

# L. D. Bailey, Peabody & Sears Belvoir

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The story of the Old Belvoir School and that of the man who founded it constitute a wonderful piece of Wakarusa Valley history. In a letter to a friend dated February 4, 1866, Mr. Lawrence D. Bailey wrote the following:

Kansas is no longer “bleeding” – but blooming and her prospects for the coming season are glorious!

Lawrence is a “city” in fact as well as in name, with two large daily newspapers filled with advertisements and its streets lined with substantial buildings – and thronged with hurrying men and women and teams . . . I mention these things because this is the beginning of the year 1866 – and ten years ago 1856 I well remember the many and many anxious hours we spent in talking about Kansas and her future destinies [ . . . ] I want you to know and now that I think of it that I am not unmindful of that part of my mission so beautifully expressed by Whittier in his Song of the Kansas Emigrant:

We go to plant her *Common Schools*  
On distant prairie swells,  
And give the Sabbath of the wilds  
The music of her bells.

We have built in my little District a fine large school house of stone – and finished it pretty nearly – at a cost of about \$1500 and all over the state they are beginning to do likewise. I send you my report on the Normal School – which I claim to be the father of – and am happy to inform you that in response to its recommendation the Legislature now in session has just appropriated \$10,000 to erect one wing of a building for its use. We will have the best School system in the world . . . Our School House in my District has a plot of 5 acres of ground for a building lot – sloping gradually from the house in all directions – and we propose to enclose it with a hedge of Osage Orange and plant it with shade trees!

Lawrence Dudley Bailey was born August 26, 1819, at Sutton (Merrimack County), New Hampshire. A man of extensive reading, he may be said to have been self-educated. He read law with the Hon. Mason W. Tappan, member of Congress from New Hampshire, and was admitted to the bar July 9, 1846; he commenced practice at East Washington, New Hampshire. He worked for several law firms in that state before going to California to practice law, lumbering and gold digging, with good success. Returning to New Hampshire in the fall of 1853, he practiced law for another three years. From 1837 on, he was an Abolitionist and was always for equal rights for all, without regard to race or sex.

Lawrence – or L. D., as he was known – came to Kansas on April 2, 1857. He would have gone to Minnesota but for the fact that freedom was in jeopardy in Kansas and he wanted to be counted in on the fight for freedom. He first settled on property ten miles southeast of Lawrence but soon learned that it was located on Shawnee Indian land, thus rendering his claim null and void. At last he heard of a claim for sale having both water and timber, southwest of Lawrence on the Wakarusa River. His walk to

his new claim – twenty miles out –revealed two cultivated fields, about ten acres each, plus an improved log cabin. He paid \$325 in gold for this claim originally preempted for \$200 in gold. He named his estate “Belvoir” after the famous Fort Belvoir in Virginia. He lost no time in planting crops, resolving to set an example and become self-supporting as soon as possible. Thirty bushels of potatoes were planted at a cost of \$3 each, and about five acres of corn, which never came up until the first of September. No rain had fallen from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April until August 19<sup>th</sup>. The corn planted on new-broke sod was as dry and “safe” as though it had been kept in the crib. As for his potatoes, they were put in on a rich patch of ground where blackberry brush, small hickories and plum brush had grown, but prairie fires had swept over it and killed everything.

In September L. D. went to Emporia and opened the first law office in southwestern Kansas. He also wrote for the *Emporia News*. An editor of that paper, Mr. Stotler spoke of L. D. ‘s editorial abilities:

During this and the next year we were ably assisted in the editorial work by Judge L. D. Bailey, a New Hampshire Abolitionist immigrant. The paper and every man connected with it gloried in being termed Abolitionist. The “News” was among the first, if not the very first, to urge the organization of the Republican Party in the Territory. Judge Bailey’s ringing articles were copied by all the leading papers in the Territory.

In November of 1858, L. D. was elected a member of the Legislature from the Nineteen Unincorporated Counties. He was elected associate judge of the Supreme Court in 1859 and re-elected for another six years in 1862. L. D. was an active promoter of agriculture and in 1863 assisted in organizing the State Agricultural Society, becoming its first president and being re-elected for four successive terms. In 1863, as president, he established the *Kansas Farmer*, an agricultural magazine.

On August 20, 1863, L. D. Bailey traveled from Topeka to Lawrence and registered as a guest at the Eldridge House at midnight, only to find himself a prisoner of Quantrill and his gang by dawn. He arose from his bed and saw only one person, a colored man who had been a waiter. The waiter cried, “Why, de Quantreel is here!” and then added, “Dey is, sartin sure, and dey’s killed Addison and dey’s shot Joe Eldridge twice.” L. D. hurriedly dressed, shoving his gold watch into the stove under the ashes and carpet sweepings, along with \$400.00 in his pocket-book, keeping small bills and change in his wallet or *porte-monnaie*, which he usually carried in his pantaloons. Outside the door his boots, left there to be polished, were missing; thus he was forced to go downstairs bare-footed. There he met a revolver-waving ruffian who relieved him of his wallet, leaving him enough change for breakfast, and as he passed on to the head of the stairs, he encountered the redoubtable Quantrill himself. Upon arriving downstairs, L. D. learned that the hotel was to be burned. In disbelief, he went directly to Quantrill and asked if it was so. Quantrill answered him civilly enough: “Yes, it will be burnt.” With his intelligence L.D. decided it was about time to recover his possessions, so he stole up the stairs to the room he had occupied the night before and did so.

The residents of the hotel were ordered outside, where they witnessed the spectacle of the destruction of Lawrence, particularly the newspaper offices of T. D. Thacher and John Speer. At about this time, L.D. heard a deep fierce groan from a Major Bancroft, whose eyes were riveted to a man on a tall horse desecrating the American flag. The Major exclaimed, “There they are, dragging the American flag in the dust! G-d d—n ‘em!” and great tears – which nothing else could ever have excited – rolled down his

cheeks as he witnessed the violation of the sacred standard he had been taught to respect. "I never felt so deeply before how sacred that emblem was in the eyes of a true soldier," L. D. later wrote.

A frequent contributor to the *Herald of Freedom* and other papers, L. D. Bailey's account of Quantrill's raid was printed in the *Kansas Cultivator* in 1887. In this very detailed narrative, L. D. relates the escape of the Rev. H. D. Fisher. In doing so, he adds that he "... was personally knowing to Mr. Fisher's care of the fugitive 'contrabands,' from the fact that a family of seven out of the steamboat-load of slaves Fisher had quite recently brought from St. Louis were committed to his charge and for years lived on his farm at Belvoir, where good old 'Uncle Tom' George and his wife Liza were held in pleasant remembrances." After leaving the Supreme Court bench and the legislature, L. D. Bailey devoted his time to the improvement of his large farm. Again, in his February 1866 letter, he laments how many sad histories there are in this world and yet reflects that there may be more bright ones if we could just get at the real facts.

Eventually, L. D. owned and cultivated a farm of four thousand acres, he built ten miles of stone fence plus stake, rail, and board fence; he built twelve habitable houses, and made other valuable improvements to his land.

By 1870 he was no longer alone in his "bachelor snugery," for he had married Elizabeth A. Peabody, the widow of his neighbor, Major David Goodall Peabody, who had settled a claim north of the Wakarusa in 1857 on the southwest quarter of Section 3.

## PEABODY

David Goodall Peabody had been born in 1825 in Littleton, New Hampshire and his wife, Elizabeth Holmes Adams had been born in 1831 in Springfield, Vermont. David had worked as a professor of French at the academy in Springfield, where Elizabeth had been one of his pupils. In 1849 he went to California for adventure or to hunt for gold. On his return from California, he was offered the role of superintendent of schools by Brigham Young in Salt Lake City, but, anxious to return to New England and marry Elizabeth, he turned down all offers for his services. After his marriage in 1853, he settled in Carrollton, Illinois and became principal of the high school there.

Both David and Elizabeth, like many other early settlers, decided to come to Kansas to help make it a free state. In 1857 they settled on a claim in Kanwaka Township just northwest of the town of Clinton (then Bloomington) and west of Coon Creek on the main trail to Lecompton (now Rt. 1029). Their Coon Creek cabin contained two rooms with a roof made of "shakes," commonly used at that time. David was active in the Underground Railroad and helped many slaves escape via the Lane Trail and on to freedom in Canada. On January 22, 1859, Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter, Alice.

By the time of the Civil War, David was serving as a Major – it is unknown in which unit he served – and was stationed at St. Louis at the time of Quantrill's Raid. By this time the family was living in Lawrence and they witnessed the horrible events from their house on Pinckney Street. They themselves encountered some terrifying hours while the ruffians searched their house, inquiring if there were any men living with them. The house was torched, but since it was built of stone only the wooden steps were burned.

After the raid, David made arrangements to move his family to his brother's farm in Coventry, Vermont. They made numerous moves while David served, but as soon as possible after the close of the war, they returned to Lawrence, buying a home at 1113 Kentucky Street in 1866.

David's health had been severely affected by the war and he died at the age of 43 in 1868. Little Alice's only brother, Frederick, had died in 1866 at the age of 7; two other children, 1 and 2 years old, had preceded him. This left only Alice and her mother as survivors.

Elizabeth Peabody's marriage to Lawrence Bailey in 1870 probably served both of them very well. By this time, L. D. had obtained close to six sections of land in Clinton Township; he founded the town of Lyndon near the center of Osage County, which by a vote of the people became the county seat. He also established two different newspapers in the town but sold or disposed of them both after a few months.

Lawrence and Elizabeth had no children of their own, but Alice Peabody, Elizabeth's daughter, lived an extraordinary life after her graduation from the University of Kansas in 1881. She was very involved in cultural, literary, and historical activities in the city of Lawrence. She married General William H. Sears, who was appointed brigadier general of the National Guard by Governor Llewellyn. Land in Marion Township, originally owned by Alice's stepfather L. D. Bailey, became the property of Alice and her husband in 1873. William Sears wrote an article entitled "Negro Slavery in Douglas County," published in the *Lawrence Daily Journal World* on March 13, 1933. An excerpt from the article reads as follows:

A Mr. Bourn brought a dozen slaves from Virginia to Kansas in 1855. He settled at Bloomington, twelve miles southwest of Lawrence. A year later he wanted to take them back to Virginia; but his head slave Tom Bourn, said: "No, Massa Bourn, I cum to Kansas wid you to help I stablish di instlution of slavery and I'ze gwine to see it froo." Two weeks later, Mr. Bourns' slaves had boarded the Kansas Underground Railway and had reached the North in safety.

After Sears' death on October 5, 1933, their property, located north of Rock creek but just south of L.D.'s large estate of "Belvoir," became Alice's. Alice Sears died on August 4, 1950 at the age of ninety-one. Her mother, Elizabeth Peabody Bailey, had died in 1906; stepfather, Lawrence D. Bailey, had died on October 16, 1891. The families of Bailey, Peabody and Sears are all buried in Section 2 at Oak Hill Cemetery in Lawrence.