

From Frederick Starr to Dear Father, Mother, and Boys Great and Small

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Weston. Oct[.] 18th 1854.

Dear Father, Mother, and boys great and small[,]

The Self Defensive association of Platte County being fully organized & having issued their anathemas against Emigration Aid Societies, Abolitionists and free soilers, immediately set to work to rid the country of all pests.

There was a gentleman living in Weston, i.e. he had rented a house & his wife & two children lived in it, while he was absent more or less selecting a claim in Kansas. This man's name was Minard, originally from Massachusetts--but lately from Iowa. This man is a smart, clear-minded, common man; but a genuine free soiler. At various places here in town he had expressed himself very freely in reference to Kansas & the Emigration Aid Companies. Had declared in conversations with persons whom he met in Kansas that he had seen & voted for Eli Thayer[.] This was enough. He was arrested by this mob society and brought before 3 of their judges. They were not posted as to the proper way to go forward & the trial was a public one, so that a large number of citizens were there & heard all. Minard defended his own case against Stringfellow & Abell. When the judges gave their decision on the case they were divided. Two great dunces pronounced him an abolitionist and ordered him to leave the city within 24 hours in default of which they should give him 24 lashes on the bare back!!! They were a majority and their decision was binding[.] The third judge[,] the most influential of the three and the greatest villain, (but for once right) gave a minority or dissenting decision--He pronounced The man innocent of the charge[,] that they had proved nothing; that he was a free soiler & intended to vote the free ticket in Kansas[,] he had acknowledged that was all they had against him; that he denied being an Abolitionist & they had not shown any thing to

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even indicate it. The meeting broke up; and that with a great deal of dissatisfaction among the common people[.]

"Dick Murphy" the dissenting judge took Minard down to his store and there had a talk with him. He told him that he could see for himself just how things stood[,] that he could not on any ground of justice urge him to leave town, on the other hand that if he chose to remain he (Murphy) would stand by him & fight with him & for him that he (Minard[]) should not be touched. And yet to have the excitement subside & not to irritate to the extreme men already insane, he advised him for a few weeks at least to go away; and promised to see that his family should need nothing while he should be absent. Many men came to Minard & urged him to stay & fight[,] that they would die with him sooner than he should be driven away or whipped. Minard however concluded that he would leave and took passage for Iowa leaving his family in Weston. I knew nothing of this arrest, trial or leaving until all was passed. This is a scene in the Constitution loving South. That Constitution Says, any citizen passing from one state into the bounds of another shall be entitled to all the rights, priveleges & immunities of a citizen of that state!!! What a commentary upon the text!!

There was a man by name Osborne, a low, degraded, drunken, ragged, gambling man. He was the second night arrested by a posse of about 20 men upon the declaration of a negro (mark it! the laws of Missouri rule all testimony of a negro against a white man, out of court, and declare it null and void) for writing passes & selling them to the negros to help them off to Canada. He was confined in the Cala

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-boose two days and then had his trial. I went to the courtroom--when lo all those who would not join the association were directed to leave, so that I took my hat & left the house with two or three others; and did not hear the trial. Nothing was proved except that the man had ten dollars and the nigger said he had paid that sum to him some two weeks before. They shaved one half his head and commanded him to leave in 48 hours or take 50 lashes and not to return. They also ordered the free negroes to leave the city. Osborne left for the north. He character and position were such that this treatment produced but little effect on the citizens.

The committee of the "Self Defensive" association appointed to obtain signatures to their organization were very dilligent and met with scarce no opposition, as they could instantly excite the public against any one who should even attempt to question the propriety of any of the movements. There was a general external assent at least of every one to whom their paper was presented. I however with every working man I met & poor man & those with whom I had influence, asked some insinuating questions intended to make them think & intimated that my fist could never be at the bottom of such a paper. I was in the public street with two men with whom I had just been talking on this same subject, when one of the ringleaders came up with his paper to get my name. He was one of the men who have always hated and opposed me since I have been here, for years pronouncing me an "abolitionist" and a "Yankee" and when he has felt peculiarly amiable, styles me by the euphonious appellation of "Starr the God damed blue bellied Yankee Abolitionist[,"] one of the men who "would help him run Starr out of the community" &c &c. He made me a respectable bow & remarked with a blush, "Mr. Starr would you like to sign this paper"? "What paper is it Mr. Wallingford"? Our Self Defensive resolutions[.]" I took them a moment & glanced at them & returned them with the remark, "I am obliged to you for your

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trouble in presenting them, but you must excuse me from signing them. I have no property of that kind which I need to protect." I knew my remarks would be repeated every where. His face was very red, he handed the paper to one of the men by me[.] he told him that while he kept his brains he would never put his name to that paper. The other one wavered[,] went aside & signed it fearing for his bread & dreading the wrath of the big 'uns[.] This Man Wallingford is a professional gambler and a notorious negro whoremaster[,] having often been run out of kitchens & cabins by the owners of slaves[.] he is one of the great and influential men of the city.

Two days after this [text stricken through] one of my church members came to me in great tribulation[.] he owns some 3 or 4 himself, and wanted to talk with me. it was the first time that a word had ever passed between us in regard to Negro Slavery. He "knew I was not an abolitionist, and he told every one so but he was not posted as to what I was, and now tell me what you are so that I can tell people just what you are?" "Well I believe slavery a civil & moral evil. I believe mere holding of men as slaves for purposes of gain is sinful, and leaving that I am a colonizationist and a free soiler. I am in favor of sending free blacks & emancipated slaves with their own consent out of the country, and of keeping slavery out of territory where it does not exist.["] He agreed to all that. [*text stricken through*] I left the place where I was and went with him down to his shop where I was talking with him when Mr[.] John W. Vineyard came in. He is one of the most notorious and influential of the planters of this region.

Enclosed I send you 160\$ as follows[:] City Bank Oswego Letter A No[.] 275-. [Howe?] Miss draft July 6th \$50- Order Fredk Starr. [Home?] Miss draft July 27 \$50- Order C[.]H[.] Heckmann. [Howe?] Miss draft Sept[.] 16th 1854 \$40 Order Fredk Starr--

All very well[.]

Yours affectionately,
Frederick Starr