

# Kansas Chief now online from era of the Civil War

By Paul Stewart  
Chief reporter

Issues of the *Kansas Chief* from the Civil War era are now available for viewing on the Internet, according to the Kansas State Historical Society.

The on-line papers involve: *The White Cloud Kansas Chief* issues from September of 1860 through July of 1872, and *The Weekly Kansas Chief*, published in Troy from July of 1872 through May of 1883.

The Library of Congress website is: [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

The website reports, *The White Cloud Chief*, 1857-1872, and its successor, the *Weekly Kansas Chief*, 1872-1918, were made notable by their founder and editor, Sol (Solbman) Miller, a pioneer of Kansas newspaper publishing.

Founded in a time when most newspapers lasted a few years at most, Miller published *The Chief* for nearly 40 years.

Shortly after arriving at White Cloud, Kansas Territory, Miller issued the first edition of *The White Cloud Kansas Chief* on June 4, 1857. The four-page newspaper was published every Thursday.

Doniphan County, located in the northeastern corner of the state, was no stranger to the controversy over slavery then engulfing the nation. *The Chief's* Free-State Republican stance was clearly stated in its simple motto — "The Constitution and the Union."

Miller was the epitome of the frontier editor — outspoken, sometimes humorous, and often vitriolic.

The first newspaper in Doniphan

County was pro-slavery and Democratic — *The Kansas Constitutionalist*, edited by Thomas J. Key.

On September 10, 1857, Miller culminated an editorial exchange with Key: "We did not exactly tell the truth about him. We said his name was Thomas Jefferson Key. We beg Thomas Jefferson's pardon — it should have been Thomas Jack-ass Key. (No insult intended to jack-asses generally.)"

Thomas J. Key occupies a position which makes him public property — or rather, a public nuisance — and we intend to take a long pole with a hook and spike in one end of it, and haul him about and turn him over and hold up his rotten filthy carcass to the gaze of the public, until it makes all decent men gag and turn in disgust."

Rival newspaper editors and politicians of any party were often the target of Miller's abuse.

Miller himself served several terms in the Kansas State Senate and one in the Kansas House, although later he made light of his legislative accomplishments.

Looking back on the development of *The White Cloud Kansas Chief*, Miller wrote: "In those times, Kansas was full of aspiring towns, each destined to become a metropolis, and every town, at the very start, must have a newspaper.

"We have been told that had we located in some large city or political center, *The Chief* might have become some great newspaper. They forgot that when we came to Kansas, every town expected to become a mighty city."

To promote interest in White Cloud, Miller would frequently distribute copies of *The Chief*, locally and nationally, free of charge.

In 1872, Miller moved *The White Cloud Kansas Chief* to Troy, the seat and commercial center of Doniphan County, seeking greater support and advertisements. He also changed the newspaper's name to *The Weekly Kansas Chief*. The four-page newspaper appeared every Thursday, beginning

in June of 1880. Its motto read: "Talk of Home. Fight for Home. Patronize Home."

In 1875, *The Weekly Kansas Chief* absorbed *The Doniphan County Republican*, which had been established in 1868.

Miller died in 1897.

In 1918, *The Weekly Kansas Chief* was succeeded by *The Kansas Chief* which remains an active newspaper, now published in Wathena by Dana Foley.

Other Civil War era Kansas newspapers now on-line include: *The Smoky Hill and Republican Union*, 1861-64, published in Junction City, *The Big Blue Union*, 1862-66, published in Marysville, and *The Independent*, 1860-74, published in Oskaloosa.

These particular newspapers were chosen because of their coverage of state and national events leading up to Kansas' statehood and, ultimately, the Civil War. The state of Kansas will commemorate its 150th anniversary of statehood on January 29, 2011.

Teresa Jenkins, public information officer for the state historical society in Topeka, explained, "Chronicling America is a website providing access to information about historic newspapers. It is produced by the National Digital Newspaper Program, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress.

"Although the historical society is new to the NDNP, it already has a portion of its collections online at [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org). *Kansas Memory* is the largest online collection of photographs and documents from Kansas history."

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