

Chapter I Introduction

“Bleeding Kansas” is the popular phrase describing the conflict over slavery in Kansas that became nationally prominent just before and during the American Civil War. Pro-slavery settlers from the South and anti-slavery activists from the north came to the territory because it was located at the intersection of Northern and Southern expansion. Because of the Kansas conflict over whether the territory would become a free state or not, Kansans first acted out the violence that would engage all Americans beginning in 1861. Born in that early conflict, Kansas became the strategic center of an emerging continental nation. In the Kansas Conflict, American settlers first fought to uphold their different and irreconcilable principles of freedom and equality. The place where this crucial step toward the outbreak of the Civil War occurred has not yet received the recognition accorded to other Civil War landscapes.

Designation of the Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area will recognize the important natural, cultural, and historic resources that form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape. This landscape reflects distinctive patterns of human activity shaped by the geography of the eastern border of the Great Plains. Kansas Territory attracted waves of settlers—some driven from their homes by others, some seeking their freedom, and some intending to enact their ideals and beliefs. These settlers meant to decide the fate of the territory, especially on the slavery question. But they were challenged by the land, the weather, and the spirit of the place itself. Those who came to Kansas to improve their fortune or shape their destiny

had to adapt to the environment they found. What happened as successive waves of settlers tried to remove others and as different groups tried to change the beliefs of others caused the Kansas Conflict. The struggle during the territorial period set the stage for continued struggles, even today. In this adaptation, Kansas is a microcosm of our nation, holding examples of many struggles for freedom within its boundaries.

Today, many places in the eastern Kansas landscape look much as they did in the territorial period when Native Americans, European Americans, and African Americans struggled to adapt to the treeless landscape and the harshly variable climate of the Great Plains. Although these settlers recreated a landscape of farms and towns like that of the eastern United States, Kansas is still a frontier where people struggle to make a living and live the good life. There are many stories, storytellers, sites, and parks in that significant landscape that deserve the recognition of their role in the national story. These people and places tell of the pain and triumph of learning to live in a different kind of landscape and learning to live with different groups in building a nation. Today the struggle for freedom is a vital issue that is still associated with the real problem of democratic nation-building.

PROJECT PURPOSE

There are many stories to tell of Kansans’ role in Indian removal, national politics, the Civil War, and the enduring struggle for freedom that followed. Native, European, and African American settlers, both men and

women, struggled for freedom in Kansas Territory and their descendants have continued to contest the fundamental socio-political structure of the United States. A substantial number of cultural and natural resources dating from the territorial and Civil War period can be found in Kansas today. The interpretation of these buildings, landscapes, sites, and geographical features provide a valuable conceptual framework for understanding the territory's critical contribution to the history of the United States. Within this thematic framework, the continued protection of such resources can be enhanced. The purpose of the study is to provide Congress with an analysis to determine if the resources in the study area are suitable and feasible for designation as a national heritage area.

The study area history outlines why people came to Kansas at a particular time, why they stayed, how they affected the environment of the Great Plains, and how that environment affected them. The struggle to adapt to the physical environment affected the development of agriculture, transportation, trade and business, and social and cultural patterns in rural and urban places in the study area. The National Heritage Area designation will help preserve remnants of the territorial period landscape and interpret the stories of that interaction over time. These resources may be cooperatively preserved, interpreted, and celebrated through designation as a National Heritage Area.

This feasibility study was commissioned by the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance (TKHA) with the support of the Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area Planning Committee (BKNHA). Early formal discussion of a National Heritage Area began in Lawrence, Douglas County, a community that is justifiably proud of its central role in

creating a free-state heritage. In January 2002, members of the Lawrence, Kansas, City Commission and the Douglas County Commission appointed the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area Committee to investigate the possibility of Lawrence and Douglas County applying for federal heritage area designation. The committee of seventeen members produced a detailed report concluding that sufficient resources and public support existed for a National Heritage Area. The committee therefore recommended on September 10, 2002, that the city and county proceed to seek designation.

The Douglas County Committee determined unifying themes that marked the history of the area and focused on the theme of "Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom" as the most distinctive theme of national importance. The committee concluded that, "even without official designation, the creation of a heritage area would confer a number of benefits. It would unify our fragmented but rich history in a cohesive manner that would allow us to more easily educate residents and visitors about our history. This would provide a source of community pride and enhance our quality of life. In addition, the area would become a heritage destination that would boost tourism and the economy."

Recognizing the broad reach of the heritage area concept, members of the Douglas County Committee helped organize a Heritage Summit Meeting held January 30-31, 2003, in Lawrence, Kansas. Approximately seventy-five representatives from twenty Kansas and Missouri communities participated in a structured, facilitated brainstorming process. This generated the significant and unifying themes that could be used to organize the resources of a proposed National Heritage Area. Fifteen educators,

fifteen government officials, seven tourism professionals, six economic developers, five parks and recreation professionals, and several representatives of cultural groups and private heritage attractions participated in the Heritage Summit Meeting.

Besides the Douglas County Committee work, planning for the organization and study of a National Heritage Area built on the efforts of the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance (TKHA), a non-profit grassroots organization established in 1999 and dedicated to building and understanding of and appreciation for the history, heritage, and national impact of the Kansas Territory. In recognition of the Kansas Sesquicentennial commemoration beginning in 2004, the TKHA has embarked on a series of projects, including a brochure series, considering significant topics in the history of the period. These include “John Brown of Kansas,” “Native American Culture: Indian Nations of Kansas,” “African Americans and the Kansas Territory,” “The Underground Railroad in Kansas Territory,” “Battles, Military Forts and Trails in the Kansas Territory,” “Natural Environment of the Kansas Territory,” “Personalities of Territorial Kansas.”¹ Many TKHA members are active leaders in the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area planning committee.

Regular monthly meetings of a regional planning committee (BKNHA) began February 13, 2003, and continued into 2004. The BKNHA planning committee has consulted with the National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office. Since September, 2003, the NPS observer has been Sue Pridemore, Heritage Coordinator.

The steering committee of the regional planning committee interviewed two qualified historians in August, 2003, and contracted

with Dale Nimz in September to undertake a National Heritage Area feasibility study based on the theme of Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom in eastern Kansas. The feasibility study was completed January 30, 2004.

STUDY PROCESS

The study team for this NHA feasibility study included representatives of the Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area planning committee and the consultants—Dale E. Nimz, Ph. D., historic preservation consultant, Cathy Ambler, Ph.D., associate historian, and Mike Houts, M.A. mapping technician.

Investigating Kansas’s contributions to the conflict over slavery and the struggle for freedom that followed the Civil War required a review of the extensive literature on the events that occurred in Kansas Territory and the people that participated in the making of a free state between 1854 and 1865. The study consultants selected this time period as the most important to evaluate the national contribution of Kansas and Kansans to the trends leading to the Civil War and subsequent nation-building.

The study process included:

Creating a public involvement strategy of extensive individual and organizational outreach, meetings, and circulation of written materials. This strategy promoted public understanding of the study and maximized the participation and contributions of interested individuals and organizations. Members of the public were encouraged to participate in data collection, selection of themes, and the delineation of boundaries;

¹ See <http://www.territorialkansas.org>. Referenced 12/01/2003.

Researching the history and developing a chronology of events for the unifying themes;

Developing a process for considering and selecting potential themes;

Examining the topographic features that determined the Kansas conflict, influenced the outcomes, and contributed to the enduring struggle for freedom;

Selecting a study area based on preliminary analysis of history and the concentration of resources;

Developing alternative national heritage area boundaries and a process for selecting a preferred alternative;

Compiling maps to analyze the assemblages of natural and cultural resources from the Bleeding Kansas period in the study area.

These maps included important terrain features, public and private open space, designated National Historic Landmarks, National Register of Historic Places listings, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom listings, and other sites and resources identified by the study consultants or suggested by the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area Planning Committee;

Discussing potential management strategies;

Assessing the national significance, suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a National Heritage Area

Assessing potential impacts of alternatives through an environmental assessment.

STUDY AREA

The Bleeding Kansas study area comprised twenty-three counties in eastern and south-eastern Kansas.

Allen	Anderson	Bourbon
Cherokee	Clay	Coffey
Crawford	Douglas	Franklin
Geary	Johnson	Labette
Leavenworth	Linn	Miami
Neosho	Pottawatomie	Riley
Shawnee	Wabaunsee	Wilson
Woodson	Wyandotte	

Many asset descriptions of historical, cultural, educational, and recreational resources were provided by the members of the BKNHA Planning Committee. The study consultants defined the study area after preliminary investigation of assets associated with the themes determined by the Bleeding Kansas Planning Committee. The consultant's research discovered that a rich array of resources was clustered in a significant assemblage in the above counties. The natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources in this area form a cohesive nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area Planning Committee organized the public involvement strategy to encourage the broadest opportunities for citizen and organizational participation. The BKNHA planning

committee identified key contacts in state and local government, organizations interested in the state's history, natural and cultural resources protection, tourism, business, and industry.

In testimony presented August 12, 2003, Judy Billings, director of Lawrence Convention and Visitors Bureau, chair of the BKNHA planning committee, described her experience to the Joint Committee on Economic Development, Kansas State Legislature. In working to promote the rich history that we share, she observed, "we make attempts at working cooperatively with other cities and counties, but without a formalized way of doing so it just doesn't seem to take on the significance that I believe it could." In Douglas County, for instance, it was not the case that Douglas County didn't have information but that it was not coordinated well enough to be used for the good of the entire county. As Billings concluded her presentation, "it's not the dollars that bring people together. It's the teamwork. It's the goals that we set collectively. As resources and energies are pooled and partnerships are formed with other organizations and governmental entities, the dollars begin to come in for projects that are born out of the collective goals."

During 2003, news articles described the National Heritage Area effort. For example, in the October 20 *Kansas City Star*, columnist Mike Hendricks acknowledged that "plans are afoot to turn eastern Kansas into a tourist attraction focusing on the state's key role in the Civil War and the abolition of slavery ... We're not talking about another national park. [Supporters] hope to get federal help to coordinate some of the historic sites already out there." Hendricks went on to point out that "the timing couldn't be any better for building excitement on something

like this. Next year looks to be a historian's delight in our part of the country. Besides being the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition, 2004 marks the sesquicentennial of Kansas territory and the golden anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. The Board of Education*, the landmark school desegregation case." Most importantly, Hendricks emphasized, "it was in Kansas where Americans began deciding in earnest—and in bloodshed—one of the most important questions ever put to a people."

Public participation was very important in order to develop the study's geographical and thematic content, to identify resources and activities related to Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom, and to generate public support for management alternatives. The geographic scale of the study area, the number of resources remaining, and the potential for conflicting priorities in interpretation and preservation required consultation with public agencies, organizations, and individual citizens. The feasibility of National Heritage Area designation was discussed with the public at a number of public meetings. Public meeting dates and participants as well as organizations and agencies contacted are listed in Appendix D.

The BKNHA Planning Committee is a remarkable example of electronic community organizing. The planning committee has established a steering committee to determine meeting agendas and review meeting minutes. Through electronic communication, other sub-committees reviewed the asset data forms submitted, considered management alternatives, and consulted on fundraising opportunities. Through electronic communication, members have read and suggested specific revisions to the draft fea-

sibility study. This e-strategy has succeeded in maximizing the alliance's limited financial resources, overcome the geographical separation of the many partners, and encouraged public participation. The committee also has carried out a policy of moving the monthly meetings to each part of the proposed heritage area to encourage participation.

At the first meeting February 13, 2003, planning committee members discussed their vision and expectations about forming a regional heritage area. Four teams then volunteered to coordinate meetings, to invite new participants from historic sites and organizations, to inform local and regional officials about the prospect of a heritage area, and to select possible names for a Kansas heritage area. In March, the group chose a working title, "Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom," and a steering committee. The group agreed to use the capacity of the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance (TKHA) as a non-profit corporation for the heritage area campaign. At the April 10 meeting, members decided on questions to guide a community inventory of sites, exhibits, and institutions that would support the heritage area themes. In May the planning committee considered possible boundaries for the heritage area. Members discussed the criteria for recruiting partners, and heard reports about local heritage assets and activities. In June the group identified more potential local partner organizations and institutions to contact.

Discussion of the need for a feasibility study dominated the July 10, 2003 meeting. The planning committee considered the slow-track alternative of requesting that the National Park Service carry out a feasibility study which would take as long as two years. Instead, the group decided to pursue a fast-track approach which would require hir-

ing a consultant and supplying the necessary information. Then the legislation for National Heritage Area designation could be passed during 2004, the Kansas Territory sesquicentennial. The group set a deadline of September 11, 2003, for the submission of heritage area asset data forms. The group again revised the proposed vision statement and mission goals (See Chapter 7). At the August 14 meeting, the committee discussed the vision statement. The chair introduced Dale Nimz, who outlined his proposal for a feasibility study of the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area. The committee discussed a strategy for raising the necessary funds to pay for the feasibility study and the economic benefits of heritage area designation. The chair also announced that two domain names had been registered for a future heritage area website.

In September, the committee discussed the status of the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation. The TKHA will serve as the financial vehicle for fund-raising and payment for the feasibility study project. After Congressional designation, the TKHA may act as the management entity for the heritage area. Consultant Dale Nimz reported on the beginning of research and collection of information for the feasibility study. In October, the committee noted the success of fundraising and suggested additional financial partners. The committee discussed information collection, organization, and the steps in preparing a heritage area management plan, the next goal after completion of a feasibility study. On October 27, members of the Douglas County Heritage Area committee reassembled to hear a progress report from Judy Billings, chair of the BKNHA planning committee and feasibility study consultant Dale Nimz.

The BKNHA planning committee met in November to discuss fundraising. While the estimated cost of the feasibility study was \$32,000, the committee set a fundraising goal of \$50,000 for completing the study and additional activities. Members volunteered for sub-committees to research management alternatives, to review the asset data forms, for partnership recruiting and fundraising, and website development. In December the committee considered the on-going business of the organization—fundraising, sub-committee reports, and the draft chapters of the feasibility study.

Throughout the fall, planning committee members met with city and county elected officials and the representatives of Chambers of Commerce, historical organizations, and non-profit groups to explain the heritage area effort, to raise funds, and to solicit letters of support.

COORDINATION WITH CONCURRENT STUDIES

In the region, the BKNHA Planning Committee has maintained informal contact with those planning a National Heritage Area in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Planners for Kansas City, Missouri initiated a feasibility study for a proposed National Heritage Area in 2000. The city retained ICON Architecture, Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts to conduct a feasibility study for the FOCUS Heritage Corridor concept. The study identified three general themes: “Borders and Boundaries,” “Transportation and Trade,” and “Cultural Crossroads.” After the initial feasibility study was completed, several public meetings were held to present the study and to gain public support from local historic organizations and local governments in the region. Since the proposed heritage area would encompass many

communities and parts of two states (Missouri and Kansas), the responsibility for leading the heritage area campaign has been delegated to the Kansas City Planning and Development Department for the Kansas City Heritage Corridor and to the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) for the bi-state heritage area. A revised second draft of the Kansas City region feasibility study will be submitted to the National Park Service early in 2004.

In other parts of Kansas, residents have discussed informally the possibility of a Tall Grass Prairie Heritage Area and a Chisholm Trail Heritage Area. Both of these areas could extend south into Oklahoma. Leaders of the BKNHA planning committee have shared information with those interested and representatives of the Tall Grass Prairie area have attended BKNHA planning meetings.

State of Kansas

In the state-wide economic revitalization plan announced on October 1, 2003, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius listed tourism development as an important component. The governor and the staff of the Kansas Department of Commerce set the goal of defining a state-wide tourism strategy which would include a Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area feasibility study. This effort was linked to the goal of creating heritage and cultural destination attractions unique to Kansas. The benefits of a National Heritage Area designation would help in the very important strategic goal of economic stimulation in rural areas of Kansas. Overall, this state economic development plan was designed to stimulate and strengthen the Kansas economy.²

To support the effort to achieve Heritage Area designation, the Kansas Department of

² See news release, “Statewide Economic Revitalization Plan Unveiled,” October 1, 2003 at <http://kdoch.state.ks.us/NewsApp/news/> referenced 10/02/2003.

Commerce awarded a \$15,000 grant to the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance for the purpose of developing a feasibility/suitability study. Because of the growing interest in heritage tourism, the director of the Travel and Tourism Division wrote, the “synthesis of heritage, authentic experience, and economic development suggests that National Heritage Area designation of the Bleeding Kansas experience would help us satisfy the demand for, and help us benefit from, these growing travel trends.” Also the director was encouraged by the cooperation between otherwise diverse and separate communities that this initiative had already produced. State leaders and Commerce Department staff have recognized that, “the Bleeding Kansas era was a time when the eyes of the nation were focused on Kansas. The legacy of that era, and the Civil War that sprang from it, attracts significant numbers of travelers and travel-related spending to those states that may claim it. We also may claim a central role in the ongoing struggle of civil rights and liberties that were key points of contention in those earlier periods. National Heritage Area designation would create key partnerships, helping Kansans promote these aspects of our history to a national and international audience.”³

One of the reasons for preparing a National Heritage Area feasibility study on a fast track was to coordinate with the Kansas Territorial Sesquicentennial. The state of Kansas established a Sesquicentennial Commission to gather information and develop a plan for commemorative events and activities marking the 150th anniversary of Kansas becoming a state. The state sesquicentennial will be observed in 2011, but the Commission has planned activities beginning in 2004 with the sesquicentennial of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which created Kansas Territory. The Kansas motto, “Ad

Astra Per Aspera” (to the stars through difficulty), is a reference to the seven-year struggle to make Kansas Territory a state. As Deanell Reece Tacha, chair of the Commission, and chief judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, has said, “the commemoration goals will be to inspire Kansans with a sense of their history and its relevance to issues facing Kansas today.”⁴

Throughout the year, 2004, the BKNHA planning committee will coordinate with activities of the Sesquicentennial Commission. Two of the official projects selected by the Sesquicentennial Commission are the special exhibit at the Kansas Museum of History, “Willing to Die for Freedom: A Look Back at Kansas Territory.” The exhibit will display the actual document, “The Kansas-Nebraska Act.” A second important project is the Kansas Chautauqua, “Bleeding Kansas: Where the Civil War Began.” This program has been organized by the Kansas Humanities Council and coordinated with the host communities of Junction City, Colby, Fort Scott, and Lawrence.

THE NEXT STEPS

This feasibility study report will be sent to the National Park Service for review and submitted to the members of the Kansas Congressional delegation. With their approval, congressional legislation will be prepared to designate a Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom National Heritage Area.

While review and legislation are pending, the BKNHA Planning Committee will continue the monthly meetings. The committee will add to the asset data base and the calendar of heritage-related events. To educate

³ Letter of November 18, 2003 from Scott Allegrucci, Director, Travel and Tourism Development Division, Kansas Department of Commerce, to Ms. Judy Billings, Secretary, Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance.

⁴ See <http://www.kshs.org/sesquicentennial/> Referenced 12/01/2003.

the public and to promote the National Heritage Area concept, the planning committee has developed a introductory Powerpoint presentation for members, organized speakers, and drafted a common set of answers to frequently asked questions about the National Heritage Area. These steps are intended to reassure the public, particularly property owners, that there will be no new regulations applied as a result of Heritage Area designation. The committee will research, measure, and promote the economic benefits of Heritage Area designation. Finally, the Planning Committee will educate the residents of the heritage area about the project, the exciting stories associated with the heritage themes and assets, and the intended benefits. The committee will continue to recruit new partners with important resources and develop more support from key individuals and institutions.

In 2004 the BKNHA Planning Committee will continue to forge new partnerships, begin to pool resources and prepare grant applications to work toward common goals. Fundraising and proposed projects will require more specific agreements with organizations at several levels including, for example, the Kansas Humanities Council, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, local Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and local and county historical societies that currently are not represented on the Planning Committee.

Also in 2004, the BKNHA Planning Committee will undertake a new initiative, a branding development and specific marketing program for the proposed National Heritage Area. The committee is developing a website to provide information from the feasibility study and facilitate communication. The committee also is developing a self-guided tour recorded on compact disk of

sites and institutions related to the “Bleeding Kansas” theme. Recorded tours will be developed in phases to extend the visitor experience to different parts of the heritage area. Finally, the committee will ask the Kansas State legislature to consider establishing a state heritage area program.

Why is heritage area development good for Kansas? A distinctive characteristic of a National Heritage Area plan is that the authority to implement the agreements and projects remains in the hands of local officials. Judy Billings, chair of the BKNHA planning committee, answered that important question by emphasizing that dynamic regional initiatives build relationships between people, their place, and their history creating a community that is stronger than its parts. Heritage areas provide for rural economic development. Regional organization for a common purpose provides a balance of attention that connects declining rural communities with growing urban and suburban populations. Organizing a National Heritage Area encourages the development of individual management or business plans that describe the ways in which people can work together to fulfill their common vision.

In a report to the Kansas legislative Committee on Economic Development, Judy Billings, BKNHA planning committee chair, stated that the most tangible benefit of a successful heritage area is economic development—business growth, job growth, and revenue growth. Heritage Areas provide a very favorable leverage of the basic local and federal investment. During the years from 1984 to 2000, for example, the total funding from the NPS Heritage Partnership program was \$107,225,378. This investment leveraged \$124,803,084 from Transportation Enhancement funds, \$118, 202,359 from other federal sources, \$186,233,871 from

state programs, \$189,577,758 from local government, and \$261,658,488 from the private sector.⁵ History and culture are a significant part of the American travel experience.

Besides the economic benefits, however, the designation of a Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area will help to interpret the complex events and issues enacted in Kansas Territory. These events and the disputed issues of citizenship and governance were vitally important in national history. Just important as the political conflict and resolution, the struggle to adapt to the physical environment effected the development of agriculture, transportation, trade and business, and social and cultural patterns in rural and urban places in Kansas. Recognition and development of the heritage area will clarify that significance. The protection and interpretation of the physical assets that form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape is essential for the present and future. Preservation of the natural and cultural resources that portray the experience of “Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom” is a fundamental goal of the heritage area designation. As BKNHA committee chair Billings concluded, what Kansas has to offer is an authenticity of history and culture, a genuine and significant story of United States history.