



## Thomas Jefferson Sutherland, Nebraska Boomer, 1851-1852

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Article Summary: Sutherland promoted the settlement of the Nebraska Territory. He proposed a tour of Indian country to search for minerals and mill sites. He favored land reform and the establishment of a military agricultural school.

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# THOMAS JEFFERSON SUTHERLAND, NEBRASKA BOOMER, 1851-1852

BY JAMES C. MALIN

NEBRASKA "Boomers" operated during the early 1850's in the Indian country in a sense similar to those in Oklahoma some years later. On occasion, agitation alone was not sufficient. Overt acts in the Indian country and in the immediate border of white settlement in western Missouri and Iowa occurred during the latter part of the summer and fall of 1852, which were designed to bring pressure upon congress to provide immediately for settlement and government. The evidence upon these episodes, which are considered here, is incomplete, but such information as is available is assembled with a view to getting the problems stated in a form which may invite further investigation. The first of these is the proposed tour of the Indian country led by "Old Nebraska."

Under the heading of "Gold in Nebraska," in June, 1852, an exploring expedition into Nebraska was proposed by one General Thomas Jefferson Sutherland, "for the purpose of topographical examination and search for minerals and mill-sites; and he invites gentlemen who have health, muscular power, and mind suited to the enterprise,

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and who feel an interest in the settlement of the Territory to join him, with their 'hunting and fishing apparatus'."

The expedition was to start August 5, the day after the general election in Missouri, and to occupy about two months. The route proposed would start from Weston, crossing the Missouri River, proceeding up the west bank to the mouth of Great Nemaha, up that stream to its source, thence across the divide to the Big Blue, down that stream to the Kaw, and back to the starting point by the Kansas River Valley, "examining the banks and bluffs of the streams for coal, iron, lead, silver and *gold*, and the tributaries and branches, as well as the principal streams, for available mill sites." Sutherland offered to reverse the route, if that was desired.

Along with Sutherland's card proposing the tour of Nebraska was an endorsement by five Weston, Missouri, men headed by Samuel Finch, editor and proprietor of the *Weston Reporter*, who vouched for his qualifications, which included several months spent in personal exploration of Nebraska territory. They thought that the tour of Nebraska would, "greatly contribute to advance the interests of the frontier towns of Missouri, and of the country by which they are supported—the object being the speedy settlement of the Territory [by] a body of substantial farmers, artizans and manufacturers." These men estimated the cost per man at \$100.00, and proposed that merchants and citizens of property in the frontier towns subscribe the necessary funds "to enable the explorers to keep out until they have made an efficient examination of the agricultural, mineral, and Hydraulic resources of the country; and also to solve the question whether 'there is gold to be found on the shores of the Big Blue river' it being asserted by those who have visited the country lying along the Big Blue, that the earths and rocks there give evidence of the existence of gold."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Joseph Gazette*, June 30, 1852. The documents were dated June 24. Three northwestern Missouri newspaper files for these years have survived in part the *St. Joseph Gazette*, owned by the St. Joseph Public Library; the *Liberty Tribune*, owned by the William Jewell College Library; and the *Savannah Sentinel*, owned by S. E. Lee of the *Savannah Register*.

No confirmation has been found that the tour materialized. In fact, there is a suggestion, but not confirmed, that it was stopped by the Commandant at Fort Leavenworth. Abelard Guthrie, of the Wyandot nation, wrote January 7, 1853 that search for minerals had been forbidden by proclamation.<sup>2</sup> If such a document was issued, no publicity was given it in the newspapers examined. Even though no expedition may actually have entered the Indian country in response to the Sutherland call, the publicity given all aspects of the issues involved served at least partially the same purpose. Furthermore, the arguments stated in the invitation were based upon the assertion that Sutherland and others had already some acquaintance with the country.

A year later, additional evidence was recorded when General David R. Atchison spoke on the Pacific railroad and the Nebraska territory at Parkville, Missouri, August 6, 1853. Although heaping ridicule upon Sutherland—"Old Nebraska," Atchison called him—the commentary is more illuminating for the historian than the Senator could have foreseen. In referring to Benton as the original Nebraska man, Atchison maneuvered his narrative in the following fashion in order to cast polite doubts upon Benton's pretensions (and in this speech Atchison explained he was not to be outdone by Benton in politeness):

But now, in what I have just said, I may have done one General Sutherland (commonly called Old Nebraska) injustice; who as I am informed, was among you a year or two since beating up recruits to settle Nebraska; declaring that the country [,] which will be designated on Col. Benton's map [,] open for settlement. But you declared the man crazy; and the officers of the Government threatened him with the penalties of the law. But even now all is changed. I do not mention Sutherland's name for the purpose of depriving Col. Benton of the glory of being the discoverer of this new doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

Under one guise or another, the frontier of white contact with Indian had witnessed many campaigns to anticipate legal procedures which such restless souls thought moved too slowly. Who was "Old Nebraska" Sutherland,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, February 6, 1853.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1853.

how did he earn the title, how much support did he receive, and what became of him? Very few newspapers and manuscript collections from this period and area have been preserved, but a thorough search, once this problem is isolated, may answer at least part of the outstanding questions. The manner of Atchison's reference to him would seem to imply that he was well known to the audience at Parkville, that his distinctive title was of some duration, and that he was recognized as just a "crank" on the subject of Nebraska. But was he?

Another Sutherland story is to be found in *Putnam's Monthly: A magazine of literature, science, and art*, for May 1854 under the title, "Nebraska, A glympse of it—a peep into its unwritten history—together with a few facts for a future historian." The article was unsigned, but was listed among those written by the editors, the author representing himself as having seen the country, and having gathered the material, some of it at least, from personal knowledge of the facts. The opening paragraphs of the article registered quite accurately the literary, scientific, and artistic standards under which the author operated:

The programme of the Age is Progress, and again a new star, perhaps several, is about to be added to our national ensign. Nebraska is no longer a myth: she claims her rights, and 'manifest destiny' is about to allow them.

As yet the abode of traders and trappers, red men and buffalo—ere many days the restless tide of emigration will cross her borders, will overrun her prairies and plains, will float up her broad rivers and sparkling streams, and rest beneath the shade of her forests and ancient oak, lofty cottonwood, and graceful willow. Not a spot that will be sacred to the researchers and prying curiosity of the genius of the universal yankee nation.

In Illinois and Missouri prospective squatters were said already to be grinding their axes, and in Maine they were thinking of lumbering opportunities, and broken-down politicians everywhere were preparing petitions and recommendations in anticipation of a judgeship or something else in the new country. After indicating the location of Nebraska, opportunities were suggested:

Here with almost every variety of soil, climate, and production, our expansive genius will find 'ample room and verge enough.' Why, the Boston ice-merchant will be able

to hew huge chunks of solid ice from the topmost peaks of the Rocky Mountains, for shipment to India, China, or elsewhere.

The northern part of Nebraska was represented as cold, sterile, inhabited by Indians, and not to be settled immediately, but south of the 40th parallel the land was "rich and fertile" and "squatters and speculators are alike looking with greedy eyes." The reports of John C. Fremont and W. H. Emory, descriptive of the country, were quoted. The author asserted that when Nebraska was considered in the congress of 1852-1853, few knew more than vaguely the location, but a year later it was known, like the name of a battlefield. Thus was the setting constructed for the introduction of the reader to the dual theme of "General" Thomas Jefferson Sutherland and Nebraska:

Well do we remember—it was in the spring of 1851—how the monotonous life of the inhabitants of the various Missouri river towns was broken in upon by the advent among them of a mysterious looking individual, who travelled with a carpet sack slung across his shoulders, and who paid his way wherever he went by 'phrenological' lectures and examinations. At each place where he was want to stop he made known the object of his visit out West, stating it to be to get up a company of explorers and settlers for Nebraska. He claimed to belong to the 'vote yourself a farm' party, and held that the Indians had no right to keep such fine lands as Nebraska was represented to contain. Wherever he went he lectured in private on the rights of property, and in public on the science of phrenology. Whilst just as certainly wherever he appeared the boys always treated him to a little of that peculiar game known out West as 'rotten-egging.' Such was the state of public opinion in regard to the Nebraska movement just three years ago. At the end of some months of unsuccessful efforts he finally started from Fort Leavenworth to accomplish his mission, attended by two or three followers, half-equipped. A few days journey took him as far as the Iowa Mission, at the Nemahaw agency; here he was seized with a fever, and died among the good folks of the Mission. He was buried in Nebraska, and with him his scheme.

The mysterious individual we have thus introduced to the reader was at one time of considerable notoriety; a native of New York, and one of the whilom Canadian 'Patriots,' tried some years ago for engaging in the project of annexing John Bull's little strip of the Canadas to Brother Jonathan's broad domain. So far as we are informed, he it was who was the first public advocate for, and overt actor in, the movement to organize and settle Nebraska. But the politicians have 'stolen his thunder,' whilst he in Nebraska sleeps the sleep that knows no waking.

Although representing Sutherland as the original Nebraska man, the author was conscious of certain factual difficulties of his theme, and accordingly felt the necessity of differentiating him from men who had shown an even earlier interest in organizing and settling Nebraska. Thus arose the "overt act" formula, which was developed briefly by a vague aside on Douglas, in 1844, not mentioned by name, and Benton, in 1850, whose action was political:

But there was no 'overt act'—as the lawyers say—and there it rested, where it began, in the minds of those who conceived it. No one was safely delivered of the grand idea.

Just one year after this effort, as we have narrated it, some of the Indian agents and government attache's at the various trading posts, along with the traders, commenced agitating the subject of organization, held a meeting or so, and shortly organized primary meetings for the selection of a delegate to go on to Washington. The thing was now seriously started. Half a score or more entered the lists as candidates, and finally, after the usual amount of electioneering and 'treating,' a trader living happily among them was chosen to the honor of paying his own expenses on to Washington as Nebraska Delegate. This was in 1852. When the American Representatives met in Washington in 'Congress assembled' the Nebraska Delegate was there among them to attend to the interests of his constituents.

At this time a bill was introduced into congress, which the author indicated as embracing only a small part of the Nebraska territory. But:—

In 1853, a new Delegate was chosen—in fact two or more claimed the right to the post of honor—and, on the 4th of January, 1853, Douglas of Illinois introduced in the Senate his Nebraska bill; followed upon the 23d of the same month with . . . amendments, bounding and subdividing the Territory. . . .

To sum up: Thus we have, in the spring of 1851, just three years ago, an ex-Canadian 'Patriot' first publicly agitating the subject and getting 'rotten-egged' for his pains. One year thereafter, the trader, agents, and missionaries, all told not over a hundred, electing a Delegate. Six months more, the first bill for organization passing the House of Representatives. In another six months, a new bill, substantially passing the Senate, and ere this reaches the eye of the reader becoming the law of the land, or perhaps lying over to another Congress. Truly we live in a fast age!

This emphasis on discontinuity, the sudden character of the Nebraska movement was developed further by reference

to the visit to the territory of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Manypenny, only six months prior to the publication of this and his statement, as the author phrased it, that there were "not three white men in the whole territory, other than Government attache's." The "poll" books, with Indian names, he pointed to as a curiosity:

We would not startle our reader at all, but we are compelled to inform him, in vindication of the truth of history, that there is already a newspaper published semi-occasionally, bearing at its head in flourishing capitals 'Nebraska City, Nebraska Ty.' We are afraid, however, that he will be still more startled when we inform him that the city has its existence as yet only in imagination, and its only citizen a solitary army supernumerary in charge of the remnants of what was once old Fort Kearney. *Sub rosa*, we would whisper, that the thing isn't an impossibility at all. It is only 'gotten-up' and printed on the opposite side of the Missouri River, at a printing office in the State of Iowa, and there dated and purporting to be published in Nebraska. Possibly, at some future day it may become the official gazette, and receive some crumbs of patronage.

The article closed with a reference to the varied physical features of the country, the Bad Lands, the Platte and Kansas valleys, the sand hills thrown up at some period, remote in time, by water and wind, and the plains between the rivers, "covered with tall prairie grass, rolling like the sea." These facts "All impel us to pronounce Nebraska an intensely interesting region, and its settlement a vast acquisition to the trade and commerce of the great Mississippi Valley." Surveying parties were mentioned, as in the field gathering further information.

This article was facetious, vague, inaccurate in detail, but with a faint framework of fact, yet intended, apparently, to be favorable—literary history, or what then and now passes for literary.<sup>4</sup> The few authenticated facts available about Sutherland do not fit exactly into this pattern. On May 22, 1851, Sutherland wrote a letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Luke Lea, from Council Bluffs, Iowa, in protest against the treatment of the Indians across

<sup>4</sup>The authorship of the article is not identified. Frank Luther Mott, *A history of American magazines*, 3 Volumes (New York and Cambridge, 1930-1938), II, Chapter 21, said that Charles Dudley Warner wrote the outstanding papers on the West for *Putnam's Magazine*.



the Missouri river from Iowa by the Mormons settled in western Iowa, and by emigrants passing through Indian lands. Sutherland denounced in particular the Rev. Orson Hyde, Editor of the *Frontier Guardian*, a Mormon newspaper published at Kaneshville, Iowa, and the only one in the area of about forty western Iowa counties. Sutherland declared that the charges made by the *Frontier Guardian* were false, and were used only as an excuse for abusing the Indians.<sup>5</sup> In printing the Sutherland letter, Editor William Ridenbaugh, of the *Gazette*, gave it his endorsement.

#### "PERAMBULATION" IN NEBRASKA, 1851

Sutherland's presence in Iowa in May, 1851 was unaccounted for, but a series of letters printed in the Cincinnati *Daily Nonpareil*, three of them written from the Missouri-Nebraska border, and about it, provide some orientation. These three letters were dated from the West, May 3, 29, and July 31, 1851. Of three additional letters, one was written in Indiana, November 27, 1851, and the other two possibly in Ohio in late February or early March, but published on March 2 and 5, 1852. There may have been others, in fact almost certainly there were others, but these six must suffice present purposes.<sup>6</sup>

The letters of May 3 and 29 were written from points near each other but on opposite sides of the river. The

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<sup>5</sup> The text of the letter was printed in the *Gazette*, June 11, 1851. Hyde was unpopular in western Missouri. About a year later he was cowhided in Weston, the alleged cause being slanders published in the *Frontier Guardian*. (*Liberty Tribune*, June 11, 1852, from the *Weston Reporter* [n. d.]) Hyde had been appointed Judge in Utah Territory. See also *Gazette*, February 25, June 9, 1852.

<sup>6</sup> Printed in the Cincinnati *Daily Nonpareil*, "Nebraska Territory and Western Iowa," May 19, 1851; "The Nebraska Territory," June 25, 1851; "From Nebraska," August 27, 1851; "Letter from Thomas Jefferson Sutherland," December 2, 1851; "Emigration to Nebraska," March 2, 1852; and "Nebraska Polytechnic Institute," March 5, 1852. The surviving files of the *Nonpareil* are incomplete, none being available for 1850 or 1851 prior to the first of these letters or for the summer and fall of 1852. The letter of May 3 implies at least one earlier letter reporting on the Potawatomie lands in Iowa.

first was written from Old Fort Kearny, Table Creek, Nebraska territory, thirty miles below the mouth of the Platte River, the starting point for government trains for Fort Kearny, 250 miles west on the Platte River. The second letter was written from Thule, a quarter of a mile south of the Iowa state line, in Atchison County, Missouri:

"Above Thule, on the Nebraska side of the river is Table Creek—which I regard as one of the favorable spots in the Territory—and one of the most eligible town sites on the Missouri River, and there, at some future day, not far distant, I can well conceive will be built up a splendid city." Besides soil "inferior to none in the world," were salt, coal, iron, several mill streams, building material, and a river landing, "and they command a scenery unequalled for grandeur and beauty. Such is Table Creek."

In the first letter he related that "I have just crossed the river for the purpose of a tramp in the Nebraska Territory. But a change—and such a change' has come in the season, that I, and all other *voyageurs*, are stopped in our careers." After weeks of "delightful weather" the grass had started, when "day before yesterday [May 1] a snow storm came down upon us," and ice had frozen as thick as a window glass for several mornings, the coldest weather for the season since white man had occupied the area across the river. There was fear that the wild plum crop was killed, "the only fruit of this region." The killing freeze would delay the emigrant trains crossing the Missouri because vegetation was killed.

The second letter, May 29, opened:

Since I wrote my last communication for your paper, I have perambulated much of the Territory of Nebraska, and catered the knowledge of many facts relative to this Upper Missouri country, which I propose to make of interest and advantage to those (of the States east of the Mississippi) who are bent upon the acquisition of homes for themselves and families in this region, which is, as I would declare in the most emphatic language, the most splendid country in America.

Before coming to this region of country, I communicated to the Hon. Justin Butterfield, Commissioner of the General Land Office at Washington, my intention of visiting the westerly shores of the Missouri above Independence, and whereupon he furnished me with a map of the *proposed* Territory of Nebraska. By this map the Ter-

ritory is represented to embrace the country between the fortieth and forty-third degree of north latitude, and to extend west from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains, and it is estimated to contain 136,700 square miles, or 87,438,000 acres of land.

The earlier of the two letters gave a different southern boundary for the territory of Nebraska—the Kansas River, instead of the fortieth parallel—and the description of the country was significant:

The country along the Missouri, and aback for fifty miles, has not its equal for fertility of soil, water, solubility of climate, and mineral resources in the United States; and for the establishment of a population, dense as may be, in so much of the Territory, there is timber sufficient, with an economical application. The mineral resources included in this region, are all on this side of the river, and while the western tier of counties of Iowa, and the north-western counties of Missouri, which are comprised in the eastern shores of the Missouri, breasting this Territory, embrace lands, which in an agricultural point of view has no equal in this continent; they can have no full development of their natural resources, while these shores of Nebraska are held by the savages, and debarred to a civilized population. To make a flourishing country of this, the people must have both sides of the river the more particularly so as all of the good and permanent steamboat landings, and good town sites embraced in this stretch between St. Joseph and the mouth of the Big Sioux, are on this side of the river.

In the second letter, Sutherland had the following to say:

The country forming the westerly shores of the Missouri river from the forty-third degree of north latitude, down to the Kansas river, has precisely the same character in every section, and is possessed of like resources. There, the scarcity of timber which exists throughout the Territory, except along the Missouri and Nebraska [Platte] rivers, and some of the larger tributaries, will confine the early settlements to the vicinity of these rivers and streams. These facts require that the south line of the Territory should be extended to the Kansas river instead of fixing the same at the fortieth degree of north latitude, as proposed by the Commissioner of the General Land Office.

In this letter he revised somewhat his estimate of the possibilities of fruit growing, both sides of the Missouri River "will prove more than an ordinary fruit country. The groves there now abound with wild cherry and the gooseberry, as well as the wild plum; and, than there, more

promising strawberry vines and raspberry bushes I have never seen. In my recent rambles in Nebraska Territory I have seen some flourishing specimens of wild grape. . . ." The great apple potential of the area was not foreseen.

Sutherland commented, May 29, upon the emigrant routes leading west, and favored the one from Old Fort Kearny westward on the south side of the Platte to Fort Kearny, at the head of Grand Island. On the route up the north side of the Platte, he pointed out the necessity of two expensive river crossings, the Elkhorn and the Loup Fork. His estimates of patronage, however, gave the northern route the larger numbers crossing at Council Bluffs, Iowa: 2,000 wagons, of which 1,000 were Oregon bound, 400 to California, and 600 to Salt Lake. Crossing at Table Creek, John Boulware [? sp.], in charge of the ferry reported 155 for Oregon, 35 for California, and 30 for Salt Lake. At both places the total number of people involved was estimated at 6,000. In the third letter, that of July 31, Sutherland reported that the cholera had struck all towns on the river from St. Louis to St. Joseph, but he had not heard of the disease among the Indians, but this might be because they were mostly on the plains on their summer hunting excursions.

### LAND REFORMER

The land question and land reform were matters of great concern to the General. Parts of the first, the third, and the whole of the fourth communications dealt with the subject. In his first letter he paid his respects to the situation in western Iowa, where the Potawatomie purchase had no equal in quality of land, but he did not advise emigrants to come to it:

Except a small strip of twelve miles in breadth on the south, no part of the lands of the State of Iowa bounded on the Missouri river have been surveyed. Yet every inhabitable spot has been '*claimed up*' by squatters, who hold it in possession by combination, in tracts varying

from 320 acres to 2,000 each. From these enormous tracts they sell out, not the improvements, but the privilege of making settlements, with *their* protection, for prices greater than the government minimum price for the lands, which, in every case is in addition to be paid. I traveled three hundred miles recently in Western Iowa, without finding a spot on which I could make a settlement, and would not have been permitted so to have done, without having paid \$200, or run the risk of having a rifle ball put through my body, or my cabin burnt over my head; and yet there is not now one family to ten quarter sections of inhabitable lands. I met there many persons who had emigrated with their families from the east, sacrificing their little properties in so doing, with a view to settlement in the Pottawatomie purchase—but upon their arrival they were forbidden by the squatters and claim speculators, except upon the payment of sums of money which their reduced means would not allow—or either to return; and in order to live they had been compelled to shelter themselves in hovels and become hirelings to the usurpers of the soil. Therefore, I advise *all to keep out of Iowa until the next Congress shall have been in session.*

At this time there are more *renters* of soil on unsurveyed lands of the United States in Iowa, than in any section of the like extent in New York or Pennsylvania, excepting the large cities.

In his letter of July 31, Sutherland discussed the land question again:

Land speculation with any feature is hideous to the husbandman—and in no feature is it more to be dreaded and detested than in that of the *squatter*. This last is a speculator in the rights of soil without having ever paid aught for the public land which he claims, into the National Treasury. At this time Iowa is *the land of squatters*, and lands lying in Illinois, with equal quality with those of Iowa, can be purchased of the land speculators at prices less than those demanded in Iowa by the squatters for the mere privilege of making a settlement upon the public lands of the United States.

If the public lands of the United States are to be regarded as appendages of the National Treasury, the laboring millions of the cities and towns of the Atlantic states, who are the principal contributors to the treasury, have a right to demand that they, the lands, shall be sold for the best available prices; and it is a double fraud to dispose of the groves of timber and all other choice parcels of land to speculators and squatters for merely the minimum prices of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, which price is also demanded for the poorest tracts of bald prairie; it is a fraud upon the national treasury, because the groves and other choice parcels of land might be sold at prices from twenty-five to fifty dollars per acre; and a fraud upon the laboring people of the Atlantic states, who contribute to the funds of the National treasury and who are landless, as the measure prevents their settling upon the government lands without first making

purchase, from the speculator or squatters, at exorbitant prices, of timber enough for the cultivation of a farm.

At the time of writing the fourth letter, devoted wholly to land reform, dated at Brookville, Franklin County, Indiana, November 27, 1851, Sutherland had been ill for ten weeks, and was still "flat on my back," the letter being dictated. But he was still ardent in his pursuit of his dreams. As he was taken ill while ascending the Ohio river, he must have left the Nebraska border late in August or early September. He was not sure of his medium of publicity, but was taking the risk:

I am not advised whether you, at the present day, claim to be Land Reformers, or not. But presuming that you will do me the favor, of letting this letter appear in the *Nonpareil*, I have included herein, points for the consideration of the Land Reformers of Cincinnati.

Two paragraphs were devoted to an adverse criticism of the existing land laws:

The entire code of Laws of the United States, for the management of the Public Lands, has been rendered nugatory, by Land Speculators and Squatters; and every law of Congress, which has been enacted under the pretense of sustaining the interest of the actual settler, has been made to work as a law, for the benefit of Land Speculators.

The people of the Union, have a right, and ought to demand, of the Congress about to go into session, that provision be made for the execution of the existing Land Laws of the United States; or that they be repealed and others enacted in their stead.

At this point the historian would like to know more about Sutherland's background and activities, because he was making an interesting proposal about land legislation which he thought was peculiarly adapted to the prairie. Furthermore, studies of the history of land policies for the 1840's and 1850's provide no effective background guidance to the problem of originality:

On the subject of Free Grants of Land, from the Public Domain, to actual settlers, for cultivation, it is my project, that the grant shall consist of one hundred and sixty acres of prairie-land; and that the timbered lands shall be surveyed into five-acre lots, and sold to actual settlers only, at three dollars per acre.

The second letter had merely reported scarcity of

timber. This one advanced a plan for circumventing its limitations, its geographical determinism, and at the same time undertaking to do justice to all. Whether or not the plan would have worked is quite another question. At any rate, he recognized the problem, and proposed something concrete and positive to meet it, as he saw it. Probably he did not see far enough into the meaning of the phrase "actual settler" as an idealized myth to which he was captive and which did not represent any substantial reality.<sup>7</sup> A very practical difficulty which he did not work out was how the five-acre timber lots, scattered irregularly along the streams, could have been fitted into the rectangular survey system and the 160-acre quarter section farm.

Another difficulty in connection with his plan, or any so-called actual settler plan, came out in his discussion of opponents of land reform legislation; supporters of the proposal to authorize assignment of military land warrants of 1850, land grants for several types of internal improvements, and swamp land grants, and his allegation "that the newspapers of the West, are all owned and controlled by Land Speculators; . . ." Public opinion actually supported the practices, not the letter and spirit of the laws. He had this to say about the homestead bills:

Had either of the bills which have heretofore been before Congress, been passed to laws, they would have afforded no relief to those who seek the soil for cultivation; but would have been turned like all preceding enactments of the kind, to give aid and comfort to the Land Speculators and Land Monopolies.—I trust that an appropriate Bill will go before the present Congress, and I hope for its passage to a law. But to make this hope good, there is work to be done; and for which work there are no hands, except those of the Land Reformers of Cincinnati.

In dealing with the Kansas controversies of 1854-1861, it is well to remember what Sutherland said about squatter monopoly of land in western Iowa in 1851. The procedure

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<sup>7</sup> James C. Malin, "Mobility and history: Reflections on agricultural policies of the United States in relation to a mechanized world," *Agricultural History*, 17 (October, 1943) 177-191. For another plan for insuring equitable distribution of the limited timber resources of what is now eastern Kansas see the proposal of Isaac McCoy, in 1823, discussed in Malin, *Grassland Historical Studies: Natural resources utilization in a background of science and technology*, Volume I, Geology and Geography (Lawrence, The author, 1950), pp. 4-6.

in Kansas in 1854 and later was very similar so far as the practical operations of the land system and squatters was concerned. But the Kansas situation became complicated by the slavery issue and the distortion of publicity which ensued in connection with the prolonged Kansas controversy and the abolition movement that culminated during the American Civil War.

### EMIGRATION TO NEBRASKA

In the third of the letters from the Nebraska border noticed here, Sutherland indicated two subjects additional to those already summarized (aspects of the Squatter-Speculator problem, and cholera)—the location of the Indian reservations of the emigrant tribes adjoining the Missouri River on its west bank, and the lands in the Indian country to which Indian title was relinquished, and which were vacant, that is, unassigned to any individual tribe:

The Indians who claim title to portions of this Territory lying within the southwestern limits and included in contiguous tracts situated on and along the Missouri, between the mouths of the Nebraska and the Kansas rivers, are as follows:

The Otoes, Missourias, Ioways, Sacs and Foxes, remnants of the once numerous and formidable tribes, claim and occupy the territory of country lying in the southwest angle formed by the Nebraska [Platte] and Missouri rivers. The lands of these Indians extend from the Nebraska about fifty miles, and west from the Missouri from seventy-five to one hundred miles.

The next located south of the aforementioned, are the Kickapoos, who are the remnant of the ancient Mascotins. They are of mixed blood, and number 470 souls.

The Delawares, who are the descendants of the Lenno Lenepees of Pennsylvania, have a tract of country lying between the fork made by the Kansas and Missouri rivers, thirty by sixty miles square. The Delawares number 820 of all shades.

These last named have admitted into their territory a band of the Munsees, a remnant of the Miami and Minnisink Indians of the Hudson river, and a band of the Stockbridge, the ancient Mohegans, to each of which bands they have sold lands. The Munsees are said to number 180, and the Stockbridge band 74. A band of half-breed Wyandots have also purchased a tract of land from



the Delawares, and built a town at the mouth of the Kansas; and these, as well as the Stockbridge, Munsee and Delawares, are doing considerable in the way of farming.

This is a clear statement of the emigrant Indian situation between the Platte and the Kansas rivers and offers convincing evidence that Sutherland possessed a respectable intellectual capacity and range of factual information.

But what of the country behind, or westward, of these emigrant tribes?:

In this Territory, a few white families have been domiciled, and are now remaining on the Indian Lands, with the penalties of the Indian Bill, enacted by Congress in 1824, hanging over their heads, and beyond these there are no white settlements in Nebraska. Yet there are three separate tracts, (and a fourth, which may be added by the proclamation of the President of the United States,) of unsurveyed public lands, from which the Indian title has been extinguished, lying within the limits proposed for this territory. These lands from which the Indian title has been extinguished embrace some of the most desirable and advantageous positions, and include soil equal to any in the world; and they are now without any settlers or white population, though they are as much subject to settlement as any of the unsurveyed public lands lying in the several states of the Union, and the other territories—upon which there are not less than 250,000 settlers. Hence, here is offered an opportunity, and it is the last which can be afforded, for the land reformers of the Union to make a practical demonstration of the thrift and prosperity which may result from a free allotment of the soil to actual settlers instead of granting the same to land speculators and buzzard-men for mere nominal prices.

This paragraph sets the stage for the land reform legislation which he was hopeful that the Land Reformers would be able to pass through the coming session of congress, if they would bestir themselves. In the meantime he was preparing to act without the benefit of legislation. Before leaving the Border of Nebraska, Sutherland let it be known that he would return. The *Liberty Tribune*, October 31, 1851, announced that: "Thomas Jefferson Sutherland, the hero of Navy Island, is in Nebraska Territory.—He proposes to found a settlement there, and expresses the belief that Nebraska will yet be the 'Eden State' of the Union." One interpretation of this sentence might be that he was then engaged in the project and had colonists on the site; but in the perspective of what

follows, the intent was probably only an announcement of future purpose.

In the Ohio country Sutherland's trail has been picked up, an evidence of the fact of his recovery from the prolonged illness. The Wellsville (Columbia County, Ohio) *Patriot* gave publicity to his colonization project. A John Russell, Inverness, in the same county, January 30, 1852, wrote Sutherland a letter of inquiry which he printed as the text of a communication to the *Nonpareil*, published March 2, 1852, the fifth of the series under consideration here. Russell reported that: "Quite a number of the most respectable of our citizens in this region of country design locating themselves in some part of our Western States or Territories this coming spring." A list of seven numbered questions was posed, along with other more informal inquiries:

1. Where do you design locating?
  2. What is the character of the soil?
  3. Is it level, rolling or hilly?
  4. Is it timbered, if so what kind and quality?
  5. Do you esteem it healthy; and do you consider it likely to be subject to fever and ague?
  6. Is coal to be found in any quantity; and is building stone abundant?
  7. Do springs of good water abound, and how is it for water power?
- ... I should like to know when you design leaving Cincinnati; and what the cost of passage will be from that point to your destination and the time likely to be consumed in the journey.

Sutherland's reply was printed under the letter according to the numbered questions:

*Answer 1.* It is proposed to make a settlement on the westerly side of the Missouri river, upon the unsurveyed public lands of the United States from which the Indian title has been extinguished. These lands lie along the north side of the line of the fortieth degree of north latitude. There is another tract of land, equal to any in the world for beauty of scenery and fertility of soil, lying along the Blue river, and extending upon both shores from a line running west from the source of the Little Nemaha river down to within thirty miles of the mouth of the said Blue river, from which the Indian title has been extinguished. These lands are now open to settlement as other unsurveyed public lands of the United States.

*Answer 2.* The soil of the lands in the eastern section of the Territory is a composite consisting of clay, sand, ashes, charcoal, and decomposed vegetable matter, and

exists in depths of from three to fifteen feet; and its productiveness is not surpassed by any other portion of the soil on the continent of America.

*Answer 3.* The face of the country is diversified and beautiful. The bottom and table lands are level, but the largest extent of the country is comprised of rolling prairies. The bluffs along the rivers are successions of small hills. There are no mountains in the Territory within six hundred miles of the Missouri river.

*Answer 4.* The largest portion of the Territory is bald prairies; and the timber which exists is scattered along the bluffs on the rivers, and spread upon the shores and islands of the water courses. The quantity of timber is deficient for the whole country; but there is abundance on the tract of land where the settlement is proposed to be made, as well as along Blue river. The timber on the Missouri river is principally cotton-wood, but the timber on the lands where the settlement is proposed to be made is black-walnut, butternut, oak, ash, elm and hickory. The timber most valuable for lumber is cotton-wood and black-walnut.

*Answer 5.* The climate is variable; yet the country is extremely healthy. Fogs are of seldom occurrence. There are no morasses or stagnant pools of water; and the ague and fever are not like to prevail anywhere in the Territory, except it may be upon the river bottoms.

*Answer 6.* Coal is known to exist in all parts of the Territory; but in what quantities has not been demonstrated. Clay, sand and stone, well suited for building purposes, exist in abundance throughout the eastern part of the Territory.

*Answer 7.* Good pure water, existing in springs and brooks, is abundant; and water can be obtained at almost any place, by digging a few feet below the soil. In the eastern part of the Territory mill-streams are numerous—and they are there in every way sufficient for extensive manufacturing operations. There is no lack of water-power.

The company proposing to emigrate to Nebraska will concentrate at St. Louis; and it will leave that place about the first of April; Positively in the first week of that month.

The cost of passage and freighting from the valley of the Ohio to St. Louis may be ascertained without advice from me. Passage from St. Louis to Nebraska, landing near the place of the proposed settlement, will cost from \$6, to \$10, cabin; from \$2, to \$3, deck. Freightage from \$5, to \$15, per ton. Provisions, furniture, (except bedding) and farming utensils, can be purchased in the vicinity of the proposed settlement, and at as reasonable prices, as at any place in the valley of the Ohio. I would advise emigrants to take with them all household furniture, (good articles,) except bedsteads, tables, chairs, and the like.—The time from St. Louis to Nebraska will be from *five to seven* days.

In a postscript, Sutherland requested the "Editors of country newspapers . . . to copy the above for the benefit

of the westward bound." A number of points in Sutherland's reply are highly significant to the problem of the history of the grassland occupance, and some of them must have been disturbing to the readers in the upper Ohio River country, to whom they were directed. The location of the proposed settlement or settlements was on the unsurveyed lands not assigned by treaty to specified Indian tribes, and was westward, or behind, the Indian barrier of tribes emigrant from the country east of the Mississippi River who had been relocated by treaty agreement in perpetuity along the west bank of the Missouri River. The present Manhattan, Kansas, lies at the mouth of the Big Blue River on the north bank of the Kansas River. The Big Blue River rises in southeastern Nebraska just west of the 97th meridian, and from Beatrice, Nebraska, east of that meridian flows almost directly southward. Sutherland's first objective, a location just north of the fortieth parallel would lie in the present state of Nebraska east of that river. Without more specific information, could Sutherland expect emigrants from the Upper Ohio valley to respond to his call? After all, it was in the area officially designated as Indian country by the Indian Inter-course Act of 1834, which Sutherland had mentioned in an earlier letter, and would constitute a completely isolated island of white settlement within that Indian country.

A second point that might raise questions in the minds of prospective settlers was his description of the largest portion of Nebraska territory as bald prairie, the principal timber for lumber being cottonwood and black walnut, and that only along the streams. One point possibly was meant to be reassuring to his readers on the Upper Ohio River, that although cottonwood was the principal timber on the Missouri, the species of trees on the streams where he proposed to settle were black walnut, butternut, oak, ash, elm, and hickory. Although not in this order of general dominance in the Ohio country, these were familiar trees in the hardwood deciduous forest of that area. Prairie openings of limited size in the forests of some parts of Ohio were familiar, but "bald prairie" as a predominant characteristic was usually somewhat frightening to forest men.

By the time the reply to Russell was published, March 2, 1852, the time was short indeed for a rendezvous of colonizing families at St. Louis the first week in April. But Sutherland had another attraction in mind, a companion project which revealed the all but global range of his dreams for human betterment—The Nebraska Polytechnic Institute. It is best to permit the "General" to tell his own story first, and then fill in some of the background detail at a later point to explain this perpetual crusader in "the Battle of freedom and humanity":

To the Editors of the Cincinnati Nonpareil.

Gentlemen: Being possessed of some knowledge of the details of camp and the strategy of war, and claiming to be well versed in the tactics of an army, I have taken it upon myself to make the effort for establishing upon the west shore of the Missouri river within the Territory of Nebraska, a Military agricultural school, which I propose to style the Nebraska Polytechnic Institute, and for this measure I ask the patronage and support of my fellow citizens.

The school which I propose to establish I intend to make a self-sustaining concern; and, therefore, have I selected for its site a position in the Territory of Nebraska, where buildings can be cheaply erected, and provision and fuel easily obtained, and where the students of the Institute, by cultivating choice parcels of the public lands which now lay idle and unproductive, can earn their support, while at the same time they receive a course of instruction in practical and theoretical husbandry.

Adopting this course, I shall be able to allow young men who are in very limited circumstances to become students of the Institute; and while those are in the process of obtaining a practical and efficient education, they will be placed in a position to make valuable selections from the public lands, (the best in the Union,) and secure "*claims*," upon which, at a subsequent day, they can build homes and display, at some profit, their learning and taste in Agriculture; and there they can secure habitations and lands to which they may return, should they ever be enticed "to share the glory of the battle of freedom"—and find the fortunes of that battle against them.

I shall look to the government of the United States for a loan of arms and Military equipments sufficient for the tactical instruction which I propose to give; and I think Congress will not refuse me, because one of the leading objects of my school will be to try the effect of Military instruction upon Indian Youths, of which there are many likely and intelligent ones to be found upon the shores of the Missouri river.

There is no extravagance in the idea of connecting the courses of Military and Agricultural instruction, because all men who have the natural gifts for a Military command, will be found to have equal taste and capacity for

the pursuit of Agriculture. Cincinnatus was taken from the plough to lead the Roman army to victory; and that gained he returned to his little farm. Our own Washington was called from the pursuit of husbandry to be the successful commander of the revolutionary army; and his country's liberty being achieved he surrendered his commission, laid down his sword, and putting off the livery of war, once more became a husbandman. Suwarroff was translated from his farm, where he cultivated the soil with his own hands, to the head of the Russian army; and then with a fame that lives in all nations, with all languages, he returned to die upon his lands. The great Cromwell was a ploughman, and so were many others of equal fame as military commanders.

Louis Kossuth, at the banquet given him at Castle Gardian, New York, by the 1st Division of New York Militia, uttered the following language: "But when the time comes, when we fight the battle of freedom and independence once more, I confidently hope that out of the generous ranks of the gallant Militia of the United States, there will be found single men who, out of their own will, without any interference of mine, *will be glad to share the glory of the battle of freedom and humanity!*" Now if it be true that the republicans of Europe are determined "to fight the battle of freedom and independence once more," we are bound to anticipate that there are those of our fellow-citizens who "will be glad to share the glory of the battle of freedom." But, it is to be hoped that they will prepare themselves before they go forth, so that they may be found competent for the duties of the places they assume—and efficient soldiers of liberty. The instructions which I propose to give, are the requisite preparations for efficient *Volunteer service*, to be performed either in Europe or America.

A few hundred well instructed American officers distributed in an army of Hungarians, Italians, or Germans, fighting for liberty, would not only give aid to their Military efficiency, but they would contribute much to sustain the morals of such an army. Yet, it should be remembered that every American found in the ranks of a republican army in Europe will there be regarded as a representative of our country and its institutions; and that if any shall be found there inefficient for duty, by reason of a lack of instruction in the tactics of an army and the duties of the camp, he will not only disgrace himself, but he will bring reproach upon our country, and by exciting ridicule, shake the confidence of the ignorant in the value of republicanism.

The forces to be contended with by a republican army in a revolutionary struggle in Europe, will be made up of well disciplined corps, commanded by experienced and able officers, who will be found well versed in the science of war. Therefore, it is well instructed officers that will be needed by the revolutionists of Hungary, and the other states of Europe whose peoples are proposing to strike for liberty. Of raw and undisciplined officers they will have a home supply—and an over stock of those merely brave in battle.

But, gentlemen, another and a more prominent object

than those of affording instruction in the sciences of agriculture; giving lessons in the tactics of an army, the duties of camp, and affording information of the strategy of war; and the making of a feeble effort to lift a few Indians from the condition of barbarism; and to fit a few of my fellow citizens "to share the glory of the battle of freedom and humanity," again to be fought, as it is said, in Europe, is aimed to be accomplished by the establishment of the Nebraska Polytechnic Institute. It is this: I propose to furnish a sufficient school where there is now none—a school in which the inhabitants there of to-day, and those who may come hereafter upon the shores of the Upper Missouri, may secure for their sons a good English education, and such as shall fit them for the performance of their duties as American freeman.

### "NOTES ON NEBRASKA"

General Sutherland next appeared in a literary capacity, author of "Notes on Nebraska," chapter 4 of which was printed in the *Tribune*, May 7, 1852. No other information about the "Notes" is available, and apparently the book was never issued as such. The chapter carried the title, "Facilities for breeding and cultivating domestic animals—Vegetable production, etc., etc.," and occupied three full newspaper columns, headed by eight lines of a poem by Lord Byron:

Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,  
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;  
Where the light wings of zephyr, oppressed with perfume,  
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gu'l in her bloom,  
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,  
And the voice of the nightengale never is mute;  
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,  
In color though varied, in beauty may vie . . . ?<sup>s</sup>

Sutherland's order of treatment of subjects in the chapter was livestock, then timber and grasses, food crops, and lastly, fiber crops;—Nebraska was "equal to any portion of the inhabited world. The face of the country being elevated, the water pure and the Atmosphere serene, health is thereby promised to every race and breed of domestic

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<sup>s</sup> These lines may be found in their context in "The Bride of Abydos," First Canto, part of the first verse, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, Oxford Edition (Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 258.

animals." He represented that horses thrived on the grass of the prairie, and required additional feed only three months of the year, and only work horses required dry stabling. Mules needed even less feed and care. The pasturage for cattle was rich and would continue to exist "for any desirable time." Parenthetically, the explanation may be in order, that forest men accustomed only to cultivated grasses often, if not usually, doubted whether native prairie grasses could survive under utilization by domestic livestock. Thus the significance of Sutherland's assurance that pasturage would continue to exist "for any desirable time." Because of the smooth surface of prairie land, and absence of stones and stumps, hay could be mowed by machines, and calves would winter on it with little corn added. Timber lay in groves, and along streams, along with extensive growths of rushes upon which cattle fed in winter, but he warned that rushes were available only to a few and would not last. Along the streams also, the timber produced mast, and hazel groves yielded nuts which were superior to corn for hogs. The bulbous roots of many prairie plants were dug and eaten also by hogs, along with prairie peas.

Sheep raising occupied a conspicuous place in Sutherland's evaluation of Nebraska:

In the early periods of the settlement of the Territory, the cultivated lands being restricted to the region where timber exists, there will remain broad strips of land between the cultivated sections, that will be spread along the shores of the water courses, which will fail to be settled for the lack of timber within convenient reach; and these unsettled strips of land will afford ample range for cattle, and the best of pasturage for sheep. Thus it will be seen that wool growing as a business, may be pursued with extraordinary advantage and great profit to the eastern part of Nebraska.

The western part of the Territory is deficient both in timber and water; and there the soil in general is thin and the grass of the prairie comparatively small in quantity, yet there is sufficient grass for sheep grazing; and the heavy dews and frequent showers which prevail in the country will afford water sufficient for sheep. Then, if we may suppose the eastern part of the Territory to be settled with a dense population, and the entire of the lands to have been occupied by cultivators of the soil there will yet remain the extensive plains of the west, affording the finest sheep pasturage in the world.



No where in the Territory, either east or west, will it be necessary to cut grass and make it into hay for the keeping of sheep through the winter. On all of the lands of the eastern part of the Territory blue grass in luxuriant growth may be produced, and there are spots of land scattered all over the plains of the west, possessing the requisite fertility of soil, for the growth of blue grass, in any desirable perfection. Then, let a field be ploughed and sown with blue grass, and let the crop which may be produced of a season ripen and remain upon the ground. Under the dried grass of such field, at the coming of winters, a young growth would be found of several inches in height, green and fresh, for which sheep turned in upon it, would dig through the dried grass, and live and thrive thereon. In the event of a severe snowstorm the addition of a little corn as a daily feeding would answer all demands of sheep for food.

The reference to bluegrass in the foregoing paragraph demonstrated that Sutherland was not emancipated altogether from the forest man's idea that tame grasses would have to be produced under cultivation, much like other field crops. Domestic fowls, Sutherland thought, could be raised in all parts of the territory.

Among the grain crops, corn dominated Sutherland's agricultural thinking, and in that respect he was typical of eastern Americans:

The eastern portion of the Territory may be estimated as one broad and extensive corn field. The sod of the prairie being turned over, (for which two pair of good cattle with a proper plough are sufficient,) and planted with corn, the produce, without further labor, will be from twenty-five to fifty bushels to each acre. Then, on each succeeding year the land planted with corn after one single plowing, with a plough run two or three times between the rows during the growth of the corn, the yield to the acre will be from fifty to one hundred bushels; and with like cultivation the same quantity of corn per acre may be obtained for twenty-five or thirty years in succession, without manuring.

After the sward of the prairie has been broken and the land made to produce a single crop of corn or oats, which may be successfully cultivated, and a good yield obtained both as to quality and quantity. But to make a crop of wheat sure, it would require early planting and the seed to be put deep in the ground. If the seed were put in late, or only sown broadcast upon the ground, it would not be likely to have sufficient root to withstand the winters, which are open and dry; and the soil being very light, unless the roots are deep & the leafing considerable, it would be very apt to be blown off and roots perish thereby. Once plowing before planting would be sufficient in all cases for wheat; and with proper cultivation, its yield upon the lands of the eastern part of the Territory would

be equal in every respect to the produce of the best soil in the States of Illinois, Iowa or Missouri.

Rye of a good quality and in quantities sufficient to remunerate the cultivator may be grown on the thinner portions of the soil. If sown upon the deep and rich soil, the stalk would acquire too great a height, and the seed heads would grow too large to allow of their standing until the grain should ripen. Oats sown on the sod upon the first breaking of the ground will yield from thirty to forty bushels to the acre, and after the sod crop, the produce per acre would average at least fifty bushels. Barley sown in like manner may be produced in quantity equal to oats and of a good quality. Buckwheat and Millet may be grown upon any of the deep soil of the Territory and a yield obtained in quality and quantity equal to the produce of any of the lands in the United States.

A considerable section was devoted to garden vegetables to which Sutherland insisted the climate and soil were admirably suited. He listed particularly cabbage, peas, beans, white potatoes, sweet potatoes (started in hot houses and transplanted), tomatoes, melons, vines. These were the traditional subsistence farming crops.

The closing section, but one, was devoted to fiber crops as distinguished from food crops. Flax was recommended for deeper soils. Hemp was more conspicuously recommended, but with a tone of qualification:

Hemp may also be grown, in quantity and of quality sufficient to afford liberal remuneration to the cultivator, on any lands of the eastern part of the Territory. On lands, similar in quality, laying on the eastern side of the Missouri river within the States of Iowa and Missouri, the value of the growth of hemp per acre, as averaged, is one hundred dollars; and crops of hemp equally good may be produced upon the lands within the Territory. Once plowing the ground before planting will be sufficient for hemp, flax, or any of the small grains.

The final section reprinted extracts from Bryant's "Journal of a Tour," describing the Kansas Indians and the prairies.

Although the analysis of the social composition of northwestern Missouri counties did not reveal a situation in any of them that would measure up to the standard of a well established slave-holding society of large plantations, Clay County, centering upon Liberty Court House, would seem to come nearest to that ideal. And the *Tribune*, whiggish in politics, probably represented the nearest approach

available to an expression of the conservative respectability of such an aristocratic plantation slavocracy. Yet Editor Miller printed Sutherland's "Notes on Nebraska." This fact does not appear in keeping with the pictures drawn of that person either in *Putnam's Magazine*, nor in Senator Atchison's ridicule of "Old Nebraska," and least of all in his letters to the Cincinnati *Nonpareil*.

Although nothing was said about slavery, even indirectly, Sutherland's "Notes" could scarcely have been reassuring to the holders of the traditional slave operated plantation. But need the plantation continue to follow the conventional crop pattern in order to survive? Not necessarily, as was demonstrated to a limited extent in Virginia and southward, around the South Atlantic and Gulf Coast region.<sup>9</sup> Some southerners were arguing aggressively on the side of the versatility of slave labor on the plantation and in the factory. Possibly the vigor of that argument was more convincing, however, of the defensive position of the slave plantation and of its vulnerability rather than of its adaptability—its weakness rather than its strength—and called attention the more embarrassingly to the wide divergence between the theoretical potential and the practice. But no recorded discussion of that issue for western Missouri has been found. Of course, corn was the principal slave crop even in the cotton and tobacco South,<sup>10</sup> as well as in the free-labor North, but Sutherland was restricting that crop to eastern Nebraska, and hemp as a money crop was the only other cheap-labor crop mentioned. Could the slave-operated plantation have been adapted to a regime of corn, cattle, horses, mules, sheep, and wheat production, marketing, and processing with its heavy dependence upon machinery? A re-education of owner, overseer, and slave would have been in order, and the education of the slave to such a regime would have presented problems fundamental to the continued existence of the peculiar institution.

<sup>9</sup> Avery Craven, *Edmund Ruffin* (New York, 1932), *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> Donald K. Kemmerer, "The pre-Civil War South's leading crop, Corn," *Agricultural History*, 23 (October, 1949), pp. 236-239.

## SUTHERLAND'S DEATH, 1852

Two somewhat different stories of Sutherland's death have survived. The first is contemporary, and while it adds somewhat to the fund of information, or misinformation, as the case may be, about him, it leaves much to be desired:

At Iowa Mission, Nebraska Territory, on the 7th inst., of typhus fever, after much suffering, General THOMAS JEFFERSON SUTHERLAND.

General S. went to Nebraska Territory, for the purpose of making mineral and topographical surveys, for which service he was well qualified. General Sutherland was [a] somewhat noted individual, and quite excentric. He was a fine scholar lawyer and politician, and so peculiar constituted as to court controversies [for] discussion on most subjects. This caused him to have enemies. At an early age he was a soldier (Lieutenant) [under] General Simon Boliver in South America, and was in some of the hardest fought battles between the Spanish and republican armies, and was severely wounded. He has traveled through Italy and Asia Minor.

He has been an Editor, and was a good practical printer. He was one of the leading spirits in the Canadian rebellion, was taken at his post—a prisoner—and detained eighteen months. Upon the whole he was a remarkable man, and the 'land reformers' have lost one of the ablest advocates of their ideas. He is now at rest from his labors, and the persecution of his enemies, if he had any.

As General Sutherland had relations in different parts of the Union, our contemporaries will please note his demise."

A much longer notice of Sutherland's last days has been preserved in a manuscript "Reminiscences of T. J. Sutherland," by S. M. Irvin, Presbyterian Missionary to Iowa, Sac and Fox Indians, near the present Highland, Kansas, and dated July, 1882:

In the early summer of 1852, at the Iowa & Sac. Mission, there walked into one of the Halls of the mission House, a tall, stout and bold looking man, roughly dressed, and carrying on his back wrapped, in a blanket, a nice little girl, seven or eight years old. "My name," said he, "is Thomas Jefferson Southerland." I am known as Gen-

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<sup>11</sup> *Sentinel*, September 25, 1852. The *Gazette*, September 29, 1852, printed the same card, except the last paragraph, but changed the wording slightly, the changes being inserted above in square brackets, except another misspelling of the word "eccentric." There was no indication in either paper of the point of origin of the death notice.

eral Southerland, and was connected somewhat with the burning of the "Caroline," on the Canada border in 1837. I was a prisoner under the British authorities there for more than three months; they intended to hang me, and erected the gallows in sight of my prison window. But, upon my trial by courtmartial I was allowed to defend my own cause, and they detected in me a "military man" and for this or some other reason they let me go." This is in fact all we ever knew, true or false, who the man was.

In regard to the little girl he carried with him: "This," said he, "is not my child. She is adopted; nor do I know who she is, only this," said he: "I am an acute Phrenologist; and, in cholera times I was traveling on the Mississippi, in a Steam Boat, and happened to see a widow, traveling with three little girls. My skill in Phrenology enabled me to see that the mother had but little love or affection for her children and that this was a very intellectual child, and would make a good teacher. I asked her if she would give this little girl to me. She at once said, "Yes; you may have her." I took her, adopted her, and her name is Viola Southerland."

The object of his visit to the mission was, he said, to make arrangements to leave the little girl a few weeks at the mission, till he, with two other men, who were in company with him, and who were in camp near, could explore this portion of the Indian country. He went on to argue that the Government had no right to keep these good lands, west of the Indian reservation, exclusively for the Indians; that military restrictions should be removed, that they were settling the Pacific coast with impunity, and that he was going to test it, here, or out some distance from the Missouri River, if the country pleased him, &c. &c.

He left the little girl, and after about three weeks absence returned, greatly delighted with his trip, and confident that west of the Iowa and Kickapoo reserves there was one of the most beautiful and productive countries. His resolution was formed to organize a small colony of young men, and go out at once and possess some part of this inviting field. He still wanted to leave his little girl at the mission until he could return with his colony. This was agreed to, and the Gen. left for Missouri.

In about three months two covered wagons were driven up to the mission, we were soon informed that it was General Southerland's outfit for a new settlement west of the Indian reserves; But that the General, himself was in one of the wagons, very sick. He was brought into the mission house, and well cared for; but his mind was gone, and he never rallied. A few days of unconscious existence, ended his career. He was evidently a man of intellect and will, and may have had considerable scholarly attainments. In his trunk was found a large quantity of manuscript, made up of biography, history and poetry, much of it seemingly prepared for the press; but nothing was found to throw any light on his ancestry or personal history. The young men, with him were led to conclude that his home or his correspondence was somewhere in eastern Ohio. They said he wrote for some paper called the

"Nonpareil," in that region. With himself, ended all his plans for colonizing the west. The young men returned to Missouri. The little girl grew to womanhood, was married, and so far as is known has a good record. This is all that was known at the mission of "General Southerland." No doubt he has friends somewhere who would be interested in knowing something of his last days.<sup>12</sup>

Sutherland's participation in the Caroline affair is specifically documented.<sup>13</sup> Other exploits must, for the present, be left as vague as the allusions here recorded. Irvin's story is not dated except that the events transpired in the summer of 1852, and Sutherland's death, September 7 of that year, sets a limit to the range of chronology. Sutherland's first visit to the Mission in 1852, at which time he brought Viola, must have been in early June; his return from the West, after mid-June; his card announcing the tour being dated June 24. The lapse of about three months specified in Irvin's story would have brought him back to the Mission with his colony the first week of September, and that fits the established chronology.

Irvin's story is quite definite in its inference that Sutherland's appearance at the Mission with Viola in the early summer of 1852 was his first visit there. Yet a possibility, if not a probability exists, that he had been there the previous summer. Possibly among the comings and goings at the Mission, Sutherland's presence at that time had not made sufficient impression to register in memory, but his letter of July 31, 1851 to the *Nonpareil* was datelined Grand Nemaha, Nebraska Territory. That was the Iowa, Sac and Fox country where Irvin's Presbyterian Mission was located (near the present Highland, Doniphan County, Kansas). Even if not actually visited during the summer of 1851, Sutherland could not have acquainted himself with the reservations of those Indians, and the approximate location of their western boundary, beyond which he proposed to establish his colony, without knowing something about the Presbyterian Mission. Dur-

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<sup>12</sup> *Kansas State Historical Society*, Topeka, Manuscript Division, *Irvin Papers*.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Sabin, *Bibliotheca Americana: A Dictionary of Books Relating to America from Its Discovery*. Compiled by Wilberforce and Vail. Volume 29 (1933-34) five entries, 93964-68.

ing the summer of 1852, that knowledge would have been put to good use and would have led him to make it his objective, and to entrust Viola to the care of the Irvins.

One part of the two stories of his last adventure into the unknown does not agree. The contemporary version had him on an exploratory tour, which might mean the one advertised to depart immediately after the election of August 4, and which might have been delayed. Irvin's "Reminiscences" committed him to an act of colonization, and the circumstantial evidence contained in the language in which the story was related, gives that version a flavor of authenticity if not probability. According to the *Gazette* he had proposed just such an enterprise a year earlier, 1851, and the Cincinnati *Nonpareil* letters gave more details about his proposed colony and institute in 1852.

Sutherland's mention of a map supplied him by the Commissioner of the General Land Office is of outstanding importance to the problem of Nebraska, particularly two aspects of it dealing with subjects that were to become critical objects of contention, during the summer of 1853, when stirred up by Benton; the origin of the Benton map of Nebraska, and the origin of the interest in settlement of the unassigned lands in Nebraska without benefit of any legislative action. Although it has not been feasible for the present author to make a search in person, a search by the staff of the Map Division of the Library of Congress, and of the National Archives, has not turned up maps that seem identifiable as either the Sutherland map, or the Benton map, or the basis for either of them. Sutherland was not clear whether the boundary of Nebraska was printed on the map, drawn in by Commissioner Butterfield, or by himself on the basis of verbal description.

Particularly interesting, in Irvin's statement of 1882, is the distinction between the assigned and unassigned lands, made so precisely, just as the Boomers of 1853 argued it, only Irvin correctly attributed Sutherland's use of this specific distinction to 1852. Irvin did not remember Sutherland's visit to the reservation in the summer of 1851, so did not record this distinction as of that date. Yet his memory and the association for 1852 are nevertheless re-

markable, because all such differentiation had been lost out of the literature of the Kansas-Nebraska controversy, either that produced by contemporaries or by historians.

### DIVISION OF NEBRASKA TERRITORY

In discussing the southern boundary of Nebraska territory in 1851, Sutherland did not raise the question of the future status of the country south of 40° or south of the Kansas River, as the case might be. Certainly Missouri could not be expected to enthuse about the Indian Barrier being continued on its western border, while Iowa was permitted to reap the benefits of the organization of Nebraska and the construction of the Pacific railroad. The bid of the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad would not be very effective as the starting point of that project, lying as it did just south of the fortieth parallel. In contrast, the rail route through Council Bluffs, and up the Platte Valley to the South Pass would be centrally located with respect to the country it would serve.

The fortieth parallel boundary suggestion at this time is of some importance, however, in planting the idea in the public mind of that line as a division point. The more often it was repeated the easier its final acceptance might be. Sutherland's argument for the Kansas River boundary was a contrary view that had merit then, as well as later. It would have thrown all the country from the Kansas to the Red River into one territory, making two states instead of the three that were finally carved out of the country in question: Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska.

This discussion points up another problem, that of making any division of the Indian country. Clearly, the idea of division was fully recognized at this time, and there was no hint in the discussion that either the Nebraska bill before congress setting the fortieth parallel boundary nor Sutherland's argument had any relation to the question of slavery as the reason for the division. The legend that division of the territory in 1854 by Douglas was a surprise,



and that it was dictated by the slavocracy, was still to be created. The one and single reason for division in the picture at the time was the relation of the proposal to the Pacific railroad. The original Douglas proposal in his letter to Asa Whitney in December 1845 had had the same origin, and had proposed to organize enough territory on both sides of the rail route to provide a good state. Before leaving the question of Sutherland's argument of 1851 for the Kansas River boundary, it is well to emphasize that there was a wider discussion of the same point of view during 1851 and 1852, whatever the origin might have been, than the records at present available would seem to indicate. This issue is to arise again after Sutherland's death, and it was advocated by Finch of the *Weston Reporter*, one of the endorsers of the Sutherland card proposing his exploration of Nebraska in the summer of 1852.

## CONCLUSION

Irvin's reference to Sutherland's manuscripts affords another sidelight that may be more than a curious commentary on the General. Irvin's memory was that some appeared to have been prepared for publication. This fits into facts about which he could have had no other knowledge. Apparently Sutherland did have a manuscript book *Notes on Nebraska*, of which Chapter 4 had been printed in the *Liberty Tribune*. What became of Sutherland's manuscripts, correspondence, and other belongings, and in what eastern newspapers other than the Cincinnati *Nonpareil* may his communications about and from Nebraska and the western border be buried?

After his own fashion, evidently Sutherland was a man of parts, possessing some peculiar talent for leadership, some capacity for formulating plans, more daring than practical, and impressing at least a few people with their possibilities. He was among those romanticists of the early nineteenth century who responded to the Lord Byron Legend, and evidently Byron's poems were his favorite

companion. A verse from Byron headed his chapter of *Notes on Nebraska*, and another, the first of the six letters to the *Nonpareil* reviewed here. Byron died on a Greek Independence expedition.

Kossuth, the hero of the suppressed Hungarian rebellion of 1848-1849, became another of Sutherland's heroes. He landed in New York, December 5, 1851, on his triumphal tour of the United States while Sutherland was in Ohio promoting his colony enterprise and the Nebraska Polytechnic Institute. Kossuth was in the Ohio Valley in February and March 1853 on a fund raising tour, leaving Cincinnati February 26 on his way down the Ohio River. The *National Intelligencer* was not favorably impressed with the "Kossuth Mania," and reported that collections of contributions in the West were even less successful than in the East. A correspondent supplied a letter of more than a column to the same paper on the theme "Can Kossuth be sane?" and concluded that "The man is mad."<sup>14</sup>

The Kossuth mania ran its phenomenal course regardless of such sceptics, although the enthusiasm may have been greatest among that element of the population without funds to donate to the cause. Certainly Sutherland's romantic nature responded. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the Nebraska Polytechnic Institute was inspired by the "Kossuth Mania," but in any case one paragraph of the Sutherland announcement of his project was devoted to Kossuth. Sutherland had been a romantic adventurer in his own right. The particulars of his alleged service under Bolivar in South America have not been verified, nor his supposed travels in Italy and Asia Minor. Nevertheless they are in keeping with the Romantic Legend he built up in the Byronic Tradition. His exploits in connection with the Canadian Rebellion, Navy Island, are authentic and the record of it was printed in Buffalo in 1838:

The trial of General Th. J. Sutherland, late of the Patriot Army, before a Court Martial convened at Toronto on the 13th day of March, A. D. 1838. By order of Sir Francis Bond Head, Lieutenant Governor of said Province. . . .

<sup>14</sup> *National Intelligencer*, March 4, 13, 20, 1852.

On charge of having, as a citizen of the United States, levied war in the Province of Upper Canada against Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain . . . With his defence and other documents.

The Nebraska Polytechnic Institute plan as printed in the spring of 1852 epitomized a romantic legend, and the life and ambition of one frustrated sentimentalist who had chosen these lines from Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" to head his letter of May 3, 1851, just as he himself was setting out upon his "perambulation" of the territory of Nebraska:

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,  
There is society, where none intrudes,  
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:  
I love not man the less, but Nature more;  
From these our interviews, in which I steal  
From all I may be, or have been before,  
To mingle with the Universe, and feel  
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> These lines may be found in their context in *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, Oxford Edition (Oxford University Press, 1914) 243. They occur in Canto IV, Verse 178.