



1850-1874

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

activities

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Created by Michael Young, former History Department Chair, Omaha Burke High School

1 Nebraska Maps

Activity
Grade Level

4 8 HS

■ activity Nebraska Maps

Have students review various maps of Nebraska in the 1850-1874 sections of Nebraska Studies, as well as in the American Memory Collection.

Where is the Nebraska Territory?
<http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1850-1874/>

How the Land Was Divided
<http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1850-1874/the-challenges-of-the-plains/dividing-the-land-how-was-land-divided/>

Railroad Maps.
1828-1900 Library of Congress.
American Memory Collection.
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/rrhtml/rrhome.html>

Have students use the **Map Analysis Worksheet** in the Resources section at the end of this document to help answer the following questions.

Why do you think the shape and size of Nebraska changed from the 1828 map to the 1863 map?

For more advanced students:

1. What states owe at least part of their present-day area to what was in the Nebraska Territory?
2. What physical and geometric boundaries made up the borders for the original Nebraska Territory?
3. What is an advantage of using physical boundaries such as rivers or mountains?
4. What is an advantage of using geometric boundaries such as a line of latitude?
5. What would be some advantages for the state of Nebraska if it had retained all of the original shape and land area of the 1854 Nebraska Territory?
6. What would be some disadvantages for the state of Nebraska if it had retained all of the original shape and land area of the 1854 Nebraska Territory?

■ Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies: SS 4.3.1; SS 4.3.2; SS 4.3.3; SS 4.3.4; SS 4.3.5; SS 4.4.2; SS 4.4.3 | SS 8.1.1; SS 8.1.2; SS 8.4.1; SS 8.4.2; SS 8.4.4; SS 8.4.5 | SS HS.1.1; SS HS.1.2; SS HS.3.1; SS HS.3.2; SS HS.3.4; SS HS.3.4; SS HS.4.1; SS HS.4.2; SS HS.4.4; SS HS.4.5

2

Impact of the Kansas-Nebraska Act on Native Americans

Activity
Grade Level

8 HS



■ activity Discussion

Have students read the section in the 1850-1874 timeline of Nebraska Studies on the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Then, use the following questions to spark discussion.

<http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1850-1874/the-kansas-nebraska-act/>

Did Native Americans live in Nebraska during this time period?
How were their lives influenced by the Kansas-Nebraska Act?

For more advanced students

How did the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Acts affect the settlement of the Nebraska area? What was a prominent issue in each act?

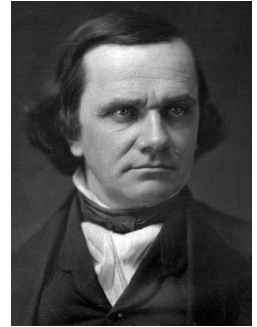
■ Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies: SS 8.1.1; SS 8.1.2; SS 8.4.1; SS 8.4.2; SS 8.4.4; SS 8.4.5 | SS HS.1.1; SS HS.1.2; SS HS.3.1; SS HS.3.2; SS HS.3.4; SS HS.3.4; SS HS.4.1; SS HS.4.2; SS HS.4.4; SS HS.4.5

■ activity

Photo Analysis

Have students use the **National Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet** in the Resources section at the end of this document to analyze a photo of Stephen A. Douglas. Find the photo for Stephen A. Douglas in the Resources Section at the end of this lesson plan.



Who was he? How did he influence the settlement of Nebraska?

For More Advanced Students

Questions for the Primary Document: excerpts from Stephen A. Douglas Speeches

Background: These speeches were made four years after Congress passed the Kansas Nebraska Act, which was authored by Douglas. In the debates with Lincoln, Douglas was defending the Act.

1. According to Douglas (in the first debate), what was the best aspect of the Kansas Nebraska Act in relationship to the slave question?
2. Also, in the first debate, what groups of politicians were to only ones who opposed the Kansas Nebraska Act according to Douglas?
3. Does Douglas view those who want to end slavery as heroes or villains? Explain your answer.
4. In the seventh debate, what is Douglas's argument against Lincoln's claim that the country cannot continue to be divided half slave and half free?
5. Why does Douglas think it best for the states to make most of their own laws instead of the national government making the rules?
6. Based on what Douglas said in these speeches, what would his response be to the argument that slavery should be ended because it is wrong for humans to be owned by others? Explain your answer.

Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_A._Douglas

The Nebraska Question, by Stephen A. Douglas, et al

<http://books.google.com/books?id=h1k0wnCgDI0C&printsec=titlepage&dq=stephen+a+douglas+nebraska>

Excerpts from **Stephen A. Douglas Speeches** (Resources section page 9)

■ Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

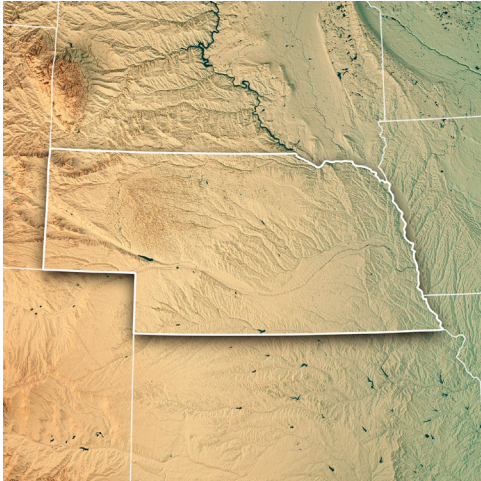
Social Studies: **SS 8.1.1; SS 8.1.2; SS 8.4.1; SS 8.4.2; SS 8.4.4; SS 8.4.5**

4

Nebraska's Geographic Formation

Activity
Grade Level

HS



■ activity Map Analysis

Use a topographical map of Nebraska to help students discuss the following questions:

What arguments related to geography were used by people living in the South Platte region to justify their joining the state of Kansas in the 1850s?

Thinking about geography and the unhappiness of those on the south side of the Platte in the 1850's, what are some arguments the residents of western Nebraska might use to plead for leaving Nebraska and joining Wyoming?

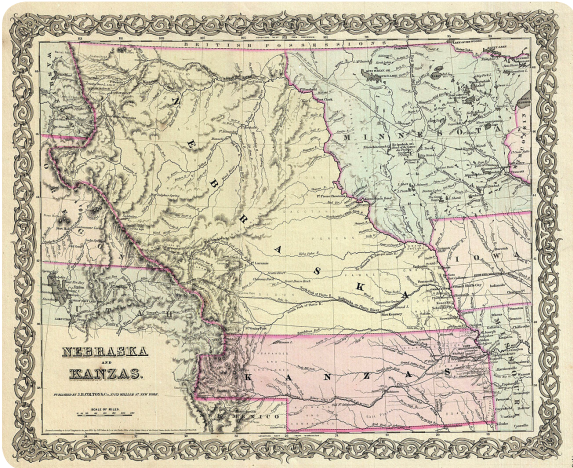
Students may also use the [Map Analysis Worksheet](#) in the Resources section at the end of this document.

Resources:

[Jim McKee- When southern Nebraska tried to secede and join Kansas](#) (Resources section page 12)

■ Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies: [SS HS.1.1](#); [SS HS.1.2](#); [SS HS.3.1](#); [SS HS.3.2](#); [SS HS.3.4](#); [SS HS.3.4](#); [SS HS.4.1](#); [SS HS.4.2](#); [SS HS.4.4](#); [SS HS.4.5](#)



1850-1874

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

resources

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Nebraska Department of Education Academic Standards
<https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/>

Nebraska Department of Education Social Studies Standards
<https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Nebraska-Social-Studies-Standards-Final-11-2019.pdf>

National Archives <http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

Library of Congress Learning Page Lesson Plans <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/index.html>

National Archives: Map Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF MAP (check one)

- Raised relief map
- Topographic map
- Political map
- Contour-line map
- Natural resource map
- Military map
- Bird's-eye view
- Artifact map
- Satellite photograph/mosaic
- Pictograph
- Weather map
- Other ()

2. PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE MAP (check one or more)

- Compass
- Handwritten
- Date
- Notations
- Scale
- Name of mapmaker
- Title
- Legend (key)
- Other

3. DATE OF MAP

.....

4. CREATOR OF MAP

.....

.....

5. WHERE WAS THE MAP PRODUCED?

.....

6. MAP INFORMATION

A. List three things in this map that you think are important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Why do you think this map was drawn?

.....

C. What evidence in the map suggests why it was drawn?

.....

D. What information does the map add to the textbook's account of this event?

.....

E. Does the information in this map support or contradict information that you have read about this event? Explain.

.....
.....

Activity 3: Stephen A. Douglas Primary Document Activity

8th-12th grade

Primary Documents

Stephen A Douglas Speeches

Excerpt from the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Debate One:

During the session of Congress of 1853-'54, I introduced into the Senate of the United States a bill to organize the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska on that principle which had been adopted in the compromise measures of 1850....., I put forth the true intent and meaning of the act in these words: "It is the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any State or Territory, or to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the federal constitution." Thus, you see, that up to 1854, when the Kansas and Nebraska bill was brought into Congress for the purpose of carrying out the principles which both parties had up to that timeevery Whig and every Democrat in the House voted in the affirmative, and only four men voted against it, and those four were old line Abolitionists. (Cheers.)

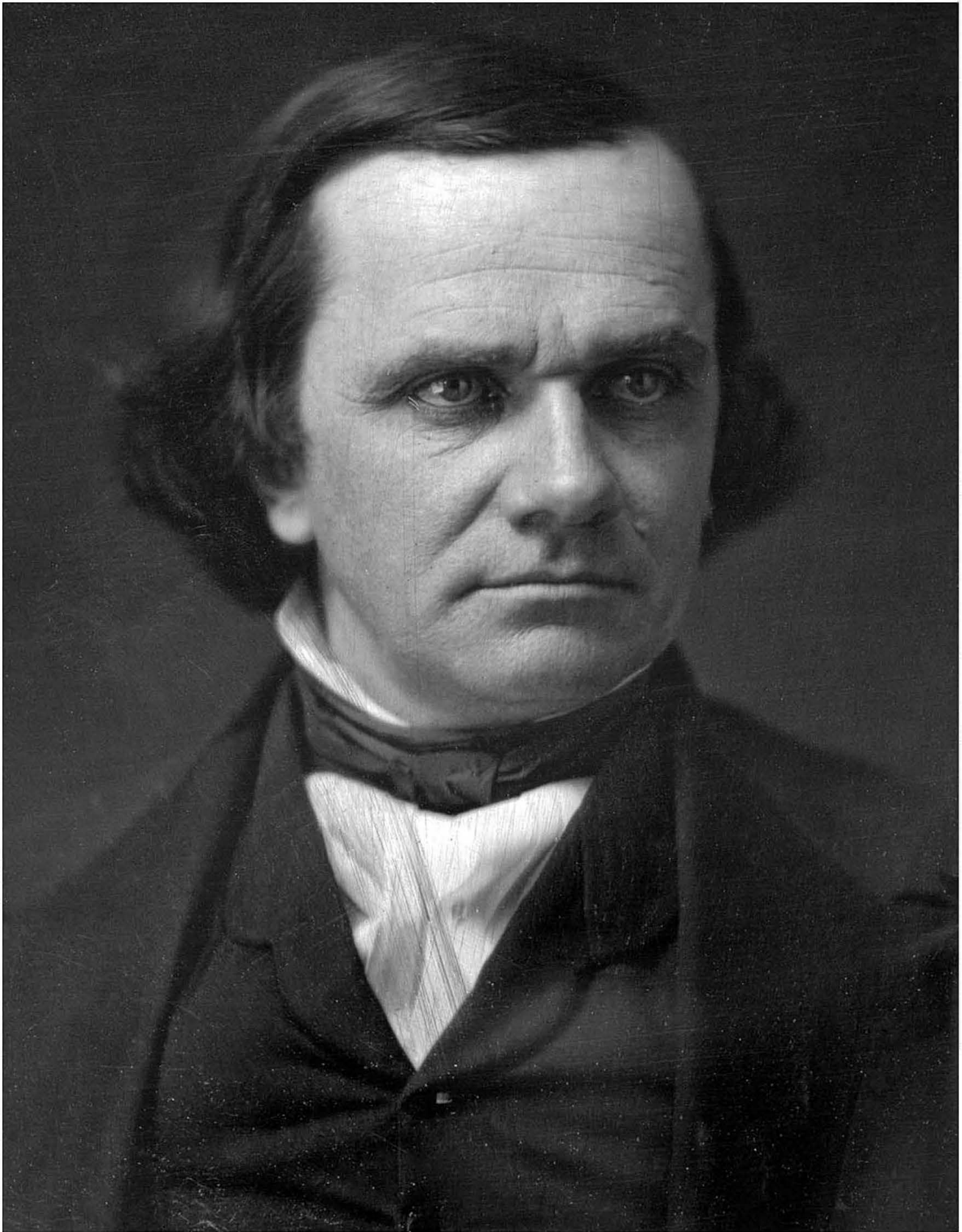
Excerpt from the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Debate Seven:

I took up Mr. Lincoln's three propositions in my several speeches, analyzed them, and pointed out what I believed to be the radical errors contained in them. First, in regard to his doctrine that this Government was in violation of the law of God, which says that a house divided against itself cannot stand, I repudiated it as a slander upon the immortal framers of our Constitution. I then said, I have often repeated, and now again assert, that in my opinion our Government can endure forever, (good) divided into free and slave States as our fathers made it,—each State having the right to prohibit, abolish or sustain slavery, just as it pleases. ("Good," "right," and cheers.) This Government was made upon the great basis of the sovereignty of the States, the right of each State to regulate its own domestic institutions to suit itself, and that right was conferred with the understanding and expectation that inasmuch as each locality had separate interests, each locality must have different and distinct local and domestic institutions, corresponding to its wants and interests. Our fathers knew when they made the Government, that the laws and institutions which were well adapted to the green mountains of Vermont, were unsuited to the rice plantations of South Carolina. They knew then, as well as we know now, that the laws and institutions which would be well adapted to the beautiful prairies of Illinois would not be suited to the mining regions of California.

Questions for the Primary Documents

Background: These speeches were made four years after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which was authored by Douglas, was passed by Congress. In the debates with Lincoln, Douglas was defending the Act.

1. According to Douglas (in the first debate), what was the best aspect of the Kansas Nebraska Act in relation to the slave question?
2. Also, in the first debate, what group of politicians were to only ones who opposed the Kansas Nebraska Act according to Douglas?
3. Does Douglas view those who want to end slavery as heroes or villains? Explain your answer.
4. In the seventh debate, what is Douglas's argument against Lincoln's claim that the country cannot continue to be divided half slave and half free?
5. Why does Douglas think it best for the states to make most of their own laws instead of the national government making the rules?
6. Based on what Douglas said in these speeches, what would his response be to the argument that slavery should be ended because it is wrong for humans to be owned by others? Explain your answer.



National Archives: Photograph Analysis Worksheet

STEP 1. OBSERVATION

A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph, and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

STEP 2. INFERENCE

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

.....

.....

.....

STEP 3. QUESTIONS

A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

.....

.....

B. Where could you find answers to them?

.....

.....

National Archives: Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one)

- ... Letter
- ... Patent
- ... Memorandum
- ... Map
- ... Telegram
- ... Press release
- ... Report
- ... Advertisement
- ... Congressional record
- ... Census report
- ... Other

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- ... Interesting letterhead
- ... Handwritten
- ... Typed
- ... Seals
- ... Notations
- ... RECEIVED stamp
- ... Other

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

POSITION (TITLE):

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Why do you think this document was written?

.....

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

.....

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

- 1.
- 2.

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document

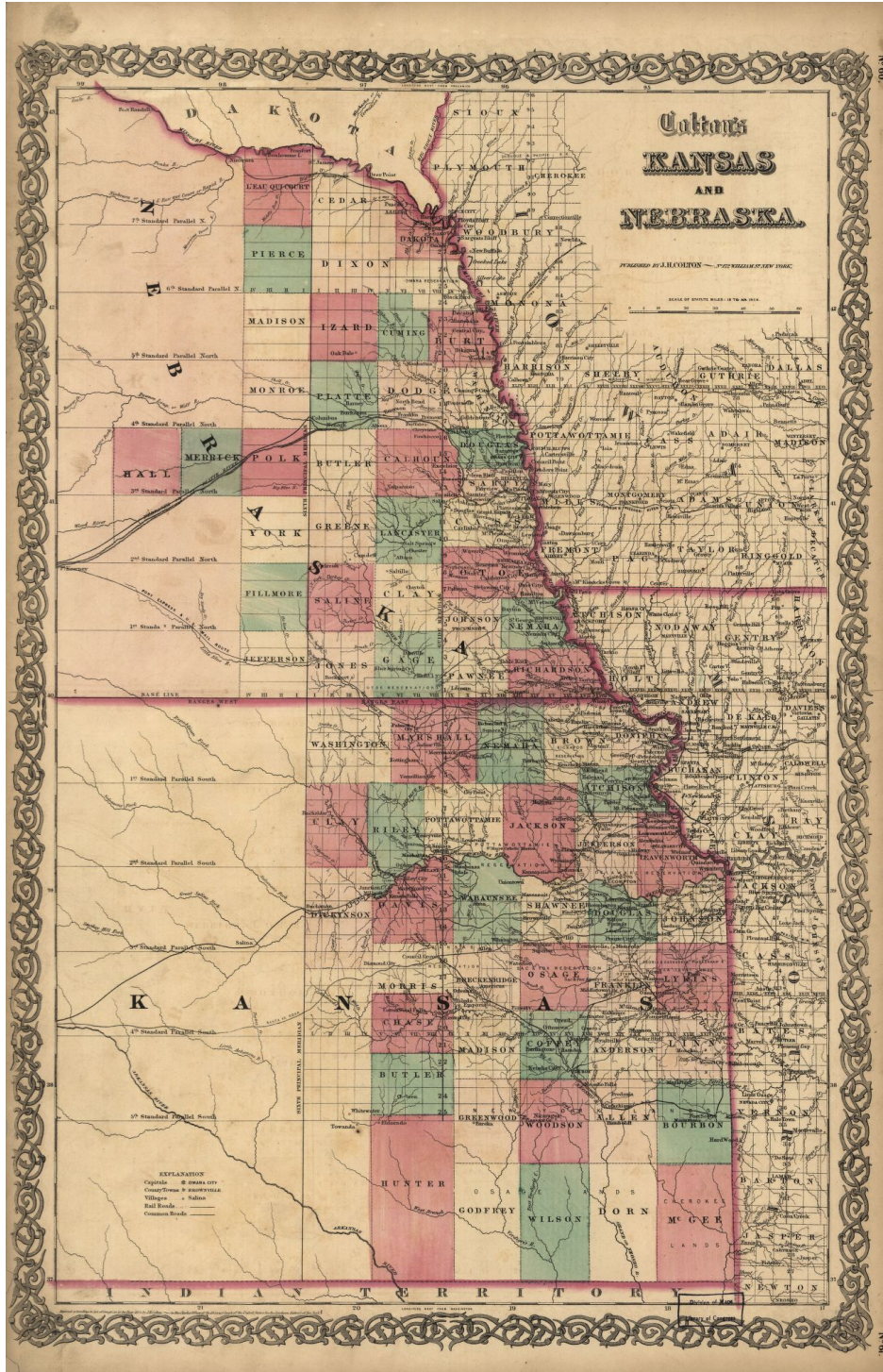
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Jim McKee: When southern Nebraska tried to secede and join Kansas

In 1856, J. Sterling Morton argued that the move would be in the best interests of Nebraska, Kansas and the United States.

Lincoln Journal Star, April 18, 2009

This map of Nebraska in 1856 shows the area south of the Platte River whose residents decided to attempt to withdraw from Nebraska and merge with Kansas as that state approached statehood. (Courtesy photo)



In 1855, one year after the Nebraska Territory was formed, Nebraska City was the largest settlement in the territory, the "leader of the South Platte Section and chief rival of Omaha" even though the capital had been placed in Omaha by Gov. Cuming.

Although the population living south of the Platte River was double that of the north, the governor has manipulated legislative boundaries so that Omaha and the north commanded a majority in the Legislature.

On Jan. 17, 1856, J. Sterling Morton introduced a bill in the Nebraska Legislature's lower house that would ask the U.S. Congress to reconsider the territorial description using the Platte River as the northern boundary of Kansas, effectively letting the South Platte area secede from Nebraska and be annexed to Kansas.

Morton argued that the move would be in the best interests of Nebraska, Kansas and the United States. He pointed out that having the Platte River in the middle of Nebraska was impractical because it would never be possible to easily bridge and thus was a natural boundary. Additionally, by annexing the South Platte to Kansas, the politics of that territory would be altered so that it would "guarantee (the) freedom of Kansas" in the question of slavery.

The house did not agree with Morton, and the bill was tabled on a vote of 20 to 5.

But the division of Nebraska north and south of the Platte had become so fierce by 1857 that the southern faction became fixated on removal of the capital from Omaha to a point south of the river. The 1858 rump legislature at Florence accelerated the division when the press pointed out that up to that point every federal dollar given to Nebraska had benefited only the north.

The Nebraska City News referred to the Platte River boundary as "the hateful tie that binds us to the north country."

A subsequent bill which would have taken parts of Otoe and Cass counties to form the new Strickland County brought the south versus the north to the boiling point.

In 1859, at what was called the Brownville Convention, Morton, as leader of the secessionist movement, told the gathering that annexation is the South Platte's "only hope-our salvation."

An open meeting on the question at Nebraska City brought a resolution to approach the U.S. Congress and ask them to use their discretion to change the northern Kansas boundary using the "impassable" boundary of the Platte. Kansas would then become "one of the most important states in the great west."

Meantime, a bill to annex southern Nebraska was floated in the Kansas House of Representatives but did not make it out of committee.

On July 12, 1859, the 12 "honorary delegates," including Jacob Dawson of Lancaster County, were given the floor to argue their case in Kansas. Although 13 pages of testimony were given, two powerful reasons were used against them. First, it was felt the annexed area was apt to be Democratic, and, second, the increase in area would push the center of the new state north, working against Topeka and Lawrence, which were both hoping to become the Kansas state capital. The ultimate vote was thus quite powerfully against annexation.

With statehood in 1867, the South Platte faction was finally vindicated as the capital was placed at Lancaster and renamed Lincoln. Even Morton noted that it was ultimately best for Nebraska not to have been divided and partially wed to Kansas.

Secession was not totally forgotten, however, and in the 1890s the Nebraska panhandle counties threatened to annex themselves to Wyoming, where irrigation laws were more favorable

Historian Jim McKee, who still writes with a fountain pen, invites comments or questions. Write to him in care of the Journal Star or at jim@leebooksellers.com.

Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Social Studies Standards

4

SS 4.3.1 Explore where (spatial) and why people, places, and environments are organized in the state and around the world.

SS 4.3.2 Compare the characteristics of places and regions and their impact on human decisions. .

SS 4.3.3 Explain how human and natural forces have modified different environments in Nebraska and how humans have adapted.

SS 4.3.4 Compare and contrast the characteristics of culture statewide.

SS 4.3.5 Use geographic skills to make connections to issues and events.

SS 4.4.2 Analyze and explain multiple perspectives of events in Nebraska, including historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 4.4.3 Analyze past and current events throughout Nebraska history.

SS 4.4.4 Develop historical inquiry and research skills.

8

SS 8.1.1 Investigate and analyze the foundation, structure, and functions of the United States government.

SS 8.1.2 Evaluate the roles, responsibilities, and rights as local, state, national, and international citizens.

SS 8.4.1 Analyze patterns of continuity and change over time in the United States history.

SS 8.4.3 Use multiple perspectives to evaluate the historical, social, and cultural context of past and current events.

SS 8.4.4 Evaluate and interpret sources for perspective and historical context.

SS 8.4.5 Apply the inquiry process to construct and answer historical questions.

HS

SS HS.1.1 Analyze the foundation, structures, and functions of the United States government as well as local, state, and international governments

SS HS.1.2 Demonstrate meaningful civic participation by analyzing local, state, national, or international issues and policies.

SS HS.3.1 Evaluate where (spatial) and why people, places, and environments are organized on the Earth's surface.

SS HS.3.2 Evaluate how regions form and change over time.

SS HS.3.4 Compare and contrast patterns of human populations and culture over space and time on a local, national, and global scale.

SS HS.3.5 Evaluate issues and/or events using geographic knowledge and geospatial skills to make informed decisions,

SS HS.4.1 Analyze and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time in history.

SS HS.4.2 Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of history.

SS HS.4.4 Evaluate sources for perspective, limitations, accuracy, and historical context.

SS HS.4.5 Apply the inquiry process to construct and answer historical questions.