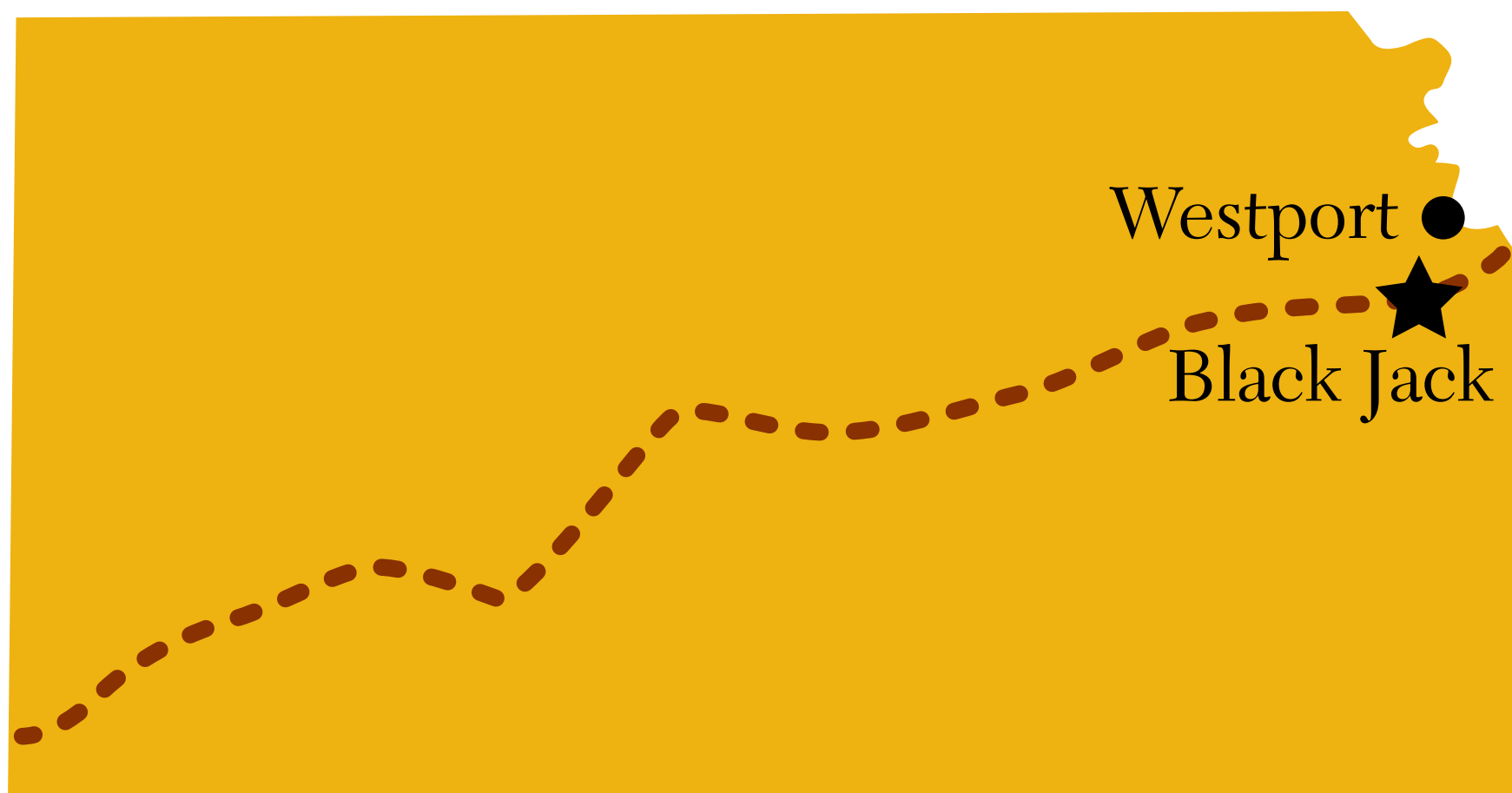


The Santa Fe Trail



The land around the Black Jack battlefield site was not open to white settlement until the creation of Kansas Territory in 1854. This site had already been affected, however, by years of heavy freight traffic along the nearby Santa Fe Trail. This major trade route running between Westport (now Kansas City) and Santa Fe, in Mexico (now New Mexico) had been opened in 1821.

The natural spring and streams on what was to become the battle site had made it a favored campground and watering spot along the trail. Deep tracks worn into the land of this site marked the path of countless large wagons from the nearby trail to Black Jack.

These deeply worn tracks played an important role during the Battle of Black Jack, providing cover for John Brown and his men.



We have direct communication with the Missouri River by the great Santa Fe Road which is as great thoroughfare as there is in the U.S. . . . A thousand yoke of cattle sometimes pass in one day, drawing wagons which are monsters, carrying from 60 to 90 hundred pounds each.

letter from James R. Mead about his new home in Kansas, August 13, 1859