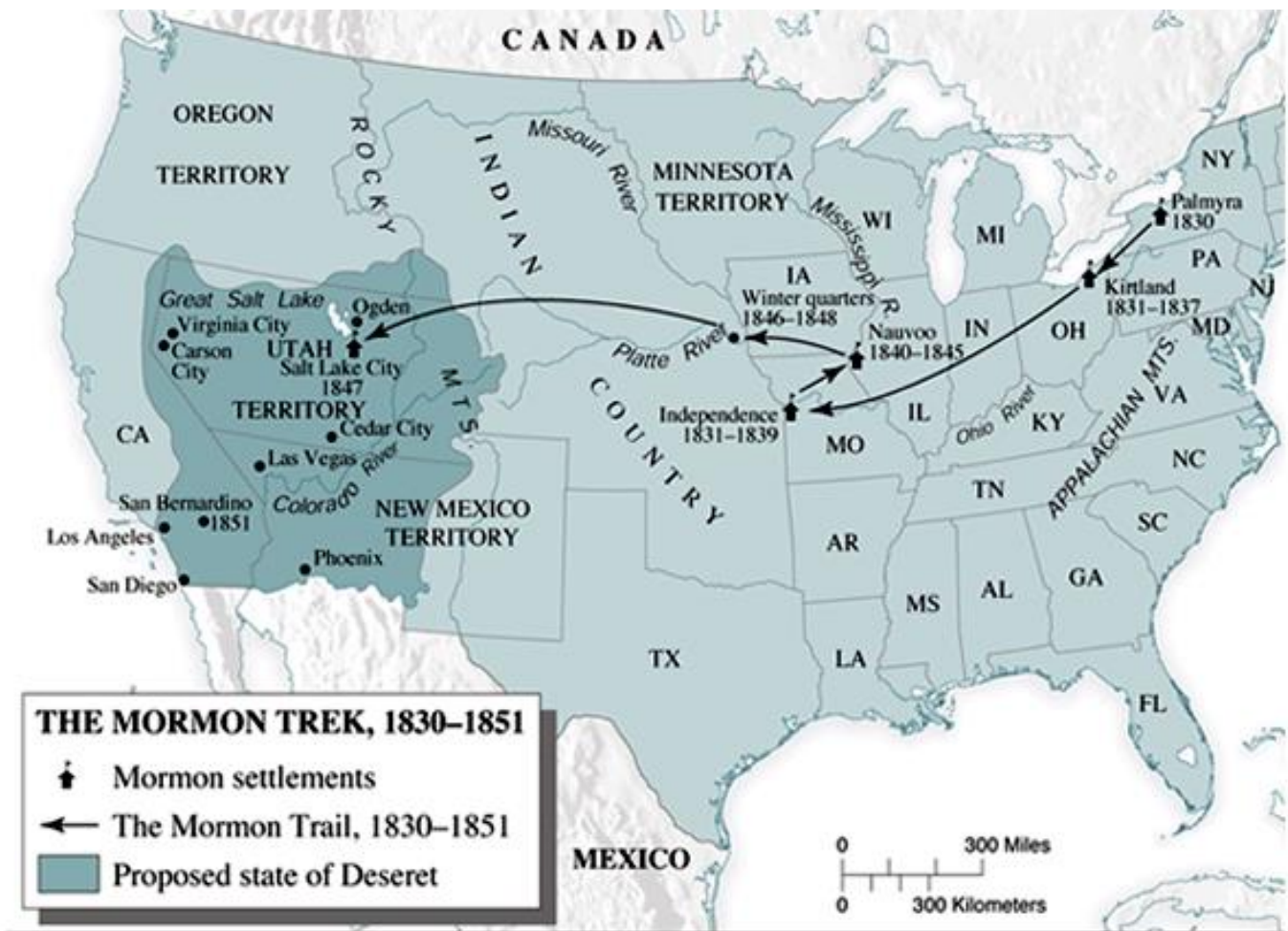


## The Great Mormon Migration



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They were a people who felt called by God, chosen to create a New Jerusalem. It was fitting, then, that in order to realize the dream, the Mormons endured a 1,300-mile journey of Biblical proportions.

**Time to Go** | Mormons had been considering moving west -- beyond the borders of the United States -- since before Joseph Smith's 1844 murder, but his assassination made it clear that the period of relative calm the Mormon faithful had enjoyed in Nauvoo, Illinois, was coming to an end. In 1845 mob violence against the Mormon community increased, and the Illinois legislature revoked the city's charter.

**Exodus, Part One** | Brigham Young, who was emerging as the church's new leader, conducted a census that fall, counting more than 3,000 families and some 2,500 wagons. He then divided church members into smaller administrative groups of tens, fifties, and hundreds (following the pattern described in the Old Testament when, after crossing the Red Sea dry-shod, the Jews went through the wilderness searching for the Promised Land). Appropriately, Young named the collective the Camp of Israel. Although Young hoped to begin the migration in spring 1846, local hostility forced the Mormons' hand. The first wave of about 3,000 people began to leave Nauvoo in early February, and their suffering was intense. They crossed the frozen Mississippi River -- dry-shod. In one evening on the trek nine babies were born, their parents barely able to provide any shelter from the elements. Wagons collapsed, people died from exposure, and it took 131 days for the Mormon convoy to travel 310 miles to relative safety on the banks of the Missouri, where the river divided Nebraska and Iowa. Still, church members kept the faith throughout their tribulations. William Clayton, who had been ordered to travel ahead of his pregnant wife, was so overjoyed to learn of his son's birth that he wrote a hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," that has become a Mormon standard. Its hopeful last line: "All is well! All is well!"

**Winter Quarters** | All was well for a time in the area (near what is Omaha, Nebraska today) that the Mormons reached in June 1846. Local Native Americans were friendly, and Young decided they would remain in what became known as "Winter Quarters" until the following spring. But when winter came, scurvy claimed as many as 15 percent of the camp members; Young's son would later call their settlement "the Valley Forge of Mormondom." Young, himself sick in February 1847, had been plagued by self-doubt, but a vision of Joseph Smith helped him become the strong leader his followers needed for the second, thousand-mile portion of their journey.

**Exodus, Part Two** | In April 1847, an advance party of 25 wagons led by Young left the Winter Quarters and headed towards the Rocky Mountains. They traveled along the Platte River, creating a new route on its north bank rather than risk encounters with other settlers on the Oregon Trail. The first half of the journey was along the plains and easier going than the mountains that loomed up past Fort Laramie, Wyoming. But the Mormons kept going, marching by day and leavening the evenings with campfire dance and song. There was also much sickness. Like many others in the pioneer band, Brigham Young came down with "mountain fever." On July 24, after 111 days of travel, a wagon carrying the prostrate Young reached the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Looking out on the terrain, Young declared, "It is enough. This is the right place."

**A Permanent Home** | As Young was reaching his destination, another wagon train with more than 1,500 people and nearly 600 cows was leaving Winter Quarters and heading west. Over the next two decades more than 60,000 Mormons would journey to the Utah Territory; thousands came by wagon, and thousands more pulled handcarts across the harsh terrain. Many died along the way, and the survivors found the country they sought to escape would soon expand its borders to encompass them. In 1857 during the "Utah War," the Mormons abandoned their Salt Lake City homes as the U.S. Army approached, but returned to them unscathed and would never again be forced to flee for their lives and abandon everything they knew; for the first time, they had found a permanent home.





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The discovery of gold nuggets in the Sacramento Valley in early 1848 sparked the Gold Rush, arguably one of the most significant events to shape American history during the first half of the 19th century. As news spread of the discovery, thousands of prospective gold miners traveled by sea or over land to San Francisco and the surrounding area; by the end of 1849, the non-native population of the California territory was some 100,000 (compared with the pre-1848 figure of less than 1,000). A total of \$2 billion worth of precious metal was extracted from the area during the Gold Rush, which peaked in 1852.

**DISCOVERY AT SUTTER'S MILL** | On January 24, 1848, James Wilson Marshall, a carpenter originally from New Jersey, found flakes of gold in the American River at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Coloma, California. At the time, Marshall was working to build a water-powered sawmill owned by John Sutter, a German-born Swiss citizen and founder of a colony of Nueva Helvetia (New Switzerland). (The colony would later become the city of Sacramento.) As Marshall later recalled of his historic discovery: "It made my heart thump, for I was certain it was gold."

Just days after Marshall's discovery at Sutter's Mill, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the Mexican-American War and leaving California in the hands of the United States. At the time, the population of the territory consisted of 6,500 Californios (people of Spanish or Mexican descent); 700 foreigners (primarily Americans); and 150,000 Native Americans (barely half the number that had been there when Spanish settlers arrived in 1769).

**NEWS SPREADS** | Though Marshall and Sutter tried to keep news of the discovery under wraps, word got out, and by mid-March at least one newspaper was reporting that large quantities of gold were being turned up at Sutter's Mill. Though the initial reaction in San Francisco was disbelief, storekeeper Sam Brannan set off a frenzy when he paraded through town displaying a vial of gold obtained from Sutter's Creek. By mid-June, some three-quarters of the male population of San Francisco had left town for the gold mines, and the number of miners in the area reached 4,000 by August.

As news spread of the fortunes being made in California, the first migrants to arrive were those from lands accessible by boat, such as Oregon, the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii), Mexico, Chile, Peru

and even China. Only later would the news reach the East Coast, where press reports were initially skeptical. Gold fever kicked off there in earnest, however, after December 1848, when President James K. Polk announced the positive results of a report made by Colonel Richard Mason, California's military governor, in his inaugural address. As Polk wrote, "The accounts of abundance of gold are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service."

**THE '49ERS COME TO CALIFORNIA** | Throughout 1849, people around the United States (mostly men) borrowed money, mortgaged their property or spent their life savings to make the arduous journey to California. In pursuit of the kind of wealth they had never dreamed of, they left their families and hometowns; in turn, women left behind took on new responsibilities such as running farms or businesses and caring for their children alone. Thousands of would-be gold miners, known as '49ers, traveled overland across the mountains or by sea, sailing to Panama or even around Cape Horn, the southernmost point of South America.



By the end of the year, the non-native population of California was estimated at 100,000, (as compared with 20,000 at the end of 1848 and around 800 in March 1848). To accommodate the needs of the '49ers, gold mining towns had sprung up all over the region, complete with shops, saloons, brothels and other businesses seeking to make their own Gold Rush fortune. The overcrowded chaos of the mining camps and towns grew ever more lawless, including rampant banditry, gambling, prostitution and violence. San Francisco, for its part, developed a bustling economy and became the central metropolis of the new frontier.

The Gold Rush undoubtedly sped up California's admission to the Union as the 31st state. In late 1849, California applied to enter the Union with a constitution preventing slavery, provoking a crisis in Congress between proponents of slavery and abolitionists. According to the Compromise of 1850, proposed by Kentucky's Senator Henry Clay, California was allowed to enter as a free state, while the territories of Utah and New Mexico were left open to decide the question for themselves.

**LASTING IMPACT OF THE GOLD RUSH** | After 1850, the surface gold in California largely disappeared, even as miners continued to arrive. Mining had always been difficult and dangerous labor, and striking it rich required good luck as much as skill and hard work. Moreover, the average daily take for an independent miner working with his pick and shovel had by then sharply decreased from what it had been in 1848. As gold became more and more difficult to reach, the growing industrialization of mining drove more and more miners from independence into wage labor. The new technique of hydraulic mining, developed in 1853, brought enormous profits but destroyed much of the region's landscape. Though gold mining continued throughout the 1850s, it had reached its peak by 1852, when some \$81 million was pulled from the ground. After that year, the total take declined gradually, leveling off to around \$45 million per year by 1857. Settlement in California continued, however, and by the end of the decade the state's population was 380,000.

Mountain Men



A hundred young men walked into the Rocky Mountains and became legends of the West when they responded to William Henry Ashley's call for adventurers to go into the beaver trade in 1822. Ashley advertised in St. Louis for men to work the beaver streams of the West, and the following year the first of these young men made their way to the Upper Missouri and ultimately spread out along the streams that flowed from the Rocky Mountains.

They began trapping for beaver and quickly launched a true mountain tradition. They held their first mountain trading fair—or Rendezvous—in 1825 in the southern end of the Green River Valley at Burnt Fork, in what is now Wyoming. The annual Rendezvous quickly expanded and would ultimately attract hundreds of mountain men, Indians and traders. These gatherings moved around to differing locations, but always were places of trade, business deals, entertainment and revelry.

During that time some hundreds of trappers lived continuously in the mountains, all of them near-native, more at home amidst the silent forests or in Indian villages than in the haunts of their fellow men. Each year these "Mountain Men" emerged from their winter camps as soon as the spring sun thawed the beaver streams, trapped until July, then made their way to the rendezvous for their yearly contact with white civilization. There an awesome sight awaited them: hundreds of bearded trappers in their fringed jackets and buckskin leggings, dozens of deserters from the Hudson's Bay Company, dark-skinned Mexicans from Taos and Santa Fe, and as many as one thousand Indians who had gathered to watch the fun. Business came first as soon as the caravan from St. Louis arrived; trappers exchanged their "hairy bank notes," the beaver pelts, for the necessities of life and fineries for their women, then the flat casks of alcohol were opened and tin cups of the lethal fluid were passed about, turning the rendezvous into a scene of roaring debauchery. During the next few days the Mountain Men drank and gambled away their year's earnings before the caravan started eastward again, its owners richer by profits that sometimes reached 2,000 percent, and the trappers wandered away into the forest to rest a few weeks before the "fall hunt" began.

What a remarkable crew of robust, self-exiled individuals those Mountain Men were. Some were well educated; a few were hardened degenerates who crossed the Mississippi with a sheriff at their heels; most were under thirty; all preferred the forest solitudes to the regulated society of white America. Some were Negroes who found in the untamed West escape from the prejudices that made their lives miserable in the East. Such a man was Edward Rose who was as famed for his trading skills as he was for the shadowy reputation that had pursued him westward. Such a man was James P. Beckwourth, son of a white father and a black slave, who saw the Rocky Mountain country first in 1823 when he joined Ashley's brigade as a blacksmith. From that time on Beckwourth was wedded to a forest life, marrying a Crow Indian, and eventually joining the tribe where his prowess elevated him to a post as a principal chief. These men, and other Negroes like them whose names were unrecorded, played a yeoman task on this most risky of all frontiers.

The carefree days of the Mountain Men were numbered, for the profits of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company soon brought competitors into the field. Some were agents of small companies; present at the 1832 rendezvous were Nathaniel J. Wyeth who had come from New England with twenty-seven followers, Captain Benjamin L. E. Bonneville with New York capital and 110 trappers at his beck and call, traders of the newly formed St. Louis firm of Gantt and Blackwell, a brigade of Arkansans under Alexander Sinclair, and a party of eighty Mountain Men from Taos with "Old Bill" Williams in nominal control. This competition the well-heeled Rocky Mountain Fur Company could meet,

but another rival at the 1832 rendezvous represented real danger. This was the venerable American Fur Company.

The American Fur Company entered the Rocky Mountain trade by the route that Ashley had followed a half-dozen years before. Slowly creeping westward after the collapse of its ill-fated Astoria venture, Astor's giant concern first ventured into the Upper Missouri Valley in 1827 when it bought out the small but ably manned Columbia Fur Company. Astor's business genius made it overnight a dangerous competitor for the established traders. He recognized that monopoly was distasteful to the public, hence he would nurture a few modest competitors while driving the bulk of them to the wall or absorbing their businesses. These plans were carried out with precise efficiency. A tightly knit establishment was set up, with operatives in the trading areas working under experienced managers, and with steamboats and improved means of travel developed to speed exchange between the rendezvous and markets. The American Fur Company saw, too, that the fur trade was not an instrument for moral reform, and that the government would be unable to punish those who defied its regulations by intruding on a rival's territory or peddling liquor to the Indians. It was after profits, whatever the harm done to its competitors, Indians, or the environment.



Thus equipped, the company was able to take advantage of an unusual opportunity. Astor realized that its Ft. Union, built in 1828 at the mouth of the Yellowstone River, lay on the threshold of the forbidden Blackfoot country, the last virgin domain waiting exploitation by the trappers. If the American Fur Company could violate that native's sanctuary, its fortune would be made. The chance came in 1830 when it employed a Hudson's Bay Company deserter who had lived among these hostile tribesmen and won their friendship. He reluctantly agreed to enter the Blackfoot domain with a small band of adventurers who expected each step to be their last; instead the Indians recognized him as a friend and agreed to a trading contract. Ft. McKenzie was built on the Marias River in 1831 as a center for the new trade; that summer, too, a small steamboat reached Ft. Union. The natives were so impressed with the "Fire Boat that Walked on the Waters" that they shifted allegiance to the American Fur Company in droves.

These steps not only solidly planted the concern in the Northern Rockies but prepared it to invade the domain of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Ft. Cass was built at the mouth of the Big Horn in 1831 as the first step in this direction; from this outpost brigades of trappers were sent southward to seek out the Rocky Mountain Fur Company expeditions and follow them to good beaver country. Worse still was the decision to send two caravans of trading goods, one from Ft. Union and one from the East, to the 1832 rendezvous. Word of this threat reached the Rocky Mountain Fur Company leaders in time to



allow them to win the race to the rendezvous and purchase most of the furs brought there, but they could take little solace in their victory. This contest between the two great rivals symbolized the dawn of an era where bitter competition was to mark the history of the fur trade, with its inevitable result—overtrapping and the extermination of the beaver.

This went on rapidly during the remaining years of the decade. Bands of hunters from the two principal contenders and their smaller rivals roamed the whole West, trapping streams that had been nearly exhausted, and searching everywhere in a vain quest for unexploited areas. To make matters worse, the Indians grew steadily more hostile in the face of this mass invasion of their hunting grounds. The Battle of Pierre's Hole, fought just after the 1832 rendezvous, cost the lives of five trappers, and was only a portent of more losses in the future. By 1834 the two companies were so discouraged by dwindling profits and the slaughter of their men that they attempted to come to terms. These negotiations could have only one outcome, for the American Fur Company could never surrender lest it lose prestige that would hamper its far-flung operations elsewhere. Before the year was out the Rocky Mountain Fur Company had sold out, assets, partners, and employees, to its rival. For a few more years of relative peace and declining returns the American Fur Company hung on, until a new and more dangerous rival entered the field.



### **How many Chinese worked on the first transcontinental railroad?**

The precise number of Chinese who worked on the railroad from 1864 to 1869 is not clear; records are incomplete and inexact. The railroad did not list most individual Chinese workers by name in their payroll records, and instead listed headmen of work crews or labor contractors who distributed pay to the individuals on the crew. In January 1864, the Central Pacific hired a crew of 21 Chinese workers and hired more during that year. In January 1865, convinced that Chinese workers were capable, the railroad hired fifty Chinese workers and shortly after fifty more. But the demand for labor increased, and white workers were reluctant to do such backbreaking, hazardous work. As Leland Stanford reported to Congress in 1865, "A large majority of the white laboring class on the Pacific Coast find most profitable and congenial employment in mining and agricultural pursuits, than in railroad work. The greater portion of the laborers employed by us are Chinese, who constitute a large element of the population of California. Without them it would be impossible to complete the western portion of this great national enterprise, within the time required by the Acts of Congress." Soon the Chinese labor pool from California was exhausted, and the Central Pacific arranged with labor contractors to import large numbers of Chinese workers directly from China. By July 1865, the Chinese workforce was nearly 4,000. In February 1867, approximately 8,000 Chinese were working on the construction of tunnels and 3000 were laying track, representing ninety percent of the workforce. Historians estimate that at any one time as many as 10,000 to 15,000 Chinese were working on constructing the railroad. Most Chinese probably did not work for the entire duration of construction and others would take their place, particularly because the work was so difficult and dangerous. Consequently, the total number of Chinese may be even higher.

### **When were they hired to work on the railroad?**

Chinese worked on shorter railroad lines before construction of the transcontinental, such as the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company (now known as CalTrain) completed in 1863. Some Chinese began working on the Central Pacific as early as January 1864, and Director Charles Crocker and Construction Superintendent James Strobridge were convinced in January 1865 to hire large numbers of Chinese laborers for the workforce. Soon after, the Central Pacific Railroad arranged with labor contractors to recruit large numbers of workers directly from China, and ships regularly brought additional workers throughout the construction.

### **Where did the Chinese workers come from?**

Railroad workers recruited by labor contractors came mostly from Guangdong (Canton) province, especially Siyi (四邑Sze Yap, meaning four counties: Taishan台山, Kaiping开平, Xinhui新会 and Enping恩平). These counties suffered from extreme poverty and civil unrest, and the area was close to Hong Kong as a point of departure. Desperate for work, workers from this part of Guangdong boarded ships for California and other parts to support their families.

### **What were the Chinese workers paid in comparison to workers of European descent?**

Chinese workers were initially paid \$24 to \$31 per month, although rates would vary depending on how skilled or dangerous the work. For example, those who worked in the tunnels were paid an extra \$1 per month. Their pay eventually rose to \$35 per day, which was roughly the same as for workers of European descent. However, Chinese workers worked longer hours and had to pay their headmen or contractors for their own lodging and food and even for their tools; on the other hand, the Central Pacific and Union Pacific provided white workers accommodations, food, and tools without additional cost. Alexander Saxton, in "The Army of Canton in the High Sierra," calculates that Chinese labor cost the railroad companies two thirds of what was paid to white workers.

### **What were the hardest and most hazardous parts of the railroad route for them to build?**

*Tunnels* | In fall 1865 Chinese workers began building 15 tunnels, most of them at high elevations through the Sierra Nevada for a total of 6,213 feet. Historians agree that the most difficult tunnel was No. 6, the Summit Tunnel, cut through solid granite, 1,695 feet long and 124 feet below the surface. Progress was very slow, with many kegs of black powder used each day, but to little effect in the



hard rock. Nitroglycerine was mixed on site by a chemist, but it was too unstable, causing many accidental explosions, and its use was abandoned. Workers built a vertical shaft halfway between the two tunnel openings, and in shifts around the clock they dug four faces simultaneously, from both exterior sides and from inside out. Work continued through two of the worst winters on record. Snow from fierce blizzards often blocked tunnel entrances, and avalanches would sweep away camps of Chinese workers, carrying many to their death. The Summit Tunnel was completed, graded and track laid on November 30, 1867. Because of the severe winter storms, the Central Pacific built 37 miles of snow sheds to cover the tracks in 1868 and 1869. The snow sheds were nicknamed the "longest barn in the world."

*Ten Miles in One Day* | On April 28, 1869 ten miles and fifty-six feet of track was laid in one day. The accomplishment was in response to a \$10,000 wager Charles Crocker made with Thomas Durant of the Union Pacific that his workers were capable of doing what seemed impossible. A squad of eight Irish rail-handlers and a small army of 4000 workers, mostly Chinese, accomplished the feat, working between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m., with a mid-day break after laying six miles of track. In the end 25,800 ties, 3,520 rails (averaging 560 lbs. each), 55,080 spikes, 14,050 bolts, and other materials, totaling in weight 4,462,000 pounds, were laid down.

The teamwork that went into laying ten miles plus of track in one day was tremendous. It was like a choreographer orchestrating a complex dance sequence. Everyone moved with a rhythm. The accomplishment has not been matched even in modern times.

The names of the eight Irish workers were recorded by the railroad, and they were hailed in a parade in Sacramento. None of the Chinese workers' names were recorded; they were forgotten so they remain nameless.

### **How many Chinese workers died building the transcontinental railroad?**

The Central Pacific did not keep records of the deaths of any workers on the railroad. Some historians estimate from engineering reports, newspaper articles and other sources that between 50 to 150 Chinese were killed as a result of snow slides, landslides, explosions, falls and other accidents. Chinese practice was to bury the deceased temporarily and at a later date collect the remains in a box in a ritual fashion. The bones would then be shipped back to China to be reburied in the worker's home village. One newspaper article entitled "Bones in Transit" of June 30, 1870 in the *Sacramento Reporter* reported that "about 20,000 pounds of bones" dug up from shallow graves were taken by train for return to China, calculating that this amounted to 1,200 Chinese. Another article published on the same day in the *Sacramento Union* stated that only the bones of about 50 Chinese were on the train. Others believe that some Chinese must have also died in a smallpox outbreak among railroad workers, although there are no records if any of the dead were Chinese. In addition, there were reports of Chinese workers being killed in Nevada as the result of Indian raids. Charles Crocker, testifying before Congress after the line was completed, acknowledged that a great many men were lost during construction – and most of those workers were Chinese.

### **What happened in the 1867 strike?**

On June 25, 1867 Chinese workers went on strike. Five thousand workers grading along the eastern slope of the Sierra between Cisco and Strong's Canyon and digging tunnels put their tools down and returned to their camps. When Chinese workers were first hired in 1864 they earned \$25 per day, but then wages were raised again. In Spring 1867 Charles Crocker raised their wages from \$31 to \$35 per month; but the workers demanded \$40 per month, reduced workdays from eleven to ten hours, and shorter shifts digging in the cramped, dangerous tunnels. Shifts were supposed to be eight hours in the tunnels, but they were often forced to work longer. As the *Sacramento Union* reported, the workers protested "the right of the overseers of the company to either whip them or restrain them from leaving the road when they desire to seek other employment."

Crocker recalled that, "If there had been that number of white laborers [on strike] ... it would have been impossible to control them. But this strike of the Chinese was just like Sunday all along the work. These men stayed in their camps. That is, they would come out and walk around, but not a word was said. No violence was perpetrated along the whole line." Despite their non-violent tactic, the strike posed a mortal threat to Crocker, Stanford and the other railroad "Associates" who received

government subsidies based on the miles of track laid. "The truth is they are getting smart," Charles' brother E. B. Crocker wrote, observing that the Chinese were aware of the scarcity of labor and therefore of their own leverage to bargain. E. B. Crocker and Mark Hopkins considered taking advantage of the newly created Freedmen's Bureau to hire recently freed slaves as strikebreakers. Hopkins reasoned, "A Negro labor force would tend to keep the Chinese steady, as the Chinese have kept the Irishmen quiet."

Charles Crocker cut off food and other supplies. After eight days of increasing privation, Crocker confronted the starving workers, along with James Strobridge, the local Sheriff and a contingent of deputized white men, insisting that he would make no concessions and threatened violence to anyone preventing workers from returning to the job. Facing starvation and coercion, the workers ended the strike. Charles Crocker became convinced that the labor action was a plot by the Union Pacific, which aimed to sabotage the Central Pacific's forward progress in their race to gain more miles for subsidies. He never considered that the Chinese workers were capable of asserting their own interests.

### **Were the workers literate, and did they send letters back to China?**

Since the workers came from the agricultural region of Guangdong, it is generally believed that most were illiterate farmers. To be literate in China at that time involved being conversant with Chinese classical texts, and by that definition, almost all of the workers were not literate. However, by the commonly accepted American definition of literacy – being able to read and write – a number may, in fact, have been literate. Evidence suggests, however, that at least some of the workers were educated; certainly, the headmen and agents for labor contractors could speak English and tally accounts, and at least one labor contractor had apparently passed the lower level of the mandarin civil service exams. Mark Twain, writing about the 1860s about Virginia City, Nevada, observed in *Roughing It* that the Chinese "can read, write and cipher with easy facility." So far, though, no letter or document of any sort written by one of the Central Pacific workers has been found. Chinese who worked on other lines after the first transcontinental, such as the Southern Pacific, have left some documents.

### **Why has no letter or journal from a worker been found yet?**

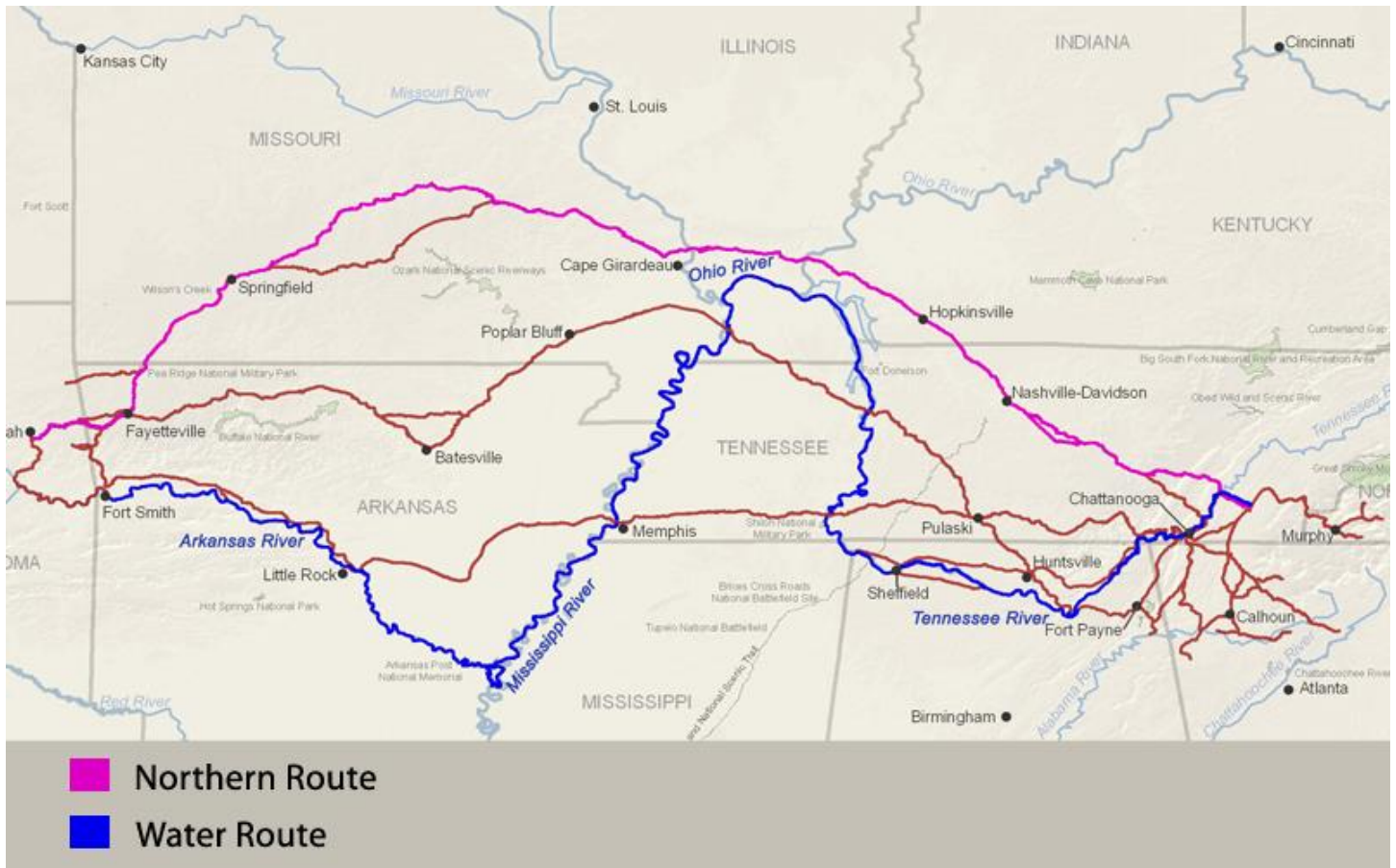
Guangdong suffered from rebellions, civil conflict, bandits and warlords in the mid-nineteenth century, so if letters or documents were sent to families back home they may have been destroyed in the chaos. Also, families may not have regarded the letters as important, since their fathers and sons were merely lowly laborers. As well, the families may not have been able to preserve them in the subsequent 150 years of invasions, famine and social unrest. Finally, no exhaustive search for such primary documents has been conducted until now, so there may yet be possible discoveries.

### **What did the railroad workers do after the Central Pacific Railroad was completed?**

Upon completion of the railroad, some workers went back to China; others went to work in agriculture, mining, building levees along the rivers or went to Chinatowns in Sacramento, San Francisco, and the small towns in the Sierras to enter domestic service or work in manufacturing to produce cigars and other items. Some continued to work for the Central Pacific upgrading the hasty construction, such as filling in land to remove a trestle. Chinese also went to work on the railroad from Sacramento down San Joaquin Valley to Los Angeles. We have not yet been able to determine how many workers from the original transcontinental line went to work on other railroads versus the number of fresh workers contracted in China, but there were large contingents of Chinese building the Southern Pacific and Northern Pacific Railroads, as well as other railroads throughout the West and even in the East.

## **Native Americans**





### Federal Indian Removal Policy

Early in the 19th century, the United States felt threatened by England and Spain, who held land in the western continent. At the same time, American settlers clamored for more land. Thomas Jefferson proposed the creation of a buffer zone between U.S. and European holdings, to be inhabited by eastern American Indians. This plan would also allow for American expansion westward from the original colonies to the Mississippi River.

Between 1816 and 1840, tribes located between the original states and the Mississippi River, including Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles, signed more than 40 treaties ceding their lands to the U.S. In his 1829 inaugural address, President Andrew Jackson set a policy to relocate eastern Indians. In 1830 it was endorsed, when Congress passed the Indian Removal Act to force those remaining to move west of the Mississippi. Between 1830 and 1850, about 100,000 American Indians living between Michigan, Louisiana, and Florida moved west after the U.S. government coerced treaties or used the U.S. Army against those resisting. Many were treated brutally. An estimated 3,500 Creeks died in Alabama and on their westward journey. Some were transported in chains.

### The Cherokees

Historically, Cherokees occupied lands in several southeastern states. As European settlers arrived, Cherokees traded and intermarried with them. They began to adopt European customs and gradually turned to an agricultural economy, while being pressured to give up traditional homelands. Between 1721 and 1819, over 90 percent of their lands were ceded to others. By the 1820s, Sequoyah's syllabary brought literacy and a formal governing system with a written constitution. In 1830—the same year the Indian Removal Act was passed—gold was found on Cherokee lands. Georgia held lotteries to give Cherokee land and gold rights to whites. Cherokees were not allowed to conduct tribal business, contract, testify in courts against whites, or mine for gold.

The Cherokees successfully challenged Georgia in the U.S. Supreme Court. President Jackson, when hearing of the Court's decision, reportedly said, "[Chief Justice] John Marshall has made his decision; let him enforce it now if he can."

## The Treaty of New Echota

Most Cherokees opposed removal. Yet a minority felt that it was futile to continue to fight. They believed that they might survive as a people only if they signed a treaty with the United States. In December 1835, the U.S. sought out this minority to effect a treaty at New Echota, Georgia. Only 300 to 500 Cherokees were there; none were elected officials of the Cherokee Nation. Twenty signed the treaty, ceding all Cherokee territory east of the Mississippi to the U.S., in exchange for \$5 million and new homelands in Indian Territory.

More than 15,000 Cherokees protested the illegal treaty. Yet, on May 23, 1836, the Treaty of New Echota was ratified by the U.S. Senate – by just one vote.

## "Many Days Pass and People Die Very Much"

Most Cherokees, including Chief John Ross, did not believe that they would be forced to move. In May 1838, Federal troops and state militias began the roundup of the Cherokees into stockades. In spite of warnings to troops to treat the Cherokees kindly, the roundup proved harrowing.

Families were separated—the elderly and ill forced out at gunpoint – people given only moments to collect cherished possessions. White looters followed, ransacking homesteads as Cherokees were led away.

Three groups left in the summer, traveling from present-day Chattanooga by rail, boat, and wagon, primarily on the Water Route. But river levels were too low for navigation; one group, traveling overland in Arkansas, suffered three to five deaths each day due to illness and drought.

Fifteen thousand captives still awaited removal. Crowding, poor sanitation, and drought made them miserable. Many died. The Cherokees asked to postpone removal until the fall, and to voluntarily remove themselves. The delay was granted, provided they remain in internment camps until travel resumed.

By November, 12 groups of 1,000 each were trudging 800 miles overland to the west. The last party, including Chief Ross, went by water. Now, heavy autumn rains and hundreds of wagons on the muddy route made roads impassable; little grazing and game could be found to supplement meager rations.

Two-thirds of the ill-equipped Cherokees were trapped between the ice-bound Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during January. As one survivor recalled, " Long time we travel on way to new land. People feel bad when they leave Old Nation. Womens cry and make sad wails. Children cry and many men cry...but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on go towards West. Many days pass and people die very much."

Some drank stagnant water and succumbed to disease. One survivor told how his father got sick and died; then, his mother; then, one by one, his five brothers and sisters. "One each day. Then all are gone."

By March 1839, all survivors had arrived in the west. No one knows how many died throughout the ordeal, but the trip was especially hard on infants, children, and the elderly. Missionary doctor Elizur Butler, who accompanied the Cherokees, estimated that over 4,000 died—nearly a fifth of the Cherokee population.

## Epilogue

In August 1839, John Ross was elected Principal Chief of the reconstituted Cherokee Nation. Tahlequah, Oklahoma was its capital. It remains tribal headquarters for the Cherokee Nation today. About 1,000 Cherokees in Tennessee and North Carolina escaped the roundup. They gained recognition in 1866, establishing their tribal government in 1868 in Cherokee, North Carolina. Today, they are known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Letter from Chief John Ross, "To the Senate and House of Representatives"  
[Red Clay Council Ground, Cherokee Nation, September 28, 1836]



It is well known that for a number of years past we have been harassed by a series of vexations, which it is deemed unnecessary to recite in detail, but the evidence of which our delegation will be prepared to furnish. With a view to bringing our troubles to a close, a delegation was appointed on the 23rd of October, 1835, by the General Council of the nation, clothed with full powers to enter into arrangements with the Government of the United States, for the final adjustment of all our existing difficulties. The delegation failing to effect an arrangement with the United States commissioner, then in the nation, proceeded, agreeably to their instructions in that case, to Washington City, for the purpose of negotiating a treaty with the authorities of the United States.

After the departure of the Delegation, a contract was made by the Rev. John F. Schermerhorn, and certain individual Cherokees, purporting to be a "treaty, concluded at New Echota, in the State of Georgia, on the 29th day of December, 1835, by General William Carroll and John F. Schermerhorn, commissioners on the part of the United States, and the chiefs, headmen, and people of the Cherokee tribes of Indians." A spurious Delegation, in violation of a special injunction of the general council of the nation, proceeded to Washington City with this pretended treaty, and by false and fraudulent representations supplanted in the favor of the Government the legal and accredited Delegation of the Cherokee people, and obtained for this instrument, after making important alterations in its provisions, the recognition of the United States Government. And now it is presented to us as a treaty, ratified by the Senate, and approved by the President [Andrew Jackson], and our acquiescence in its requirements demanded, under the sanction of the displeasure of the United States, and the threat of summary compulsion, in case of refusal. It comes to us, not through our legitimate authorities, the known and usual medium of communication between the Government of the U.S. and our nation, but through the agency of a complication of powers, civil and military.

By the stipulations of this instrument, we are despoiled of our private possessions, the indefeasible property of individuals. We are stripped of every attribute of freedom and eligibility for legal self-defence. Our property may be plundered before our eyes; violence may be committed on our persons; even our lives may be taken away, and there is none to regard our complaints. We are denationalized; we are disfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family! We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own. And this is effected by the provisions of a compact which assumes the venerated, the sacred appellation of treaty.

We are overwhelmed! Our hearts are sickened, our utterance is paralyzed, when we reflect on the condition in which we are placed, by the audacious practices of unprincipled men, who have managed their stratagems with so much dexterity as to impose on the Government of the United States, in the face of our earnest, solemn, and reiterated protestations.

The instrument in question is not the act of our Nation; we are not parties to its covenants; it has not received the sanction of our people. The makers of it sustain no office nor appointment in our Nation, under the designation of Chiefs, Head men, or any other title, by which they hold, or could acquire, authority to assume the reins of Government, and to make bargain and sale of our rights, our possessions, and our common country. And we are constrained solemnly to declare, that we cannot but contemplate the enforcement of the stipulations of this instrument on us, against our consent, as an act of injustice and oppression, which, we are well persuaded, can never knowingly be countenanced by the Government and people of the United States; nor can we believe it to be the design of these honorable and highminded individuals, who stand at the head of the Govt., to bind a whole Nation, by the acts of a few unauthorized individuals. And, therefore, we, the parties to be affected by the result, appeal with confidence to the justice, the magnanimity, the compassion, of your honorable bodies, against the enforcement, on us, of the provisions of a compact, in the formation of which we have had no agency.

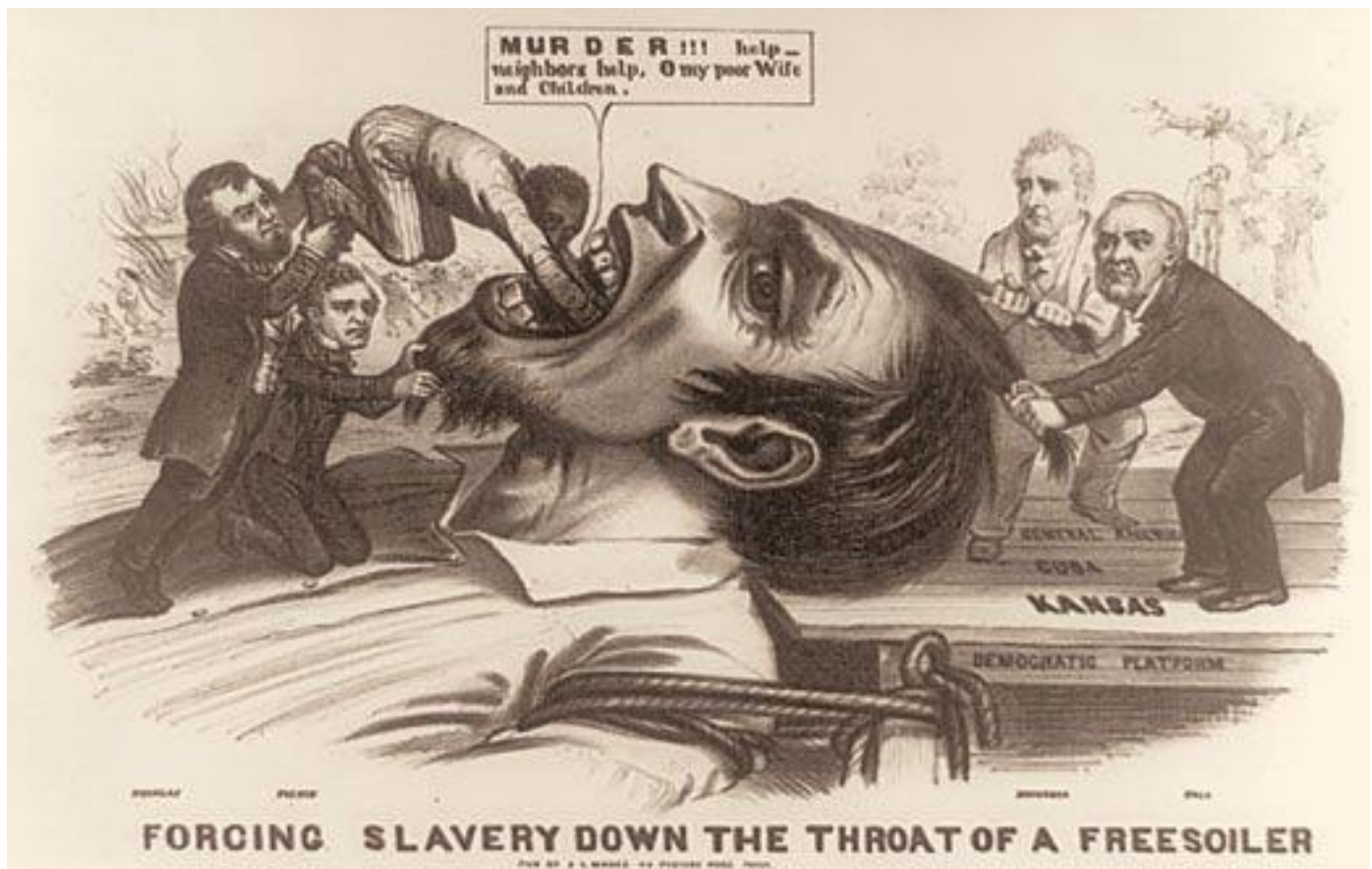
### **Free-Soil Party**

The Free-Soil Party was an antislavery political coalition that was organized in territorial Kansas in 1855 to oppose proslavery Democrats. From 1855 to 1859, party members thwarted the expansion of

slavery into Kansas Territory by forcibly resisting proslavery forces on the ground and drafting antislavery legislation in conjunction with the national Republican Party.

By 1854 the national debates over whether to allow slavery in the territories acquired from the Mexican-American War had reached a fever pitch. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed on May 30, 1854, was a piece of watershed legislation in American history. Drafted by Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas and containing the provision of "popular sovereignty," it created two new territories and enabled settlers and their legislatures to determine whether the future states would be slave or free. Congress had previously applied popular sovereignty in the New Mexico and Utah Territories under the Compromise of 1850, and due largely to a climate unsuitable for plantation slavery, little controversy ensued. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, on the other hand, allowed the possibility of slavery on large tracts of land that had been legally designated for free territories by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and it planted the seeds of political violence over slavery in the West.

Seeking to establish Kansas as a state without slavery, antislavery settlers from Massachusetts, upstate New York, Ohio's Western Reserve, and Iowa became known as "Free-Soilers." Some of these settlers were abolitionists, while others simply hoped to preserve an all-white society of yeoman farmers in the West, without slavery (thus limiting direct economic competition with slaveholders). On March 30, 1855, Kansans elected a territorial legislature, deciding in effect whether the future of Kansas would be slave or free. Several thousand proslavery "border ruffians" from western Missouri flooded over the border, stuffing ballot boxes in a resounding victory for proslavery voters. The Free-Soilers referred to the resulting territorial government as the "Bogus Legislature," but in spite of the election fraud, Democratic President Franklin Pierce continued to approve of the proslavery legislature and denounced the Free-Soilers as insurrectionists.



In response, Free-Soilers held a convention at Big Springs in July 1855, laying out their case against voter fraud in the March 1855 elections. Underscoring the initial moderation of most Free-Soilers, they held the convention at Big Springs rather than Lawrence, which had a reputation for abolitionist radicalism.



The antislavery settlers were deeply divided over race. Tensions persisted between morally-inclined abolitionists and antislavery settlers who cared little about black freedom but did not wish to compete with black labor in Kansas. Indeed, antislavery settlers divided over whether to reject the territorial government, to boycott territorial elections altogether, or to use violence to achieve political aims. Moreover, abolitionist Easterners consistently broke with conservative Westerners who opposed black emigration and suffrage.

Amid the infighting, this aggrieved coalition of antislavery settlers formally formed the Free-Soil Party on September 5, 1855. The first order of business was to form a separate territorial legislature at Topeka and draft an antislavery constitution. Again, factionalism arose between abolitionist New Englanders led by Charles L. Robinson and more conservative Midwesterners associated with James H. Lane, a U.S. congressman from Indiana who supported black exclusion from the territory.

Despite the internal divisions, Free-State Party members held a constitutional convention at Topeka in October 1855, drafted and passed their own constitution. The resulting "Topeka Constitution" outlawed both slavery and the settlement of free African Americans in Kansas, and the constitution passed in a territory-wide referendum on December 15, 1855, as proslavery men boycotted the vote on legislation drafted by what they saw as an illegitimate legislature. However, the Topeka Constitution stalled in the U.S. Senate, as support for it was largely confined to the North. Whereas congressional Republicans supported the Free-Staters, national proslavery leaders advocated the Lecompton Constitution, a rival proslavery document championed by the "Bogus Legislature" starting in September 1857.

Like its proslavery opposition, the Free-State Party used paramilitary groups to buttress its politics at the ground level. Extralegal militia outfits such as the "Kansas Legion" operated in conjunction with some Free-Soil politicians. Bloodshed erupted between proslavery "bushwhackers" and Eastern-backed anti-slavery "jayhawkers," as a series of violent episodes beginning with the proslavery raid on Lawrence in May 1856 led to the period known as "Bleeding Kansas."