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"We ought to hold on to our history until we get our blessing from it."
Rev. Emanuel Cleaver
Former Mayor of
Kansas City, Missouri
Dedication Day,
August 19th, 2001

"The history of Lawrence is the history of our state, and the history of our nation. We're here to honor the people who chose freedom for our state."
Rep. Dennis Moore
Congressman, 3rd District of Kansas
Dedication Day, August 19th, 2001

"The settling of Kansas was different in principle and purpose than the settling of any of the other states."
Hannah Oliver, survivor of the Lawrence massacre, in a speech before the D.A.R., 1923
Lawrence, Kansas was founded in the summer of 1854, led by Boston Abolitionists. Many shared a vision of a nation free from the brutality of Slavery, which imprisoned nearly four million Africans across the South. Missouri was Slavery’s western outpost and the new Kansas Territory was to be its next conquest. But the pioneers of Kansas halted the westward expansion of slavery, igniting both the Civil War, and a profound revolution in the way the country was governed.

Today, a few blocks east of downtown Lawrence, a new public monument has emerged, tying our city and state to this most critical chapter of American history. The monument enshrines the highest ground on Lawrence’s old East Side as an important regional historic site. The 1860s Murphy-Bromelsick House has been relocated to Hobbs Park, as a tribute to the vernacular architectural style of the surrounding residential and industrial district, the oldest in the city. The park is the home-site of Pennsylvania newspaper publisher John Speer, an unparalleled hero of the free-state cause in the battle over Kansas statehood. Speer, his presses, allies and adversaries made “Bleeding Kansas” the birthplace of what became a battlefield struggle to end legal slavery in America.

Speer was a driving force in Lawrence’s founding, and an important influence throughout the years of political and military struggle which expelled violent pro-slavery Missourians from the territory. Most famed for his repudiation of the gag laws of the fraudulently elected territorial legislature of 1855, he later rose as a leader of the city’s stunning resurrection, following the August 1863 sacking and massacre at the hands of Confederate irregulars, led by William C. Quantrill. An insolent and activist opponent of Slavery, Speer was a missed target of the dawn assault. But among the 200 men and boys murdered that morning were his and wife Elizabeth’s two oldest teenage sons.

In 2008, alongside the new federally-designated Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area across much of NE Kansas, the memorial and surrounding park sites stand to gain recognition as a locus of the social, economic and military history which spans the first century of this community’s storied past. Old East Lawrence was a multi-racial, multi-ethnic working class district from the beginning; adjacent Hobbs Park saw John Brown himself in defense of Lawrence, John Speer’s homestead, repelled military encampments, and an execution on the day of the massacre. After 1871, for the same seventy years that the immigrant German Bromelsick family owned this relocated brick and stone cottage, a magnificent Quaker Church crowned the hilltop. The post-Civil War era also witnessed an ambitious railroad endeavor, landmark canneries, German POW camps, the county’s livestock auction, a National Guard armory, and municipal baseball. A new museum inside the reconstructed interior of the Murphy-Bromelsick House will interpret these layers of history and culture, while projecting a strong, unvarnished perspective of the forces which made Kansas a free, non-slave holding state.

As icon and artifact, the memorial helps reawaken a public awareness of Lawrence’s roots in the drama of American historical experience. Through the new museum, the markers at the site, and media materials focusing on narratives of the era – the monument showcases the tenacity and courage of the people who built our state, defeated the slave system, and preserved the Union. We remind residents, visitors, and especially our young, that we are stewards of a national historic site symbolic of a hard-won legacy of freedom, human dignity and civil rights.

Through sites like the Hobbs Park Memorial, and the Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area, the meaning and significance of our Kansas legacy will be protected, interpreted and promoted, to the cultural, ecological and economic benefit of Douglas County and the entire region.

The Hobbs Park Memorial is located at the corner of 10th and Delaware, seven blocks east of downtown Lawrence.

Hobbs Park Memorial Fund of the Lawrence Preservation Alliance
P.O. Box 1564 • Lawrence, Kansas 66044

For more information, call: (785) 749-7394
Please visit our web site: www.HobbsParkMemorial.org