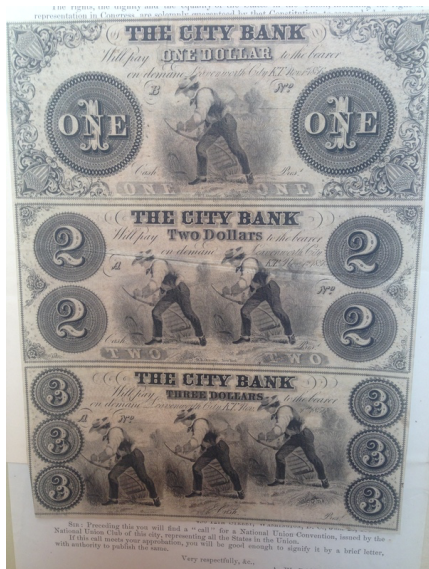


Figure 3: Banknote from Leavenworth City, 1856. Kansas State Historical Society. 3

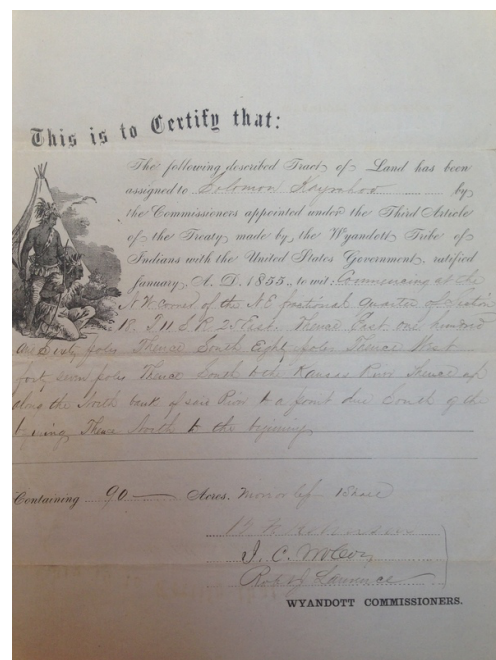


Figure 4: Wyandott contract. Kansas State Historical Society.



Figure 5: Kansas land claim debt, James Emery Papers, Kansas State Historical Society.

### Chapter Three: Beyond Kansas

In 1861, Eli Thayer wrote two letters to President Abraham d to outline his plan for a “cheaper & safer method” to save the Union.<sup>1</sup> He suggested that the Government “enforce a homestead” to encourage “planting...in sufficient numbers colonies of loyal men from the North & from Europe” into rebellious states.<sup>2</sup> Thayer suggested Virginia and Texas as viable options, but reasoned that it would work well in any Southern state. Although Thayer was convinced that this would secure “the perpetual loyalty of the Southern States,” Lincoln never answered.<sup>3</sup>

One year later, Brimmer M. Hook wrote to Edward Everett Hale that he had seen Eli Thayer the day before. Thayer had not given up on this plan, and imparted unto him a “scheme for establishing a ‘colonization department’ of the government,” which would offer “free passage to free immigrants to the South from all parts of the civilized world.”<sup>4</sup> Hook viewed the idea with suspicion, noting that Thayer was even “finer and grandiose” than before.<sup>5</sup> Thayer and what remained of the NEEAC after Kansas, continued to spread the company’s mission of free labor ideology, which they believed would not only civilize the West, but also the South. In the antebellum period, they presented their immigration plans as a solution to sectional conflict, and in the postbellum period, as an avenue for Reconstruction.

Histories that examine the New England Emigrant Aid Company rarely follow them past Kansas, after the violence of the border wars and the coming of the Civil War. By this point,

---

<sup>1</sup> Eli Thayer to Abraham Lincoln, October 12, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>2</sup> Eli Thayer to Abraham Lincoln, November 6, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>3</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>...Lincoln heartily disapproved of Thayer’s plan as a concession to slave power. At one point during the Secession Crisis, he wrote to Thurlow Weed that “Eli Thayer’s Pop. Sov. Would lose us every thing we gained by the election.” Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), IV, 154.

<sup>4</sup> Brimmer M. Hook to Edward Everett Hale, April 23, 1862, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>5</sup> Brimmer M. Hook to Edward Everett Hale, April 23, 1862, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

many historians dismiss the Company as having completed its most important task, and indeed, Kansas remains the only real example of Company success. The Company did not officially close its doors until the twentieth century, and in that time became involved in several other emigration projects. The NEEAC continued to believe, just as they had in Kansas, that “there is no earthly reason why anybody should give their money out of philanthropy.”<sup>6</sup> The thing must come upon a business basis or it goes under, and the business basis is this. Show men how they can get a handsome return for their money and they will put it in. If you cannot show them that you cannot get the money.”<sup>7</sup> The Company continued to mix the tenets of capitalism with the mission of Christian morality as a solution to poverty and sectionalism. Even after the Civil War, they continued to promote the type of nineteenth century philanthropy that Eli Thayer had so effectively advocated in the 1850s, which not only assisted in emigration schemes, but also benefitted the stockholders and Directors. As the century drew to a close, however, these plans started to look more and more like the land speculations that the Company had vehemently denied as their mission earlier in Kansas and despite similar ideology, their attempts to colonize western Virginia, Texas, Florida, and Oregon failed quickly because of lack of funding and support. Company secretary F.B. Forbush attributed this failure to the lack of “absorbing public interest” in comparison to Kansas. And indeed, popular opinion had shifted to favor immediate solutions, such as war to gradual solutions like immigration.<sup>8</sup>

In 1857, during the height of the NEEAC’s success and fame in the Kansas Territory, the Company began to redirect its ideology to the colonization of West Texas. This idea, which eventual company agent Frederick Law Olmstead (who would later become famous as the

---

<sup>6</sup> In this particular case, Forbush uses the term “philanthropy” as synonymous with their idea of charity.

<sup>7</sup> F.B. Forbush to Edward Everett Hale, March 16, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>8</sup> F.B. Forbush to Edward Everett Hale, March 16, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

landscape architect of Central Park), wrote to Edward Everett Hale that, “last week he saw some men from Kansas who said it was a common thing for the more zealous fighting free settlers there to talk of taking western Texas next. I have a constantly improving conviction there that is the thing we do next that it can be done easily.”<sup>9</sup> The idea of colonizing Texas had long been on the minds of the Company directors as a viable next step in the process of spreading Republican ideals. Hale posited an idea to colonize the region as a means to end slavery in his 1845 pamphlet “How to Conquer Texas before Texas Conquers Us.” Although Hale claimed this work as the direct inspiration for the NEEAC, Thayer believed he came to it by divine intervention.<sup>10</sup> In either case, this work by Hale argued that Texas could be saved from the evil of slavery if “the north pour down its hordes upon these fertile valleys, and bear civilization, Christianity and freedom” to “continue there the contest of freedom, in the first skirmish of which we had been defeated.”<sup>11</sup> He wrote that the immigration plan was “not wild nor Utopian,” and would not require “any spasmodic exertion, any self-sacrifice, any crusading spirit,” because Northern capitalists would fund the venture.<sup>12</sup> Hale argued that “such an effort to introduce free labor and free institutions on the virgin soil of a new republic, must command the sympathy of freeman and Christians the world over,” and that God would reward the settlers with the “blessing of Providence,” which would in turn render them economically successful.<sup>13</sup> Considering Hale’s plan to “conquer” Texas, it was no wonder that he so eagerly assisted Thayer in Kansas and became a staple member of the NEEAC’s projects in other regions.

Thayer also had larger plans for the Company from its conception. He wrote that the goal of

---

<sup>9</sup> Frederick L. Olmstead to Edward Everett Hale, January 10, 1857; Johnson *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 256.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick L. Olmstead to Edward Everett Hale, January 10, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*; Johnson *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 256.

<sup>11</sup> Everett Edward Hale, *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us* (Boston: Redding and Co., 1846), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Hale, *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us* 18; 19.

<sup>13</sup> Hale, *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us*, 21.

the association was for it to “grow and expand till it shall become the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to the lovers of Freedom all over the Earth. Its first aim is to secure Kansas and Nebraska as Free States. But when these are redeemed from the perils that now encompass them, the Society will advance up on objects of even a wider scope.”<sup>14</sup> Thayer believed that once the Kansas project proved successful, the principles of religion and free labor would propel his business into a nation-wide affair.

The Company used Kansas as a springboard into this next venture, which true to their ideological roots, sought not only to increase the adherence to free labor, but also to provide large returns on investments for stockholders. Following up on the zealous Kansas settlers who wanted another adventure, the company sent pamphlet information to the territory, the “purpose being to encourage attention to Texas among the right sort of men and diffuse in formation about the country.”<sup>15</sup>

Another piece of media that the Company circulated was Olmstead’s account of his trip to Texas in 1857, which served as a promotional piece, but also as a reminder of the Company’s goals in emigration. Olmstead adhered to the Northern Republican idea of philanthropy as a means to ending the oppression of slavery in the region. He outlined his opposition to slavery, not in humanitarian terms, as an abolitionist would, but in economic terms, which was more characteristic of anti-slavery Republicans. He wrote that a slave holding Texan would spend most of his money on buying slaves, whereas an Iowan could simply advertise and hire hands with his money. Not only was it cheaper to participate in free labor enterprise, he wrote that:

The Iowan is able to contribute liberally to aid in the construction of the church, the school-house, the mill, and the railroad. His laborers, appreciating the value of the reputation they may acquire for honest, good judgment, skill and industry, do not need

---

<sup>14</sup>Thayer, *The History of the New England Emigrant Aid Company*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Frederick L. Olmstead to Edward Everett Hale, January 10 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

constant superintendence, and he is able to call on his neighbors and advise, encourage and stimulate them. Thus the church, the school, and the railroad are soon in operation, and with them is brought rapidly into play other social machinery, which makes much luxury common and cheap to all.<sup>16</sup>

Olmstead believed that slavery needed to be eliminated in Texas because it would make white industry more effective and lead to more productive society. In contrast to the uplifting Iowan, the Texas planter would, “have personally grown rich, perhaps; but few, if any, public advantages will have accrued from his expenditures.”<sup>17</sup> Olmstead did not believe that making money was wrong; in fact, he believed it was noble and he also believed that the best way to have a productive society was through free labor.

Olmstead also saw colonization as a way to repair the damage that slavery had already done in Texas. He wrote that the “extension of slavery into Texas, commenced, for good or evil, in our own day; and when we of the North had the power and the constitutional right to prevent it.”<sup>18</sup> On his trip to Texas, he met various Northerners and showed how they were in great need of uplifting company, lest they fall prey to Southern ideology. One man he met:

did have the wit to say he believed he should have been better off now if he had remained at the North. Think of the probabilities--the son of a master mechanic, with a considerable capital. Educate him where you please, in any country not subject to the influence of slavery, how different would have been his disposition, how much higher and more like those of a reasonable being, would have been his hopes, aims, and life.<sup>19</sup>

To Olmstead, saving Northerners already in Texas was just as important as changing the quality of the region to conforming to Northern ideals. Like media efforts in Kansas, Olmstead also sought to show that Texas was an area safe for Northern immigration. Although he noted that Mexicans were treated “as vermin, to be exterminated,” and that slaves suffered under the

---

<sup>16</sup> Frederick L. Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas: or, a saddle trip on the southwestern frontier* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857), ix-x.

<sup>17</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas*, xi.

<sup>18</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas*, xii.

<sup>19</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas*, 122-3.

system of oppression, he often reminded his readers that the control of the state was firmly in the hands of whites.<sup>20</sup> This was evident in his discussion of the “native savages” he encountered, where he noted that Indian agents had successfully “tamed” the indigenous residents through nothing other than capitalism. He wrote that by providing “a certain pension in clothing and food, for keeping quiet,” the Natives had learned to substitute the “use of the plough for that of the scalping-knife.”<sup>21</sup>

He also proved that foreigners could easily adapt to the climate of Texas and endure the locals, by writing at length about the German settlements in the area. He wrote of their “experiment,” which used “associated capital” to transport emigrants on a large scale under a charter from the Duke of Nassau.<sup>22</sup> Although more than 2,000 families came to Texas under this agreement, in which each adult could pay \$120 for free passage and forty acres of land, they became “humbugged by speculators” because of poor organization and ignorance.<sup>23</sup> He wrote that despite German failures, which he attributed to “bungling and cruel mismanagement,” “in the hands of men of sound sense and ability,” the project would “have ranked as, in the highest degree, a beneficent acquisition of experience, inaugurating almost a new era for humanity.”<sup>24</sup> Olmstead was careful to show his support of this immigration model, which he also saw as successful in Kansas. He wrote that the NEEAC project in Kansas, “served, at least, to show what might be realized, in calm times, by the power of organization of capital.”<sup>25</sup> Olmstead’s work on Texas, coupled with his compatible northern ideology, brought him into almost immediate contact with the leaders of the NEEAC. His goals and views fit so well into the

---

<sup>20</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas*, 245.

<sup>21</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas*, 288.

<sup>22</sup> Hale, *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us*, 175-6.

<sup>23</sup> Hale, *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas: or, a saddle trip on the southwestern frontier*, 282.

<sup>25</sup> Olmstead, *A Journey through Texas: or, a saddle trip on the southwestern frontier*, 282.

mentality of the Company that he was hired almost immediately in May 1857 as their Texas agent, by recommendation of Colonel Daniel Ruggles of the United States Army.<sup>26</sup>

After significant research into the region, board member Samuel Cabot, Jr., recommended a similar plan in West Texas—purchase the land at twelve to fifty cents an acre, introduce mills, churches, and schools, and through “the rise in value of land paying a handsome profit on the investment.”<sup>27</sup> Once again, this land speculation had a Republican goal, and was seen as a philanthropic move, which could destroy slavery without a violent internal conflict. Cabot noted that the main purpose of the Texas adventure was to make “apparent on a large scale that free cotton can be raised and pay well for its production,” which would “show to the slave states that white labor not only can compete with slave labor, but vastly excel it, in the quantity and quality of the article produced” and “gradually induce the poor whites of the slave states to take up this kind of labor.”<sup>28</sup> Northerners lauded this philanthropic capitalism as a “pure Christian duty,” and others even wrote the Company offering to sell their land at cheap prices.<sup>29</sup> There was also an effort to induce the settlement of Europeans, in particular Germans and British, to settle the region; apparently their anti-slavery sensibilities qualified them to pose as Northerners in this emigration scheme.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately for the NEEAC, the Panic of 1857 broke up the financial incentive for settlement, and effectively drained their accounts.<sup>31</sup> The Company and its affiliates continued to discuss the matter of Texas even into March 1860. The Texan

---

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 255.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Cabot Jr. to the NEAAC, July 28, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Cabot Jr. to the NEAAC, July 28, 1857, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>29</sup> C. Paltrex to Edward Everett Hale, February 20, 1857; Ferguson and Brother New Braunfield Co. to NEEAC, July 7, 1857. *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>30</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 256.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 256.



Committee Report, written by Cabot, urged for “sooner measures” in securing Texas for freedom, but with the impending secession, it was simply too late.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time that the Company was considering West Texas as a possible venue, Eli Thayer also sought out Virginia out as an area for Northern emigration. Thayer began his own emigration company for this venture, called the Emigrant Homestead Association, but it effectively served as an arm of the NEEAC in Virginia. Thayer retrospectively wrote that when he created the Charter for the NEEAC, it “was my purpose...to be done with Kansas in 1855, and then, without loss of time, and with increased capital, to have bought up large tracts of worn-out lands in Virginia.”<sup>33</sup> Thayer further contended, “two years of such work, by such a company, in Virginia, would have made her as secure for the Union in 1861 as Massachusetts was.”<sup>34</sup> In March 1857, Thayer enlisted the help of a Mr. Woodward and Mr. J. McKay to assist in drafting a bill for the charter of the new company. Once again, the Company was to be funded by stock subscriptions and would convince Southerners to amend their ways by example.<sup>35</sup> Thayer attempted to use his same sources of funding for the project, once again calling on Amos A. Lawrence for subscription, despite the fact that Lawrence had dropped all affiliation with the NEEAC in September 1855 due to not receiving his promised compensation.<sup>36</sup> Thayer wrote in *The Liberator* that his plan was thus: “I assure you it is our purpose to be strictly a business organization. We shall abide by the laws, state and national...We shall purchase large tracts of land at Slave State prices; shall give way to actual settlers about one-fourth; shall sell about one-fourth, at cost, and the remainder at free state prices—thus probably doubling our money on the

---

<sup>32</sup> S. Cabot, “Texan Committee Report,” March 7, 1860, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>33</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, 59.

<sup>35</sup> Jay McKay to Eli Thayer, March 15, 1857, *Papers of Eli Thayer 1854-1891*, Microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>36</sup> Amos Lawrence to Charles Branscomb, September 26, 1855, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

speculation.”<sup>37</sup> Although the Company eventually successfully colonized the city of Ceredo, Virginia (now West Virginia), the biggest impact of Thayer’s side venture was the media controversy it sparked.<sup>38</sup>

Thayer argued that his plan was so well incentivized Southerners would gladly join in and support the endeavor. He saw his plan not only as a way to eradicate slavery via the highly superior system of free labor, but also a way in which he could quell rising sectional tensions. He wrote that Southerners could have no reason for resisting his plan, but every reason to encourage it,” after all, he reasoned, “we do not come as your enemies; we come as your friends. We do not come to violate your laws, but to improve your own condition.”<sup>39</sup> This assumption, tinged with the egotism of Northern moral and economic authority, certainly gained him notoriety among some southerners, but Thayer wrote that when he toured the South pitching his idea in 1857, he garnered wide southern support. He wrote, “Western Virginia has proffered a friendly welcome...Kentucky has presented the strongest inducements yet offered...we continue to hear from the progressive sons of North Carolina and Tennessee. Applications to go are as numerous as invitations to come.”<sup>40</sup> He even claimed, “I can show you that even slaveholders are on our side, and that, too, in large numbers.”<sup>41</sup> Thayer believed that even the slaveholder, “could not withstand the progress of this age and the money making tendencies of the Yankee.”<sup>42</sup>

Although Thayer’s claims of Southern support were certainly exaggerated, some Southerners did support his mission. The New Orleans *Delta* compared Thayer to General Gardenshire, who wanted to donate his land for skilled laborers to come from the North to

---

<sup>37</sup> “Letter from Hon. Eli Thayer,” *The Liberator*, April 24, 1857 vol. XXVII No. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 252.

<sup>39</sup> Thayer, “The Suicide of Slavery.”

<sup>40</sup> Eli Thayer, “Letters of Welcome from her Western Apennines,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* April 29, 1857.

<sup>41</sup> “Letter from Hon. Eli Thayer,” *The Liberator*, April 24, 1857 vol. XXVII No. 17.

<sup>42</sup> “Letter from Hon. Eli Thayer,” *The Liberator*, April 24, 1857.

Missouri, stating that “Thayer is engaging in similar villainy in Virginia...but does not appear that he has met with the same opposition as Gardenshire encountered in Missouri.”<sup>43</sup> According to this Southern newspaper, Virginians were more receptive to this plan (perhaps because of the Panic of 1857). One Virginian wrote to Thayer of his “dilapidated state” of Virginia:

Her mountain water courses and her valleys want nothing but Northern enterprise and intelligence to make them a hundred fold more prolific in all the elements of material wealth and the highest Christian civilization. The school house and the church will follow the loom and the anvil—labor will become associated then, not as now, with color and caste, and mental and moral degradation—but with intelligence, refinement and moral progress.<sup>44</sup>

These Southern accounts, though perhaps imagined or exaggerated by Northern newspapers, did manifest real argument over the utility of emigration enterprises. This debate even led to speculation about the Governor of Virginia, whose “extensive schemes for internal improvement” included “looking with favor upon Eli Thayer’s scheme of colonizing Western Virginia, and consecrating it to free labor.”<sup>45</sup> This was a cause for the title of the article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, “Is Gov. Wise an Emancipationist?” and widespread Northern and Southern speculation on his actions. Northern support, especially among anti-slavery and abolitionists was readily apparent.

Many Southerners were of course, not convinced of the project’s validity. In *The South*, a newspaper printed in Richmond, Virginia, an article called the project, “exactly identical with the original Kansas Emigrant Aid Society” and “a crusade against slavery—a propagation of Black Republicanism.”<sup>46</sup> Further, it claimed that “it will open the way for the march of Black Republicanism towards the South, and will reduce us to the necessity of fighting the battle on our

---

<sup>43</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 4, 1857.

<sup>44</sup> “Another broadside from Eli Thayer”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1857.

<sup>45</sup> “Is Gov. Wise and Emancipationist?”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 10, 1858.

<sup>46</sup> *The Liberator*, April 17, 1857.

own borders.”<sup>47</sup> This article, reprinted in *The Liberator* for Northern consumption, emphasized the threat of colonizing the South. After the conflict of Bleeding Kansas just a few years before, there was no doubt that the introduction of what Thayer considered superior Northern labor was increasing sectional tensions.

Some Northerners disliked the plan’s focus on white labor and neglect of slavery. Essentially, the NEEAC was fighting against accusations of land speculation. *The New York Herald* dubbed this plan, “The Free White Recolonization of Virginia,” and proclaimed that the “waste landowners of Virginia have offered over five million acres of Eli Thayer, ‘as cheap as dirt,’ for cash” while he “boldly proclaims that free white labor, even to the utter exclusion of niggers.”<sup>48</sup> For some Northerners, the South was quickly becoming irredeemable without conflict, and the propagation of white labor did not even come close to answering the problem.

A group of Freedmen did write Thayer in 1858 asking for advice and refuge. The author, J. C. Foster, wrote:

Sir we the colored people of Western New York contemplate making an effort to relieve ourselves of these American Disabilities under which he suffer until (forbearance insisted to be a virtue). Sir the information we seek is that which we think you and complete from experience as any is the person in the US to give...Sir it cant be possible that this lost god, we’ve been taught is all powerful will allow such an injustice to us very much longer without his inter-cession...I thought the Constitution of the New England Emigrant Aid Society would meet our case precisely.<sup>49</sup>

Foster, profusely asking Thayer to “excuse the letter both spelling and writing for I am self taught and what is bad if not worse I am Black,” also saw the potential for settlement under the Company name.<sup>50</sup> There is no record that Thayer assisted these freed people in settling Virginia, but the emigration companies that he had started clearly began to draw support or

---

<sup>47</sup> *The Liberator*, April 17, 1857.

<sup>48</sup> *New York Herald*, April 21, 1857.

<sup>49</sup> J.C. Foster to Eli Thayer, May 24th 1858, *Papers of Eli Thayer 1854-1891*, Microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>50</sup> J.C. Foster to Eli Thayer, May 24th 1858, *Papers of Eli Thayer 1854-1891*.

rejection from different factions of Americans, foreshadowing the divides of the Civil War.

Some Southerners rejected his plan as pretentious and aggressive, while others (often in western Virginia) accepted the plan as a solution to their rising debt and misfortune. The rising population of staunch Northern abolitionists criticized it as a money making scheme for white people, while other Northerners lauded the plan as the perfect nonviolent solution to sectional tensions. African Americans saw the idea as a way to obtain land and live peacefully apart from oppression. All of these groups became essential to the politics of the Civil War, and Thayer's project in Virginia sparked debate and conversations over slavery and Northern sectionalism.

The idea of colonization as a benevolent enterprise was a longstanding tradition in America, tracing back to the American Colonization Society. Thayer also applied his domestic colonization, an iteration of such ideology, internationally to Central America. In an 1858 speech to Congress, Thayer advocated Republican ideology and immigration of Northern people as the solution to overpopulation. He maintained that an emigration movement, "in accordance with the highest laws, human and divine," would "give us Central America as soon as we want it."<sup>51</sup> This would relieve the North of its excess population of foreign immigrants, noting that Kansas had already served as an effective "outlet."<sup>52</sup> Thayer definitively described this process as philanthropic, but also emphasized the immense and moral power that it would give emigration companies. He told the Congressional Committee:

the people of Central America were oppressed, that they needed our assistance, and that it was conferring a benefit upon them to send out colonies among them to aid them to get rid of their oppressors. This is more than patriotism. It approaches universal brotherhood...But in addition to that, just look at it, sir! In addition to that great argument of philanthropy, we have not only the argument of necessity, but the argument of making money; and when you take those three arguments, and combine them, you make a great motive power, which is sufficient, in ordinary

---

<sup>51</sup> Thayer, "The Central American Question" Speech to Congress, January 7, 1858.

<sup>52</sup> Thayer, "The Central American Question."

cases, to move Northern men, though they are not very mobile not very fickle.<sup>53</sup>

The ultimate supporter of Republican and imperialistic philanthropy, Thayer also saw the potential benefit for himself as the leader of an emigration company. He bragged that if Congress were to approve such a company, the owners would become so powerful that they could afford to laugh at politicians, the Supreme Court, and even the President; the power of Government would eventually be unable to “in any way interfere with our progress or prevent our making cities and States and nations wherever and whenever we please.”<sup>54</sup> White self-improvement, specifically that of Northerners (Thayer expressly stated that “Northern states are the only ones who can furnish emigration that would be of any consequence to Central America”), would not only benefit the United States but would replace the barbaric conquest of the past with a philanthropic one in which Americans could proudly lift up a broken region.<sup>55</sup>

The Civil War quickly halted any real success that the NEEAC could have potentially achieved in Texas, West Virginia, or Central America. The Company’s business was put on hold during the war, but commenced again during the postbellum Reconstruction period as a viable option for emigration. The Company was involved in sending women to Oregon in 1864 and its final scheme centered on reconstructing Florida in the 1880s. In both cases, the Company held essentially the same values as before the war, but deviated in small ways from their Republican ideology. In Oregon, the Company ventures most closely resembled charity; in Florida, the scheme’s manifestation looked more like land speculation or what a Southerner may classify as carpet bagging.

In 1864, Edward Everett Hale published a report on the possibility of sending women to Oregon. The company once again argued that women were the essential missing piece to the

---

<sup>53</sup> Thayer, “The Central American Question.”

<sup>54</sup> Thayer, “The Central American Question.”

<sup>55</sup> Thayer, “The Central American Question.”

colonization scheme. Feeling that only women could tame the mostly male population, they provided funds for “seamstresses, housemaids, teachers, and (possibly) matrimonial candidates” with the hope that they would “speedily better the condition” of the territory.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the family migration the Company promoted in the antebellum period, this migration was primarily focused on young, single women.

Hale’s tract emphasized the need for the migration through census data. He reported that the 1860 census showed “in a population of 52,160, there were 19,961 males over 15 years of age, and only 9,878 women of the same age. The population is now estimated as considerably over 100,000; and the disproportion—more than two to one of males—has not probably changed at all.”<sup>57</sup> He noted that this problem was evident in the comparatively high wages of women in Oregon, who, without competition, were making a dollar a day in gold, even if they were unskilled laborers.<sup>58</sup> Hale concluded that the only way to organize “all of the best social influences in the civilizing of the State,” was to import women of “good character.”<sup>59</sup> He wrote that it would also do New England good, because it would rid them of his calculated 29,166 “surplus” women, and drive up wages for women in the North.<sup>60</sup>

Hale’s proposed plan involved sending Henry Higgins and his wife to Oregon as agents, so that they could discern the feasibility of this project. Then, the Company would provide the necessary protection needed for the journey, but the women would fund it themselves at a cost of three hundred dollars apiece. Unlike previous NEEAC endeavors, which promised the stockholders rewards, this enterprise insisted that the money, once paid, “should be used to

---

<sup>56</sup> Anne E. McDowell to Edward Everett Hale, July 10, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>57</sup> Edward Everett Hale, *The Emigration of Women to Oregon: A Report to the Directors of the New-England Emigrant Aid Co.* (Boston, 1864.)

<sup>58</sup> Hale, *The Emigration of Women to Oregon*.

<sup>59</sup> Hale, *The Emigration of Women to Oregon*.

<sup>60</sup> Hale, *The Emigration of Women to Oregon*.

facilitate the emigration of other women, so long as this emigration may seem desirable.”<sup>61</sup> Only nine days after Hale published his report, the Higginses were given their instructions, officially promoting them as agents of the Company for the next year. Higgins was required to “relieve the passage of its circumstances” for the women he brought, and take the women to San Francisco and then to Portland.<sup>62</sup> Under his own discretion, he could loan the women “such money as you may think necessary for her to establish herself,” but that amount could not exceed one hundred and fifty dollars.<sup>63</sup> Higgins was to protect and guide these women of good character to their homes in Oregon, but he almost immediately ran into trouble.

After the Company’s first attempt to send a small group of women to Oregon, Higgins wrote the Company that he was “quite satisfied that sending out a few girls at a time and allowing them to mix with others on the passage, will never do. They must be sent here with large numbers and kept to themselves otherwise the object will be defeated.”<sup>64</sup> Apparently, one of the single women he had taken with him, Jane J. Miller, had become a “fallen woman” and a “special favorite with the stewards.”<sup>65</sup> Though Miller had apparently retorted that “she was capable of taking care of herself,” Higgins became worried that her actions “considerably influenced” the other women.<sup>66</sup> Higgins did not consider this the fault of Miller, however, but rather chalked up the offense to the wily nature of Western men, who, far removed from Northern civilization, and the moral influence of women, had receded into barbarism. In many

---

<sup>61</sup> Hale, *The Emigration of Women to Oregon*.

<sup>62</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, December 15, 1864, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>63</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, December 15, 1864, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>64</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, February 1, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>65</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, February 1, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>66</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, February 1, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.



ways, Higgins's experiences only exacerbated the fears of the NEEAC, as it seemed to imply that the steady influence of women was desperately needed to immediately reform Oregon.

Higgins's wife, a woman who was only mentioned as such, played a role in promoting this idea. Just the thought of Mrs. Higgins on the journey seemed to set her as a role model for the women already in Oregon. She was even authorized to write officially for Henry when he was disposed.<sup>67</sup> In many letters concerning the couple, the authors were careful to mention that Higgins was a "woman of energy and enterprise."<sup>68</sup> She embodied exactly what the Company valued in women who would migrate to Oregon; she was "energetic," which was necessary for a long pioneer journey and "intelligent," which would help her improve the character of settlers.<sup>69</sup> Her only flaw was her Australian heritage, but it was stated that she possessed "better education than you expect of an Australian."<sup>70</sup>

In order to obtain enough women for the project, Hale suggested that the Company could import orphans and the children of refugees, "who accumulate at our Western ports" as young as ten years old.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps foreshadowing the orphan trains that would flood the West in the coming years, this suggestion bordered closely on the Republican philanthropy of the Kansas project, as it promised families free labor for about ten to fifteen years, while removing the burden of Northerners from caring for the children. Though the idea of obtaining wage labor was often the most cited reason for this movement, marriage was always an underlying theme. In one letter, however, Hale was express about this purpose. The main goal, he wrote, was the

---

<sup>67</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, February 1, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>68</sup> Dr. Karsch to Edward Everett Hale, December 15, 1864, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>69</sup> Dr. Karsch to Edward Everett Hale, December 15, 1864, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>70</sup> Dr. Karsch to Edward Everett Hale, December 15, 1864, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>71</sup> Dr. Karsch to Edward Everett Hale, December 15, 1864, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

necessity of providing wives for husbands, without compelling men to give up a year of life of work in emigrating to the East and back again...the small farmer in Oregon cannot leave his claim and come to the Atlantic States and return thither with his wife, without giving up many months to the expedition, and expending, at the very least, six or seven hundred dollars. The necessary work of the farm is set back an nearly a year is lost to him. All this to a poor man in a new community is a very great loss.<sup>72</sup>

Although many women responded to the company circulars with enthusiasm, it was rarely, if ever because they sought marriage. Like Janet Miller, this migration effort was a way to gain more freedom and opportunity, enticed perhaps by Higgins's boast that "girls here dictate their own being."<sup>73</sup> Louise Hannah, for instance, wrote the Company for information, stating that she was "strong and healthy and accustomed to work," also thanking the Company for "taking an interest in the welfare of working women."<sup>74</sup> Charlotte W. Towne similarly wrote that she wished to go to Oregon to teach, perhaps convinced by the stories of female teachers from Lowell whom Asa Mercer took to the Washington Territory in 1865 who "were very soon employed at teaching and some of them are married."<sup>75</sup> Women who replied to the circulars, on the whole, responded to the opportunity the same way that men did in Kansas; with enthusiasm at the prospect of bettering their condition and wages, or with desperation, like settler Elizabeth Hume, who had been homeless since her son was killed in the Battle of Fredericksburg.<sup>76</sup>

As mentioned, Asa Mercer also contacted the NEEAC about promoting emigration to the Washington Territory. An advertisement titled "A change for the anxious and aimless" boasted that a steamer was prepared to take three hundred "lady passengers" to the territory completely for free, promising that upon arrival they would receive "good wages, to be paid in gold, and

---

<sup>72</sup> Letter from New England Emigrant Aid Company, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>73</sup> Henry Higgins to Edward Everett Hale, February 15, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>74</sup> Louise Wallingford Hannah to Gov. Andrews, July 25, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>75</sup> Charlotte W Towne, April 24, 1865; Barnard WE Williams to Gov. Andrews, May 2, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>76</sup> *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*, Microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society.

have the added endorsement of probably marriage within three months, if they wish.”<sup>77</sup> An organization called the Protective Association also sought to send women to Nevada and Colorado at the same time. Although the Company rejected both companies for lack of resources, their existence illustrates how well the idea of sending women West resonated with the Northeastern population.<sup>78</sup>

Still reeling from the Civil War and with rebuilding on the forefront of the nation’s mind, the Governor of Massachusetts and Senator B. F. Harding begged the company in January 1865 to ask Congress for funding to aid the emigration scheme.<sup>79</sup> Although this phase of the NEEAC’s work deviated from their general philosophy of philanthropy in that it was “a very simple charity...and it is a charity, which helps those who are left as well as those who go,” the Oregon migration project still bore the influence of their fundamental ideology.<sup>80</sup> Even after the end of the war and slavery, the Company believed, even more strongly, that New England republican labor provided the best solution for the nation’s moral quandaries. Advertisements specifically asked for New England women, as they tended to be “intelligent, thrifty, energetic, and virtuous.”<sup>81</sup> This monolithic description of a New England woman promised, “to make a Yankee proper” of the territory and its men.<sup>82</sup> Women were expected to fall into the same roles they had filled in New England (one man wrote, “they cannot be too well educated—but at the same time a very important part of their education, and one which will be especially regarded by these practical fellows, will be their thorough acquaintance with housewifery”) the example of Jane

---

<sup>77</sup> *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*, Microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society.

<sup>78</sup> Anee E McDowell to Edward Everett Hale, July 10, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>79</sup> Gov. Andrews to Senator B.F Harding, January 15, 1865. *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>80</sup> *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>81</sup> W.E. Barnard to Gov. Andrews, May 2, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>82</sup> S.H. Marsh to Edward Everett Hale, February 6, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

Miller and other migrants demonstrated that women took the opportunity to improve their own conditions, not necessarily to recreate their same lives in the West.<sup>83</sup> The NEEAC continued to promote the migration of Northeasterners to form and shape the West, with the goal of improvement and the spread of republican principles.

After the migration to Oregon fizzled out for lack of funds, the NEEAC turned its eyes toward the promotion of Southern migration movements in Florida. Economically depleted and adjusting to a new system of labor after the war, the NEEAC saw the South as another opportunity for Northeasterners to escape the bustling population booms. Without the moral imperative of ending slave labor or the battle over popular sovereignty, which had effectively enticed Northern settlement in Kansas before the war, Republican philanthropy looked much more like land speculation than a partially charitable enterprise. Perhaps it is not surprising that in the postwar environment of carpetbagging, speculation, and skepticism that the Company could not continue its antebellum mission of optimism and overtly sectional colonization.

As early as December of 1865, a mere eight months after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the NEEAC inquired about obtaining land in Florida for settlement. Original lines of inquiry centered on the ability to obtain Southern lands, especially under the confiscation laws.<sup>84</sup> From the start, this NEEAC proposal was toned down from their intense involvement in Kansas affairs. They intended to circulate information and convince "separate families to go forward at their own charges (as all our emigrants have always done) and in their own way...we think we are safe in saying that our reputation through the Northern States is such that we can use a good deal of influence in any right direction."<sup>85</sup> While their reputation among New Englanders did give them some credibility, it is clearly false that the Company's emigrants had always paid their own

---

<sup>83</sup> W.E. Barnard to Gov. Andrews, May 2, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>84</sup> Chickrey to NEEAC, December 23, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>85</sup> Chickrey to NEEAC, December 23, 1865, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

fare and found their own way. With funds low, however, it did not serve company interest to advertise their former policies of obtaining discounted rates and providing land. Edward Everett Hale was once again highly involved in Company affairs. His inquiries to C.G. Barnard, who had just visited the region, were returned with enthusiasm. Barnard was convinced that “plantations must pass into Northern hands” and assured Hale of the “almost boundless openings for any colonies which we wish to plant” of Florida.<sup>86</sup> Barnard emphasized that as soon as the war ended, that they should begin colonizing Florida with people that exemplified “all that is good in a New England village or town.”<sup>87</sup> At the start of the Florida project, the Company again had noble goals, as Barnard put it, by “the hand of God,” they would “dot all the old slave states with circles of civilization which, shall, one day, impregnate the whole land.”<sup>88</sup>

In 1866, the Company took action. They officially employed General J. F. B. Marshall in December to investigate the feasibility of buying small farms in Florida to resell to Northern emigrants. This would relieve both the Northeastern population and siphon off European immigration (Hale was already “in correspondence with a prominent German and Scandinavian” for this purpose.)<sup>89</sup> The NEEAC agreed to pay for General Marshall’s travel expenses along with a salary, as long as he provided them valuable information on the conditions of Florida, specifically information about the St. John’s River and the railroad line from Jacksonville.<sup>90</sup> By this point, the company claimed that its main object “should be to get reliable information to help the poorer class of settlers who have not much time or money to spend in prospecting.”<sup>91</sup> Hale

---

<sup>86</sup> C.G. Barnard to Edward Everett Hale, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>87</sup> C.G. Barnard to Edward Everett Hale, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>88</sup> C.G. Barnard to Edward Everett Hale, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>89</sup> Edward Everett Hale to J.F.B. Marshall, December 12, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>90</sup> Edward Everett Hale to J.F.B. Marshall, December 12, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>91</sup> Edward Everett Hale to J.F.B. Marshall, December 12, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

believed it essential to this mission, perhaps based on his past experience, to remind the settlers that they would not be going to “make their fortunes but to get their living by work.”<sup>92</sup>

They believed that they could use the Homestead Act of 1862 to obtain the land they desired in Florida. A.B. Stonelawe reminded the Company that under this law “each actual settler can obtain 80 acres of land” and believed that he could use the law to “sell land in any part of Florida at \$5.00 to \$6.00 per acre.”<sup>93</sup> A year later, they looked to General Ely as an example, who was using the Homestead Act to buy “tracts of land for sale...suitable for colonizing” for three to nine dollars an acre.<sup>94</sup> This dream ultimately ended in frustration for the Company, as they realized that the government would only provide land on individual cases, and not for land companies.

While the Company’s main function at this point was to obtain and provide information to settlers, their biggest responsibility lay in quelling the post-war fears of Northerners regarding the South, centrally their fear of the climate, the resistance of its people to Reconstruction, and the presence of freed people. A. B. Stonelawe wrote, at the advent of the project, that there was “perhaps no soil in America that to the eye of a New Englander could look more forbidding than that of Florida.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, perhaps nothing could be more different from the cold, harsh winters of New England than the tropical Floridian climate. Stonelawe continued his letter, reassuring the company that despite this trepidation, there was “no soil on this continent that will produce more saleable crops to the acre than can be raised here,” boasting that he had seen lands in middle Florida that had produced two hundred pounds of cotton per acre for over seventeen

---

<sup>92</sup> Edward Everett Hale to J.F.B. Marshall, December 12, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>93</sup> A.B. Stonelawe, December 17, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>94</sup> J.F.B. Marshall, February 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>95</sup> A.B. Stonelawe, December 17, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

years.<sup>96</sup> W. H. Gleason similarly wrote Stonelawe a letter claiming, “sugar cane can be raised with less labor than in Cuba,” and could produce all “of the different products of the West-Indies.”<sup>97</sup> The NEEAC took these descriptions seriously, advertising in 1867, in a form letter, the advantages of emigration to Florida, including its “delightful climate, the variety of its productions and easy access to ready markets, we believe to be superior to those of any Southern State.”<sup>98</sup> The other inducement of course, was its climate, which they believed would improve the health of those “whose delicate throats and lungs suffer in our harsh climate.”<sup>99</sup>

The goal of the NEEAC in promoting immigration was not merely speculative, but highly political. They not only had to convince Northerners that they would be safe in the former Confederacy, but also that they would be doing the nation a favor by trying to increase the Republican influence in the area. The company took great measures to reassure Northerners that moving to the South directly after the Civil War was not dangerous, and that Southerners welcomed their capital. Marshall met several plantation owners in Florida who “never wavered” in their loyalty, or were of Northern origin.<sup>100</sup> Although they were “politically and socially ostracized by the secessionists,” they were well protected by the government.<sup>101</sup>

Marshall even met with the Governor of the state, David S. Walker, for reassurance about safety. He wrote on several occasions about how Gov. Walker “is desiring of Northern immigration and says Florida will welcome N.E. settlers with open arms, feeling that in no better way can her prosperity be assured, than by and influx of Northern labor, capital, and

---

<sup>96</sup> A.B. Stonelawe, December 17, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>97</sup> W.H. Gleason to A.B. Stonelawe, November 30, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Office of the New England Emigrant Aid co., May 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Office of the New England Emigrant Aid co., May 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>100</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 5, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>101</sup> J.F.B. Marshall, January 12, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

enterprise.”<sup>102</sup> Some Southerners even wrote the Company to assure them that the need for labor was so great, that emigration from Northerners was welcome.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, as far as Marshall could tell, all of the “low class ‘crackers’” who owned small farms, or no land at all, were especially willing to sell their land at cheap rates so that they could “go further south, where they can get out of Yankee neighborhoods, raise cattle, and drink whiskey in peace.”<sup>104</sup>

An ardent anti-slavery group prior to the war, the Company never identified as abolitionists in concern with the civil rights of African Americans. After the Thirteenth Amendment definitively ended slavery, the NEEAC had to contemplate what role freed people would play in their new colonization company. Much of the Company correspondence that concerned free persons looked at the project of a General Elys, who was attempting to create a black colony in Florida. Marshall worried that “the settlement of freemen in large bodies by themselves will not be a success” unless white workers were “among them to set them good examples of industry and direct the labor.”<sup>105</sup> Marshall wrote that the opinion of most white Floridians was that the freed people should work on small farms, because “the Negroes are not otherwise to be relied on.”<sup>106</sup> The NEEAC continued in its general attitude about African Americans after the war as it did in the antebellum period. African Americans should be free, but they would be burdensome until they learned the value of Republican industriousness and free labor. Marshall wrote that he understood why freedmen were unwilling to work until they got better terms, but maintained an attitude of white paternalism.<sup>107</sup> He directly compared the freedmen to children, writing that “It is natural to suppose that men seriously freed from the

---

<sup>102</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 9, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>103</sup> Dr. J.D. Rankin and Co., March 30 1867; James Watson to Rev. Forbush, May 24, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>104</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 11, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>105</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 9, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>106</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 9, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>107</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 5, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.



restraints to which they have all their lives been subject, should not be as manageable as before, and like a boy with a new knife should be for some time experimenting with the sudden [sic] of freedom.”<sup>108</sup> The Company saw the influence of northern education as the only real solution to the problem in Florida. Just as the NEEAC saw Northern education as essential in Kansas to help tame the West, it saw the instillation of Republican values as the way to integrate former slaves into the population. This idea accurately reflected the ideology of many other Northern groups, because by 1867 there were reportedly already “some thirty schools for Freedmen taught by Northern teachers.”<sup>109</sup>

The NEEAC did not end up doing much for freed people, except provide information to some societies that wanted to create black colonies in Florida. Dr. L. Miller wrote the Company in 1867, with a proposal to colonize Florida, at the suggestion of the Governor of Massachusetts. In a scheme that paralleled the American Colonization Society’s antebellum motivations, Miller also exuded white paternalism, writing that if he was not successful, the freed people “as they are at present situated, their destiny is to vanish rapidly away.”<sup>110</sup> In the end, the war did little to change the mission of the Company, which still sought to instill Republicanism as the cure for sectional problems, and failed to change their ideological ideas about the recently freed people.

A large portion of the NEEAC’s efforts was spent trying to sway the Floridian vote toward Republicanism. One company agent, J.M. Forbes, believed that “5000 voters introduced into this state will control it for the Union party. No other state in the South offers such inducements to the Union party to undertake such an organized immigration as was carried out in

---

<sup>108</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 9, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>109</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 12, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>110</sup> Dr. L. Miller to Rev. Forbush, January 27, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

Kansas.”<sup>111</sup> In the aforementioned form letter produced and distributed by the Company, one of the major benefits advertised by the letter was political influence. It noted,

“The small number of present inhabitants gives to each settler a proportionally large influence, and makes each colony a social and political power. From information already received, it is estimated that there are enough farmers and mechanics in New England alone, *whose lives would be saved by a change of climate*, to make Florida one of the best states in the Union.”<sup>112</sup>

Media coverage of the colonization effort was of central importance to the NEEAC, who had learned the importance of publicity in Kansas. One of Marshall’s first concerns upon his tour of Florida was that a “good Union paper” to replace the one currently in the State, which he described as “poorly printed and poorly constructed.”<sup>113</sup> The Company chose Edward M. Cheney, former employee of the Christian Register, to run the paper in an arrangement similar to the one they had given to their Kansas agents years before.<sup>114</sup> Cheney set out to make his fortune, selling all of his possession before the Company even had the money to send him out.<sup>115</sup> Cheney’s terms were thus: buy the Jacksonville Times for \$2,000 at most and he would be entitled to all profits of the paper over eight percent on the amount earned. Additionally, he could buy the paper from the Company at any time by returning the \$2,000 advance with interest.<sup>116</sup> And just as the Company trusted its agents too much in Kansas and suffered the consequences, Cheney overstepped his instructions. When Cheney arrived in Florida, he found the Florida

---

<sup>111</sup> J.M. Forbes, August 13, 1866, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from Office of the New England Emigrant Aid co., May 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>113</sup> J.F.B. Marshall to Rev. Forbush, January 12, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>114</sup> Notes of the Secretary of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, May 26, 1868, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>115</sup> Rev. Forbush to Edward Everett Hale, April 3, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>116</sup> Edward M. Cheney to Edward Everett Hale April 22, 1867; Edward Everett Hale to Edward M. Cheney, May 1 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

Times unwilling to sell, and quickly purchased *The Jacksonville Union* for \$2,500. Hale scolded Cheney, writing:

“What most troubles me in the matter is that you do not appear to understand our object. We have no desire to initiate a contest between the Loyal Papers. Certainly we do not expect to buy up Copper Head papers. At the earnest request of our Florida friends, we have attempted to serve them and the National cause in the matter of a paper. If they do not need our help in Jacksonville, it certainly seems to me that we can do better with our money than to attempt a second paper there.”<sup>117</sup>

In a later letter Hale also reminded Cheney that the goal was to secure harmony for Florida Republicans, not cause further divides. This signaled a revision, if a slight one, of NEEAC policy before the War when the Company was happy to split the party if they could achieve their goals. In the end, the Company acquiesced to its agent, much as it had done with Charles Branscomb in Kansas. They agreed to buy the paper for Cheney, but retained the full title to the paper until he could pay it off in full.<sup>118</sup> In the end, this action was the only real contribution that the NEEAC made the colonization of Florida. Cheney started the Republican State Executive Committee of Florida, which promoted stump speakers and “other legitimate expenses incidental to the upcoming election.”<sup>119</sup> Despite their originally rocky relationship, the Company lauded Cheney and his political success as their own.

By 1868, the Company’s Report consisted of a long list of disappointments. They rejoiced in their pamphlet (“obtained a large expense”) that set out to aid “in every way in their power in the work of reconstruction in that state” and the loyal newspaper run by Cheney.<sup>120</sup> They lamented that their plan to purchase large tracts of land for immigration resulted in failure,

---

<sup>117</sup> Edward Everett Hale to Edward M. Cheney, May 17, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>118</sup> Edward M. Cheney to Rev. Forbush, June 13, 1867, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Republican State Executive Committee, March 30 1868, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>120</sup> Notes from the Secretary of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, May 26, 1868, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

which they blamed on the “unfortunate reality of investments of Northern Capitalists in cotton plantations at the South,” the tumultuous political climate, and the land itself.<sup>121</sup>

In a 1954 history of the NEEAC, historian Samuel A. Johnson wrote that from 1857 onwards, the Company’s ideas shifted from “crusading spirit to an attitude of business.”<sup>122</sup> Johnson argued that after this time, “the stress was laid on so managing the property so to return something to the stockholders.”<sup>123</sup> Although Johnson correctly identifies the two most important components of the NEEAC’s republican philanthropy, morality and capitalism, they did not neatly fit into pre and post 1857 packages. Even the NEEAC’s philanthropic ventures after the war mixed these two elements into a complicated idea that charity did not have to be merely giving, it could also involved reciprocity. In many ways, every project that members of the Company discussed: Texas, Virginia, Central America, Oregon, or Florida, were efforts to recreate what they saw as their biggest triumph in Kansas. While it is tempting as a scholar to also focus only on the monumental Kansas projects, these later endeavors help trace the ideology of a generation. Although this vision was oftentimes complicated by war and financial trouble, what remains clear is that the Company never only wanted to profit, but generally cared about improving the morality of the nation by spreading what they deemed a superior ideology.

---

<sup>121</sup> Notes from the Secretary of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, May 26, 1868, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909*.

<sup>122</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 252.

<sup>123</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 252.

## Chapter Four: Memory of the NEEAC

History gives abundant proof, that a brief period of time has often determined the character and destiny of a nation. Such a period is properly called its controlling or dominating epoch. In the history of our own country, the year 1854 holds this commanding position, and governs all our subsequent years. It was in this year that the Slave Power attained its highest eminence, and demolished the last barrier that stood in the way of its complete supremacy and its perpetual dominion. In the same year, 1854, a power, before unknown in the world's history, was created and brought into use, to save to Freedom all our territories, then open by law to the possession and dominion of Slavery. This new power was an organized, self-sacrificing emigration.

-Eli Thayer

In 1887, at the age of sixty-eight, Eli Thayer set out to memorialize his greatest accomplishment in a work entitled *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence, through the Kansas Contest, upon National History*. In this book, Thayer lauded his own work in Kansas and the idea of “self-sacrificing emigration” as “a power, before unknown in the world’s history” that would “save to Freedom all our territories.”<sup>1</sup> Thayer was convinced that there would never be “any danger that false conclusions about either the agency or its methods” would surface, and remained confident until his death in 1889 that historians would not skew his or the NEEAC’s motivations.<sup>2</sup> Thayer took various measures to ensure that the history of the NEEAC, the historical “truth,” as he put it, would endure as the narrative of Bleeding Kansas, and indeed the epitome of the anti-slavery movement. His work became controversial, however, when he asserted that the NEEAC a far more influential group than the abolitionists. He specifically attacked William Lloyd Garrison’s organization as “inferior in numbers and far more inferior in influence. Its champions advocated Disunion as the ‘corner-stone of all true anti-slavery.’”<sup>3</sup>

Garrison, who had died in 1879, still had a group of supporters who worked to uphold his public memory in the postbellum era. Soon after his death his children compiled a book that

---

<sup>1</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company, and Its Influence, Through the Kansas Contest, Upon National History*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Thayer, *A History of the Kansas Crusade*, vi.

<sup>3</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company, and Its Influence*, 8.

presented him as he would have wanted, “as the single most insightful, heroic, and above all, significant leader in the abolitionists’ thirty year crusade to destroy slavery.”<sup>4</sup> Both men had supporters in their camps that considered them to be the heroes of the antebellum period, and the ideological battles that they sparked before the war continued into the 1880s.

One such battle was their differing ideologies about the best way to end slavery. Where Thayer considered himself anti-slavery, Garrison was an abolitionist. As Lawrence Jacob Friedman writes, “Antislavery stands for the hope that slavery might ultimately disappear as a result of various developments and tactics, but immediate ‘abolition’ is a more precise term: An abolitionist had a compelling desire for immediate, complete, uncompensated emancipation and was at least moderately committed to civil equality for free Negroes.”<sup>5</sup> For Garrison, this meant that Thayer’s gradual approach equated to colluding with the evil of slavery, and for Thayer, Garrison was an anarchist, bent on destroying slavery even at the cost of the Union.

As David W. Blight demonstrates in *Race and Reunion*, the memory of this type of debate remains “difficult to shuck from its shell of sentimentalism.”<sup>6</sup> Blight argues that the memory of the Civil War has since become “a story of how in American culture romance triumphed over reality, sentimental remembrance won over ideological memory.”<sup>7</sup> Because of the complicated nature of memory, it turns out that Thayer did have cause for concern about the memory of the Company and his intentions. It is the radicals of the antebellum period, the Garrisons and the John Browns, who dominate history textbooks, and the North’s perception of its own role in the war. In today’s world we can see how this sentimentalism affects the way we

---

<sup>4</sup> James Brewer Stewart Ed., *William Lloyd Garrison at Two Hundred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), vii.

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Jacob Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>6</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 4.

remember the Civil War. Books like *Confederates in the Attic* depict how some Southerners continue to celebrate the “lost cause” and the ideals of the Confederacy. Tony Horowitz demonstrates a Northern perspective on Southerners for whom the “remembrance of the War had become a talisman against modernity, an emotional lever for their reactionary politics.”<sup>8</sup> While this lost cause mentality of the South remains a popular topic among scholars and in the public, perhaps what gets lost is the Northern tendency to similarly construct their own memory of the war to overstate Northern support of abolitionism. Examining the interaction between Garrison and Thayer and their attempts to shape the public memorialization of the antebellum period offers us a window into the complex ideologies of Northerners before and after the war.

Thayer began his efforts to ensure the NEEAC’s place in the history books almost immediately from its conception in 1854. When he won a term in Congress in 1857, he used this platform to remind others of the NEEAC’s sacrifice in Kansas just a few years earlier. In a speech entitled “The Central American Question,” given to Congress on January 7, 1858, Thayer asserted that the immigration plan that he used in Kansas should be applied to Central America. He drew many parallels between the two locations, and frequently cited his work in Kansas as an example for future immigration projects. He argued that an emigration movement in Central America would relieve the North of its excess population of foreign immigrants and benevolently transform the impoverished region into a reflection of New England. Thayer also began his work to present the NEEAC as the savior of Kansas, writing that before his work “there seemed to be no chance whatever for Freedom in Kansas, after the opportunity for Slavery

---

<sup>8</sup> Tony Horowitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 386.

to enter there had been given.”<sup>9</sup> He praised the “freedom-loving men” who ventured to the territory, and posited that the NEEAC as the perfect example of antebellum antislavery.

Thayer also established his aversion to moderates and abolitionists early in his congressional career. In a speech on February 24, 1859 entitled “Fair Play,” Thayer identified the classes of men within the Republican Party that he saw as problematic. The first were the “rigidly righteous,” who only wanted slavery abolished if the act proceeded “from the most exemplary and Christian motives.”<sup>10</sup> Thayer denounced these Republicans for their strictly moral claims, stating that they should not ignore “economical or pecuniary” solutions to the problem of slavery. This reflected Thayer and the NEEAC’s view on the best way to eradicate slavery was through the standard of free labor. Another class of Republicans he denounced were the “preeminently-consistent,” who he stated were still trying to fix the problems of the past instead of finding new solutions.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Thayer identified the camp that he deemed “political Cassandras,” those Republicans who “are always prophesying, in the middle of one great disaster, that another still great is about to come.”<sup>12</sup> These politicians he deemed a “greater obstacle to our progress than the border ruffians” in Kansas because they quickly lost hope.<sup>13</sup> Thayer therefore advocated for popular sovereignty, for a “fair play” between slavery and free day. He also maintained that Northern values reigned superior. He noted that:

When it was necessary to put some colonies into Kansas, I found no difficulty in having meetings in these towns and villages at very short notice. Plans were formed for making colonies, and for taking possession of the country in dispute, and thus the result contemplated was accomplished...How can a Southern planter hope to rival this speed

---

<sup>9</sup> Thayer, *The Central American Question: Speech of Hon. Eli Thayer, of Massachusetts: Delivered in the House of Representatives, January 7, 1858*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Eli Thayer, *Fair Play: Speech of Hon. Eli Thayer, of Massachusetts, Delivered in the House of Representatives, Feb. 24, 1859* (Washington, D.C.: Polkinhorn's Steam Print Office, 1859), 32.

<sup>11</sup> Thayer, *Fair Play*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Thayer, *Fair Play*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> Thayer, *Fair Play*, 32.



and readiness of transition?<sup>14</sup>

Thayer was not only constructing the memory of Bleeding Kansas as the triumph of popular sovereignty and free labor ideology, he also began to bend the memory of the events to fit his current political agenda against other congressional Republicans. Thayer's speech drew the lines for antebellum Republicans: there were those who opposed slavery on Christian, moral grounds, those who whimpered but did nothing about it, and those who harped about solutions without action. Clearly the most dangerous in Thayer's mind, however, were the Garrisonian abolitionists,

who are dissatisfied, and who are inclined to invoke a certain deity I think a false deity which presides over a portion of this Union; a deity which has been invoked by great men on great occasions, and by little men on little occasions, for a long time past a deity in whose expected presence both the people and the politicians have sometimes stood aghast when "‘he’, ‘in prospect only,’ from his horrid hair shook pestilence and war." This sulphurous god is Disunion.<sup>15</sup>

Thayer found the abolitionist desire for "disunion" the most disturbing faction of all, and dreaded the idea of splitting the Union. In the late 1850s, Thayer had already begun to draw the lines his debate with the abolitionists after the war by constructing popular sovereignty and immigration as the best solutions to the antebellum problems in contrast to abolitionism.

It was not only Thayer, however, that sought to memorialize the NEEAC in Bleeding Kansas before the Civil War erupted. The desire to name Kansas' cities after prominent New Englanders demonstrated their attempt to transform the West into a reflection of New England, and also to leave a permanent reminder of the Company's role in the creation of white settlement in the state. The first city settled by the NEEAC was named after Amos Lawrence, one of the company's original members. Although they kept the Indian names for the cities of Topeka, Osawatomie, and Wabunsee, they also named Manhattan and Burlington after Northeastern

---

<sup>14</sup> Thayer, *Fair Play*, 36.

<sup>15</sup> Thayer, *Fair Play*, 16.

cities. This act of town naming, especially in Lawrence, signaled an effort to memorialize NEEAC efforts in the region.

During the war, the Company further emphasized their role in Bleeding Kansas to Congress. In 1863, Company secretary Thomas H. Webb petitioned Congress to pay the Company back for its hotel in Lawrence, which had been destroyed by pro-slavery forces on May 21, 1856 during the “Sack of Lawrence.” Webb reminded them that the Company had opened the west “up to civilization” and provided “benefits and blessings of society” to the region.<sup>16</sup> He then proceeded to write that David Atchison, who was once President *pro tem* [short for *pro tempore*] of the U.S. Senate, led the charge against the hotel, burning it violently to the ground in an act that resulted in Bleeding Kansas.<sup>17</sup> Although this attempt at memorialization demonstrates that the Company did remain active during the war, it was mainly after the conflict that they jockeyed for position in the history books.

Thayer’s *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence* was the first spark in the postbellum debates with Garrisonians. This book consisted of two lectures that he gave before The Worcester Society of Antiquity the year before, along with his personal notes. In it, Thayer told the same triumphant story that he began years before in Congress. He vividly remembered the split between Northerners in two groups—“one was political, and opposed to Slavery extension in a legal way,” and “the other was sentimental and contented for the overthrow of Slavery by revolutionary methods—advocating the dissolution of the Union as the best and only sure way.”<sup>18</sup> Thayer continued that while the first group, the Free Soil Party, had good intentions, it crumbled at the first sign of loss. When Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he wrote, the Party’s “leaders were silent in their despair, or spoke only to lament their

---

<sup>16</sup> Edward Everett Hale to Congress, February 20, 1863.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Everett Hale to Congress, February 20, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Eli Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 6.

defeat.”<sup>19</sup> On the other side of the argument, lay the “sentimental” party of William Lloyd Garrison, which Thayer commented “advocated Disunion as the ‘corner-stone of all true anti-slavery.’”<sup>20</sup> Thayer then directly quoted Garrison in an 1856 meeting as proposing that,

Resolved: That the one great issue before the country is, The Dissolution of the Union, in comparison with which all other issues with the Slave Power are as dust in the balance; therefore we will give ourselves to the work of annulling this 'covenant with death' as essential to our own innocency, and the speedy and everlasting over-throw of the Slave System.<sup>21</sup>

Thayer outlined the reasons that Northerners had “no sympathy” for the cause of abolitionism and “their methods were everywhere condemned.”<sup>22</sup> While he admitted that the abolitionists had “good motives,” he argued that they were ineffective, anti-religious (“By their own showing a quarter of a century spent in denouncing the church, the clergy and the Union had accomplished nothing”), extralegal, and caught in the snares of Garrison’s pride.<sup>23</sup> Thayer further quipped that Northerners had always detested slavery, but preferred “legal and constitutional methods only, and always for the Union.”<sup>24</sup>

Caught between these two camps, one of which was despondent, the other of which promised destruction, Thayer believed that Northerners waited with baited breath. He quipped,

There was silence deep as death,  
While we floated on our path;  
And the boldest held his breath  
For a time.<sup>25</sup>

But this was only for a time, because Thayer himself came up with the perfect solution to the extension of slavery. Thayer did not fall into either camp, because he did not feel “the depression and despondency that so affected others who regarded the cause of liberty as

---

<sup>19</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 7.

hopelessly lost,” nor did he care to destroy the Union like the Garrisonians. It was after many weeks of worry that Thayer was given the answer by revelation, for a plan of organized immigration.<sup>26</sup>

Thayer praised the NEEC, and wrote that their efforts caused the South serious alarm and roused the “border ruffians” into action. His work became so popular, he posited, that crowds surrounded his emigrant routes “as far west as Chicago” with “continued ovations.”<sup>27</sup> Thayer continued that Garrison’s “peculiar clique” broke their silence about the situation in Kansas and “opened their batteries of vituperation upon it and its authors, as they had always assailed every practical and feasible measure, and everybody who proposed to do something for the cause of freedom.”<sup>28</sup>

In comparison to his successful efforts in Kansas, Thayer argued that Garrisonians were not only ineffective, but they also “accomplished nothing,” and even encouraged the growth of slavery.<sup>29</sup> Instead of taking legal pathways to restricting slavery, as had Congressmen of the eighteenth century, Thayer claimed “during the entire period of Mr. Garrison's efforts for disunion...Slavery was unrestricted, and made steady progress.”<sup>30</sup> He claimed that abolitionism had not only been ineffective, it had in fact actively worked against the end of slavery. He wrote that by,

Demanding immediate emancipation, they strove to retard the overthrow of slavery. Contending for the dissolution of the Union as the only means of destroying Slavery, they saw Slavery destroyed not only without their aid, but against their protest, while the Union was preserved and made permanent and harmonious.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 29.

<sup>28</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 10.

Thayer's arguments against the Garrisonians were heavily influenced by their current actions as well. Although he made most of these jabs in his added notes, it is clear that Thayer's main objective was to provide the historical "truth" in comparison to their current claims. He wrote that despite their clamor for disunion, when secession actually occurred, the abolitionists "had sense enough not to insult the outraged sentiment" of the North.<sup>32</sup> Instead, he wrote, they waited until the war was over, at which point they "were the loudest in the jubilee over the restoration of the 'grand and glorious Union' which they, and they alone, had saved!"<sup>33</sup> Thayer was revolted that Garrison was dubbed "the father of anti-slavery" and that Northerners retrospectively seemed to have forgotten Garrison's lack of loyalty.<sup>34</sup>

Thayer believed that the ultimate dishonor to the NEEAC was that the abolitionists stole the credit for their work in Kansas in historical memory of the period. Thayer fumed that,

The present generation has, in consequence of the persistent clack and endless scribbling of that class, come to believe that Mr. Garrison was the Alpha and Omega of the anti-slavery struggle, and that he and his small party of followers were the leaders and directors of the great movement that brought about the overthrow of Slavery. These men and women have never exhibited any diffidence or modesty in sounding their own praises.<sup>35</sup>

Essentially, Thayer became upset that many Northerners who before the war did not support immediate emancipation retroactively supported the Garrisonian view. Thayer griped that abolitionists, in fact, "had come to be despised at the North, and they were neglected and shunned by the better element."<sup>36</sup> He reminded his audience that this distaste of abolitionism was so vehement about Northerners that when he settled Kansas, he had to reassure dozens of people that he was not affiliated with Garrison. In the end, this discrepancy in popular memory, which

---

<sup>32</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> After the war Mr. Garrison said: "I am with the President [Johnson], and desire to make treason infamous."—See *Century Magazine* for February, 1887, Vol. xxxiii.

<sup>35</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 33.

<sup>36</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 33.

Thayer called “exaggerated and distorted,” was the entire reason he felt the need to give his speeches and publish their transcriptions.<sup>37</sup>

In order to remind Northerners about their true feelings about Garrison, Thayer specifically drew on pieces of his ideology that he considered offensive to his audience. He argued that abolitionists had no faith in the power and superiority of New England, citing Garrison for writing that the South “has never yet been foiled in her purposes thus concentrated and expressed.”<sup>38</sup> As for Northern emigration as a solution, Thayer reminded his audience that Garrison said that he “never had any faith in it as a breakwater against the inundation of the dark waters of oppression.”<sup>39</sup> As further insult to Northern superiority, Thayer quoted Thomas Wentworth Higginson as saying that emigration would be useless if all it did was transplant Massachusetts, which “had been tried and found wanting.”<sup>40</sup> To make sure his audience was thoroughly offended, and more likely to turn against the abolitionists, Thayer also reminded them that Garrisonians turned against the churches. He again quoted Garrison directly for saying that “the American Church continues to be the bulwark of Slavery, and therefore impure in heart, hypocritical in profession, dishonest in practice, brutal in spirit, merciless in purpose,—‘a cage of unclean birds’ and ‘the synagogue of Satan.’”<sup>41</sup> Thayer culminated his evidence of Garrison’s anti-northern sentiment with a reminder to New Englanders about what made them great. He reminded them of the high order of their race, writing that although “Latin races claim that their founders were nursed by a wolf. The Saxons have a higher origin. Their founder was nursed by a polar bear. Deep in the nature of this race is found that untamable ferocity, which fears nothing,

---

<sup>37</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> *The Liberator*, June 1, 1855.

<sup>39</sup> *The Liberator*, June 1, 1855.

<sup>40</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 40.

<sup>41</sup> *The Liberator*, May 16, 1856.

but can endure everything.”<sup>42</sup> Thayer argued that Northerners were industrious, virtuous, and racially pure, and therefore could and did accomplish a great moral and practical feat in Kansas.

Abolitionists had disagreed with Thayer’s plan from the start. They found Thayer’s idea of philanthropy as a capitalistic enterprise disturbing, because they opposed slavery on wholly moral grounds. (Thayer despised this attitude, of course, and wrote that an abolitionist told him that he would “rather give over the territory to Slavery than to make a cent out of the operation of saving it to Freedom.”<sup>43</sup>) Garrisonians immediately dismissed Thayer’s plan in 1854 with a resolution that stated:

Resolved: That the idea of starving slavery to death by confining it within its present limits, is, in view of the fact, that the larger part of the territory already secured to the Slave Power, is, as yet, virgin soil, on which it can grow and fatten for ages to come; a most dangerous delusion.<sup>44</sup>

So when Thayer returned years later wielding the same assaults against abolitionism, the Garrisonians responded in kind. Without Garrison alive to defend himself, Oliver Johnson took the helm. Johnson was the editor a Boston newspaper called *The Christian Soldier* that shared an office building with *The Liberator* in the 1830s. Johnson became close friends with Garrison thereafter, editing his papers when he took trips to Europe and writing a biography of him upon his death.<sup>45</sup> When Johnson heard about Thayer’s book, he immediately took to defending his friend and countering his arguments, which he considered “boastful in its tone, exaggerated in its claims, and positively vituperative toward the Abolitionists, who created the agitation which gave him his only hope of success.”<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 18.

<sup>44</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Oliver Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper on the New England Emigrant Aid Company* (Worcester: Franklin P. Rice, Publisher, 1887), 6.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 8.

Johnson once again refuted the idea that gradualism and capitalism were useful solutions to the immorality of slavery. He drew particular attention to his disgust with Thayer's idea of philanthropy as a moneymaking affair. He called Thayer's goal to be both self-sacrificing and money making "a flavor of craftiness that repelled the Abolitionists."<sup>47</sup> He also denied the originality of the plan, reminding Thayer that the American Colonization Society theorized about immigration as a gradual solution to slave labor since the 1820s. Because of this unoriginality, Johnson especially scoffed at Thayer's claim that he came to the idea by revelation. He noted that Thayer's "application of an old idea to new circumstances" would have left "small need of a special revelation."<sup>48</sup>

Johnson further contested Thayer's claims about the futility of emotional appeal against slavery. Although Thayer critiqued abolitionists for their sentimental appeals, Johnson quipped how humorous it must have been for Thayer to realize that "A million dollars was not to be raised without 'sentimental' appeals."<sup>49</sup> Johnson argued that the Garrisonians sought to change hearts and minds, while the NEEAC "invited not moral but a physical conflict," financed by Sharps rifles and bloodshed.<sup>50</sup> Although Thayer had spent a good portion of his criticism outlining the ideas of violent disunion of the Garrisonians, Johnson objected that abolitionists "hoped for the peaceful abolition of slavery...they could not themselves begin a war; if it must come, the South should strike the first blow."<sup>51</sup>

Johnson turned Thayer's argument around on him, pointing out that Thayer could not simultaneously claim to have agitated the Civil War and also blame the Garrisonians for disunion. Further, he refuted Thayer's evidence against Garrisonians as "wholly and stupidly

---

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 12.



false,” especially when it came to debating the idea of disunion.<sup>52</sup> Johnson explained that Thayer’s mistake was his memory of the antebellum period. Thayer assumed that the “Union existing before the war is the same that exists today,” while the Garrisonians merely recognized that the old Union was already defunct and not to “beat a dog already dead.”<sup>53</sup>

In at least one way, Thayer was correct about the abolitionists: they did not want to continue with the American Constitution as it stood. Johnson ridiculed Thayer’s devotion to the American Constitution, and argued that the only way to end slavery was to break with the document that held slaves as property. Because Thayer’s plan involved the absolute upkeep of the Constitution, Johnson argued that gradual approaches like emigration would never solve the problem of slavery. He retorted, “It was as hopeless to expect that States thus bound by the Compromises of the Constitution could abolish slavery, as that a man with one foot held fast in a huge steel trap, and both hands manacled, could successfully cope with a wild beast.”<sup>54</sup> These debates over gradualism and immediatism almost exactly mirrored the types of arguments Americans had before the war, but the memory of the conflict kept them alive for intellectuals after the conflict. Johnson and Thayer’s squabbles over ideology demonstrate that the war did not end differences in opinion, even among Northerners.

As for the work actually done in Kansas, Johnson argued that the abolition of slavery was not the work of any single group, but instead “vast multitudes of men and women bore a creditable part.”<sup>55</sup> Johnson flatly refused Thayer’s claim that the abolitionists were ineffective in Kansas. Johnson responded that “in charging the abolitionists with ‘doing nothing’ for the final overthrow of slavery” he supposed that Thayer was taunting them for standing aloof from the

---

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 17.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 12-13.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 7.

war.<sup>56</sup> This was an inaccurate and insulting claim, wrote Johnson, because it ignored the fact that thousands of abolitionists had gone to war for the Union, including Garrison's own son.

Just as Thayer's argument had its main root in defending his own historical memory, Johnson's argument was fundamentally centered in leaving a correct historical record. Johnson wrote that although he certainly held many of Thayer's views in low regard, he did commend his action in Kansas for winning the support of many Northerners to the cause of anti-slavery. He did not doubt that Thayer hated slavery, but emphasized, "some of Mr. Thayer's flagrant misrepresentations demand attention; not, however, on personal but on purely historical grounds."<sup>57</sup> He reminded him that "if he aspires to be its historian, should be careful to do no injustice to those who labored for the great end by means different from his own, or in ways that he did not wholly approve."<sup>58</sup> Johnson further remarked that if history would do the movement justice, it would seek not to "perpetuate the memory of unwholesome controversies and personal animosities," but rather would show the power of Americans to overcome the great evil of slavery.<sup>59</sup> While the subject of these debates mirrored those in the antebellum period, the greatest difference in the arguments was over the construction of American memory and how the years leading up to the war would become characterized and remembered.

Johnson firmly dismissed Thayer's claim that the Garrisonians were purposely projecting themselves as heroes. He argued that it was not the Garrisonians who were recreating events, but Thayer, who was trying to boost his own egotism. Johnson wrote that Thayer's "pages fairly bristle with the perpendicular pronoun 'I' in every form of ostentation" and that he was "hardly

---

<sup>56</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper on the New England Emigrant Aid Company*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer's Paper*, 7.

the man to rebuke the Abolitionists for setting up unfounded claims in their own behalf.”<sup>60</sup> This would have never been the goal of Garrison, Johnson continued, “who could never listen to praises of himself without a protest.”<sup>61</sup> Any public memory attributed to Garrison, in the eyes of Johnson, was a just reminder that Garrison was the first to “repudiate the delusion of gradualism” and that even those who previously despised abolitionists came to see their correctness.<sup>62</sup>

By this point, Johnson and the Garrisonians had the clear advantage in Northern popular memory. At various points in his refutation, when Johnson wanted to refute a specific insult made by Thayer (in one case that abolitionists were “a fraternity of mountebanks”), he listed great numbers of famous abolitionists, taunting Thayer’s arrogance in insulting such famous and influential men.<sup>63</sup> At one point he wrote, “Who is Mr. Thayer, that, like Shimei, he should come forth to stigmatize with insulting epithets such men and women as these?”<sup>64</sup> Johnson here refers to Shimei of the Old Testament, who opposed King David’s rise to the throne of Israel and cast stones at him and his followers. This reference both to an extensive list of abolitionists, who Johnson likened to the holy followers of David, suggests that there was already a popular idea in the North that abolitionists had been the ones that defeated slavery. If the abolitionists had continued to be ostracized as they had in the antebellum period, these references would hold no weight. Instead, Johnson cast Thayer in the role of Shimei, whose backwards ideas and insults look foolish in light of King David’s ascension.

This debate surrounding gradualism, immediatism, and the memory of the antebellum period did not only occur between Johnson and Thayer. Both had advocates and supporters, and all jockeyed for position in the collective memory of the North, with most Unionists in favor of

---

<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 20.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 18.

Garrison. Poems and songs lauded Garrison, especially after his death, as a hero of the Union.

James Russell Lowell's Tribute to Garrison ended with the verse,

O small beginnings, ye are great and strong,  
Based on a faithful heart and weariless brain;  
Ye build the future fair, ye conquer wrong,  
Ye earn the crown, and wear it not in vain!<sup>65</sup>

Lowell attributed Garrison for building a better future for America and earning his crown as the King of anti-slavery. Johnson reminded his audience that when President Lincoln met with the Governor of South Carolina, “he attributed emancipation not alone to the fidelity of the soldiers, but to the ‘logic of Garrison.’”<sup>66</sup> There was even more damning evidence that President Lincoln had disliked Thayer and his plans for immigration. In 1861, Eli Thayer wrote two letters to Lincoln to outline his plan for a “cheaper & safer method” to save the Union.<sup>67</sup> He suggested that the Government “enforce a homestead” to encourage “planting...in sufficient numbers colonies of loyal men from the North & from Europe” into rebellious states.<sup>68</sup> Thayer suggested Virginia and Texas as viable options, but reasoned that it would work well in any Southern state. Although Thayer was convinced that this would secure “the perpetual loyalty of the Southern States,” Lincoln never answered.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Lincoln heartily disapproved of Thayer’s plan as a concession to slave power. At one point during the Secession Crisis, he wrote to Thurlow Weed that “Eli Thayer’s Pop. Sov. Would lose us every thing we gained by the election.”<sup>70</sup> Lincoln’s disapproval of the NEEAC’s plan as a concession to slave power helped cement American

---

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson, *The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review on Eli Thayer’s Paper*, 17.

<sup>67</sup> Eli Thayer to Abraham Lincoln, October 12, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>68</sup> Eli Thayer to Abraham Lincoln, November 6, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>69</sup> Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), IV, 154.

<sup>70</sup> Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), IV, 154.

memory against the Company, as Lincoln remained the greatest fallen hero of the Civil War in Northern memory.

Garrison's funeral further perpetuated his public perception as a great American hero and leader. As the Reverend Samuel May eulogized Garrison's life:

Never before was that life more potent for good than at this moment; never before did he live, as he lives now: lives in the laws of the land, lives in a renovated Constitution, lives in the hearts of all true lovers of our country and of man...For death does not narrow the influence of such a life, but enlarges it ; it gives the last needful pressure to the weight which stamps its image ineffaceably in history and upon humanity.<sup>71</sup>

By the time of his death, Garrison's legacy in American history had been set. May was correct in his prediction that Garrison's life would only continue to enlarge and increase in importance, especially as the United States started the long process of combating its thorny racial legacy.

Thayer was not alone, however, in attempting to commemorate the NEEAC's legacy in Kansas. In February 1881, several members and guests of the Kansas State Historical Society met to honor him and add his marble bust to their collection. In their remarks on Thayer, guest speakers remembered him with great respect as a zealot who secured Kansas. Major J.B. Abbott, an original settler in the territory, wrote that the Company's conception was "noble" and that more was due to Thayer than to any other person in eradicating slavery.<sup>72</sup> Another man familiar with the NEEAC commented as well. Charles Robinson wrote that without Thayer "Kansas and the country would have been cursed with slavery to this hour."<sup>73</sup> The current Governor of Kansas praised Thayer as "an educated, cultivated Eastern man" who saved the West by his zeal for

---

<sup>71</sup> *Tributes to William Lloyd Garrison: At the Funeral Services, May 28, 1879* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, 1879) 11-12.

<sup>72</sup> "Marble Bust of Hon. Eli Thayer". *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1881* (Topeka: Geo W. Martin Publishing House, 1881), 186. (Topeka: Geo W. Martin Publishing House, 1881), 186.

<sup>73</sup> "Marble Bust of Hon. Eli Thayer", 191.

freedom.<sup>74</sup> A former Governor reached the pinnacle of this excitement when he told the that providence had brought salvation to Kansas in the form of Thayer and the NEEAC, much as “the day that Moses was raised up and qualified to be the deliverer of his people.”<sup>75</sup>

In the *New England Magazine* in 1897, Professor William H. Carruth of the University of Kansas also wrote in support of the Company. Although Dr. Carruth was not affiliated with the Company in any way, he wholeheartedly accepted their ideology, especially when it came to Northern superiority. He praised the NEEAC for their moral purity, and wrote, “it was absolutely true that no questions were asked any settler as to the motives with which he went, nor was a cent ever given to a settler for the purpose of assisting him.”<sup>76</sup> Carruth responded to the criticism that the NEEAC were land speculators when he provided evidence that the Company sold its stock in Kansas land in 1862, and thereafter had no speculation in Kansas.<sup>77</sup> He simultaneously praised the innate morality of Northerners in their successful settlement of Kansas. Carruth wrote that it was the “practical bent of New Englanders which united so curiously with its idealism” that produced the project that “proposed to settle the slavery question, without more talk” by the simple process of establishing religion in Kansas.<sup>78</sup> This process paid off, according to Carruth, because “Kansas furnished a larger proportion of young men to the Union army than did any other state.”<sup>79</sup> Another Professor also followed suit in a history of Kansas, writing that no one, “unless, he is ignorant of the facts in the Kansas struggle, or is completely blinded by malice or

---

<sup>74</sup> “Marble Bust of Hon. Eli Thayer”, 190.

<sup>75</sup> “Marble Bust of Hon. Eli Thayer”, 186.

<sup>76</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 86.

<sup>77</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 90.

envy” would ever “attempt to defraud the Emigrant Aid Company of the glory of having saved Kansas.”<sup>80</sup>

Thayer was not the only member of the NEEAC that took to writing in defense of the company in the postbellum period. Edward Everett Hale wrote several books defending the historical memory of the NEEAC, including one entitled *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*. Hale believed that the reason that the Garrisonians dominated the history books was a generational gap in memory. He wrote, “our generation has forgotten the excitement of the great Missouri controversy; indeed every generation has to repeat the experiences and lessons of its founders.”<sup>81</sup>

Hale also echoed Thayer’s claim that the Garrisonian focus on destruction negatively impacted efforts to end slavery. Although Hale used less aggressive language than Thayer, he excluded the abolitionists from a long list of people who he deemed influential in the settlement of Kansas. He wrote, “the list includes names of none of those whom we now call the old Anti-Slavery war-horses. These gentlemen distrusted any action which did not look to the destruction of the Union.”<sup>82</sup> A true believer in the company ideology, Hale kept strongly to the party line that Thayer promoted. Hale truly believed that the NEEAC and domestic immigration had made the difference in the antebellum debates over slavery. He wrote that:

The moral effect of this act through the whole country can hardly be described. It cannot be overstated. It was like what one sees, when, at a given movement, watched for and prayed for, a great vessel, which seems likely to miss stays in her voyage, feels, happily, one strong gust of a favoring gale, and sweeps forward in her career as her master has determined.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 46.

<sup>81</sup> Edward Everett Hale, *New England in the colonization of Kansas* (1897), 79.

<sup>82</sup> Hale, *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*, 82.

<sup>83</sup> Hale, *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*, 82.

Beyond defending the morality and necessity of the Company, Hale also defended Thayer himself against criticism. Hale wrote that “until Kansas was a free state” Thayer “gave his time, his money, and his life to the establishment of freedom.”<sup>84</sup> Despite this post war ambiguity and debate over support, Thayer still remains a minor character in the story of anti-slavery, while Garrison had already won the upper hand by the 1880s.

On the surface, all of this jostling over memory could appear to be nothing more than petty squabbling over two men’s egos. Historians have most often presented Thayer as a shrewd businessman who used the politics of the day to earn a quick profit. They mention him in the category of “impractical visionary” and have doubted his sincerity, arguing that his “first purpose was to make money, and only incidentally to make Kansas free.”<sup>85</sup> Nicole Etcheson, whose history of Bleeding Kansas remains a seminal work on the subject, described Thayer briefly as a man who “spied his opportunity for profit in promoting emigration to Kansas.”<sup>86</sup> In the most comprehensive study of Thayer himself, Samuel Johnson claimed that he sought to gain political profit, and claimed that he “loved notoriety and noise.”<sup>87</sup> A closer look at this debate, however, shows that although Thayer of course wanted credit, he also truly wanted to present the historical “truth” of the antebellum period. He wanted to remind the North that most of them were just like him before the war—advocates of antislavery and Unionism, not proponents of disunion and violence.

This also was not merely a personal dispute with a long time rival. Thayer did not only object to Garrisonians or abolitionists, but anyone who he felt misrepresented his vision. For example, he lambasted a historian only known at T.W.H. for writing “nonsense” about Kansas.

---

<sup>84</sup> Hale, *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*, 84.

<sup>85</sup> Miner, *Seeding Civil War: Kansas in the National News*, 79; Rawley, *Race and Politics: “Bleeding Kansas” and the Coming of the Civil War*, 84.

<sup>86</sup> Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era*, 84.

<sup>87</sup> Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 10.



He wrote that T.W.H.'s account of the NEEAC was so egregiously incorrect that if the author should "ever enlarge the sphere of his labors so as to include the writing of sacred history, we shall probably learn that Barabbas and the two thieves were the founders of the Christian religion."<sup>88</sup> Just as Thayer worked tirelessly to spread the message of the NEEAC before the war, he continued to preach his view of capitalistic philanthropy as the best option to change a region's ideology. This strategy did have some practical application as well, as the NEEAC was seeking stock subscriptions for its work in Oregon and Florida. By defending the ideological principles and actions of the company in Kansas, Thayer was both protecting its ideological legacy and advocating for it to be adapted to current problems of Reconstruction.

Both Thayer and Garrison played an important role in the antebellum anti-slavery movement. Although unpopular at first, Garrison's ideology of immediate abolition became the destiny of the nation during the Civil War. Garrison rightly has been memorialized for his crusade against slavery and continues to be celebrated by Americans as a historic hero because his ideas perpetuated the coming of the Civil War and importantly, he represents the racial equality that many Americans cherish.<sup>89</sup>

Although Thayer can perhaps be faulted in retrospect for his gradual approach to the eradication of slavery, his idea for a nonviolent emigration movement did influence popular sovereignty in the fight for the freedom of Kansas. Despite the urge to define Thayer as a swindler caught in the traps of financial scheming, it is clear that he, as well as many of the immigrants who settled with his company, truly believed in the immorality of slavery, the

---

<sup>88</sup> Thayer, *The New England Emigrant Aid Company and its Influence*, 41.

<sup>89</sup> This is not to say that Northerners in the postbellum period transferred this celebration of the abolition of slavery into racial equality for former slaves, in fact it was quite the opposite. The conflict continued to be viewed in the light of the superiority of northern ideology and free labor in comparison to the "backwards" South. I merely mean that there has been a tendency in popular historical memory to remember abolitionists as more influential than anti-slavery leaders, or to view the North as a monolithic group who demanded equality for slaves.

promises of religious revivalism, and the superiority of the principles of free labor. Thayer continued to fight for his ideas after the war because he still believed that the emigration of Northerners to areas of moral or economic decay held the key to “civilizing” them.

Garrison’s triumph over Thayer in the history books was, in many ways, a product of the winner writing the dominant historical narrative. Many school children learn that the North was full of abolitionists, set on immediately granting freedom to African Americans. Their philanthropic mission for slaves was an entirely moral imperative in which no man or woman sought personal gains. What does not fit into this narrative of the Civil War was the fact that Northerners like Eli Thayer and the NEEAC subscribed to a more popular nineteenth century ideology that promoted gradual emancipation and a solution that would take on moral and capitalistic imperatives.

Thayer and Garrison’s supporters demonstrate that the ideological conflicts of the antebellum period did not disappear, even after the conclusion of the war. In the face of immense toll of the conflict, both personally and collectively, some Americans continued to wonder if gradual solutions like immigration could have prevented the widespread despair. The fact that Thayer continued to debate with Garrisonians after the war over the best ideology both shows that the ideas of the antebellum period continued to be debated after the war, and even applied to problems of Reconstruction. Should emigration be used to reconstruct the South, as the NEEAC was trying to do in Florida? Should the West continue to be the frontier for emigration movements, as would occur with the Exodusters? Should former slaves receive the benefits of the Constitution immediately, or gradually? In many ways, the debates of Thayer and Garrison over the memory of Kansas and their respective ideologies foreshadowed the many debates of Northern Republicans that would shape American history for decades to come.

## Conclusion

In today's world philanthropy has essentially the same perception as charity. A person of wealth gives their time or money to a group or person in need with no expectation of personal benefit. Americans today shudder at the thought that certain philanthropic ventures only give twenty percent of their funding to charity, or that directors of non-profits own million-dollar homes. But in some ways, philanthropy is about reciprocity and benefit. As Andrew Carnegie learned in the twentieth century, even if that benefit is not immediately financial, cultivating a good reputation can have its own set of benefits.

Nineteenth century philanthropists were more transparent about how they expected their work to benefit them. In a time when capitalism was intertwined with morality, companies like the NEEAC embraced both their capitalistic and moralistic impulses. The roots of the American philanthropic tradition in antebellum American not only served the needy or fulfilled a benevolent purpose; they also overtly served the founders, morally, financially, and politically. The NEEAC's ideas were rooted in the moral principles of the Second Great Awakening and rising anti-slavery sentiment, the Republican ideal of free labor, and a feeling of sectional and racial superiority. This complex view of philanthropy was not hidden in the shadows of doing good for others, but was firmly rooted in making money and selling stocks. Expanding the history of philanthropy beyond the constraints of a twentieth century urban environment illustrates how the NEEAC came to typify a new type of moral crusade and settlement strategy.

While historians have been hesitant to acknowledge the Company as anything beyond a fringe society with a stubborn leader, the NEEAC's widespread support from many different parts of New England suggests a more representative ideology. Thayer may have been an egotist or a zealot, but respected members of the Boston intellectual community embraced his ideas,

some (like Edward Everett Hale) even until their deaths. The NEEAC provides an invaluable lens into the Northern mentality before the Civil War. Their embrace of gradualism, non-violence, and colonization helped them achieve their goals of “civilizing” the West and those who lived there, as well as fight against slave labor. Their ideology also demonstrates just how important New Englanders found their region for the upkeep of the nation. For them, New England stood as a bastion of proper Christianity, education, and intellect, and their “self-sacrificing” emigration held the key to transforming the rest of the nation.

Historians who analyze immigration to Kansas rarely consider the impact of Indian removal just the year before in 1853. Although the New Englanders saw their migration as a movement into vacant land, they exemplified what settler colonialism means for both the colonized and the colonizer. White settlers in Kansas continued to promote a policy of eradication and assimilation for the Natives, a policy that would continue to travel west with the settlers. The white scramble over preemption was not a new story, but demonstrated that the NEEAC further reflected the mindset of many Northerners.

Their philanthropic vision and ideology did not stop at Kansas, although many historians are content to evaluate the Company only within that context. The NEEAC’s success in Kansas fueled their conviction that immigration held the key to transforming the nation. In Texas and Virginia before the Civil War, this meant using New Englanders to starve slavery as they did in Kansas. In Oregon, this meant sending women en masse to promote moral upkeep. In Florida during Reconstruction, this meant establishing a Republican newspaper and promoting Northern occupation. For Thayer, this even meant leaving the United States in benevolent missions to conquer Central America. In many ways, this ideology and justification for mass migrations was present again in support of early transnational imperial projects, such as the Spanish American

War. The NEEAC once again provides an ideological link to a line of reasoning that justified sparking conflict in order to obtain land for “benevolent” purposes. Extending the narrative of the company beyond Kansas provides a different perspective on the Company and their ideology and shows that they saw this embrace of popular sovereignty as a solution to many dilemmas, not just the expansion of slavery.

Further, the NEEAC demonstrates that despite Northern mythologies about widespread support of abolitionism, there were many diverse ideologies in the North before the war, many of which did not include immediate emancipation. These debates also continued well after the war, as members of the NEEAC continued as major intellectual players on the national stage throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

Their vision of philanthropic capitalism therefore transcended the Civil War and Kansas. It came to encompass a way in which many Northerners believed they could end slavery without a war, relieve excess population in urban areas, promote Christianity and “civilization,” and even reconstruct the South. Although their ideology grew out of fashion with a new generation of reformers who saw gradualism as a compromise rather than a solution, the NEEAC holds the potential to elucidate the complexity of American thought during the nineteenth century.

## Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Kansas State Historical Society

Abelard Guthrie Diaries

Charles and Sara T.D. Robinson Papers

Charter of the New England Emigrant Aid Company.

Eli Thayer Papers

George Washington Brown Papers

James Stanley Emery Papers

Julia Louisa Lovejoy Diary

Richard Hinton Collection

Robert E. Yarmer Collection

Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Clubb, Henry S. "Constitution of the Vegetarian Kansas Emigration Company." Reel #3984, Microfilm Collection, Western America Collection, Research Publications Inc, Connecticut.

Hale, Everett Edward. *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us*. Boston: Redding and Co., 1846.

Hale, Edward Everett. Introduction to *A History of the Kansas Crusade*. By Eli Thayer. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1889.

Hale, Edward Everett. *New England in the Colonization of Kansas*. 1897.

Hale, Edward Everett. *The Emigration of Women to Oregon: A Report to the Directors of the New-England Emigrant Aid Co.* (Boston, 1864.)

Johnson, Oliver. "The Abolitionists Vindicated in a Review of Eli Thayer's Paper on the New England Emigrant Aid Company." *LSE Selected Pamphlets*, 1887.

"Marble Bust of Hon. Eli Thayer." *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, 1881. Topeka: Geo W. Martin Publishing House, 1881.

“Nebraska and Kansas Report of the Committee of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company.”  
Boston: 1854.

Olmstead, Frederick L. *A Journey through Texas: or, a saddle trip on the southwestern frontier*  
New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857.

Park, Geo S. “Notes of a Trip Up Kansas River, Including Observations on the Soil, Climate,  
Scenery.” Boston, 1854.

Robinson, Sara. *Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life: Including a full view of its settlement,  
political history, social life, climate, soil, productions, scenery, etc.* Lawrence, 1856.

Thayer, Eli. *A History of the Kansas Crusade: Its Friends and its Foes.* New York: Harper and  
Brothers, 1889.

Thayer, Eli. *Fair Play: Speech of Hon. Eli Thayer, of Massachusetts, Delivered in the House of  
Representatives, Feb. 24, 1859.* Washington, D.C.: Polkinhorn's Steam Print Office,  
1859.

Thayer, Eli. *The Admission of Oregon: Speech of Hon. Eli Thayer, of Massachusetts : Delivered  
in the House of Representatives, February 11, 1859.* Washington, D.C: Buell &  
Blanchard, printers, 1859.

Thayer, Eli. *The Central American Question: Speech of Hon. Eli Thayer, of Massachusetts:  
Delivered in the House of Representatives, January 7, 1858.* Washington, D.C: Buell &  
Blanchard, printers, 1858.

Thayer, Eli. *The History of the New England Emigrant Aid Company.* Boston: John Wilson and  
Son, 1862.

Thayer, Eli. *The New England Emigrant Aid Company, and Its Influence, Through the Kansas  
Contest, Upon National History.* Worcester, Mass: F.P. Rice, 1887.

Thayer, Eli. “The Suicide of Slavery.” Speech to Congress, February 24, 1859.

*Tributes to William Lloyd Garrison: At the Funeral Services, May 28, 1879.* Boston: Houghton,  
Osgood, 1879.

Snell, Joseph W., and Eunice L. Schenck, and George T. Hawley. *The New England Emigrant  
Aid Company Papers, 1854-1909, In the Holdings of the Kansas State Historical Society,*  
Microfilm reels 1-6. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1967.

*Newspapers*

Century Magazine. February 1887, Vol. xxxiii.

The Chicago Daily Tribune

The Kansas Herald of Freedom

The Liberator

The New York Herald

The New York Tribune

#### Secondary Sources:

Abbott, Richard H. *Cotton and Capital: Boston Businessmen and Antislavery Reform 1854-1868*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991.

Berwanger, Eugene. *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1967.

Blight, David W. *Frederick Douglass' Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

Bremner, Robert. *American Philanthropy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Etcheson, Nicole. *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006.

Foner, Eric. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Friedman, Lawrence J. and McGarvie, Mark D. *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Friedman, Lawrence Jacob. *Gregarious saints: self and community in American abolitionism, 1830-1870*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Gates, Paul W. *Fifty million acres: conflicts over Kansas land policy, 1854-1890*. New York: Atherton Press, 1966.



- Guarneri, Carl. *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth Century America*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Hood, Gary Allen. *After Lewis and Clark, the Forces of Change*. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2006.
- Horwitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.
- Howard, Victor B. *The Evangelical War against Slavery and Caste*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1996.
- Jacobs, Margaret. *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.
- Johnson, Samuel. *The Battle Cry of Freedom*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1954.
- Manning, Chandra. *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.
- McLoughlin, William G. *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Miller, Nyle H. *Kansas, A Pictorial History*. Topeka: Kansas Centennial Commission, 1961.
- Miner, Craig. *Seeding Civil War: Kansas in the National News*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008.
- Miner, Craig and Unrau, William E. *The End of the Kansas Indian*. Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978.
- Nichols, Alice. *Bleeding Kansas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Oertel, Kristen Tegtmeier. *Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender, and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009.
- Papers of Eli Thayer 1854-1891*, Microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society.
- Rawley, James. *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969.

- Rothman, David J. *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. Boston: Little Brown, 1971.
- SenGupta, Gunja. *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals, Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Sheehan, Bernard W. *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973.
- Stasiulis Davida and Nira Yuval-Davis. *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*. London: Sage, 1995.
- Stewart, James Brewer. *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1976.
- Stewart, James Brewer (Ed.). *William Lloyd Garrison at Two Hundred*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Stoler, Ann Laura, McGranahan, Carole, Perdue, Peter C. *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007).
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
- Swenson, Brie A. Dissertation: "Competition for the Virgin Soil of Kansas": Gendered and Sexualized Discourse about the Kansas Crisis in Northern Popular Print and Political Culture, 1854-1860."
- Taylor, Alan. *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1995.