



# Our Kansas Stories

The Radicalization of John Brown  
in Kansas Territory

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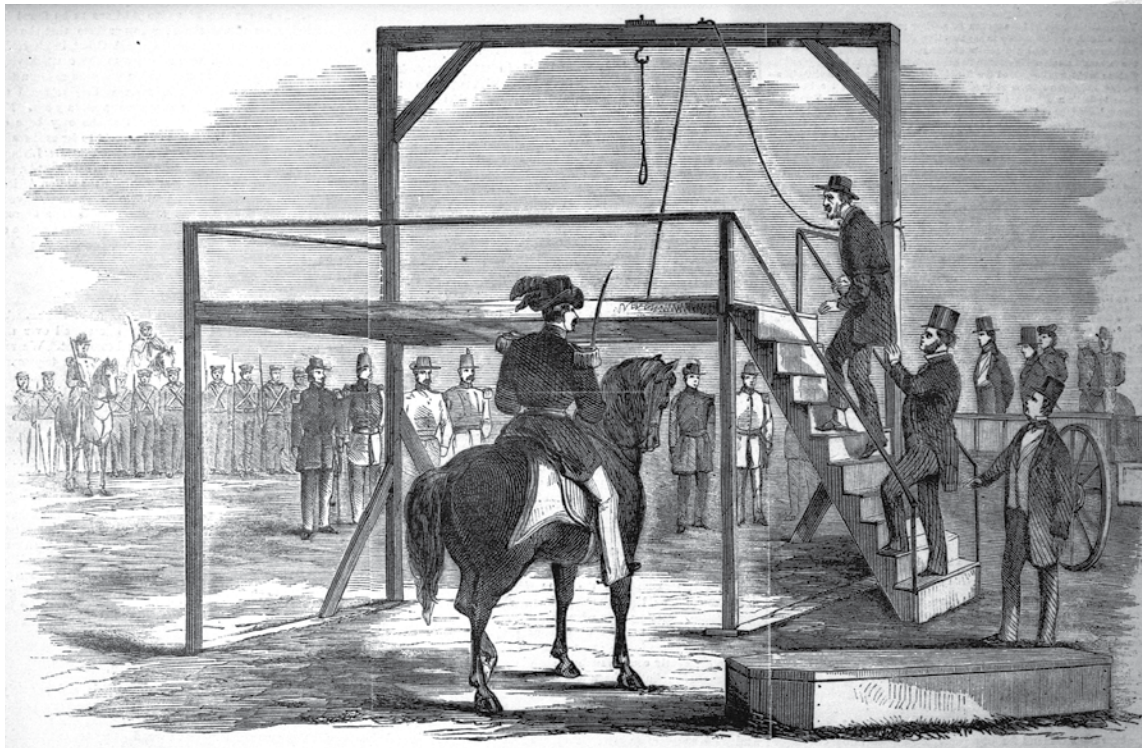
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**John Brown**, one of the most controversial figures in American history, can be viewed through many lenses. Over time his persona became bigger than life. Brown can be seen as a hero or a terrorist. Were his actions mad and reckless or compassionate and calculated? He was, perhaps, all or none of these things. Evidence shows he was a man who believed the end justifies the means. How did he become such a complicated figure and what role did Kansas play in his radicalization?

The end to John Brown's story is familiar. He was convicted of treason for raiding the armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). Brown's plan to steal weapons and arm a slave revolt was motivated by his goal to end slavery. He was executed by hanging for his treason.



American magazines such as *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (1855-1922) and *Harper's Weekly* (1857-1916) depicted the news of the day in real time. Because they recorded contemporary events their illustrations are a valuable window into the past. Here Leslie's records the final moments of John Brown's life.

Many writers have contributed to the legend that has become John Brown.

John Greenleaf Whittier, a Quaker, an abolitionist, and a poet, was a contemporary of Brown's. His poem "John Brown of Ossawatimie" was published 20 days after Brown's execution. Abolitionists believed slavery was morally wrong and wanted it abolished.

### "John Brown of Ossawatimie" (excerpt) – By John Greenleaf Whittier

John Brown of Ossawatimie spake on his dying day:

'I will not have to shrive my soul a priest in Slavery's pay;  
But let some poor slave-mother whom I have striven to free,  
With her children, from the gallows-stair put up a prayer for me!'

John Brown of Ossawatimie, they led him out to die;  
And lo! a poor slave-mother with her little child pressed nigh:  
Then the bold, blue eye grew tender, and the old harsh face grew mild,  
As he stooped between the jeering ranks and kissed the negro's child!

The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell apart,  
And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave the loving heart;  
That kiss from all its guilty means redeemed the good intent,  
And round the grisly fighter's hair the martyr's aureole bent!

Perish with him the folly that seeks through evil good!  
Long live the generous purpose unstained with human blood!  
Not the raid of midnight terror, but the thought which underlies;  
Not the borderer's pride of daring, but the Christian's sacrifice.

### TIMELINE

**1854** | May 30, Kansas Territory created allowing the people of the territory to decide the issue of slavery in the future state of Kansas

**1859** | December 2, John Brown executed for treason

Many have made pilgrimages to the final resting place of John Brown in North Elba, New York.



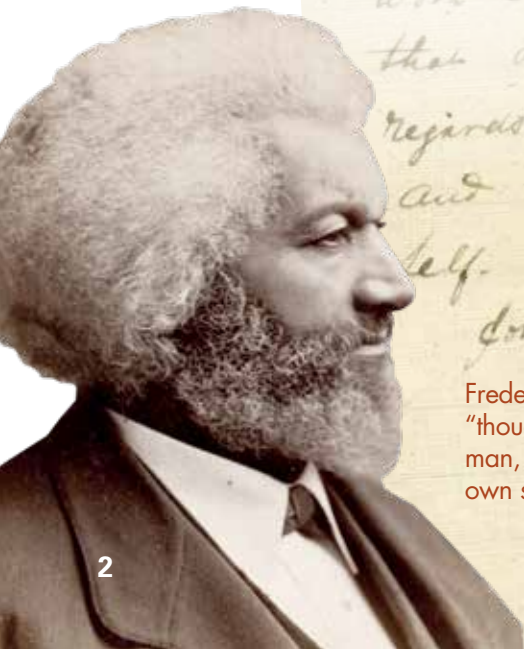
Photo courtesy Library of Congress



The roots of John Brown's abolitionist feelings most likely came from **Owen Brown**, his father. A religious man and a successful cattle breeder, land speculator, and operator of a tannery, Owen was an active community leader and outspoken abolitionist. He founded several antislavery organizations and gave support to the Underground Railroad. John Brown was exposed to abolitionist ideas most of his life.

When John Brown was 37, abolitionist, journalist, and Presbyterian minister Elijah P. Lovejoy was shot and killed by a proslavery mob in Illinois. This so upset Brown he publicly declared his life would be dedicated to the destruction of slavery. Nine years later he moved his family to Springfield, Massachusetts, a center of antislavery activity. There John Brown attended lectures by well-known African American abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth.

John Brown, however, does not become a prominent abolitionist figure until he moves to Kansas Territory.



Frederick Douglass said upon meeting John Brown that, "though a white gentleman, [he] is in sympathy a black man, and as deeply interested in our cause, as though his own soul had been pierced with the iron of slavery."



Brown marries **Dianthe Lusk** in 1820; she gives birth to five sons, and one daughter, an additional child dies in infancy, she dies in 1832.

Brown marries **Mary Ann Day** in 1833; she gives birth to six sons and six daughters, an additional child dies in infancy.

Brown's sons and their ages when they move to Kansas Territory.

**John Brown, Jr.**  
34 years old

**Salmon Brown**  
19 years old

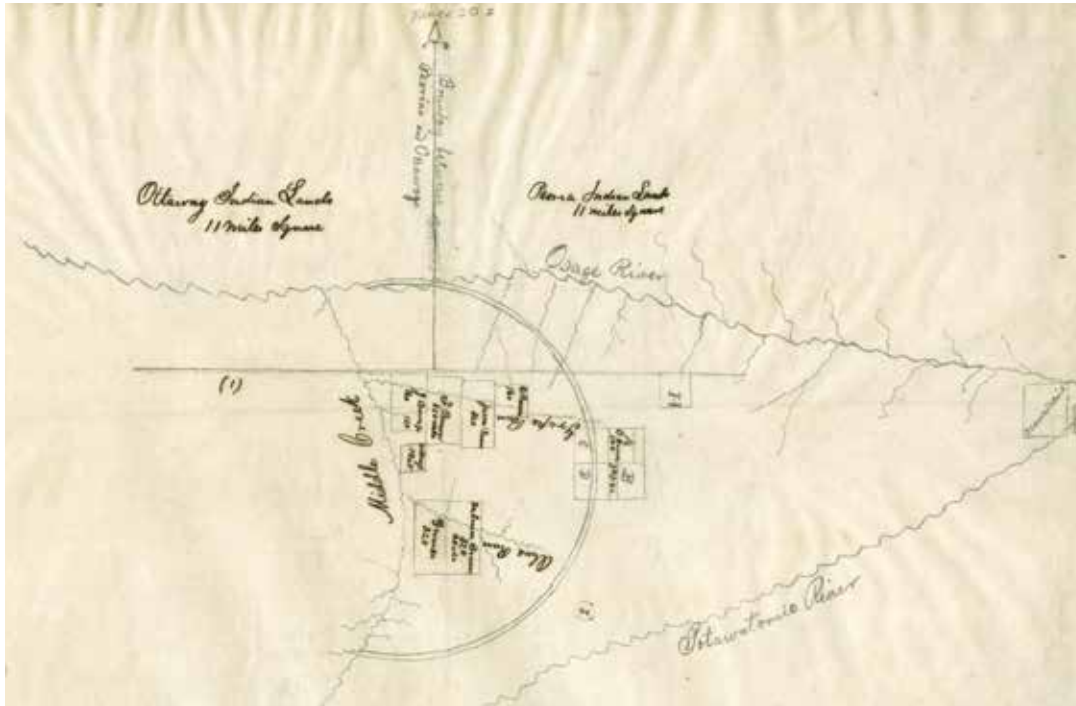
**Jason Brown**  
32 years old

**Oliver Brown**  
16 years old

**Owen Brown**  
31 years old

**Frederick Brown**  
25 years old

In spring 1855 five of John Brown's sons move to Kansas Territory. They notify their father about their encounters with proslavery supporters. Residents of the territory have been given the right to decide for themselves if slavery should be allowed in Kansas. With the hope of making Kansas a free state, Brown follows his sons to Kansas Territory, bringing another son and his son-in-law Henry Thompson.



On June 22, 1855, John Brown, Jr., writes his father, including a map of "Brownsville," where John Brown's sons have settled. He writes, "the land on which we are located was ceded by the Potawatomie Indians to Government. ... There is a town site recently laid out on the space marked Village Plat. The semicircle is over ground sloping every way and affording a view in every way of from 20 to 30 miles in every direction, except one small point in the direction of Osawatimie. The view from this ground is beautiful beyond measure."

## TIMELINE

- 1800** | John Brown born in Torrington, Connecticut
- 1820** | Brown marries Dianthe Lusk and moves to Pennsylvania to raise cattle; he becomes a surveyor and tanner
- 1832** | Dianthe Brown dies
- 1833** | John Brown marries Mary Ann Day
- 1846** | Brown moves his family to Springfield, Massachusetts, where there is an active abolitionist movement
- 1849** | John Brown moves his family near an African American community in North Elba, New York
- 1855** | John Brown and several sons move to Kansas Territory

**Florella Brown** was the sister of John Brown and the daughter of Owen and his second wife. As a young woman Florella attended Oberlin College in Ohio, a leading antislavery school founded by her father. There she met **Samuel Lyle Adair**, who shared Florella's abolitionist views. Samuel became a Congregational minister, the two married, and served several churches in Ohio and Michigan before becoming missionaries in Kansas Territory.

After traveling to Kansas with the New England Emigrant Aid Company the Adairs decide to settle near Osawatimie. The Adair cabin serves as a frequent refuge for John Brown after his arrival in Kansas Territory. Known on occasion to shelter fugitive slaves, the Adairs provide considerable spiritual and material assistance to John Brown and the abolitionist cause.

The Reverend Adair received and distributed financial aid from friends in the East who were deeply interested in the cause of freedom in Kansas. In a letter in 1857 Adair foreshadowed what was to come, "I much fear that when Slavery dies it will be in a conflict of arms, or in some other violent manner. What a fearful doom awaits our nation."





## TIMELINE

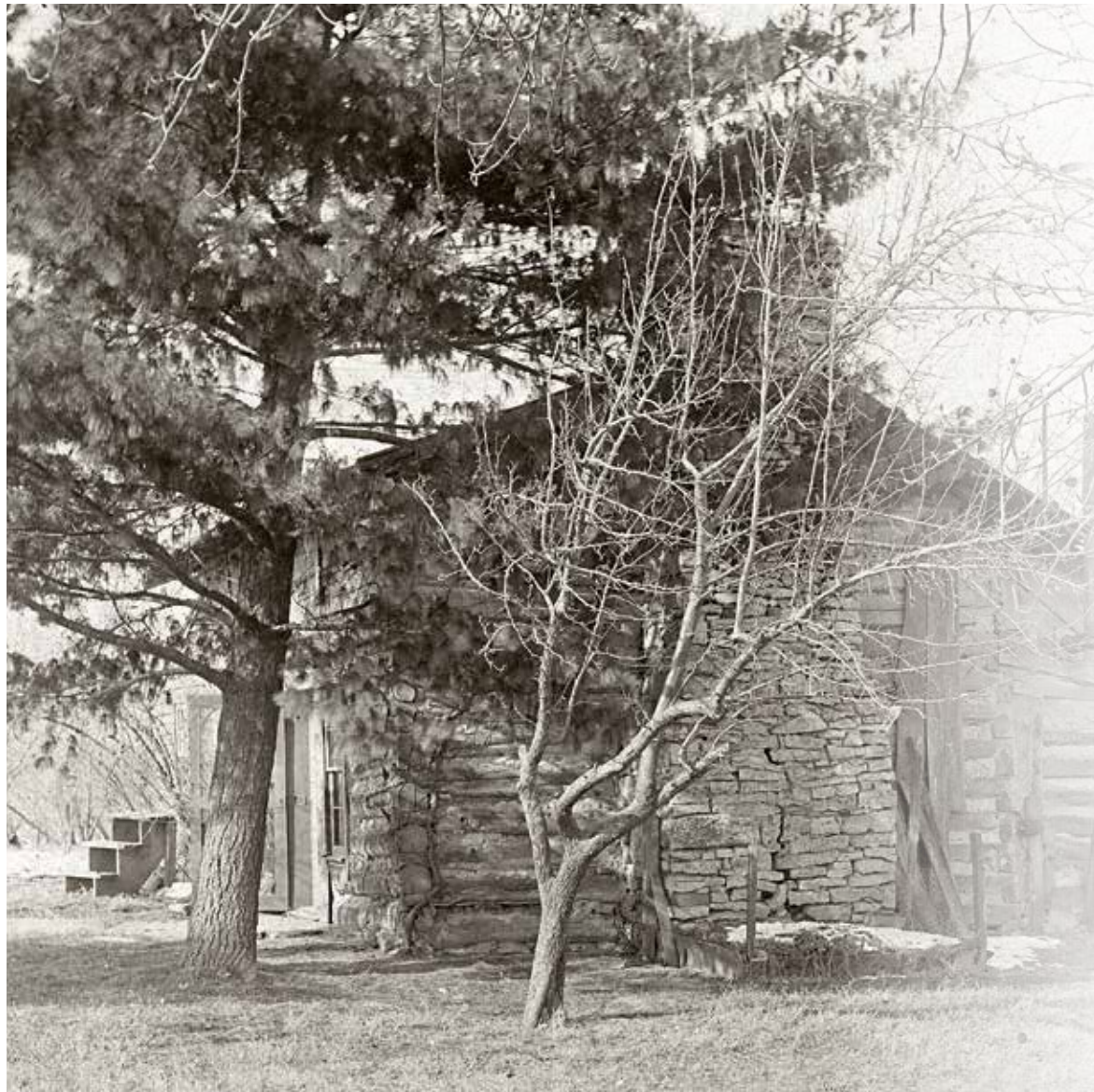
**1816** | Florella Brown is born in Ohio

**1841** | Florella Brown marries Samuel Lyle Adair

**1854** | Adairs move to Kansas Territory

**1856** | Adairs establish the First Congregational Church in Osawatimie

The Adair Cabin was the site of a great many abolitionist activities.



This nickel-plated fork bears the initials FBA, for Florella Brown Adair. The fork and the teacup were recovered during an archeological excavation of the Adair cabin site in 2014.



The fight over slavery in Kansas Territory simmered until it erupted into violence. Letters and newspapers from the time reveal a developing uneasiness. Many mention John Brown or "Old Man Brown" as he was often called. Some express their fear of Brown and the chaos he and others might cause. National attention focused on the violent confrontations between antislavery and proslavery forces in Kansas, giving rise to the name **"Bleeding Kansas."** About 50 people did lose their lives; many more were injured. Personal property was also destroyed in the fighting between antislavery and proslavery factions.



John Brown owned this Sharps carbine rifle. Designed in 1848 the Sharps rifle was popular among abolitionists. At the time of Bleeding Kansas it was a single-shot rifle well-known for its long-range accuracy.



# Kansas Pioneer, **EXTRA.**

KICKAPOO CITY, K. T., 8 A. M., }  
January 18th, 1856. }

## RALLY! RALLY!!

A messenger has just arrived in this City from Eastin, bringing the intelligence that a battle took place last night about 12 o'clock, between Abolitionists and Pro-slavery men—the Abolitionists making the attack. One Pro-slavery man named Cook has been killed, and several Pro-slavery men have been wounded. Several Abolitionists have been killed and wounded in the melee.

There is an Abolition company from Lawrence on the ground, who commenced the fight, commanded by one Brown, who, it is said, is urging his company on to commit further violence, boasting extravagantly of Sharp's Rifles, &c., at the same time daring the "damned Ruffians," as he calls Pro-slavery men, to approach within rifle shot.

Forbearance has now, indeed, ceased to be a virtue, therefore, we call on every Pro-slavery man in the land to rally to the rescue—Kansas must be immediately

### TIMELINE

**1854 – 1861** | Violence erupts between proslavery and antislavery forces in Kansas Territory, often referred to as Bleeding Kansas

From the Kansas Pioneer, published in Kickapoo near Leavenworth, this article describes the tension between proslavery and antislavery forces and encourages proslavery supporters to take up arms against abolitionists.

The **Wakarusa War** was triggered over a land dispute when a proslavery settler killed a freestater named Charles Dow. Antislavery citizens began to gather in Lawrence to plot revenge. Sheriff Samuel Jones of Douglas County was a Southern sympathizer. He gathered a group of Missourians and headed toward Lawrence, camping about six miles outside town, creating a blockade.

In response to Sheriff Jones' action, John Brown and James Lane gather a force of antislavery men to defend Lawrence. The siege lasts nine days. Thomas Barber, a free-state settler, is killed. Losing Barber greatly affects John Brown. He writes to his wife of Barber's death saying it is, "the sure results of Civil War." With Barber's death, Brown begins to focus on actions rather than pure rhetoric.



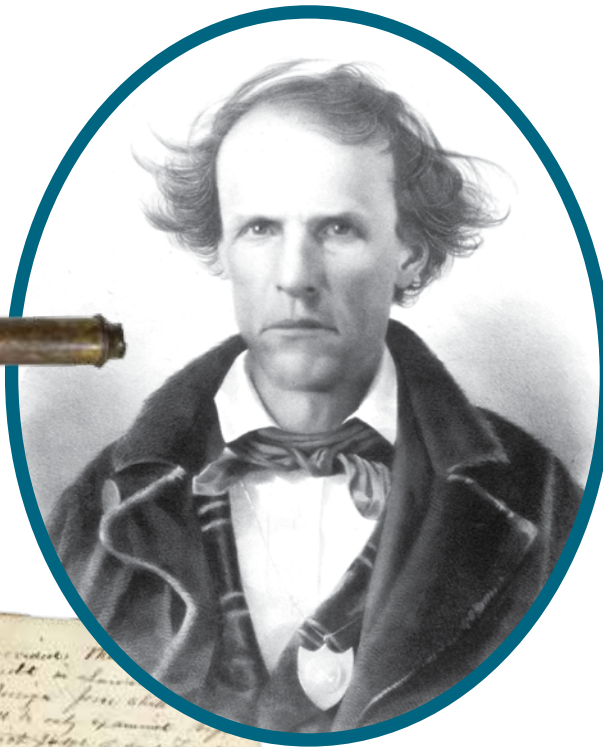
**"Burial of Barber" (excerpt)**  
**By John Greenleaf Whittier**

Frozen earth to frozen breast,  
Lay our slain one down to rest;  
Lay him down in hope and faith,  
And above the broken sod,  
Once again, the Freedom's God,  
Pledge ourselves for life or death,  
That the State whose walls we lay,  
In our blood and tears to-day,  
Shall be free from bonds of shame,  
And our goodly land untrod  
By the feet of Slavery, shod  
With cursing as with flame!

This desk was brought to Kansas Territory by George W. Clarke, a proslavery leader. Clarke was the suspected killer of Thomas Barber, but never convicted. The year after the Wakarusa War ended Clarke sat reading by this desk at his home near Leecompton when someone shot at him. He was not injured but the bullet passed through the front of the desk.



Like John Brown, James Lane was a controversial figure. Sometimes ruthless in his actions, Lane became a significant antislavery leader in Kansas Territory. He used this spyglass to watch movements of proslavery forces.



## TIMELINE

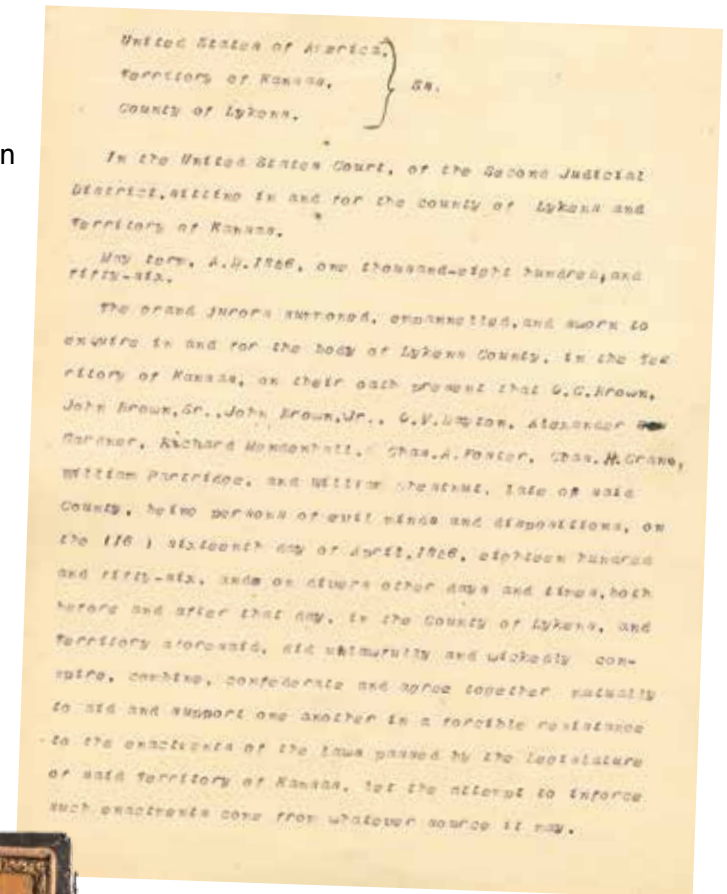
- 1855** | November 21, Charles Dow killed by proslavery settler, starting the Wakarusa War
- 1855** | December 6, Freestater Thomas Barber killed during the siege of Lawrence
- 1855** | December 8, Wakarusa War ends

To end the standoff both sides had to agree to the terms. Charles Robinson was a stabilizing influence on the Free State Party. He negotiated the truce that ended the Wakarusa War and eventually became the first governor of Kansas, taking office two months before the Civil War broke out. The treaty was signed by Robinson, James Lane, and Governor Wilson Shannon. Shannon, a proslavery territorial governor, wanted to end the siege.

Wilson Shannon  
Chas Robinson  
J H Lane

At the time of the **Sacking of Lawrence** Kansas Territory had a proslavery territorial legislature. President Franklin Pierce proclaimed the proslavery legislature legitimate and those opposing it to be treasonous. John Brown writes to his wife anticipating and hoping for increased hostility that would allow him to retaliate. A proslavery judge in Miami County, Kansas Territory, issues an indictment of John Brown and his sons for disagreeing with the laws of the proslavery government. John Brown is furious but stays mute for the moment.

Although Brown is quiet, the antislavery Lawrence newspapers are not, remaining highly critical of proslavery leaders. For this reason, a proslavery grand jury determines the newspapers are a nuisance and need to be shut down. Sheriff Jones enters the town with a group of 800 armed men and goes on attack, burning down two newspaper offices. Other businesses are also destroyed. The home of Charles and Sara Robinson, well-known antislavery advocates, are burned. In the destruction two people are killed. One paper quotes Sheriff Jones as saying, "This is the happiest day of my life, I assure you."



ABOVE: The U.S. District Court for Lykins County (now Miami) issued this indictment of John Brown and others. Claiming this group of "persons of evil minds and dispositions...did unlawfully and wickedly conspire, combine, confederate and agree together mutually to aid and support one another in a forcible resistance to the enactments of the laws passed by the Legislature of said Territory of Kansas."

LEFT: Portrait of Samuel J. Jones who led the proslavery force in the sacking of Lawrence.



John Brown and his sons were traveling to Lawrence when they received word of the attack. Brown is incensed when he learns that no freestaters fired their guns to defend Lawrence. He views their inaction as cowardly. The horror of the attack on Lawrence makes national news.



## TIMELINE

**1856** | April 16, Warrant issued for John Brown and his followers

**1856** | May 21, Sacking of Lawrence

A group from South Carolina known as the Palmetto Guards participated in the attack on Lawrence. They flew their "Southern Rights" flag over the Herald of Freedom newspaper offices and the Free State Hotel before setting fire to the buildings. Four months later the Palmetto Guard—and their flag—were captured, near Oskaloosa by free-state men.



Soon after the Sacking of Lawrence John Brown receives word that the abolitionist senator from Massachusetts, **Charles Sumner**, has been physically attacked on the floor of the U.S. Senate. The incident becomes known as the caning of Charles Sumner.

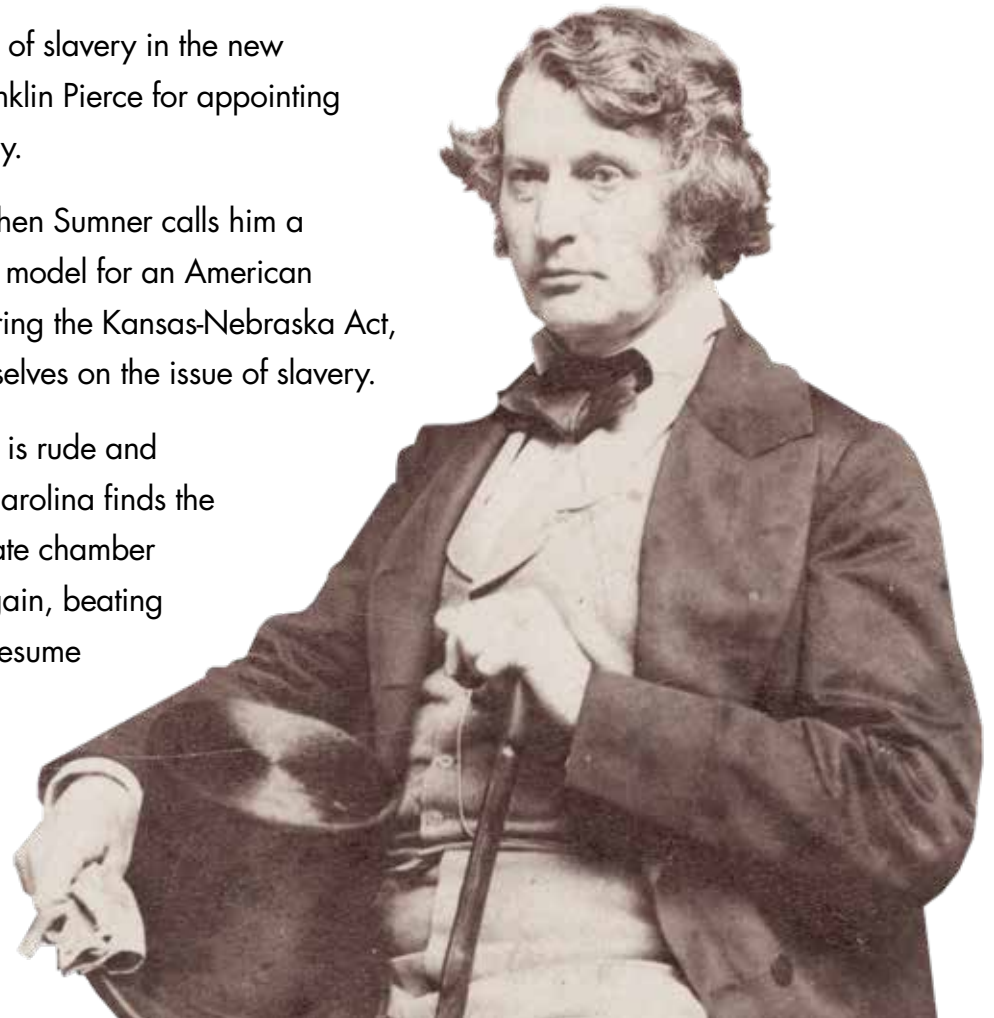
Sumner was giving a long and passionate speech on the "Crime Against Kansas."

*Sir, the [Kansas Nebraska Act] was in every respect a swindle. It was a swindle by the South of the North... Urged as a Bill of Peace, it was a swindle of the whole country. Urged as opening the doors to slave-masters with their slaves, it was a swindle of the asserted doctrine of Popular Sovereignty.... Turn it over, look at it on all sides, and it is everywhere a swindle.*

Angry that the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the possibility of slavery in the new territories, Senator Sumner directs his rage at President Franklin Pierce for appointing so many proslavery followers to positions in Kansas Territory.

Stephen Douglas, senator from Illinois, is in the chamber when Sumner calls him a "noise-some, squat, and nameless animal . . . not a proper model for an American senator." Douglas' crime, according to Sumner, was authoring the Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing the citizens of Kansas Territory to decide for themselves on the issue of slavery.

Some believe Sumner's personal attack on a fellow senator is rude and ungentlemanly. Representative Preston Brooks from South Carolina finds the remarks entirely unforgivable. Brooks marches into the senate chamber and attacks Sumner with a cane. He hits him again and again, beating Sumner unconscious; so severely that Sumner is unable to resume his work in the senate for three years.





Upon hearing about the caning of Charles Sumner John Brown's frustrations boil over saying, "Something must be done to show these barbarians that we, too, have rights." Camped along Middle Ottawa Creek, Brown tells his men to prepare for a fight. John Brown, Jr., the eldest of his sons, tries to keep his father in camp, telling him to stay calm, but John Brown ignores him as he sets in motion a chilling plan of revenge; revenge against any and all proslavery sympathizers.

## TIMELINE

1856 | May 22, Caning of Senator Charles Sumner

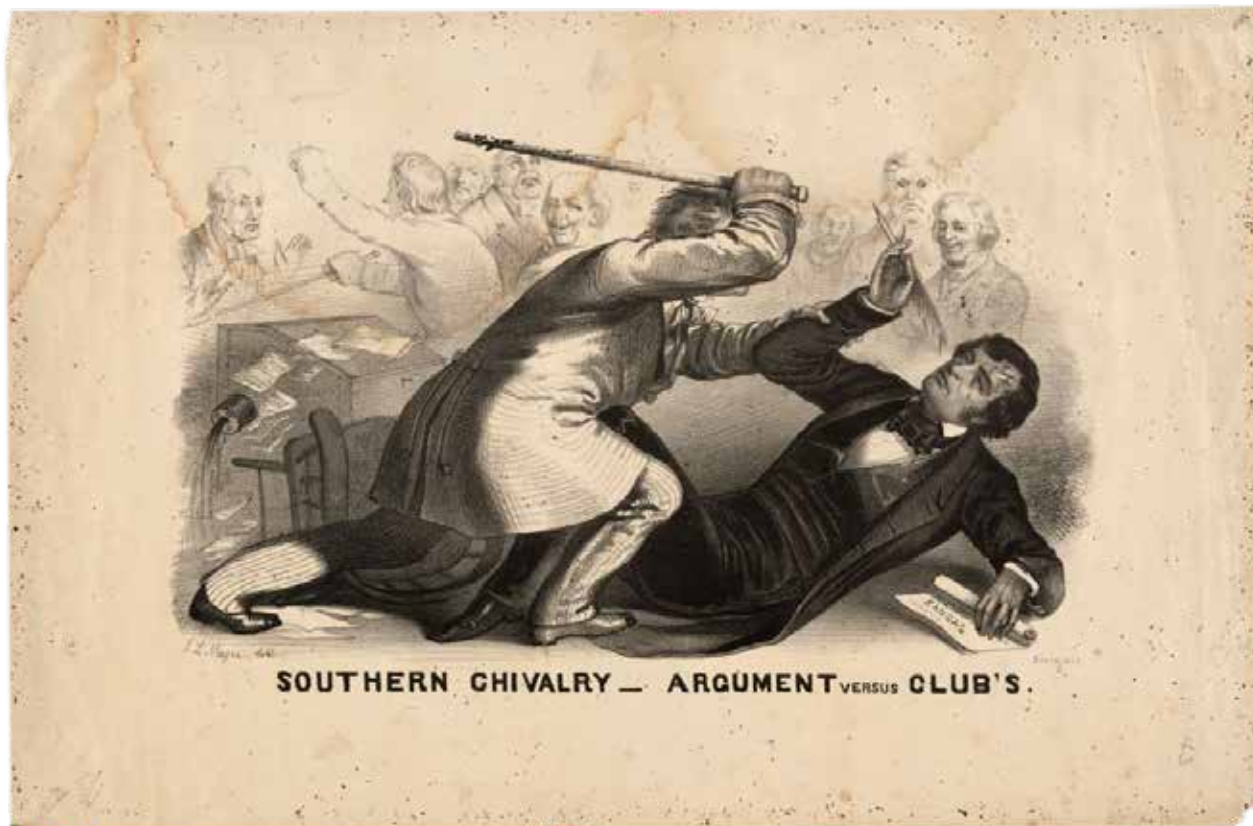
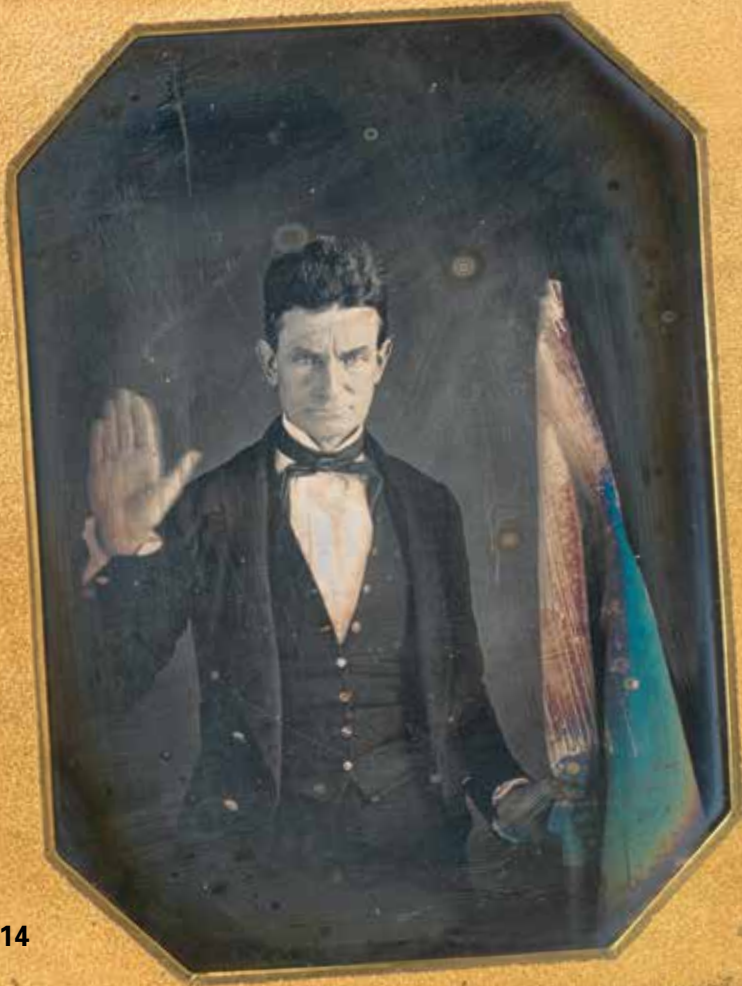


Photo courtesy Boston Public Library

The attack on Lawrence and the caning of Senator Sumner enrages John Brown beyond reason. Two days after the attack in Washington, D.C., and three days after the Sacking of Lawrence John Brown exacts his brutal revenge. The night before the **Pottawatomie Massacre** Brown and his men camp after crossing Mosquito Creek. With him are his sons Frederick, Oliver, Owen, Salmon, and Watson, his son-in-law Henry Thompson, and two associates, James Townsley and Theodore Weiner.



This daguerreotype was made by African American photographer and abolitionist Augustus Washington. The pose dramatizes John Brown's antislavery activism. He holds what is believed to be the standard of his "Subterranean Pass Way." Brown's plan was to build an actual underground highway to assist those who had been enslaved to escape.

Photo courtesy National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian



## TIMELINE

1856 | May 24 – 25, Pottawatomie  
Massacre

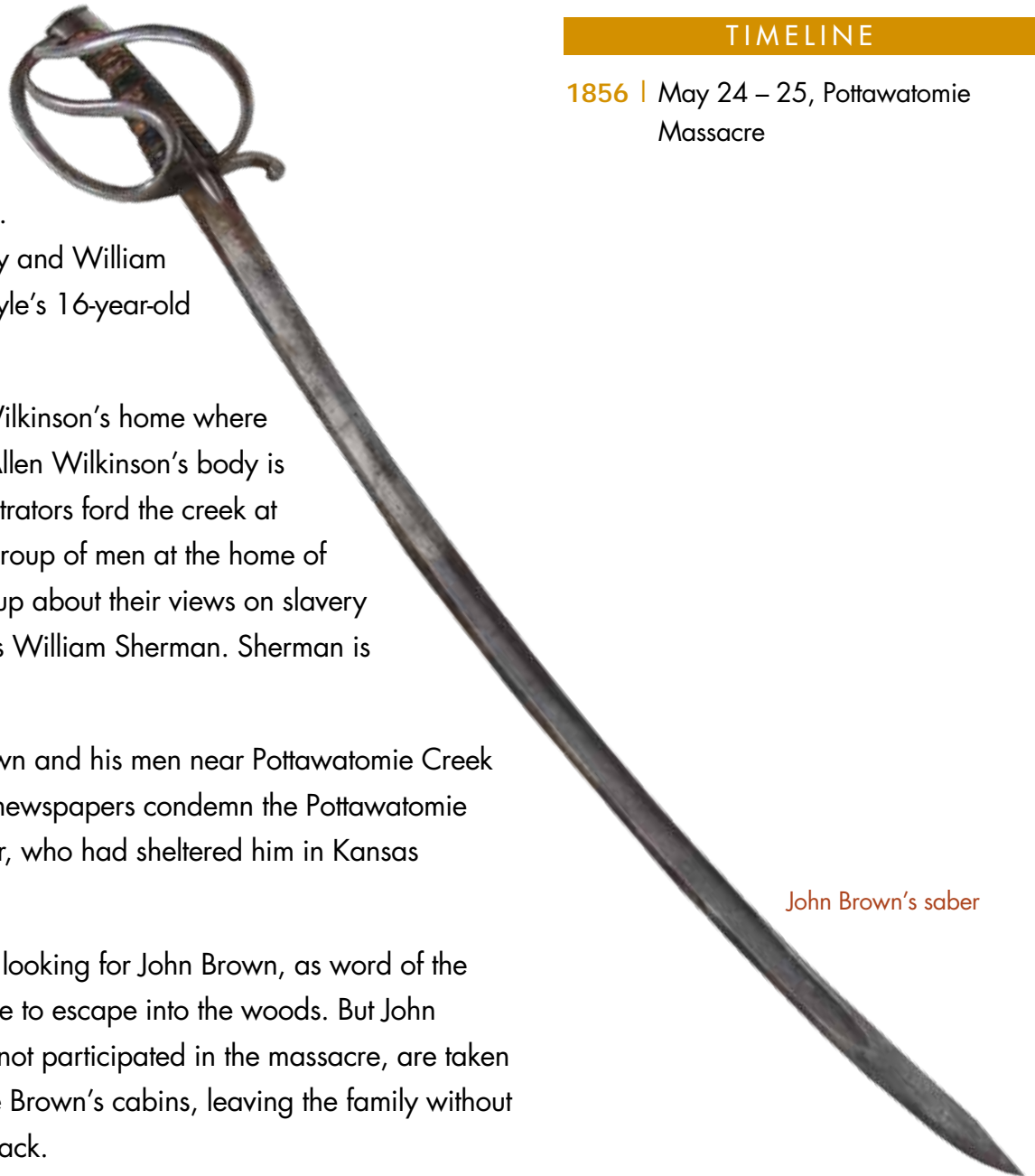
They wait until the next evening, after dark, to carry out the plan. Their victims would all be well-known proslavery supporters. They creep first toward the cabin of James Doyle and insist that he and his sons come outside.

Doyle is shot in the head and his sons, Drury and William Doyle are hacked to death with swords. Doyle's 16-year-old son is allowed to live.

John Brown and his men next go to Allen Wilkinson's home where Mrs. Wilkinson puts up a fight. Ultimately, Allen Wilkinson's body is found lifeless alongside the road. The perpetrators ford the creek at Dutch Henry's Crossing and come upon a group of men at the home of James Harris. John Brown questions the group about their views on slavery and the attack on Lawrence. Brown suspects William Sherman. Sherman is later found dead in the creek.

Five settlers are dead, brutally killed by Brown and his men near Pottawatomie Creek in Franklin County. Southern and Northern newspapers condemn the Pottawatomie Massacre. Brown's own sister, Florella Adair, who had sheltered him in Kansas Territory, is extremely upset by his actions.

Proslavery forces, led by Henry C. Pate, go looking for John Brown, as word of the killings spreads. Brown and his men manage to escape into the woods. But John Brown, Jr., and his brother Jason, who had not participated in the massacre, are taken prisoner. Proslavery forces burned down the Brown's cabins, leaving the family without shelter. For John Brown there is no turning back.



John Brown's saber

Hoping to rescue his sons, John Brown gathers a group of 29 men to attack Pate's camp at **Black Jack**, near Baldwin City. Although Pate's "army" outnumbered his opponent—around 50 Missourians to Brown's 30 antislavery followers — neither men know at the time.

When Brown's men meet Pate about a quarter of a mile from Black Jack, Brown forms two groups and tells them to attack downhill. Brown's men hide in ruts created by wagon trains on the Santa Fe Trail whenever Pate's men return fire. For a while no side makes progress. Not knowing the number of men Brown has, Pate asks to negotiate a cease fire. But Brown demands unconditional surrender and the battle continues.

Tired and hopeless, a few Missourians begin to escape the battlefield. John Brown sends some of his men to cut off their escape. Pate believes these men are reinforcements arriving to help Brown. Feeling outnumbered, Pate surrenders. Brown captures Pate and 22 of his men. Pate later notes, "I went to take Old Brown, and Old Brown took me."

BACKGROUND: A, few hours after the Battle of Black Jack, Colonel Sumner of the U.S. Army ordered dispersal of both parties.



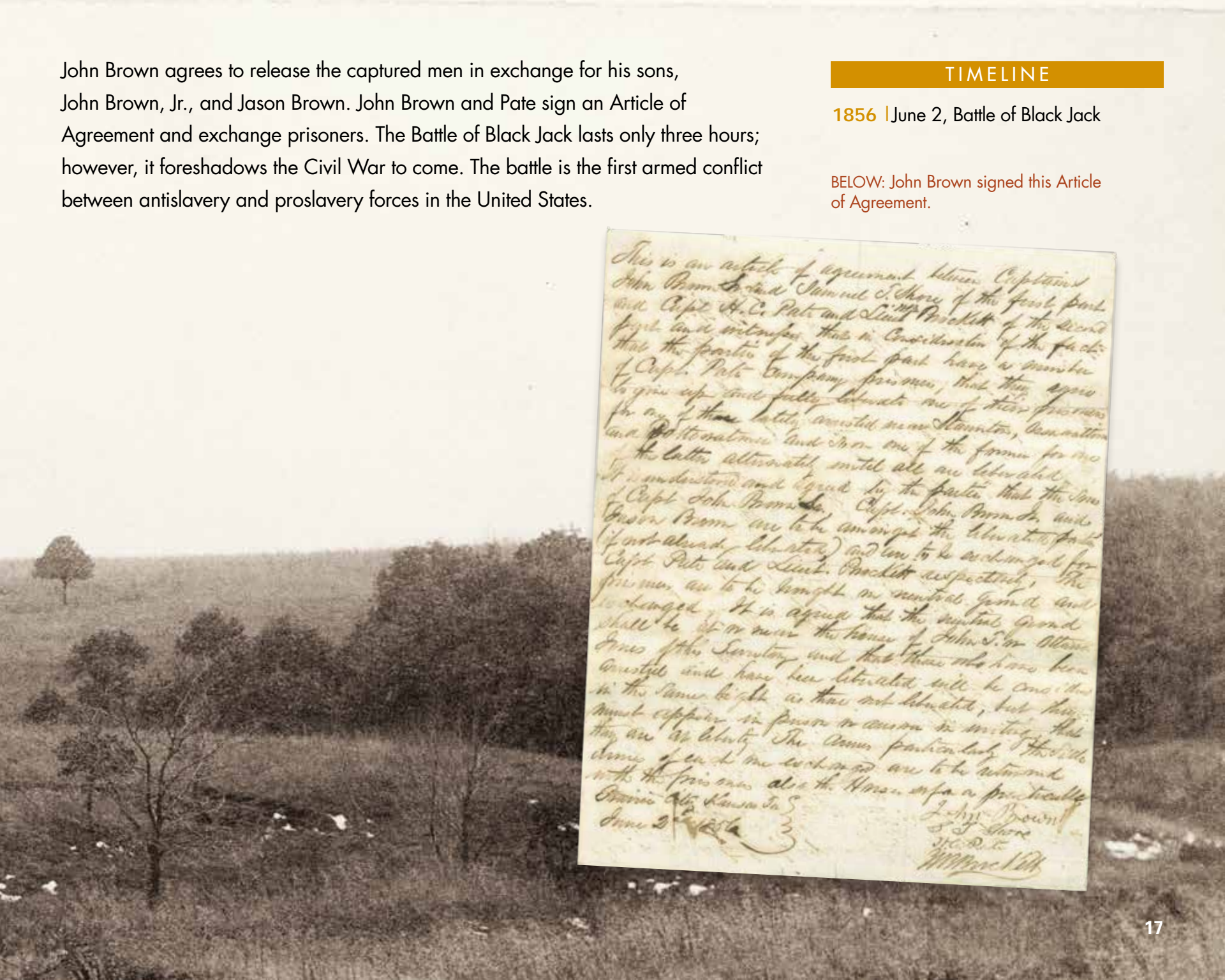


John Brown agrees to release the captured men in exchange for his sons, John Brown, Jr., and Jason Brown. John Brown and Pate sign an Article of Agreement and exchange prisoners. The Battle of Black Jack lasts only three hours; however, it foreshadows the Civil War to come. The battle is the first armed conflict between antislavery and proslavery forces in the United States.

## TIMELINE

1856 | June 2, Battle of Black Jack

BELOW: John Brown signed this Article of Agreement.



This is an article of agreement between Captained John Brown and Samuel Shore of the first part and Capt. H. C. Pate and Lieut. Prockett of the second part and it is witnessed that in consideration of the fact that the parties of the first part have a number of Capt. Pate Company prisoners, that they agree to give up and fully liberate one of their prisoners for any of those lately arrested near Newton, Kansas and a proportionate and soon one of the former for one the latter alternately until all are liberated. It is understood and agreed by the parties that the sons of Capt. John Brown, Capt. John Brown, Jr. and Jason Brown are to be amongst the liberated party (if not already liberated) and are to be exchanged for Capt. Pate and Lieut. Prockett respectively. The prisoners are to be brought in neutral ground and exchanged. It is agreed that the number of men shall be at or near the house of John S. or Ottawa Jones of this territory and that those who have been arrested and have been liberated will be considered in the same light as those not liberated, but they must appear in person or answer in writing that they are in liberty. The common property of the soldiers of each are to be exchanged and are to be returned with the prisoners also the horses and a proportionate amount of the same. John Brown  
S. J. Shore  
H. C. Pate  
W. M. Prockett

June 2, 1856

Tensions remain high in Kansas Territory. In Douglas County Lawrence remains the antislavery stronghold. But surrounding Lawrence are three smaller proslavery settlements; **Franklin, Fort Saunders, and Fort Titus**. Each would see an attack by antislavery forces.

Twelve days after the Sacking of Lawrence John Brown moves on the proslavery settlement of Franklin. After a short skirmish Brown locates weapons and ammunition believed to be taken during the sacking. Brown and his men reclaim them.

Hoping for peace, Major David S. Hoyt, a resident of Lawrence, travels to the proslavery settlement of Fort Saunders to negotiate the terms of a peace agreement. At the completion of the meeting two proslavery men escort Hoyt out of the settlement so he can return to Lawrence. Hoyt is shot and killed. The same day a band of freestaters returns to Franklin and attacks the town again. This time six proslavery settlers are killed. "Old Sacramento," a cannon that was fired on Lawrence, is taken as part of the spoils of war. No peace is in sight.



Samuel J. Reader depicts himself as sentry with John Brown approaching an antislavery camp on Pony Creek in Brown County on August 3, 1856.



While in Kansas John Brown was employed as a surveyor, an occupation that allowed him to move around freely to locate and observe proslavery camps. This compass was part of his surveying kit.





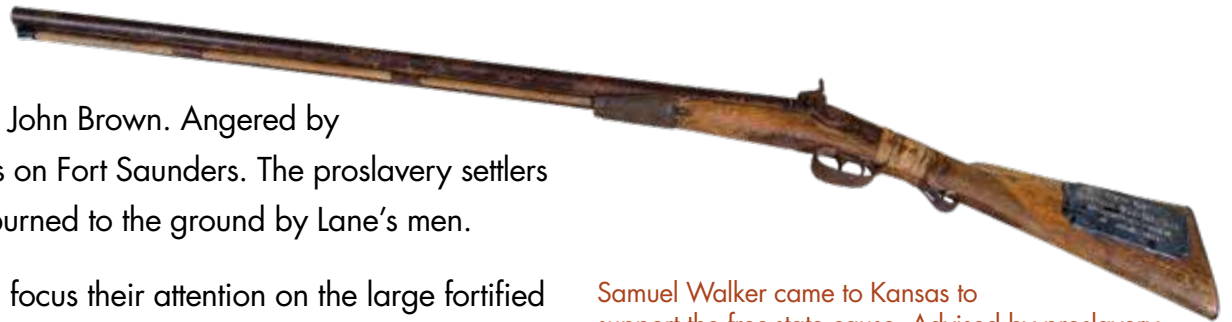
Fort Saunders, one of three proslavery settlements in Douglas County, was located 12 miles southwest of Lawrence on Washington Creek.

James Lane, never an abolitionist but a free-state politician, is as fired up as John Brown. Angered by the killing of S. D. Hoyt, Lane marches on Fort Saunders. The proslavery settlers surrender and the log cabin "fort" is burned to the ground by Lane's men.

Proslavery forces wish to retaliate and focus their attention on the large fortified log cabin of Judge John Wakefield outside Lawrence. The Wakefield home was routinely watched by proslavery men because antislavery forces were sometimes stationed there. In the middle of the night more than a dozen proslavery men, including Henry Titus, try but fail to take the house. Later the same day antislavery forces retaliate by attacking "Fort Titus," a few miles from Lecompton, the capital of the proslavery legislature. They succeed in burning the fort to the ground.

## TIMELINE

- 1856 | June 4-5, Battle of Franklin
- 1856 | August 11, Major David S. Hoyt murdered
- 1856 | August 12, Second attack on Franklin
- 1856 | August 15, Destruction of Fort Saunders
- 1856 | August 16, Destruction of Fort Titus



Samuel Walker came to Kansas to support the free-state cause. Advised by proslavery Sheriff Jones of Douglas County to leave the territory, Walker responded by organizing a company of free-state militia known as the Bloomington Guards. Walker used this 12-gauge muzzle loader shotgun at Fort Saunders and Fort Titus.

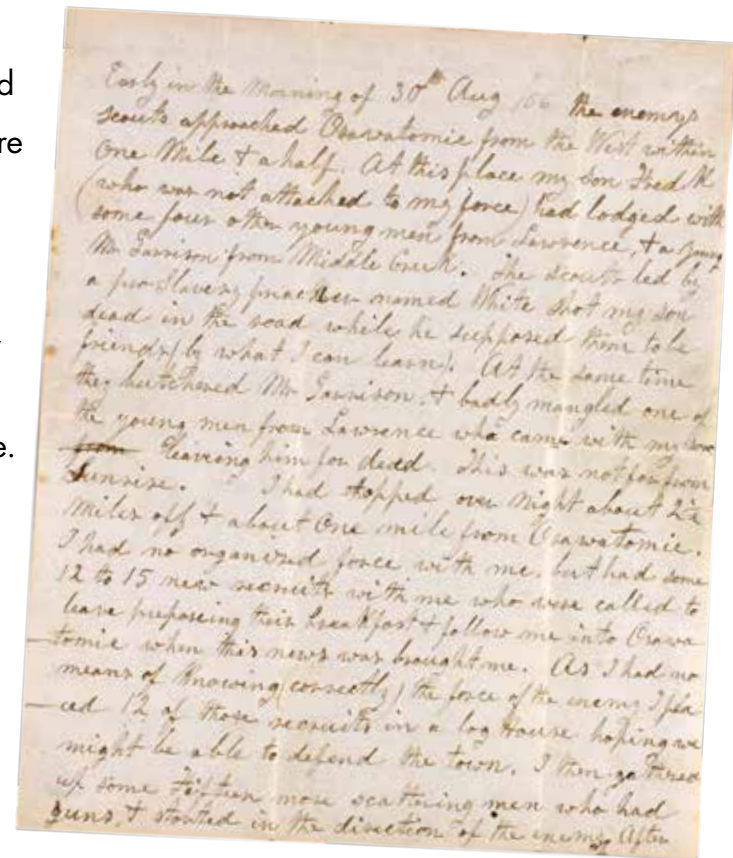
Osawatomie lies about 30 miles west of the Missouri border. Settled largely by antislavery supporters, and the home of his sister, Brown and his sons frequented the area. By the time of the **Battle of Osawatomie** many residents were tired, feeling harassed by Missourians. Like others who lived in border towns between Kansas and Missouri, settlers moved on when they could no longer tolerate the conflict. So when Missourians decided to retaliate against the harassment they felt from antislavery men like John Brown and James Lane, they chose to attack Osawatomie. By the morning of the attack many in town had been warned Missourians were advancing toward them and they choose to flee.

At daybreak that day Reverend Martin White, a proslavery Baptist minister, leads the advance team ahead of several hundred proslavery Missourians. White immediately spots John Brown's son Frederick and shoots and kills him.

When news reaches John Brown he rushes from camp to protect Osawatomie, gathering several dozen supporters to stop the Missouri invaders. He finds a stone corral where his men gain a vantage point to fire on proslavery forces.

The Missourians move in rows toward the wooded area where Brown and his men are under cover. When Brown's men run out of ammunition he orders them to flee in different directions to draw proslavery troops away from Osawatomie.

Failing to catch Brown's men, the proslavery military burn nearly all Osawatomie's buildings. Five antislavery settlers are left dead, including Frederick Brown. Several other free-state men are taken as prisoners. It is a victory for the proslavery side. Looking at the remains of Osawatomie, John Brown is thought to have said, "I have only a short time to live—only one death to die, and I will die fighting for this cause. There will be no more peace in this land until slavery is done for."



Early in the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> Aug. the enemy scouts approached Osawatomie from the West within one mile & a half. At this place my son Fred (who was not attached to my force) had lodged with some four other young men from Lawrence, & a young Mr. Garrison from Middle Creek. The scouts led by a pro-slavery preacher named White shot my son dead in the road while he supposed them to be friends, by what I can learn. At the same time they hurled Mr. Garrison & badly mangled one of the young men from Lawrence who came with me from Lawrence. I had stopped over night about 12 miles off & about one mile from Osawatomie. I had no organized force with me, but had some 12 to 15 men, some with me who were called to leave preparing their breakfast & follow me into Osawatomie when this news was brought me. As I had no means of knowing correctly the force of the enemy I placed 12 of these recruits in a log house, hoping we might be able to defend the town. I then gathered up some fifteen more scattering men who had guns & started in the direction of the enemy. After

Eight days after the Battle of Osawatomie John Brown gave this detailed account of the fighting between antislavery and proslavery forces. Brown recounts the approaching enemy scouts led by a "pro-Slavery preacher named White shot my son dead in the road while he supposed them to be friends."





Samuel Reader, an early settler of Shawnee County and a freestater, recorded the events of Bleeding Kansas in both words and images. Fourteen days after the Battle of Osawatomie came the Battle of Hickory Point depicted in this painting by Reader. Hickory Point, a proslavery settlement in Jefferson County, had supported an attack on Grasshopper Falls (now Valley Falls). James Lane recruited a group of freestaters to do battle with the proslavery forces at Hickory Point. Kansas Territory had a new governor, John Geary, who proclaimed that all armed forces must disband. Lane did not hear the governor's directive and proceeded with reinforcements. According to Reader's accounts, only one freestater was injured; between five and six proslavery men were killed.

#### TIMELINE

- 1856 | August 30, Battle of Osawatomie
- 1856 | September 13, Battle of Hickory Point

The Battle of Osawatimie made John Brown larger than life and earned him the nickname "Osawatimie Brown." Brown leaves Kansas to raise money for the cause. He returns to Kansas Territory two more times to recruit others to help defeat slavery. Brown arrives shortly after one of the final acts of terrorism during the Bleeding Kansas era, the **Marais des Cygnes Massacre**.

Fear crept throughout Linn County when news spread that 30 proslavery men led by Charles Hamilton had ridden through the small village of Trading Post, capturing 11 free-state men. The victims were marched to a nearby ravine where Hamilton ordered his men to shoot. Five of the men were killed, five were seriously injured, and one escaped unharmed.

The community was drawn together in the face of these events even as they were unfolding. Sarah Read, wife of the captured Reverend Benjamin L. Read, set off on foot, spyglass in hand, to chase down Hamilton and his men. Sarah Read would later make this statement about her experience.

*After walking about four miles I again see the company, marching the prisoners towards a ravine. I walked on, and when near the ravine, I heard the discharge of fire-arms. After this, I could no longer walk, but run. I soon met up with part of Hamilton's company. ... I asked him again where the prisoners were. They told me as they rode away, that I would find some men in the timber. I went on till I saw some men in a ravine lying on the ground. ... I asked where are the prisoners, which I repeated three times. My husband recognizing my voice answered me. I went up to him and he told me to get aid as soon as possible. It was the most affecting sight I ever beheld.*

Word of the massacre spread quickly and by afternoon freestaters from around the area had gathered to treat the wounded, collect the dead, and ride into Missouri in fruitless pursuit of Hamilton's gang. Once again, news from Kansas spread across the nation.

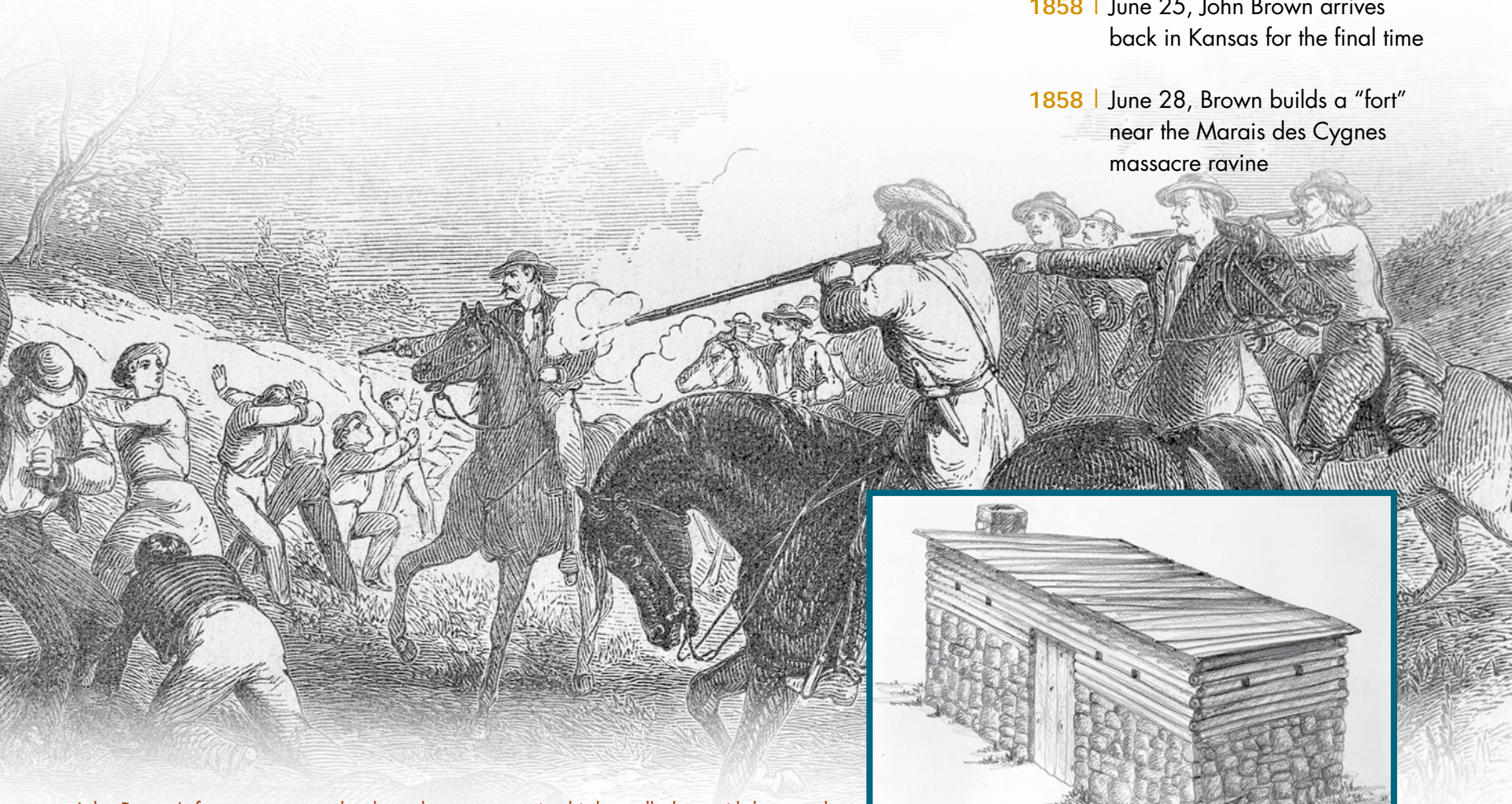




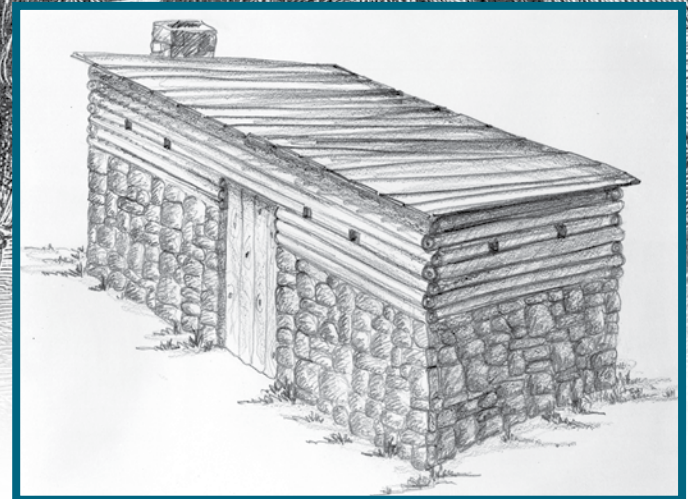
John Brown arrives at the scene of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre a month later. Brown builds a "fort" some 220 yards south of the ravine. Reported to be two stories high, walled up with logs, and with a flat roof, water from a spring ran through and into a pit at the southwest corner.

## TIMELINE

- 1858 | May 19, Marais des Cygnes Massacre
- 1858 | June 25, John Brown arrives back in Kansas for the final time
- 1858 | June 28, Brown builds a "fort" near the Marais des Cygnes massacre ravine



John Brown's fort was reported to have been two stories high, walled up with logs and with a flat roof. Water from a spring ran through the house and into a pit at the southwest corner.





Thirteen days after John Brown and his men cross into Missouri and kill one slaveowner Brown writes **"Old Brown's Parallels"** with the intent of publication in the newspapers. He begins his plea for justice with the words, "Gents: You will greatly oblige a humble friend by allowing me the use of your columns while I briefly state two parallels, in my poor way."

Brown goes on to explain the two parallels. One being the failure of government to do anything about the murder of free-state men during the Marias des Cygnes Massacre; the other being his recent raid into Missouri to liberate 11 enslaved African Americans where one white slaveowner is killed. Brown is incensed that the governor of Missouri is demanding his capture, when in his opinion no one is seeking punishment of the Missourians who killed five freestaters and wounded five others.

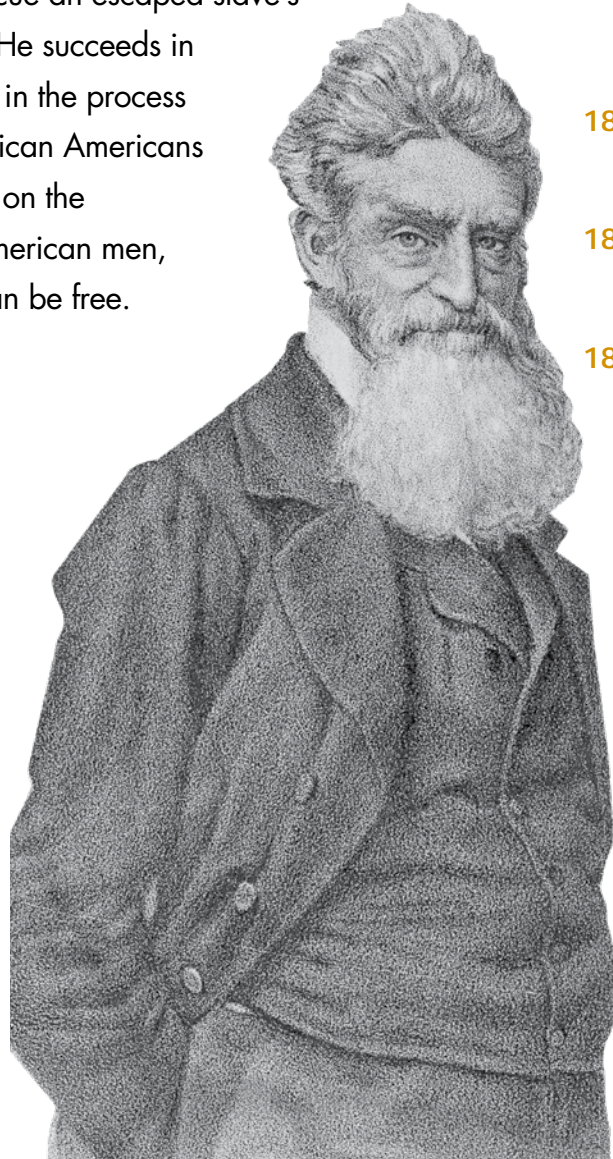


This secretary was used in the home of Augustus Wattles at Moneka, Linn County, Kansas Territory. Family tradition holds that this was where abolitionist John Brown wrote his "Parallels" defense. The tradition further relates that the Wattles children watched Brown as he wrote, peering through cracks in the floor above. To hide his own location and to protect Wattles from retaliation, Brown indicated the "Parallels" were written at Trading Post instead of Moneka.

*Old Brown's parallels,*  
*Trading Post Kansas, June 1859*  
*Gents:*  
*You will greatly*  
*oblige a humble friend by allowing me*  
*the use of your columns while I briefly state two*  
*parallels, in my poor way. Not one year ago*  
*Eleven quiet citizens of this new republic, viz*  
*Wm. Anderson, Wm. Coffey, Amos Hall, Austin Hall, John Campbell,*  
*Ala. Taylor, John Howell, John Hargrove, Ala. Hargrove,*  
*Patrick O'Connell, & L. Reed,*  
*were gathered up from their work & their homes,*  
*by an armed soldiery. One Hamilton, & without*  
*trial or opportunity to speak in their defense, were for-*  
*med into a line, & all but one shot, & five*  
*wounded. One fell unharmed, & was taken to a house,*  
*where he was left for dead. Now, I enquire, what action*  
*has ever since the occurrence, in May last, been taken*  
*by either the President of the United States, the Governor*  
*of Missouri, the Governor of Kansas, or any of their*  
*tools, or by any slaveholders or administration man?*  
*None for the one parallel. The second parallel, the 19<sup>th</sup>*  
*December, a Negro man called Jim, came over to*  
*the Oregon settlement from Missouri, & stated that*  
*Governor of Missouri had made a requisition upon*  
*the Governor of Kansas for the delivery of all*  
*such as were concerned in the last named dread-*  
*ful outrage. The Marshall of Kansas is said to be collect-*  
*ing a posse of Missourians (not of Kansas) men, at*  
*West Point, in Missouri, a little town about ten*  
*miles distant, to enforce the law.*



John Brown was an abolitionist in every meaning of the word, and at times used force to **liberate those enslaved**. Six months after the Marais des Cygnes Massacre, John Brown leads a group of men into Missouri. His face is aged from the hardships of the past few years, and he had grown a wild white beard that shields his identity from those seeking him harm. His goal is to rescue an escaped slave's family before they can be sold and separated. He succeeds in freeing 11 enslaved people from two farms but in the process kills one slaveowner. John Brown moves the African Americans from safe house to safe house. It takes 82 days on the Underground Railroad to deliver the African American men, women, and children to Canada where they can be free.



## TIMELINE

- 1858** | December 20, John Brown and his men liberate 11 slaves from two farms in Missouri
- 1858** | December 24, Brown arrives at the Adair cabin with liberated slaves
- 1859** | January 3, John Brown writes his "Parallels"
- 1861** | January 29, Kansas admitted into the Union as a free state
- 1861** | April 12, Civil War begins

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After John Brown moved north on the Underground Railroad he was never to return to Kansas again. Brown set his sights on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. In less than a year Brown would be dead, and the United States would be on the brink of Civil War.

Most of the collection items features can be found at [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org). For more information on these topics visit [kshs.org/20236](http://kshs.org/20236). To receive this publication quarterly we invite you to become a member.

ON THE COVER: *Tragic Prelude* by John Steuart Curry features abolitionist John Brown. The mural is on the north wall, east wing, second floor of the Kansas State Capitol.



Curry's early sketch for the mural referencing John Brown and the struggle against slavery during the territorial period.