

Bleeding Kansas

DOCUMENTS YOU'LL BE USING

- 🕒 3.11 Missourians Going to Kansas to Vote
- 🕒 3.12 The Caning of Charles Sumner
- 🕒 3.13 Brutal Murder of Unarmed Citizens of Lawrence, Kansas, by Quantrell's Gang of Southern Cut-Throats
- 📄 3.14 Excerpt from Charter of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Society
- 📄 3.15 Excerpt from a Speech by Charles Sumner in the U.S. Senate
- 📄 3.16 Excerpt from "The Sumner Discipline—The Needful Remedy" in *The Richmond Enquirer*
- 🕒 3.17 Forcing Slavery Down the Throat of a Freesoiler
- 📄 3.18 Letter from Edward Bridgman to his Cousin Sidney
- 📄 3.19 Account of the Quantrill Massacre by Erastus D. Ladd

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

This act, which became law in May 1854, created two new territories west of the Mississippi River. The law left the question of the legality of slavery in the territories to be determined by the settlers themselves at the time they applied for statehood.

Excerpt from Charter of the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Society

3.14 | Charter | 1854 | *The Emigrant Aid Society*, established in Boston in 1854, encouraged emigration to Kansas and Nebraska, hoping to establish an antislavery majority in the territories. The society founded the town of Lawrence, Kansas, and worked in cooperation with German emigrant companies.

REPORT.

The objects of this Corporation are apparent in its name.

The immense emigration to America from Europe introduces into our ports a very large number of persons eager to pass westward. The fertility of our

western regions, and the cheapness of the public lands, induce many of the native born citizens of the old States also to emigrate thither. At the present time public and social considerations of the gravest character render it desirable to settle the territories west of Missouri and Iowa; and these considerations are largely increasing westward emigration....

With the advantages attained by such a system of effort, the territory selected as the scene of operations, would, it is believed, at once fill up with free inhabitants. There is reason to suppose that several thousand men of New England origin propose to emigrate under the auspices of some such arrangement this very summer. Of the whole emigration from Europe—amounting to some 400,000 persons, there can be no difficulty in inducing thirty or forty thousand to take the same direction. Applications from German agents have already been made to members of the Company. We have also intimations in correspondence from the free States of the West, of a wide spread desire there among those who know what it is to settle a new country to pass on, if such an organization can be made into that now thrown open. An Emigrant Company of those intending to go has been formed in Worcester County, and others in other States.

In view of the establishment by such agencies of a new Free State in that magnificent region, it is unnecessary to dwell in detail on the advantages which this enterprise holds out to the country at large.

It determines in the right way the institutions of the unsettled Territories, in less time than the discussion of them has required in Congress. It opens to those who are in want in the Eastern States, a home and a competence, without the suffering hitherto incident to emigration. For the Company is the pioneer—and provides, before the settler arrives, the conveniences which he first requires. Such a removal of an over-crowded population is one of the greatest advantages to Eastern cities. Again, the enterprise opens commercial advantages to the commercial States, just in proportion to the population which it creates, of free men who furnish a market to our manufactures and imports. Whether the new line of States shall be Free States or Slave States, is a question deeply interesting to those who are to provide the manufactures for their consumption. Especially will it prove an advantage to Massachusetts, if she create the new state by her foresight—supply the first necessities to its inhabitants—and open, in the outset, communications between their homes and her ports and factories.

In return for these advantages, which the

Company's rapid and simple effort affords to the emigrant and to the country, its stockholders receive that satisfaction ranked by Lord Bacon among the very highest, of becoming founders of States (See

Mr. Everett's Speech on the Nebraska Bill), and, more than this—States which are prosperous and free. They secure satisfaction by an investment which promises large returns at no distant day. ■

Excerpt from a Speech by Charles Sumner in the U.S. Senate

3.15 | Speech | May 19, 1856 | *On May 19, 1856, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts delivered a speech in the Senate during debate over the free-state constitution for Kansas submitted to Congress, a constitution that was boycotted by the proslavery side. The opposition was led by South Carolina Senator Andrew Butler. On May 22, Sumner was physically attacked and severely beaten in the Senate chamber by Butler's nephew, Representative Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina.*

...But the wickedness which I now begin to expose is immeasurably aggravated by the motive which prompted it. Not in any common lust for power did this uncommon tragedy have its origin. It is the rape of a virgin Territory, compelling it to the hateful embrace of Slavery; and it may be clearly traced to a depraved longing for a new slave State, the hideous offspring of such a crime, in the hope of adding to the power of slavery in the National Government. Yes, sir, when the whole world, alike Christian and Turk, is rising up to condemn this wrong, and to make it a hissing to the nations, here in our Republic, force, ay, sir, *force* has been openly employed in compelling Kansas to this pollution, and all for the sake of political power.

With regret, I come again upon the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. Butler] It is against the people of Kansas that the sensibilities of the Senator are particularly aroused. Coming, as he announces, "from a State" ay, sir, from South Carolina he turns with lordly disgust from this newly-formed community, which he will not recognize even as a "body politic." Pray, sir, by what title does he indulge in this egotism? Has he read the

history of "the State" which he represents? He cannot surely have forgotten its shameful imbecility from Slavery, confessed throughout the Revolution, followed by its more shameful assumptions for Slavery since. He cannot have forgotten its wretched persistence in the slave-trade as the very apple of its eye, and the condition of its participation in the Union. He cannot have forgotten its constitution, which is Republican only in name, confirming power in the hands of the few, and founding the qualifications of its legislators on "a settled freehold estate and ten negroes." And yet the Senator, to whom that "State" has in part committed the guardianship of its good name, instead of moving, with backward treading steps, to cover its nakedness, rushes forward in the very ecstasy of madness, to expose it by provoking a comparison with Kansas. South Carolina is old; Kansas is young. South Carolina counts by cen-

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turies; where Kansas counts by years. But a beneficent example may be born in a day; and I venture to say, that against the two centuries of the older "State," may be already set the two years of trial, evolving corresponding virtue, in the younger community. In the one, is the long wail of Slavery; in the other, the hymns of Freedom. And if we glance at special achievement, it will be difficult to find anything in the history of South Carolina which presents so much of heroic spirit in an heroic cause as shines in that repulse of the Missouri invaders by the beleaguered town of Lawrence, where even the women gave

their effective efforts to Freedom. The matrons of Rome, who poured their jewels into the treasury for the public defence, the wives of Prussia, who, with delicate fingers, clothed their defenders against French invasion, the mothers of our own Revolution, who sent forth their sons, covered with prayers and blessings, to combat for human rights, did nothing of self-sacrifice

truer than did these women on this occasion. Were the whole history of South Carolina blotted out of existence, from its very beginning down to the day of the last election of the Senator to his present seat on this floor, civilization might lose—I do not say how little; but surely less than it has already gained by the example of Kansas, in its valiant struggle against oppression, and in the development of a new science of emigration.

Already, in Lawrence alone, there are newspapers and schools, including a High School, and throughout this infant Territory there is more mature scholarship far, in proportion to its inhabitants, than in all South Carolina. Ah, sir, I tell the Senator that Kansas, welcomed as a free State, will be a “ministering angel” to the Republic, when South Carolina, in the cloak of darkness which she hugs, “lies howling.” ■

Excerpt from “The Sumner Discipline—The Needful Remedy” in *The Richmond Enquirer*

3.16 | Editorial | June 3, 1856 | *This editorial on the beating of Senator Charles Sumner appeared in The Richmond Enquirer on June 3, 1856.*

...In the main, the press of the South applaud the conduct of Mr. Brooks, without condition or limitation. Our approbation at least is entire and unreserved. We consider the act good in conception, better in execution, and best of all in consequence.

These vulgar abolitionists in the Senate are getting above themselves. They have been humored until they forget their position. They have grown saucy, and dare to be impudent to gentlemen! Now, they are a low, mean, scurvy set, with some little book learning, but as utterly devoid of spirit or honor as a peck of cure. Intrenched behind “privilege,”

they fancy they can slander the South and insult its Representatives, with impunity. The truth is they have been suffered to run too long without collars. They must be lashed into submission. Sumner, in particular, ought to have nine-and-thirty early every morning. He is a great strapping fellow, and could stand the cowhide beautifully. Brooks frightened him, and at the first blow of the cane, he bellowed like a bull-calf. There is the blackguard Wilson, an ignorant Nantick cobbler, swaggering in excess of muscle, and absolutely dying for a beating. Will not somebody take him in hand? Hale is another huge, red face, sweating scoundrel, whom some gentlemen should kick and cuff until he abates something of his impudent talk. These men are perpetually abusing the people and representatives of the

South, for tyrants, robbers, ruffians, adulterers, and what not. Shall we stand it? Can gentlemen sit still in the Senate and House of Representatives, under an incessant stream of denunciation from wretches who avail themselves of the privilege of place, to indulge their devilish passions with impunity? It is an idle mockery to challenge one of these scullions. It is equally useless to attempt to disgrace them. They are insensible to shame; and can be brought to reason only by an application of cowhide or gutta percha. Let them once understand that for every vile word spoken against the South, they will suffer so many stripes, and they will soon learn to behave themselves, like decent dogs—they can never be gentlemen. Mr. Brooks has initiated

this salutary discipline, and he deserves applause for the bold, judicious manner, in which he chastised the scamp Sumner. It was a proper act, done at the proper time, and in the proper place. Of all places on earth the Senate chamber, the theatre of his vituperative exploits, was the very spot where Sumner should have been made to suffer for his violation of the

decencies of decorous debate, and for his brutal denunciation of a venerable statesman. It was literally and entirely proper, that he should be stricken down and beaten just beside the desk against which he leaned as he culminated his filthy utterances through the capitol. It is idle to talk of the sanctity of the Senate Chamber, since it is polluted by the presence of such fellows as Wilson and Sumner and Wade. They have desecrated it, and cannot now fly to it as to a sanctuary from the lash of vengeance. We trust other gentlemen will follow the example of Mr. Brooks, so that a curb may be imposed upon the truculence and audacity of abolition speakers. If need be, let us have a caning or cowhiding every day. If the worse comes to the worse, so much the sooner so much the better. ■

“It was literally and entirely proper, that [Sumner] should be stricken down and beaten just beside the desk against which he leaned as he culminated his filthy utterances through the capitol.”

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



DOUGLAS

PIERCE

BUCHANAN

CASE

FORCING SLAVERY DOWN THE THROAT OF A FREESOILER

PUB BY J L MAGEE 48 FAYUNK ROAD PHILA

Forcing Slavery Down the Throat of a Freesoiler

3.17 | Political cartoon | 1856 | This cartoon presents commentary on the conflict between “freesoilers” (that is, those who opposed slavery in Kansas) and proslavery forces.

Letter from Edward Bridgman to His Cousin Sidney

3.18 | Letter | 1856 | *Edward Bridgman migrated to Kansas from Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1856 at the age of 22. Bridgman joined those fighting for a free Kansas. He would fight beside John Brown several months after the events recounted in this letter.*

Kansas May 25, 1856

Dear Cousin Sidney

I write now to let you know my present situation and a little about the affairs of Kansas....

In some small towns the men are called up nearly every night to hold themselves in readiness to meet the worst as scouting parties of Alabamians, Georgians and Missourians are around continually, plundering clothes yards, horses and cattle, and everything they can lay hold of. A few miles from Lawrence a man was plowing. A party of Southerners came along and being hungry killed his best ox, ate what they wanted, took away some and left the rest. Such like occurrences are almost daily taking place. Last Thursday, news came from Lawrence that she was in the hands of the Ruffians, and that they had demolished the free state Hotel, burned Robinson's house, and destroyed the two printing presses. Almost immediately a company of 30 was raised. There was no reason why I could not go for one, so I borrowed a rifle and ammunition and joined them. The thought of engaging in battle is not a pleasing one, but the free state men are compelled to. Why should I not do [so] as well as others, I have nothing to hinder me and my life is no dearer to me than the lives of others are to them. At sundown we divided into 2 divisions and took turns in walking. It was really affecting to see husbands and wives bid each other good bye—not knowing as they would ever see each other again. Yet the feeling and sympathies of the women are as much enlisted in the cause as the men. It is nothing uncommon to see them running bullets and making cartridges. One woman yesterday told

me that she had often been called up nights to make them....

Tuesday, 27. Since I wrote the above the Osawatomie company has returned to O. as news came that we could do nothing immediately, so we returned back. On our way back we heard that 5 men had been killed by Free State men. The men were butchered—ears cut off and the bodies thrown into the river. The murdered men (Proslavery) had thrown out threats and insults, yet the act was barbarous and inhuman whoever committed by. We met the men going when we were going up and knew that they were on a secret expedition, yet didn't know what it was. Tomorrow something will be done to arrest them. There were 8 concerned in the act. Perhaps they had good motives, some think they had, how that is I dont know. The affairs took place 8 miles from Osawatomie. The War seems to have commenced in real earnest. Horses are stolen on all sides whenever they can be taken

Weds eve. Since yesterday I have learned that those men who committed those murders were a party of Browns. One of them was formerly in the wool business in Springfield. John Brown, his son, (Jn) has been taken today, tho he had no hand in the act, but was knowing to it, but when I write to Maria I will give further particulars. Osawatomie is in much fear and excitement. News came tonight that a co. of Georgians and Alabamians were coming to make this their headquarters. All work is nearly

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suspended, the women are in constant fear. It was really pleasing to witness the reception of our co. by the women after they came in to O. [I]t was a little after dark. A long line of women and children stood by the roadside to greet us and joy was depicted on every countenance. Hands were heartily shaken and congratulations offered. But I must close....

Yours truly, E

It won't be best for me to write my name so you must guess who wrote this. But very few now attach their full name to a letter.

Account of the Quantrill Massacre by Erastus D. Ladd

3.19 | Letter | September 16, 1863 | *The conflict between Missouri and Kansas continued through the Civil War as bands of Kansas “Jayhawkers” and Missouri “Bushwhackers” skirmished and raided across the border. Both sides engaged in theft and murder, but the most notorious attack was led by William Quantrill and his Missouri “ruffians.” They raided Lawrence, Kansas, on August 21, 1863. In what became known as the Lawrence Massacre, 150 male citizens of the town were killed. Erastus D. Ladd, a Lawrence resident who had come to Kansas with the Emigrant Aid Society, recounted his experience.*

DEAR FATHER:

It was five minutes past five o'clock, when I got up and went down stairs. I stepped out on the porch on the south side of my kitchen, and was standing there for a moment, when I heard, first, two or three scattering shots, followed immediately by a dozen or more in quick succession, in a south-easterly direction, but hidden from my view by houses. The shots were accompanied by cheers, or rather yells. In a few moments, as I stood looking, some three or four negroes from the camp, which was some forty rods from where I stood, came rushing by, hallooing, “The secesh have come!” As I looked, the head of the column of fiends rushed down the street on which the camp was, full in my view, and commenced shooting down the boys in camp near by. There were twenty-five boys there at the time, of whom they shot down and killed nineteen. How the rest escaped I do not know. I estimated there were some two hundred of the devils. There were about three hundred altogether. I saw that, too truly, “the secesh had come!” I went to call Eliza, but she was already up. We commenced to get up and dress the children as fast as possible. We saw that every man was shot down at sight. When they had rode into the main street, and commenced their hellish work they immediately broke into squads and rushed through all the streets, killing every man they saw, probably in order to prevent any concentration or organization on our part for defense. They rode up and

“Kansas was the first territory, and Lawrence the first place, where this great strife and war between freedom and slavery took an active form...”

down the streets seeking victims. As soon as all danger of opposition was over they commenced to rob and plunder the houses and barns, and fire them. Eliza at first insisted that I should stay with the family, which I proposed to do, at least for the time, but when she saw them shooting every man they found, she insisted that I should run and get out of town. I concluded, however, that it was better for me to stay until the first fury of the assault was passed; for, to be discovered in the street was certain death. I told her so, and remained. To this fact I probably owe my life.

When they came to plundering and burning, the streets were comparatively clear. When they were near my house, or along the street, I would go into my cellar; and when they were temporarily absent, I would come up and watch the progress of affairs from the windows or porches. The first fire I saw was a large barn, about one hundred feet from my house. They had taken the only horse in it, and then set it on fire. In the course of time it came our turn. I was in the cellar. A devil came to the door with a cocked revolver in his hand, and called Eliza out. He demanded if I was in the house. She told him I was not. He demanded her money, jewelry, and arms. She gave him what she had. He then broke up some chairs, and tore up some books, piled them up in the dining room, and in the kitchen, and set them on fire. He was a Perfect demon. She begged for five minutes time to get out some

things. He would not give her a moment. I heard the flames crackling and roaring over my head. I expected, however, that I should be able to escape through the outside cellar door, which I had fastened on the inside, after he should have left the house, and before I should suffer from the heat. He told

Eliza if she put out the fire it would be a damned sight worse for her. He then went to the next house. Eliza got some water and put out the fire in the dining-room, and partially in the kitchen. I supposed she had done so altogether, but she, fearing if it was put out entirely that they would be there again, before I could get away, threw some paper on the kitchen fire, and let it burn.

When the fellow had gone, I came up from the cellar, took an observation, saw that the fellow was out of sight, in the next house, and that no one was passing on the street—although there were some in sight above and below, but they were not approaching, being

otherwise engaged—took the children's wagon, put Emma in it, and Georgie in her lap, took Winnie by the hand, and Eliza, a bundle of clothing for them and herself, and a change—a thin coat, vest, and pants—for me, in a pillow-slip, and we went boldly out into the street, crossed over it, went along the road out of town for about two miles, and were not disturbed.

I will not attempt to describe the desolation which I saw on my return to our town, which was just in the full tide of the greatest prosperity it had ever seen. I could not describe it if I would. I cannot do better than those have done who have written for the papers, and still they have utterly failed. Many of our best men were murdered. All except one of our best blocks of buildings have been consumed, a large portion of our town destroyed, and all of it sacked and plundered. As to the amount of property destroyed, the many horses and goods taken, &c., the papers have informed you better than I can. Eliza and the children came in towards night of that day, and, through the kindness of friends, we have had a home, or rather several stopping places until yesterday, when we moved into a part of a house. We have three small rooms, blackened with smoke, and glass most all broken by the heat, (for it was set on fire among the last, and put out after they left the town) for which we pay nine dollars per month. By buying, borrowing, and (not begging) donations, we have got a few things to keep house with.

Now, father, why have we been so terribly punished? Why so infinitely worse than any other place in all the history of this war? Why beyond comparison and precedent, except in the war of the British and Sepoys, in India, or some of the wars with the savages in our own history? Our city has been a doomed city in the feelings and intentions of the rebels since 1854, when we came here. They have only awaited their opportunity. It has come, and they have had their revenge. Kansas was the first territory, and Lawrence the first place, where this great strife and war between freedom and slavery took an active form—where this power of hell was first told, “Thus far, no farther, come.” As Lawrence was the representative of a principle in all that great revolution, so, as such representative, has the hellish hate of that infernal power been poured out upon her devoted head, and she feels to rejoice that she is counted worthy to receive such a baptism of blood, and fire, and desolation. ■

History and Photography

Given the date and the clarity of the image, the original photo of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (Document 3.1) was probably a Daguerreotype. But the photo of Gordon, the former slave (Document 3.4), was a *carte-de-visite*. This name came from its small size—4 inches by 2 inches—which was about the same as the calling cards people left behind when they visited each other's homes. *Carte-de-visite* portraits of famous people became a craze in Europe and America around 1860. They were collected and put into albums, which could be read like a magazine. So this photographic form was an ideal way to publicize Gordon's mistreatment, and the continuing abolitionist message. The number of people who saw the image was increased dramatically when the engravings and article appeared in *Harper's Weekly*.

This unit also illustrates the limits of photography at the time. The Bleeding Kansas story is told entirely in drawings because no cameras were present to record nighttime raids, secret movements, or sudden attacks. These events could only be described later by eyewitnesses working from memory. Sometimes, of course, this is also true today.

Bleeding Kansas

UNIT 3 Analyzing the Documents

TIME CLASSROOM
REPRODUCIBLE

The questions below are designed to deepen your understanding of the images and texts concerning the controversy over Kansas's status as a free state or a slave state. Use items 3.11 through 3.19 as the basis for your answers.

1. Why did the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska act lead to violence in Kansas?

2. What specific actions did proslavery advocates and antislavery advocates take in the hope of winning a majority as the territory applied for statehood? Which actions were legal? Which were not?

3. What does the Charles Sumner beating demonstrate about how volatile the slavery question had become by 1856?

4. What point was the creator of document 3.17 making? Is this a proslavery or antislavery cartoon? Explain.

5. How was the Civil War fought in Kansas? How was it a continuation of the "Bleeding Kansas" conflict of the 1850s?
