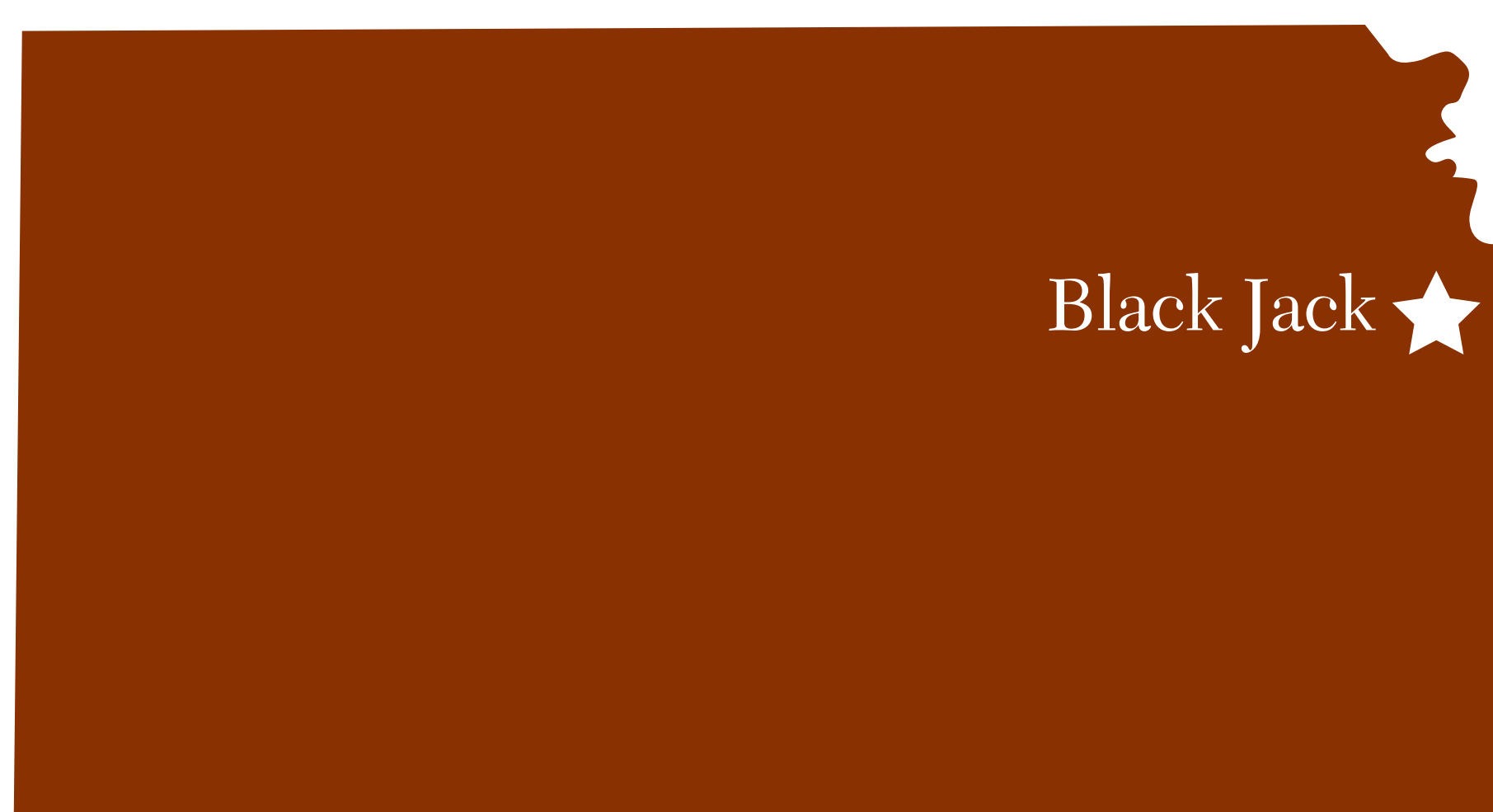


The Battle of Black Jack

The Battle of Black Jack is considered by many to have been the first battle of the American Civil War.

On June 2, 1856, the abolitionist John Brown led his Free-State militia, with co-commander Samuel Shore, in attacking the camp of a Pro-Slavery force led by Henry Clay Pate. This clash was the first pitched battle between Pro-Slavery and antislavery groups.

The men on both sides, probably totaling around 90 to 100 individuals, engaged in intense fighting for several hours in the ravines and tall grass of the site. In the end no one was killed. Pate, thinking he was outnumbered and possibly surrounded, eventually surrendered to John Brown.



The battle took place in Douglas County in northeast Kansas Territory, about 30 miles from the border of Missouri, a slave state.



John Brown, a tireless foe of slavery, led the “Free-State” militia at Black Jack.

Photo credit: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Gift of the Hall Family Foundation, 2008.6.4. Photograph by John Lamberton.



Henry Clay Pate, a native Virginian, led the Pro-Slavery men in battle.

Photo credit: West Virginia State Archives



Bullets found on the battlefield at Black Jack.

From the collection of the Old Castle Museum, Baker University, Baldwin City.