

The “Wicked” Bill



The Kansas-Nebraska Act of
1854 as seen in the letters of
Charlotte Morgan



Charlotte Wood Morgan: bas-relief
by Erastus Dow Palmer

❧ The Archives of the Village of Aurora contain a collection of letters spanning 1853-1855 from Charlotte Wood Morgan to her husband Edwin B. Morgan, then serving in Congress.

Aurora to Washington: Charlotte Morgan to E. B. Morgan, May 21st 1854



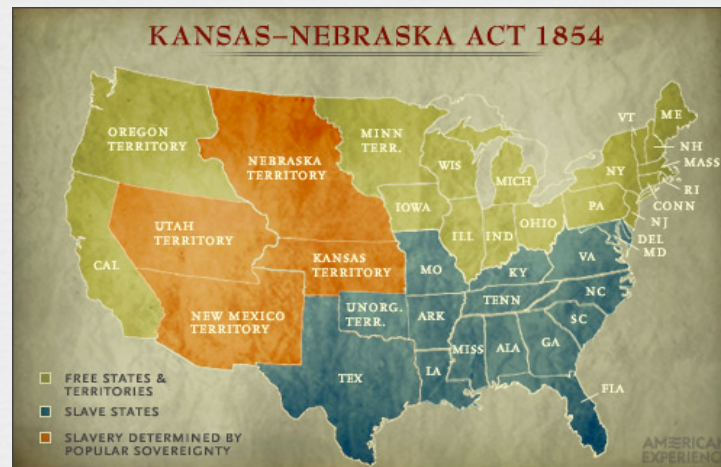
❧ *“I would love dearly to be with you today I wonder what you are doing- I hope not directing speeches- I will not think of you as sitting in the House of Representatives today dear you did till a late hour last night I would rejoice to hear that you had at last tired the wicked ones and they had yielded- The Bill I fear will pass- but do all you can”*

What was the “wicked” bill?

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854

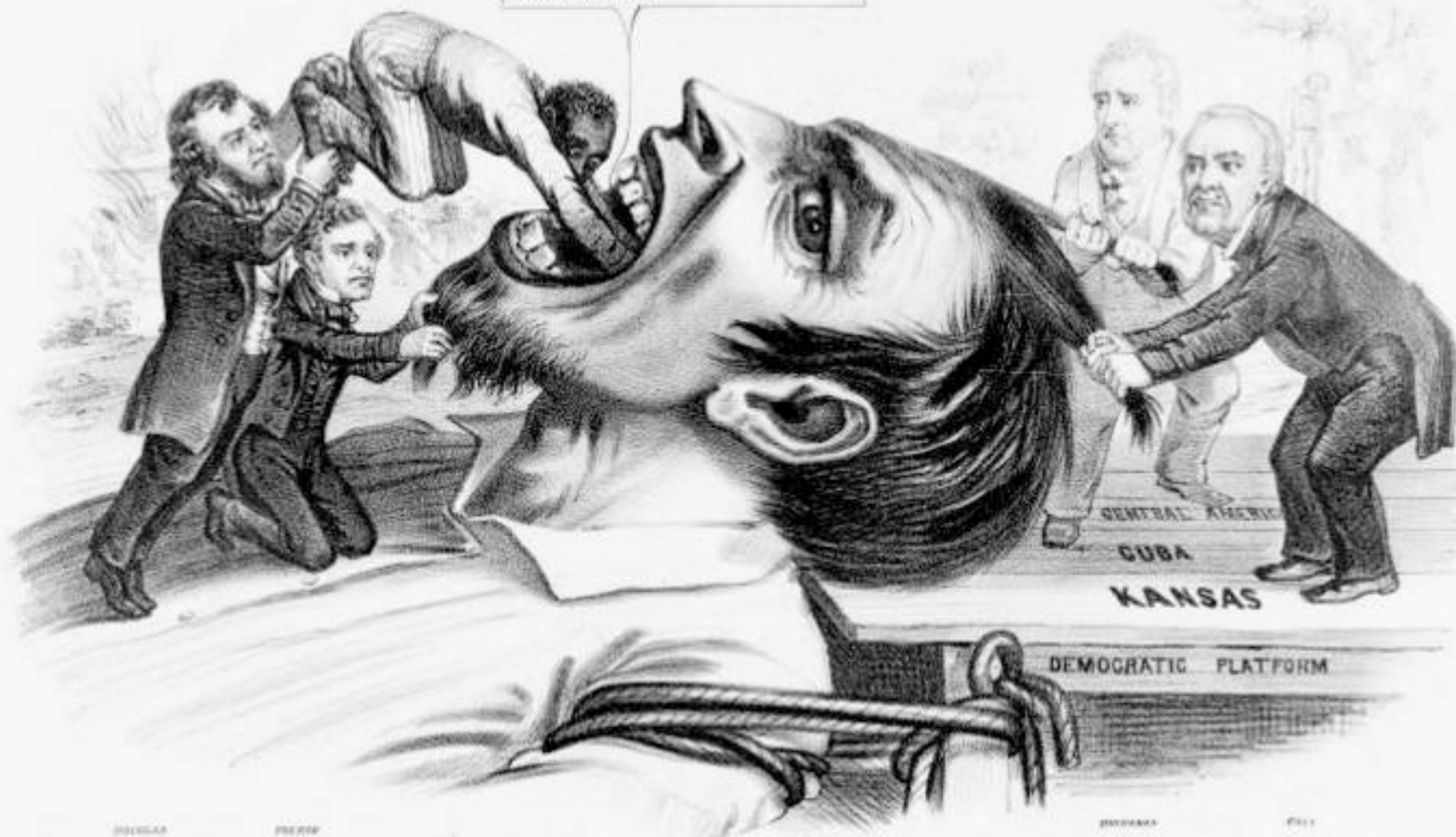


- ❧ The Act would end the Missouri Compromise, allowing new territories to permit slavery by popular vote



- ❧ Northern abolitionists were fiercely opposed to its passage

MURDER !!! help —
neighbors help, O my poor Wife
and Children.



FORCING SLAVERY DOWN THE THROAT OF A FREESOILER

PLD BY A. S. WOODS FOR DOUGLASS WEEKLY

Washington in May of 1854

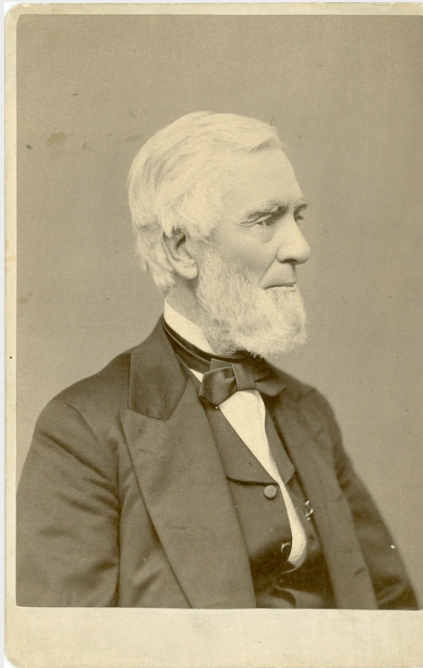


- ✧ Edwin B. Morgan represented New York's 25th congressional district
- ✧ Throughout his career in Congress (1853-1859) he opposed the expansion of slavery



The Capitol still under construction in 1858

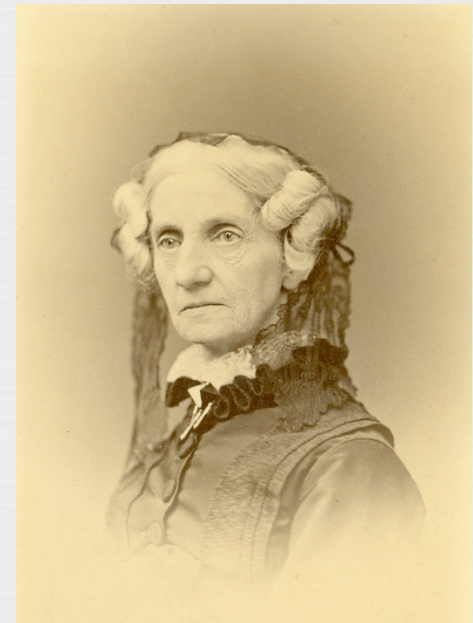
Grief at home: In April 1854 the Morgans lost their 14 year old daughter Adele



Edwin B. Morgan

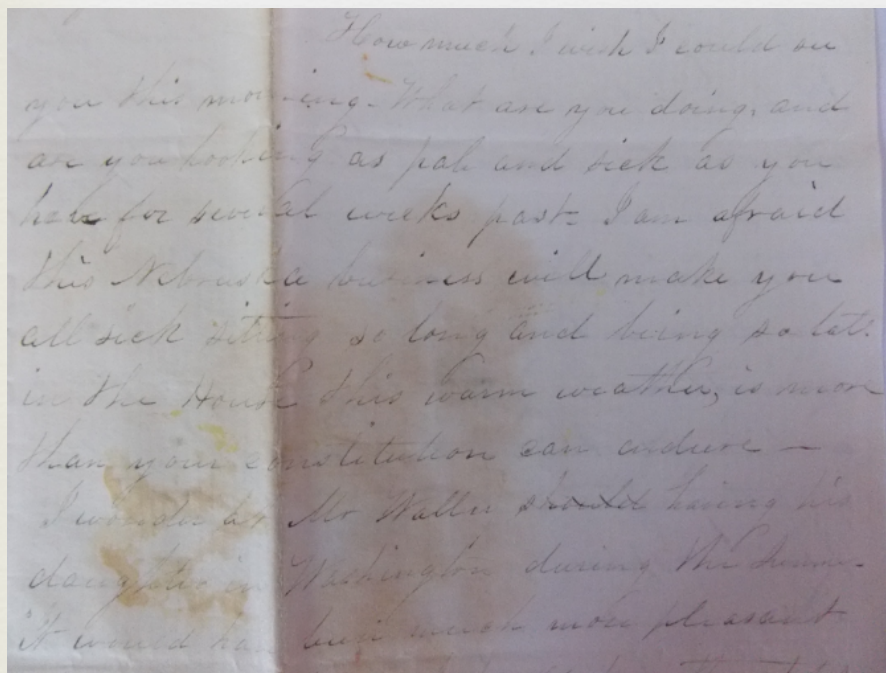


Adele and twin brother Christopher (who died in infancy) are buried in Oak Glen Cemetery



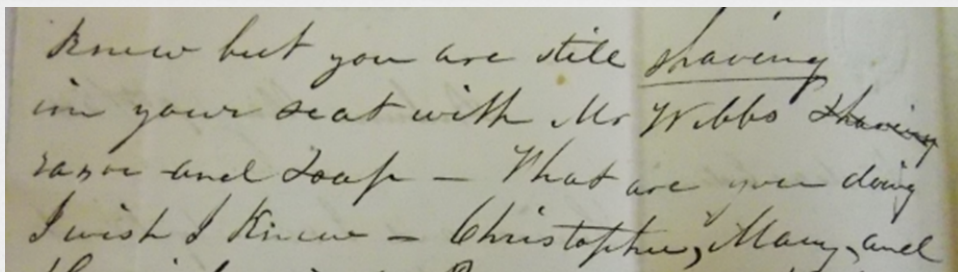
Charlotte Morgan

Tensions ran high in Washington during May as the Act came before the House



✧ “How much I wish I could see you this morning-What are you doing and are you looking as pale and sick as you have for several week past- I am afraid this Nebraska business will make you all sick siting so long and being so late, in the house this warm weather, is more than your constitution can endure” (Charlotte to Edwin, May 12th)

E. B. Morgan dared not leave the House during a long series of delaying votes

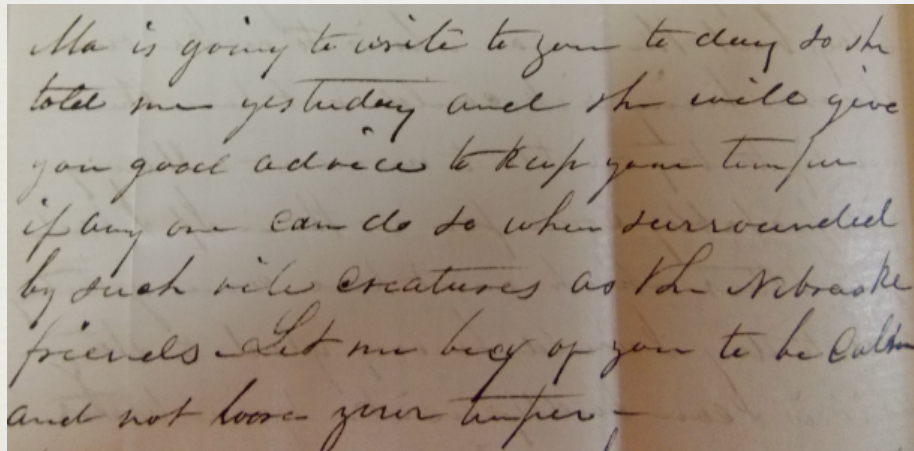
A snippet of a handwritten letter in cursive script. The text reads: "knew but you are still shaving in your seat with Mr Webb's Shaving razor and Soap - What are you doing I wish I knew - Christopher, Mary, and".

knew but you are still shaving
in your seat with Mr Webb's Shaving
razor and Soap - What are you doing
I wish I knew - Christopher, Mary, and



❧ “I do not know but are you still shaving in your seat with Mr. Webb's razor and soap-What are you doing I wish I knew” (Charlotte to Edwin, May 17th)

The effort to keep the bill from passing frayed nerves

A snippet of a handwritten letter in cursive script, showing the text: "Ma is going to write to you to day so she told me yesterday and she will give you good advice to keep your temper if any one can do so when surrounded by such vile creatures as the Nebraska friends Let me beg of you to be calm and not loose your temper -".

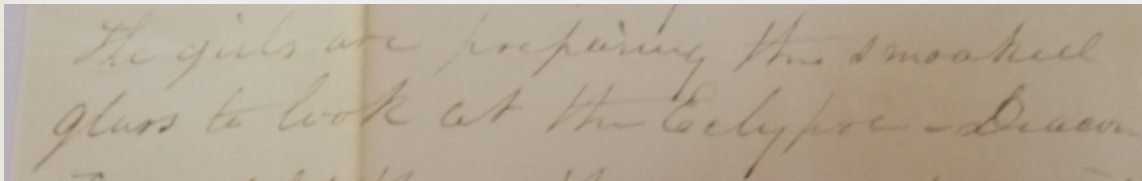
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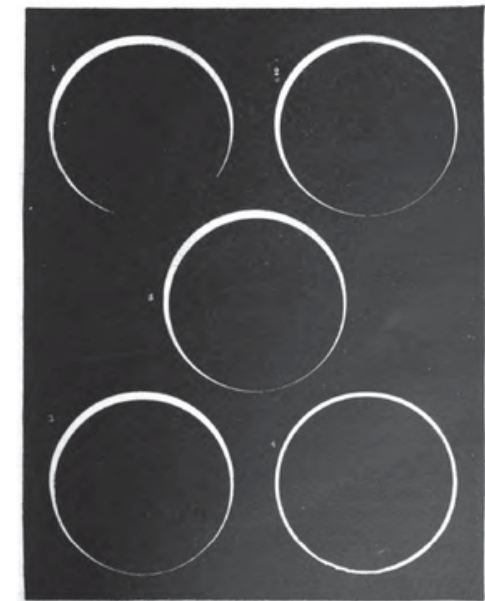
A strange sign



❧ The bill passed on May 23rd and was signed into law on May 30th , setting the stage for the Civil War



❧ On May 26th a solar eclipse was visible throughout the Northeast. "The girls are preparing the smoked glass to look at the Eclipse" (Charlotte to Edwin, May 23rd)



THE SUN IN ANNULAR ECLIPSE, 1854
(Daguerrotyped by ALEXANDER)

❧ Public service is a shared sacrifice. Charlotte Morgan's moral influence and support were vital to her husband and his work.



Research and display by Brittany Carpenter, Wells '14 (Historian's Assistant), with Linda Schwab, Village Historian