



### Historians Corner, Paul R Petersen

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## Liberal Colleges – History Repeats Itself

### Yankee Lives Matter

We have all seen and read about the events that are happening in the news concerning our colleges and universities. We are not only ashamed at the transformation and decadency of our icons of higher learning but marvel in unbelief at what is actually transpiring. Protestors and anarchists taking over college administrations because the truth is offensive to them. The cowards who call for the termination of professors who refuse to cower to their demands are hounded out of academia. And while we stand aghast at these daily news events we should not be surprised that we are not the first to stand amazed at such events.

In Kansas City, Kansas, in the old Quindaro area, at the intersection of 27th and Sewell Street stands a monument to the infamous John Brown of Kansas, the foremost terrorist of the Civil War. Even after the truth of John Brown's life was made public, the predecessors of our modern day anarchists at Western Reserve College, especially founded in memory of John Brown, dedicated a monument to Brown on August 30, 1877, 18 years after he was hung for treason.

What the fanatical professors and students at Western Reserve College refused to admit was the truth about their benefactor John Brown. Even after Brown's murder of five unarmed Kansas settlers in the middle of the night along Pottawatomie Creek in May of 1856, Brown's politically correct adherents supported his actions by saying that he had a "moral justification" for committing murder since the victims were accused of being pro-slavery. The truth of the matter was that the five murdered victims were the Territorial judge who had issued an arrest warrant for Brown, two deputies who were prepared to carry out the judges' warrant and another man and his son who owned the building where the judge held court. In retaliation Brown waited until nightfall, threw incendiaries through the victims' window and shot them when they emerged and hacked the others to death with broadswords. Kansas settlers who knew of Brown's intentions were said to

have given three cheers to the success of Brown and his men as they left for the massacre. Kansas governor Charles Robinson defended Brown saying his act was justifiable. Later Brown admitted, "If it was murder, I am not innocent."

When this bloodshed occurred the truth was so distorted that for those who knew the truth it became reprehensible. The Lawrence (Kansas) Tribune completely fabricated the facts with falsehoods in an attempt to glean sympathy from the Eastern press. What first struck Missourians as treasonous and criminal was the part Kansas newspapers took in defending John Brown during this raid on innocent settlers. One Northern newspaperman recorded the murder scene as a "sacred spot" in the "great struggle." His paper defended Brown by denying Brown's role in the killings and went on to help shape Brown's image as a "martyr for freedom," which afterwards prevailed in public opinion. Timothy Dwight Thacher praised John Brown in the Lawrence (Kansas) Republican as a martyr and his followers as brave men in the cause of human freedom. In addition the Northern press, and many influential Northern clergy and political leaders proclaimed John Brown a hero comparable to Christ, even after the knowledge that Brown, his four sons, son-in-law and two others of his gang butchered these five unarmed settlers in cold blood, hacking them to death with broadswords. The murder scene was described as "some with a gash in their heads and sides, and their throats cut; others with their skulls split open in two places, with holes in their breasts, and hands cut off: and others with their fingers cut off." No man in Kansas has pretended to deny that Old John Brown led that murderous foray which massacred those men. Up to that period not a hair of Old John Brown's head, or that of any of his sons, had been injured by the proslavery party.

Following Brown's murderous expedition against anyone who opposed his actions he began raiding indiscriminately in Missouri. Claiming his actions were purely to free slaves Brown also murdered a Missouri citizen named David Cruse robbing him of seven head of horses, two mules, two *Continued on Page 6...*

wagons and a yoke of oxen valued at fourteen thousand dollars. Unfortunately most of the country had already been influenced by abolitionist newspapers with the notion that Brown was a noble liberator of slaves and promoted to martyrdom but those who knew the truth bravely spoke out. One postwar memoir stated that Brown's contemporaries "unhesitatingly declare that this pious fraud established the Freedman's Aid Society, with headquarters in Lawrence, for the purpose of personal gain, and for no other reason. The famous 'Underground Railroad' was a feat of his psychological engineering, the purpose of which was to steal out slaves from the slave states and kite them across the boundary, where they were held for a ransom, and whenever a reward commensurate with his greed was offered for the return of the 'fugitive' he was delivered to his master for a price agreed upon."

Later when commenting on Brown's failed attempt at a slave revolt at Harper's Ferry an anti-slavery convention held in Lawrence on December 9, 1859, endorsed Brown's insurrectionary invasion of Virginia. Another Lawrence citizen, Jayhawker Lieutenant Hugh D. Fisher wrote admiringly about the virtues of Brown's selfless crusade for emancipation. It was only after the war that Brown's true character was noted in articles of the day. In an 1883 editorial in the North American Review, Mr. Eggleston of Solon, Ohio, wrote, "I knew the old scoundrel long before the war, long before Kansas was known. He [Brown] tried to blow up his mother-in-law with powder; he was guilty of every meanness. He involved his father at one time in ruin. His swindling operation in Franklin,

Portage County, Ohio, would make another chapter. The last time I saw him was at Brockaway's Hotel in Cleveland, where he had a large number of Missouri horses selling. Brockaway told me they were stolen and I heard the question put to Brown and he didn't deny it. If New England can't find better material to make heroes of than John Brown, she had better go without them." Another witness to Brown's criminal and unethical behavior was National Kansas Committee agent E. B. Whitman who wrote to his friend from Lawrence about the John Brown proceedings as a fellow committeeman. Brown had been accused by Democrats during the previous legislative session of "subsisting upon the proceeds of [money] given for seeds and clothing," for needy New England settlers. Whitman at first defended Brown but to Whitman's dismay, he later found them to be true.

Reaction to the criminal deeds of John Brown and his ilk was widespread. Southerners expected their Northern neighbors to renounce abolitionist fanatics after Harper's Ferry. The Richmond (Virginia) Enquirer pointed out that "Armed bands of traitors: in all the panoply of war, are openly invading the State of Missouri, murdering the people, burning the towns, and proclaiming the purpose to 'free every slave in Southwestern Missouri.'" In Congress Senator Hammond of South Carolina proclaimed, "The whole history of Kansas is a disgusting one from beginning to end." From North Carolina Senator Biggs was quoted as saying, "I have grave misgivings whether the people of Kansas are of that character from which we may hope for enlightened self government." Senator Iverson of Georgia, was quoted as saying, "If you could rake the infernal regions from the center to the circumference and from the surface to the bottom, you could not fish up such a mass of corruption as exists in some portions of Kansas." In the House, Representative Atkins of Tennessee branded the likes of John Brown and his gang as "struggling hordes of hired mercenaries carrying murder, rapine, and conflagration in their train." And from Missouri Representative Anderson said he was certain "no part of our Union has been settled by such an ungovernable, reckless people."

But despite these condemnations from the hallowed halls of the United States Congress Western Reserve College proudly erected a statue to America's first modern terrorist, John Brown of Kansas.

### Article by Paul R. Petersen

Ref: Herald of Freedom, July 18, 1857, October 29, 1859, December 17, 1859; Cutler, William G. History of the State of Kansas; John Brown Collection, Kansas State Historical Society; Under the Black Flag by Captain Kit Dalton, Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries, Lawrence, pg 97; Richmond Enquirer, November 30, 1860; Nichols, Alice, Bleeding Kansas, 1954, pg 208.