

# Bleeding Kansas

*Civil War  
in Kansas!  
Let not the  
knives of pro-  
slavery men be  
sheathed while  
there is one  
abolitionist in  
the Territory.*

“Squatter Sovereign,”  
Pro-Slavery newspaper  
in Atchison, Kansas  
Territory, June 10, 1856

**A**s settlers moved westward in the years before the Civil War, the debate over slavery grew. Would slavery be allowed in new states coming into the Union? When the newly-formed Kansas Territory was opened for settlement in 1854, the issue came to a head.

Pro-Slavery and antislavery backers poured into the territory. Feelings ran high, and political conflict became violent. Soon the area became known as “Bleeding Kansas.”

Citizens on both sides of the slavery issue formed free-wheeling militias. Several incidents in the spring of 1856 brought matters to a head. Pro-Slavery men sacked the city of Lawrence, a Free-State stronghold. John Brown’s men carried out the bloody nighttime killing of several Pro-Slavery men at Pottawatomie Creek.

Enraged by the so-called “Pottawatomie Massacre,” Henry Clay Pate and his Pro-Slavery militia went looking for Brown.

The result was the Battle of Black Jack.

*Talk will do no good. That time is past.  
What we now need is men, money and rifles.*

Free-State settler Charles A. Wright, Lawrence, Kansas Territory, June 16, 1856