

KANSAS HISTORY

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of the
Central Plains

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Concerning
The
Finest
Beer
ever
Brewed.



Centennial Highlights

The 1893 Legislative War



Kansas State Militia, Topeka and Wichita batteries, on the statehouse grounds, February 17, 1893, during the Legislative War.

"LIKE A RIOT," proclaimed a headline in the State Journal on January 10, 1893. The story told of mass confusion, and the Topeka Daily Capital reported the activities of a "howling mob." Newspapers throughout the country called it a "war"; and matters got worse before they got better. No, these journalists were not covering a campus demonstration, labor strike, or race riot. They were broadcasting the proceedings of the Kansas State Legislature—the first skirmishes in the "legislative embroglio" of 1893. Before it ended, armed bands of "deputies" roamed the halls of the capitol and the streets of the capital city, militiamen covered the statehouse grounds, and Kansas "was upon the verge of civil war."

The cause of this "Kansas Warfare" is to be found in the political animosity between the state's dominant Republican and upstart People's parties. Since 1890 Populists had experienced extraordinary electoral success and were now poised to take complete control of the state government. Lorenzo Lewelling headed a new executive branch, and the People's party controlled the state senate. Thus, majority control in the house of representatives was especially critical, and there several contested seats allowed both sides to claim the right to "organize."

With emotions at a fever pitch and few in the mood for compromise, the contestants elected officers and commenced conducting their separate

business. Eventually party leaders agreed to take turns occupying the house chamber, causing many to believe the crisis had passed. Then, on February 14, Republicans brought the crisis to a head, the precarious truce was broken, and Populists locked themselves in the hall for the night. Early the next morning, with Speaker George L. Douglass in the lead, Republicans marched on the statehouse, broke down the doors, and triumphantly took possession of the chamber. Both sides swore in more "deputies" and the governor called out the militia.

On the morning of the sixteenth, the stand off continued and the New York Times heralded the "Battle of the Barricades." But twenty-four hours later a foot of snow covered Topeka and tempers cooled. At noon, after conferring most of the night, Governor Lewelling and Speaker Douglass signed a compromise agreement that amounted to a Populist capitulation. "Peace" reigned and the bloodless "war" ended; lawmakers adjourned the session on March 13, having conducted some of the most unusual business in Kansas legislative history.

Throughout 1993, "Centennial Highlights," featured on the inside front cover of Kansas History, will recognize significant events of 1893.

KANSAS HISTORY

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Cover: *Nineteenth-century
promotional brochure for a
local brewer's "fine beer." A
history of the Kansas beer
industry from 1854-1911
begins on page 2. Back cover:
The 1893 Kansas "Legislative
War" as depicted on the
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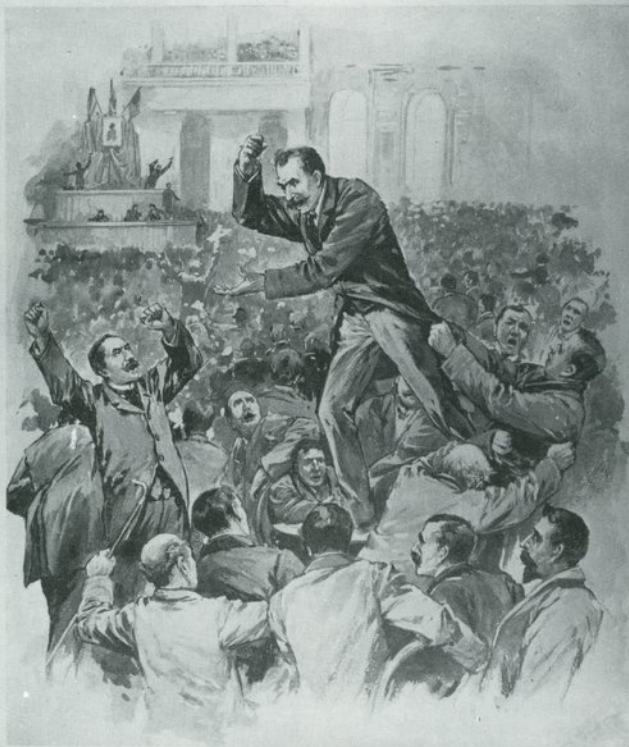
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THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN THE KANSAS LEGISLATURE—RIVAL BODIES IN SESSION WITH TWO FREEDMEN'S OFFICERS AT THE SPEAKER'S DESK.
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