1830–1849

By the 1830s, settlement reached to the river valley at the western boundary of the new state of Missouri. Maps began to show county delineations in the heritage area. Native settlement was pushed to the west side of the border, delineated as the edge of the frontier. In the frontier, lands were assigned to various native tribes. This appropriation would continue into the 1840s. The western reaches of today’s heritage area (now central Kansas) were sparsely populated and not mapped.

Development was still primarily in the Missouri River valley east of the point of confluence with the Kansas River. The Kansas, Osage, and Neosho river valleys are shown as broad regions without detailed political delineations.

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Influences on Settlement and Freedom: 1830–1849} & \\
\text{Indian Removal Act} & 1830 \\
\text{Platte Purchase} & 1836 \\
\text{Mormon War} & 1838 \\
\text{Opening of California/Oregon Trail} & 1839–1841 \\
\text{Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo} & 1848 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]
The Power of Place

Squatter settlements began to appear in Kansas in the years prior to the 1850s. As the decade progressed, Native Americans offered concessions to the government, outright sale, or their lands were reapportioned into lots. Non-natives were still sparse in Kansas, but the economically viable land spurred settlement and the prospect of statehood began at this time. This limited settlement along with the charged atmosphere of national politics would foster the conflicts that occurred at this time.

The end of the Mexican War led to settlement of the region by veterans who received grants from the federal government. Continued settlement of California, Oregon, and Salt Lake Valley began in earnest as well. Trails to these and other locations began to emanate from the Kansas-Missouri border and through Kansas.

**Influences on Settlement and Freedom in the 1850s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas-Nebraska Act</td>
<td>1854</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onset of the Border War</td>
<td>1854</td>
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</tbody>
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Settlement of the Heritage Area in the 1860s was greatly affected by the onset of the American Civil War. Populations shifted across the region—sometimes involuntarily—as the fortunes of competing sides shifted over time. The greatest impact on the landscape was the destruction of farmsteads, towns, and districts in a circle of vengeance and retribution.

Resettlement and reconstruction typified the settlement patterns of the latter 1860s. Railroads and telegraph lines began to connect cities and resources in the East, while the construction included land speculation and concessions.
Growth and settlement in Freedom’s Frontier became more balanced across the border in the 1870s. Railroads first connected existing towns along rivers, then connected existing towns located away from tributaries both to attract business to their lines and to reduce the number of expensive bridge crossings on their routes. New towns were “popping” up in southeast Kansas away from major tributaries, where Civil War veterans settled after Indians were removed to Indian Territory. Hundreds of Africans Americans came to settle in various parts of Kansas as part of the “Exoduster Movement.” River and trail towns began to decline relative to railroad towns. This transportation shift would be seen again in the twentieth century as railroad towns declined relative to towns along interstate highways.

Another significant shift to the landscape occurred as minerals began to be extracted on an industrial scale.
The stories of social reform and change that typified this era often occurred in lands that had already been settled. Industrial growth, real estate speculation, and immigration spurred growth in the heritage area from 1880. Development on both sides of the border was more balanced than in previous decades.

Growth and settlement continued into the twentieth century, but the changes to the built environment on a regional scale were not as dramatic as earlier periods. The boom and bust cycle of railroad speculation and towns began to recede, while immigrants and industry settled in emerging urban areas. The number of railroad lines in the region began to decline after the 1920s.

Although the Dust Bowl—the major environmental disaster of this period—had more significant impact to the west of the heritage area, the rural population in most of the region steeply declined in the 1930s and 1940s.
The enduring struggles for freedom were intertwined with social reform after the Second World War. These stories occurred in settled spaces, but the nature of settlement changed drastically during this period. The creation of interstate highways and suburban development began to alter the landscape with explosive growth in metropolitan areas.

**Post-1945**

Much of this growth was at the expense of smaller towns and farming communities. The steep declines in rural population in the heritage area continued into the 1970s. Many rural counties in the heritage area saw a decline of population over the course of the twentieth century. This growth affected the landscapes and sites in these areas.

**Influences on Settlement and Freedom after 1945**

- **G.I. Bill**: 1944
- **Civil Rights Reform**: 1948-1968
- **Federal Highway Act**: 1956
- **Immigration & Nationality Act**: 1965

**ABOVE**: In 1950, the census bureau defined three cities in Freedom’s Frontier as metropolitan areas: Kansas City, Missouri, St. Joseph, Missouri, and Topeka, Kansas. These metro areas grew into the countryside as their population increased and as suburbs were developed. A comparison is shown between their land size in 1950 (dark green) and 2000 (blue). Since 1950, Lawrence, Kansas, and Manhattan, Kansas, have grown to become metropolitan areas.
Freedom’s Frontier encourages its partners to preserve its cultural watersheds and natural resources. This Management Plan seeks to steward and understand the “power of place” not only through historic structures, but also through the streams, landforms, and animals that cross this region.

According to the American Farmland Trust, Americans paved six million acres of farmland between 1992 and 1997. Only half of the nation’s urban expansion is related to population growth, the other half is tied to land-use choices. Economic development is needed in the region, but without careful planning, unsustainable development can destroy the natural and cultural resources that make our place unique.

While careful planning can improve the economic climate of the region’s metropolitan areas, the region’s rural communities are facing their own brand of unique challenges. According to studies by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, a vast majority of the non-metropolitan counties in the Great Plains witnessed a population decline in the years between 2000 and 2005. In these years, rural Kansas lost over 28,000 people—more than any other state. These challenges also threaten the economic well-being of farmers in Missouri, which has the second-largest number of farms in the nation. The people that live in the rural areas of Freedom’s Frontier, many of whom live in farm-based economies, are facing financial challenges related to rising health care and transportation costs.

The political competition for land and economic resources is not a relic of the nineteenth century. Rural and urban interests today often compete with each other as they seek the same limited funds for the development of their communities. This competition has fostered distrust between rural and urban areas. The voluntary collaboration of all citizens to build diverse economies is an important part of the heritage area’s vision. By working together, the stories of Freedom’s Frontier can be told much more effectively.

Many potential solutions exist for partners and organizations. They are further explored in the Power of Partnership and Power of Action section in this plan.
Tomorrow's region will be influenced by continuing growth and development. Growth and development in the region can be seen in the population density of the region. The metropolitan areas have seen extensive growth, while many rural areas have seen population loss.
This management plan encourages residents to ask new questions about their heritage area and homes. One way to begin is by looking at the landscape. In the late 1970s, the cultural geographer D.W. Meinig wrote an essay entitled: “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene.” His article lays out ten lenses by which we can understand, remember, and interact with a landscape whether it is a farm or an urban neighborhood. Each leads to different questions. The following are ten versions of the same scene.

1) **Landscape as Nature**: an area that is removed from human influences and offers a sensory experience that changes with the seasons and climate.

2) **Landscape as Habitat**: a site or group of sites that are a permanent or migratory home for humans and other species. Habitat can imply more than one species and their mutual reliance.

3) **Landscape as Artifact**: a place to be preserved, a place that is static or known for a great monument such as a fort or a natural feature such as a butte.

4) **Landscape as System**: an approach to beholding the land as a collection of inter-related parts such as the rainfall cycle. Precipitation adds water that percolates through soil and limestone into deep aquifers. These underground bodies in turn feed streams and wetlands that evaporate into the air.

5) **Landscape as Problem**: an area to be studied and a question to be answered. Whether a polluted pond or changing rural character, the “landscape as problem” invites rigorous data collection, analysis, and new insights.

6) **Landscape as Wealth**: can imply monetary, social, or historical resources. Usually, “wealth” implies monetary measures of resource value and real estate value, both current and future.

7) **Landscape as Ideology**: a political statement of assertion of a belief system. The expressions can be overt such as a Soviet-era memorial to Stalin or more subtle such as the line of American frontier forts and posts that asserted federal power and intentions to settle the west.

8) **Landscape as History**: an outlook that focuses on stories or specific events that may have happened at a site. They can represent broad social themes such as “the settlement of Free-State towns” or specific events such as a battle or raid.

9) **Landscape as Place**: an approach to landscape that focuses not on wealth or visual qualities, but on human attachments including memories, prior associations, on-going festivals and events, and a sense of how “this place” is different from any other place.

10) **Landscape as Aesthetic**: emphasizes the sensory perception of beauty through any of the five senses and the effect that it has on emotion. Rather than being based in past stories, aesthetic experiences in landscape happen in a moment and can create a sense of calm and refreshment.

ABOVE: Urban scene in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas during a 1935 dust bowl storm. This landscape can be viewed many different ways using the Ten Versions exercise. From this, new questions and connections to stories can be developed.
Many Versions of the Same Landscape

These ten approaches all apply to Freedom’s Frontier; and we will find these perspectives in various sections of the Management Plan. They all have a role in planning for recreation, conservation, education, interpretation, historic preservation, and economic growth.

In this section of the plan, we explore many of these ten viewpoints with examples from FFNHA. Indeed, many of these versions of beholding the same scene can apply to a single FFNHA site. For example, the Black Jack Battlefield located in Douglas County, Kansas, is rich in possible perspectives. Black Jack can be interpreted as a Problem to be studied, as Wealth surrounded by encroaching urban development and rising land values, as Ideology and History where a skirmish between northern and southern sympathizers took place, and as a Place of unusual beauty and calm.

Sometimes differing versions of the same scene conflict with one another such as the fact that Black Jack is a very historic piece of land that is also economically very valuable. It has both historic and monetary wealth. As such, many of its outward viewsheds are threatened with development that could change the experience of being there and its historic character.

As happened in the Border War period, when the same region or piece of land is contested and interpreted differently, it can become a site of conflict. Yet, conflict can sometimes lead to new insights, innovations, compromise, and reconciliation. Just as looking at the ecosystems of the heritage area as a whole can yield new insights about the location of historic events, looking at historic sites and landscapes through many metaphors or perspectives can reveal the many layers of their value. Though it would be simpler to directly map known historic sites, this Management Plan seeks to create a new model of multi-disciplinary questions and new pathways to interpretation found by residents themselves.

New Metaphors for Freedom’s Frontier

In the spirit of posing new questions, consider some additional metaphors for Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area including: Ecosystem, Fabric, Quilt, and Jigsaw. Each of these ideas implies a whole that is greater than its sum of parts such as individual historic sites, recreational opportunities, and attractions.

An “Ecosystem” viewpoint implies strength of diversity yet also a fragility in which all pieces are interrelated and that changes to one can affect all.

Thinking of the region’s locales as a “Fabric” opens questions about the threads that bind them and the strength of many small strands when woven together.

If we consider Freedom’s Frontier as a “Jigsaw,” we can think about how it would look from an airplane. But, if we introduce the metaphor of a Quilt (which is also visible from the air), we can discuss the 41 counties as a region made by many people with scraps and pieces from many sources and eras brought together over time in the image of a whole.

In the end, having many metaphors for discussing landscape and the heritage area can make residents better citizens with richer “mental maps” that they can share with visitors. A “sense of place” and a “sense of region” means citizens are being consciously aware of the landscape—and how it is different from other regions. Such as regional self-understanding can vary person by person, but it has to come from within; and throughout the planning process, many residents have shared stories that show how powerfully this discovery can happen.
Landscape as Political Tool

In this chapter, we have seen the landscape as an ecosystem and as a backdrop for settlement patterns. We can also study the popular descriptions of landscapes and their use as a political tool. We can ask: how was the beauty of the land packaged and marketed to draw settlers? How can we interpret this beauty in the region’s scenic byways, rivers, and nature preserves today?

Part of understanding the Power of Place today is to understand its influence on the national imagination in the 1850s. We can learn much from these emigrant prospectuses. Their writers, closely woven into the literary world of the eastern seaboard, can serve as an inspiration for new writers from the region today. Original descriptions, exaggerated though they may be, should be included in the interpretation of sites throughout Freedom’s Frontier.

Many speculative guidebooks before the Civil War were written to support strategic settlement. These accounts provide a fascinating window into the optimism, hype, and boosterism of the era. Written in 1857 with an introduction by the abolitionist and landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, The Englishman in Kansas: or, Squatter life and border warfare, celebrates the Kansas landscape through English eyes. This promotional guide for free-state settlers touts the vastness of the plains, a sense only expanded by the arching and open sky. Olmsted verbally paints an immense visual canvas for readers thousands of miles away. His lofty sentences encourage readers to imagine possibilities for agriculture, community building and their own futures.

To this day, the ideals of the pastoral landscape that Olmsted found in Kansas underlie Americans’ sense of style in landscape design and the promotion of new neighborhoods for prospective buyers. In the summer of 1854, George S. Park recounted in the New York Times, his journey on the steamer, Excel. This travel account also appeared in the prospectus of the New England Emigrant Aid Society of that year. These passages from a writer who claimed to have visited Kansas over fifteen years, were likely among the most broadly circulated (and influential) accounts of Kansas for an eastern seaboard audience of that time. He saw as it a kind of Promised Land, a pastoral ideal at the center of the continent.

Near these rivers, and especially on the borders of the Kansas and Missouri, are fine bottom-lands covered with a rich and most fertile soil, needing nothing but the plough to convert them into fruitful fields. Then follows prairie—beautiful, undulating prairie—here and there a grove of walnut, hickory, oak, or sugar-maple…..

“The country abounds with the most lusicious grapes. Stock of all kinds are remarkably healthy; and these rolling prairies will make the finest sheepwalks in the world. In fact, this may be designated the pastoral region of America.” Notes of a Trip up Kansas River, by Geo. S. Park, NYT August 16, 1854

ABOVE: Detail of the “Drouthy [sic] Kansas” sketch by Henry Worrall, c. 1869. Worrall sought to combat the negative portrayal of his adopted state as being “droughty” by producing an idealized, exaggerated portrait of Kansas as a land of immense agricultural bounty. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.
Promotion of the Landscape at War’s End

As the Civil War neared its end, the landscape continued to play an important role in the promotion of the heritage area for a national audience. On January 11, 1865, Missouri voted to abolish slavery. Written at the close of the Civil War as a call for “Capitalists and Immigrants,” Nathan H. Parker’s *Missouri Hand-Book* spoke with a sense of boosterish optimism for post-conflict prosperity. Despite its clear Unionist orientation, there are useful glimpses into the mineral, timber, and water resources on the land that likely lured settlers throughout the 1850s and earlier. For example, Parker notes that the southeastern outcrop of coal extended “from the mouth of the Des Moines River” through several counties in Freedom’s Frontier today including St. Clair, Bates, and Vernon “into the Indian Territory....” Sulfur and zinc were noted in all of the mining areas of the southeastern portion of the state.

Beyond broad descriptions of opportunities in agriculture and mining, the *Hand-Book* offers regional and county-specific descriptions of the landscape during and near the end of the Civil War. For example, Parker describes Johnson County, Missouri, (denoting its population in 1860 at 13,080) as rich in “fertile prairie land, level or slightly undulated, interspersed here and there with forest trees and small groves of thrifty young timber. He also notes the numerous springs and the presence of “black oxide of manganese” found in Township 44—“a material leaving a clear black mark used for pencils.” Lafayette County is described as fertile for tobacco, corn, and fruit. “As high as 2200 pounds of hemp have been produced per acre. On the 18th of February, 45 bales of choice hemp were sold in St. Louis, for the handsome price of $190 per ton.”

While such development prospectuses were not unusual during the nineteenth century, Pinckard’s *Handbook* is written with the end of the Civil War in sight and an Emancipation Ordinance already passed in Missouri. For the western Missouri counties that were home to raids and forced evacuation, he documents a rich array of resources that had already drawn many settlers. He also sketches the post-slavery economy that will arise after the Civil War. In the case of Lafayette County, Pinckard writes:

“Farmers will see at a glance that this county is very well adapted to all the purposes of agriculture. The class of people most needed are qualified school teachers, practical farmers and mechanics, who have capital to improve the land or establish manufactories: also carpenters, plasterers and masons.”
The landscape of Freedom's Frontier is valued for many reasons: for its natural history, social activism and debate, open sky, and a long-term tradition of community involvement. How do people remember and value this heritage area’s places? The most powerful places in Freedom's Frontier are valued for many reasons: for their natural history, how they shaped human history, their scenic beauty today, and the vitality of their social life.

The Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area “Power of Place” cannot be easily measured. Unlike “property,” it is not an asset with value that can be easily determined based on market comparables. Rather, “places” exist in our thoughts and memories. As the geographer Yi-fu Tuan has argued, place is not designed but achieved through cultural acts such as naming, the creation of boundaries, and important events. “Sense of place” implies a self-conscious awareness that makes a place different from others.

Mid-nineteenth century promoters of Kansas and Missouri tried to invent a sense of the land in their advertising for potential settlers from the east. Over a century later, cultural geographers and landscape architects continue to speak of having a “sense of place” in beautiful, historic, or culturally rich settings. There is little agreement over the meaning of “sense of place,” what causes it, or the role of historic places and events in shaping it. Yet, when we have a “sense of place”—a gut understanding that our home region is different from others—we know it.

**Quick Reference Definitions**

**sense of place:** the conscious awareness of how a region is distinct from other areas.

*A full glossary of terms can be found in the appendix.*
The Power of “the Frontier”

Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area lies at the heart of the country, in the “Midwest”—and somewhere near the imaginary point “where the West begins.” The frontier is a mythical force in American culture; and the word is used both in a physical sense of the edge of a nation and in the intellectual sense of the boundary for new ideas, debates and questions. Both of these senses are implied in the name of this National Heritage Area: Freedom’s Frontier. The heritage area is set at the edge of one part of the country and remains a testing ground for new ideas.

Because of its power as a myth, the idea of the “frontier” can become distorted when applied to the histories of a heritage area such as our own. James R. Grossman writes in The Frontier in American Culture:

“Cowboys, Indians, log cabins, wagon trains. These and other images associated with stories about the frontier maintain a constant presence in our lives. Innumerable products are marketed according to assumptions that symbols of the frontier are deeply embedded Americans’ notions of who we are and what we want to be.”

One of the reasons that the Freedom’s Frontier partners and other citizens are asking new questions about the Power of Place and the Power of Story is to find their own place in natural and human history—and to correct stereotypes about the past. Like the exact location of “the frontier,” it’s also difficult to define the part of the country where Freedom’s Frontier exists. We would think it is in the Midwest, yet as James Shortridge maintains in The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture, the exact location of the “Midwest” has continued to shift since the mid-nineteenth century. Interestingly for Freedom’s Frontier, the first popular application of “Midwest” in the national media applied to Kansas and Missouri in the 1850s when they lay at the center of national debate over slavery and states’ rights.

Should we be uncomfortable with such geographic uncertainty? Like cultural geography, “history” is not about finding concrete answers and universal consensus.

Rather, as many historians agree, it takes a certain humility. “The best you can do,” argues John Lewis Gaddis in The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past, “is to represent reality: to smooth over the details, to look for larger patterns, to consider how you can use what you see for your own purposes.” Like working as a map-maker, Gaddis argues that the historian can feel very large and powerful.

Looking at the 100 million years of known natural history in the Freedom’s Frontier region and the relatively miniscule sliver of the last three centuries of American settlement, human beings can also feel very small. “Historical consciousness therefore leaves you, as does maturity itself, with a simultaneous sense of your own significance and insignificance,” Gaddis says. This heritage area and its stories are so vast and varied that we may never fully know them all, but the very conversation itself will make us wiser. They will also help to strengthen our “sense of place”—our sense of this region—as something to care about.
Relevant Questions

Many of the most relevant questions for this management plan start from our “sense of place”. They begin with what we know matters and endures here. As we will explore in the Power of Action and the Power of Partnership sections of this plan, strategies for conservation, education, interpretation, preservation, recreation, and economic development are all informed with a discussion of the Power of Place.

Reconnecting with the Land

In considering “sense of place” in Freedom’s Frontier, we should ask hard questions, such as: are we losing our “direct contact with the earth”? Are we losing connection with our stories? Can we learn from the experience of those from the past? As we will discuss in the Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation section, children are increasingly cut off from the sights, smells, sounds, and chance encounters of playing in the woods or running in a field. Their time is structured in classes and organized events. Freedom’s Frontier can help to rebuild this connection for future generations. Can programs and activities help future generations reconnect with the sources of our food? Can reconnection with land and place help to teach a conservation ethic? These are all questions that we will explore.

Reconnecting with nature and the stories of the land mean understanding them on their own terms... not as the English pastorale promoted in the past or through myths of the “Wild West.” The power of this landscape is that it was built up over millennia by the forces of nature, and more recently, by the individual and collective acts of people. Most of these residents were not architects, professional engineers, or historians. And, as such, the Main Streets, farms, trails, churches, schools, fences, and irrigation systems that they built are vernacular—they are built by lay people using what they had.

The cultural geographer J.B. Jackson spent much of his life studying the beauties of the ordinary American landscape and the fascinating stories of aspiration and struggle that lie beneath the surface. His introduction to Discovering the Vernacular Landscape encourages us to think of Freedom’s Frontier’s Power of Place without preconceptions about what is “historic” or “significant.” He encourages us to start with its testimony to our common hope for a better future, to human striving to find answers to important questions.

For too long we have told ourselves that the beauty of a landscape was the expression of some transcendent law: the conformity to certain universal esthetic principles or the conformity to certain biological or ecological laws. But this is true only of formal or planned political landscapes. The beauty that we see in the vernacular landscape is the image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance striving to be love. I believe that a landscape which makes these qualities manifest is one that can be called beautiful.

J. B. Jackson, Discovering the Vernacular Landscape

ABOVE: Prairie landscape at dusk. Wabaunsee County, Kansas.