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Central Resouce Library  
9875 W. 87th St., Overland Park, KS 66212

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# LEGACIES OF THE CIVIL WAR

## BLOOD & ASHES: *How should we remember the border war?*

### INTRODUCTION 2

Before the Civil War, a war raged on the border between Missouri and the Kansas territory that, many believe, ignited the Civil War itself. The guerrilla war was fought over whether Kansas would be a slave or free state. It was extremely personal, with neighbors informing on neighbors; revenge was a driving force. Today, some say the border war is as recent as the latest KU/MU match-up or corporate move across the state line. Others say their identities are identified by what their forebears did and suffered. But many local residents know little about the border war beyond the sketchiest description. The reality is complicated and emotions can run high. How do you think we should remember the historical events of the border war?

### APPROACH ONE: Stick to the facts 12

We should present information from all sides, even if it is embarrassing or painful to some people. The purpose of remembering is to remember everything, or the lessons of history will be lost or twisted. Without all the facts, we cannot really know who we are or from where we came.

### APPROACH TWO: Grapple with history at an emotional level 14

The facts don't go far enough. Engaging people requires that we take ownership of what happened and acknowledge wrongs that were done. It is the difficult conversations, the emotional conversations, which allow us to build something positive from the pain of the past.

### APPROACH THREE: Promote positive values and pride 16

We should use history to promote values that are important to our society. It is appropriate to focus on aspects of history that promote patriotism, pride or unity. History is where we tell our shared story of the past. It is important that our story gives us hope for the future.

#### About deliberation

Oftentimes when people discuss issues, they debate. This leads to trying to undermine an opponent's position, defending one's own view, or withdrawing to avoid a conflict. Deliberation is different.

A deliberative forum increases understanding. It offers multiple ways of approaching the issue, based on different values. It promotes discussion that helps people consider their shared experiences and priorities, and the common good. It also acknowledges that any approach comes with tradeoffs and consequences that need to be considered.

This guide's three approaches are built around the main ways that people deal with history, based on interviews and research. These are not the only ways that people deal with history. You will probably find aspects of each approach to like and dislike, and that's fine. You won't be asked to choose one.

The ground rules that support a deliberative discussion:

1. This is a dialogue, not a debate.
2. Everyone participates, nobody dominates.
3. All participants are equals.
4. Listen with empathy, disagree with respect.
5. Examine your own assumptions as well as those of others.
6. Speak from direct experience.
7. Move toward greater understanding of the issue.
8. Try to imagine what others who aren't present might say.

# BLOOD & ASHES:

## How should we remember the border war?

*"[Tonight is] about the fact 150 years ago that Quantrill really did invade Lawrence and really did kill 183 innocent men, women and children because Missouri wanted us to be a slave state. And it's about the fact that the Free Staters pushed them back and made this state what it is today. It's about the fact that even though that happened 150 years ago, no one here will ever forget those raids and many of us avoid going to Missouri at all cost, if for no other reason than the fear that we might accidentally spend some money there."*

**Kansas Governor Mark Parkinson** in opening remarks at the fifth annual Symphony in the Flint Hills event. Many in the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

**A**s America commemorates the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, so Greater Kansas City remembers the border war that raged between Missouri and Kansas and, many believe, ignited the Civil War itself. For some local residents, the border war is as recent as the last KU/MU match-up or corporate move across the state line. Others say that their identities are defined by what their forebears did and suffered. But many local residents know very little about the border war beyond the sketchiest description, which often makes one side or the other sound more faultless than it was. The reality is complicated. The problem is that knowing who we are now may hinge on the way in which we remember historical events like those difficult times in the 1850s, when all eyes were on us and the Union hung in the balance.

### Does the border war matter today?

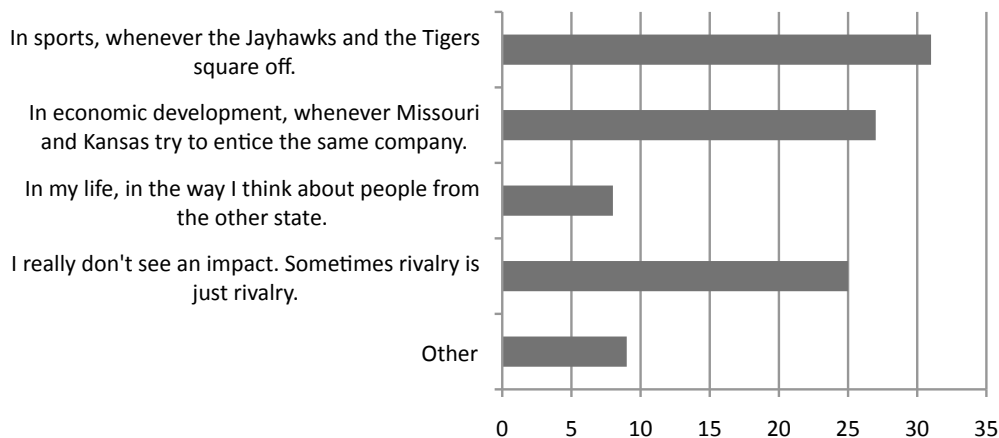
When a friend moved from Missouri to Lawrence, Diane Mutti Burke said, "Somebody saw her license plate at the gas station and said, 'Go back there to Missouri.' She felt so unwelcome." Mutti Burke, a historian, grew up here, "but I've heard people talk who've moved here and they can't figure it out.

They think it's the most bizarre thing the way people talk about divisions, then you drive across State Line Road and does it look any different?"

Most often, the term "border war" . . . er, excuse us, "border showdown" . . . relates to the rivalry between the University of Kansas Jayhawks and the University of Missouri Tigers. Lately, "border war" has also been used to describe the practice of wooing businesses from one state to the other. When we invited Johnson County Library

patrons to weigh in, here's what they said:

#### Where do you see the biggest impact of the border war today?



The survey was posted on the Johnson County Library website and drew 88 responses. Of them, 79 live in Kansas, nine live in Missouri, and one lives in another state. Half have lived in the area for 31+ years, while about a quarter



each have lived here 16-30 years or 1-15 years. The group was 56 percent female and 44 percent male. About 20 percent each were in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s, while 8 percent were in their 20s and 4 percent were in their 70s. Ninety percent were Caucasian and about 2 percent each were Asian, Hispanic/Latino, African-American or other.

When asked how they've experienced the division, one respondent said whether to live in Kansas or Missouri was a factor in her divorce. Some said they won't spend money in the other state. Some report prejudice, like the person who lived in Overland Park before moving to Kansas City, Missouri. "I heard a thousand jokes (a slight exaggeration) about the Jackson County slums and Missouri idiots. Since moving to Missouri, I haven't heard very much at all about Johnson County. No jokes." Another reported harassment in Missouri due to Johnson County tags.

**Erik Ashel** produced the documentary "**Border War: Kansas vs. Missouri**" for Metro Sports in 2007, the year that KU and MU were going to play a football game at Arrowhead for the first time. "There are people here who aren't sports fans and who didn't go to KU or MU who despise the other state. Someone told me, 'Every time we went into Missouri, my parents told me to hold my nose.' Some people won't buy houses on the other side of the state line, even though we all live in the same city . . . it's sports, it's social, it's political," Ashel said. Some of the most memorable moments in "Border War" are of MU and KU fans and their historical signs referencing Quantrill and John Brown. "It's amazing the passion everyone had."

### Find Out More

Watch the trailer at the official site for the movie:

[www.kcmetrosports.com/  
MetroSports-BorderWar.aspx](http://www.kcmetrosports.com/MetroSports-BorderWar.aspx)

Or check out a copy at the Library:  
*Border War: Kansas vs. Missouri*  
(DVD 2008)

The survey participants who see no real impact would find a friend in **Jim Heeter**, a history buff and president of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. Heeter doesn't buy the idea of an economic border war. "**I don't think what happened here historically has any bearing on this . . . so-called competition between communities for jobs and economic growth.**" The incentive programs used to attract business are in response to competition with communities around the country; the state line that runs through the metro means companies will switch states. The area's economic future is a regional one, he said.

That might sound like a good theory to **Judge Deaneell Reece Tacha**, but, she said, "Those old biases kick up." Judge Tacha is chair of the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area Trustees. Her mission is to get people to view the border war from each other's perspectives as a way to remove antagonism. "**We're not enemies. We're neighbors. We have the same economic interests, the same interests in a peaceable life and ordered government. How could we possibly be contemporary enemies?**"

## It's a complicated story

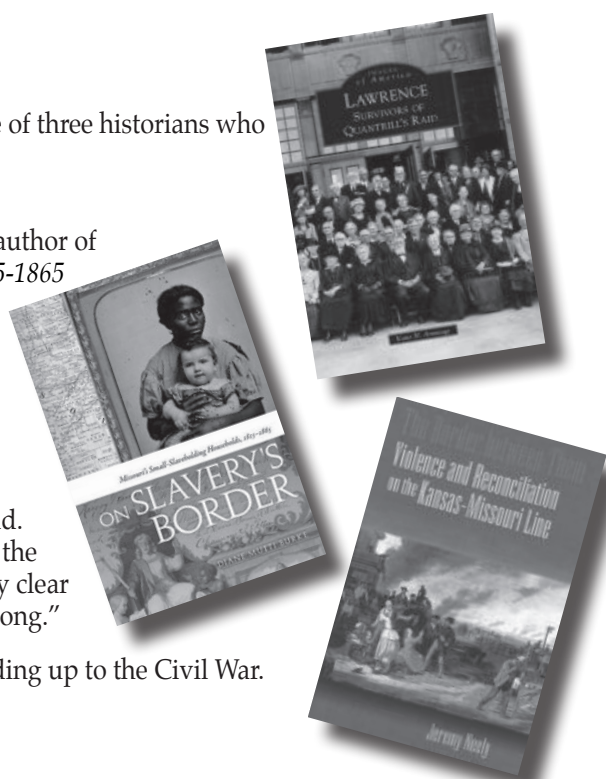
Facts can help temper the rhetoric. That's why we convened a roundtable of three historians who specialize in the border war period:

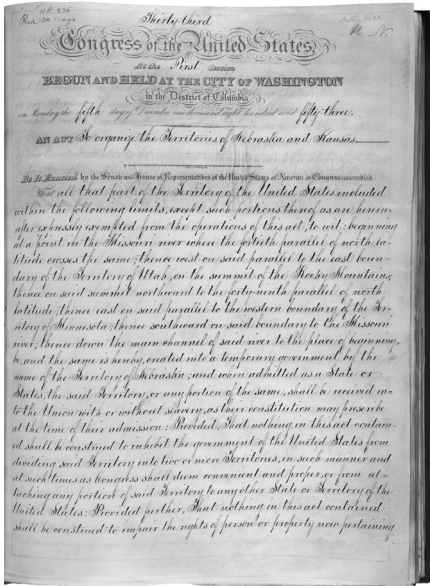
- Katie Armitage, author of *Lawrence: Survivors of Quantrill's Raid*
- Diane Mutti Burke, associate professor of history at UMKC and author of *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865*
- Jeremy Neely, author of *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line*

In addition, we held phone interviews with other historians. They talked with us about popular ideas about the war and areas where the truth is more complicated than most would expect.

"People are familiar with events, but not the context of events," Neely said. "If people are clear about one thing, they're clear about the wrongness of the other side, that the blame lies across the border . . . They're not necessarily clear on the virtue of their own side, but they know the other side has done wrong."

What is not disputed is that this area played a critical role in the time leading up to the Civil War.





Original Kansas-Nebraska Act from the National Archives. Find out more at [www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=28](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=28).

Image courtesy of An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas, 1854; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives.

## The Kansas-Nebraska Act and Its Impact

When Congress opened up the Kansas and Nebraska territories for settlement in 1854, it said that whether each state would be slave or free would be settled by majority vote of the people living there. Pro- and anti-slavery forces launched campaigns to populate Kansas (or its polling places) with their supporters.

Missouri was the northernmost slave state. Missourians felt they had the right to determine the status of their neighboring territory in part because, as America expanded westward, people typically claimed the land to the west of them. When Northern settlers began to arrive, some funded by New England abolitionists, Missourians were shocked. Missourians committed massive vote fraud in almost every territorial election between 1855 and early 1858, which they viewed as necessary to protect their interests.

About 4 percent of Kansas settlers were underwritten by the New England Emigrant Aid Company and many of them settled in Lawrence, the most abolitionist town in the state. Most other settlers came from the old northwest and were mainly looking for better homes in the west. Among the settlers were slaves. In 1855, a census of Kansas Territory settlers counted 192 slaves, most brought from Missouri by their owners.



Missourians cross the state line to vote in Kickapoo, KS. From Albert D. Richardson's *Beyond the Mississippi*.

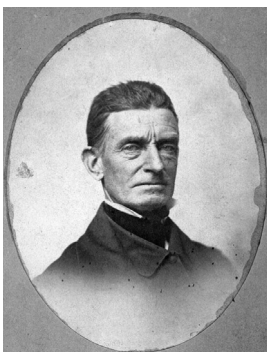
Image courtesy of KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

## Bleeding Kansas

In the period known as Bleeding Kansas, Kansas voters (often assisted by armed Missourians) elected a pro-slavery territorial legislature and delegates to a constitutional convention. Free-soil Kansans then formed the Free State party to oppose making Kansas a slave state. They elected their own government and wrote their own constitution. Free State organizers were not mainly abolitionists. Instead, they agreed not to interfere with slavery where it currently existed. The major area of agreement for Free Staters was self-government; their greatest fear was the oppression of white Free Staters at the hands of pro-slavery forces.

President Franklin Pierce and Congress viewed the Free State party as treasonable and its constitution as revolutionary. When Lawrence residents endured the Sack of Lawrence by pro-slavery forces without responding with violence, however, public opinion shifted away from seeing Free Staters as defiant lawbreakers.

Then John Brown and his men perpetrated the Pottawatomie Massacre. Brown led eight men to Pottawatomie Creek, dragged five unarmed pro-slavery settlers from their homes and murdered them, mutilating several of the bodies with cutlasses. The Free State movement had long conducted militia drills with arms supplied by New England supporters and others. They had come close to violence in the past, but this was the first act of violence by Free Staters. Brown was not part of the recognized Free State leadership and some believed Brown's fanatical approach hurt the movement more than helped it.



John Brown, c.1856.

Image courtesy of KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.



The massacre marked the beginning of a guerrilla war that continued for about a decade. Some 80 percent of the guerrillas were younger than 21. Pro-slavery Missourians (called pukes or border ruffians before the Civil War, and bushwhackers after) led raids from Missouri into Kansas, and free-soil Kansans (called jayhawkers) attacked pro-slavery settlers on both sides of the state line. People were forced to choose sides, and neighbors informed on neighbors. Revenge was a driving force as guerrilla warfare became extremely personal.

In Washington, President James Buchanan and the Senate supported a pro-slavery constitution passed by Kansas voters, but the House was dominated by the North and voted it down. A year later, in the fall of 1859, Kansans ratified the free-state Wyandotte Constitution. When Southerners left the



Campaign flag used in 1856 and 1860 Republican conventions and elections. The 33rd star, Kansas's upon admission, is enlarged and captioned, "Admit Me Free."

Image courtesy of KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

U.S. Congress, it cleared a path for Kansas statehood, and Kansas entered the Union as a free state in January of 1861. After statehood, slavery began to be more important to Free Staters than self-government for white people, and jayhawkers executed several prominent pro-slavery settlers still living in Kansas.

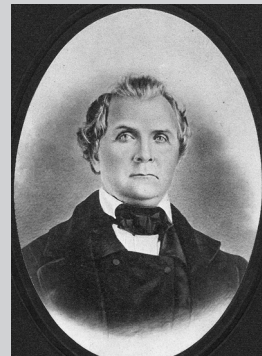
## Bogus Legislature

Johnson County namesake

Rev. Thomas Johnson was instrumental in the rigged elections of the pro-slavery territorial government known as the "Bogus Legislature." The Bogus Legislature was headquartered at Johnson's Methodist Mission while he served as its president.

Find out more in Mindi C. Love's *Johnson County, Kansas: A Pictorial History, 1825-2005*. (Shawnee, KS; Johnson County Museum, 2006.)

Image courtesy of KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.



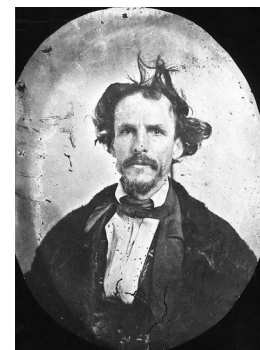
## The Civil War Begins

The guerrilla war picked up steam again after the presidential election of 1860. Missouri had supported candidates who stood for preserving the Union and protecting southerners' rights to own slaves. When the Civil War started in April of 1861, Lincoln sent federal troops to Missouri in an attempt to keep the state in the Union. That action pushed Missourians to the Southern side. Pro-slavery bushwhackers had a new enemy in the Union troops, which included many Kansas jayhawkers intent on revenge. The bushwhackers received help from their families, who provided food, horses and information that allowed the men to strike, then disappear into the woods.

Who you were . . .	Who you fought . . .
Pro-slavery or slave-owning Kansan	Jayhawkers, bushwhackers
Free State Kansan	Bushwhackers
Secessionist Missourian	Jayhawkers, Union troops
Pro-Union Missourian	Jayhawkers, bushwhackers

Jim Lane, Kansas senator-general, took 2,000 men and marched into Missouri in the fall of 1861, where they plundered, burned and killed in towns across the state. They freed enough slaves to fill 160 wagons. Lane's superiors in the Union army felt his pillaging cost them public support among Kansans.

It all came to a head in August, 1863. Union General Thomas Ewing Jr. arrested the wives, sisters and mothers of Missouri bushwhackers, who were providing aid to their warriors. If there was one thing everyone understood during the border war, it was the consequences of harming an enemy's women. When a makeshift jail collapsed, killing five women and injuring several others, bushwhackers said it was intentional. In what many viewed as an attempt to avenge those deaths, William Clarke



Jim Lane, c.1860.

Image courtesy of KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

## INTRODUCTION

Quantrill and his band of 400 bushwhackers raided Lawrence, killing some 180 men and burning about 180 buildings.

**Later in August, General Ewing issued Order No. 11, requiring all people living in Jackson, Cass, Bates and northern Vernon counties to vacate the area unless they could prove their loyalty to the Union. Few remained.** Ewing issued Order No. 11 to discourage retaliatory attacks by Kansans and further bushwhacker attacks. Residents left with whatever they could grab. Union troops plundered and set fire to the area, which became known as the Burnt District.

After the war, violent crime and vigilante justice remained widespread. Eventually, shared business interests led to cooperation between Missouri and Kansas towns seeking to attract railroad lines. Some settlers left the territory, but others returned and lived next to neighbors who may have been sworn enemies. By spoken and unspoken agreement, people didn't discuss what caused the border war.

Historians point to several aspects of the border war as complicating factors in terms of how it is remembered: **it was a guerrilla war rather than one fought by armed forces; both sides escalated the violence; many (but not all) Missourians were committed to the institution of slavery; and Free Staters were not initially abolitionists.**

## A guerrilla war is unlike a regular war

If you lived here, there was no escaping the border war. **"This is a story about normal people, civilians, who are caught in the middle,"** Carol Bohl said. Bohl is president of the Missouri/Kansas Border War Network and director of the Cass County Historical Society. "They got hit by the bushwhackers and the jayhawkers. **It didn't matter which side you were on; it was about where you lived . . . It was really the worst kind of civil war.**"

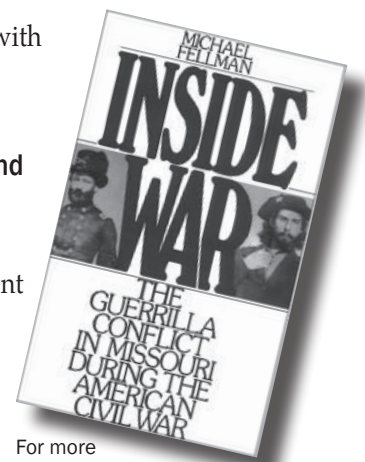
The government didn't sanction the guerrilla war so there was no official recognition of the suffering of civilians and their losses. The only consistent rule seemed to be that it was forbidden to physically hurt white women. Beyond

that, all bets were off in what was some of the most brutal fighting of the Civil War era.

Terror was both a method and a goal. **"This was not a stand-up war** with uniformed, flag-carrying massed troops charging one another in open combat or even the confusion of the typically disorganized battlefield; **it was thousands of brutal moments when small groups of men destroyed homes, food supplies, stray soldiers, and civilian lives and morale,"** Michael Fellman writes.

If you lived in this area, your political views were a matter of life and death. Neutrality was not allowed, according to Mike Calvert, president of the Civil War Roundtable of Western Missouri. "You had to choose a side and you never knew whose side was coming to your door . . . **It was personal and bloody,** especially on the civilian population." People lied about their neighbors for revenge or survival.

Nobody was blameless in this war, according to local residents and historians.



For more information, see Michael Fellman's *Inside War*, an account of the guerrilla war in Missouri.

## Both sides escalated the violence

In the survey we asked, what is the one biggest misconception about the border war? After errors of historical fact, people most often mentioned the belief that the other side was at fault. "Hate to admit it," one respondent wrote, "but probably that all the raids were from Missouri to Kansas." "That all abolitionists/free-staters were peaceful and not prone to extremism," another wrote.

Each side cast themselves as the people of Good and the others as the sub-people of Evil. **Northern**

### Find Out More

Check out the Missouri/Kansas Border War Network's website: [moksbnw.net/Newindex.html](http://moksbnw.net/Newindex.html)



settlers, for example, didn't consider plantation owners or slaves the enemy. Instead, their enemy was the poor southern white trash they called pukes. "These southern frontiersmen, primarily Missourians, were especially threatening because they represented to Northerners the degraded material and moral condition the slave system forced upon the independent white of modest means – people, in other words, of their own social position," Fellman wrote. Northerners saw the poor whites as savages. "Pukes were often described as being like animals rather than fellow humans. One Midwestern journalist asserted, 'They are a queer-looking sort, slightly resembling human beings, but more closely allied to wild beasts.'"

In contrast, Fellman wrote, Missourians who became pro-slavery settlers in Kansas, "defined themselves as defenders of American institutions and of law and order . . . They stood for home, church, private property, familial and community honor, and male authority; they were the conservative party, guarding tradition from anarchic, invading northern radicals."

No matter the rhetoric, the historical record shows that each side committed atrocities like raids, pillaging, looting and murder. Calvert, with the Roundtable, has ancestors on both sides. He doesn't see either side as entitled to being considered right. Both sides were responsible for starting the war and both could have stopped it. "Who will be the first to stop and to trust the other person to stop, as well? **Old grudges and feuds die hard,**" he said.

For present-day Missourians and Kansans, whose identity may be shaped by the border war, coming to terms with two particular realities can be difficult.

***For Missourians, it is accepting that Missouri was a slave state with a commitment to continuing as a slave state. For Kansans, it is that the Free State party was not abolitionist.***

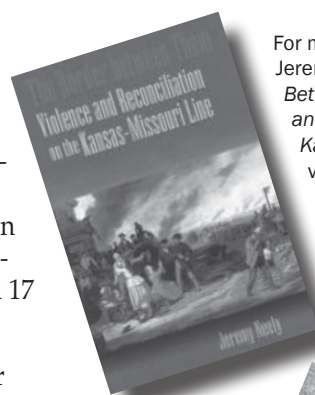
## Missourians wanted to keep slavery in place

Missourians may be used to thinking of this area as the western frontier rather than the slave-owning south. But in 1850, in the border counties of Cass, Bates and Vernon in Missouri, almost one in ten persons (9.6%) was a slave, and slavery was increasing. Between 1850 and 1860, the personal wealth of Missouri border settlers doubled or tripled and many more households began to own slaves. The number of slaves and percentage of households that owned them doubled in Bates and Cass counties in that time. Jackson County was Missouri's eighth largest slaveholding county in 1860, with a slave population of 3,944 that comprised 17 percent of the total population.

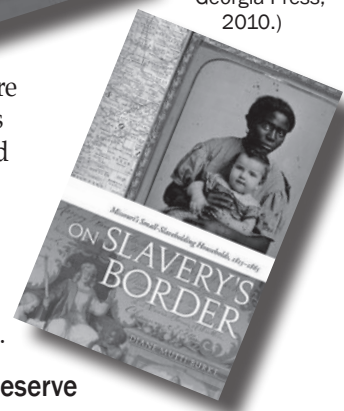
**Slavery looked different in Missouri than in the Deep South.** The three border counties didn't have big plantations. **The wealthiest slave master had 38 slaves**, and Missouri slaves often worked side-by-side with their masters. In the state as a whole, slaves were used to grow hemp and tobacco, and the main slaveholding areas of Missouri were the counties along the Missouri River. According to Fellman, in 1860, about one Missouri family in eight held slaves, as opposed to one in two in the lower south, and **the average number of slaves per Missouri slaveholder was 4.66.**

Some white people didn't like to compete against slave labor, which drove down wages. Still, there were race-based benefits even for poor whites. **No matter how poor and downtrodden they were, simply being white gave them something in common with wealthy slaveholders.**

**When the Kansas territory opened, many Missourians wanted to keep the status quo, to preserve**



For more information, see Jeremy Neely's *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (University of Missouri Press, 2007) and Diane Mutti Burke's *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (University of Georgia Press, 2010.)



## INTRODUCTION

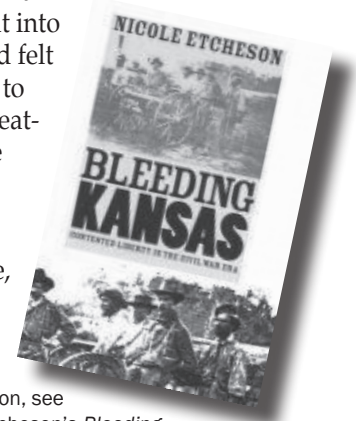
the Union and to preserve slavery. That's how Missouri ended up being one of four slave states that didn't secede. But that didn't reduce support for slavery as an institution.



John L. Magee's cartoon entitled, "Liberty, the Fair Maid of Kansas – In the Hands of the 'Border Ruffians.'"

Image courtesy of Stern Collection, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-92023.

Pro-slavery gangs called **border ruffians** formed to protect their interests. Border ruffians were backed by secret societies intended to extend slavery to Kansas. The most famous of the societies was the **Platte County Self-Defensive Association**, which formed in **1854**. The association was hostile toward "free blacks, slaves who hired their own time, blacks and whites who mingled too freely, and abolitionists," according to historian Nicole Etcheson. "They were as obsessed with preserving slavery in Missouri as they were with extending it into Kansas, and felt opposition to slavery threatened white economic mobility."



For more information, see Nicole Etcheson's *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (University of Kansas Press, 2004.)

If Missourians don't fully comprehend the history of slavery in this state, it may be because it hasn't been a popular discussion topic. "In the 1900s, they embarked on this project of talking about slavery in Missouri as benign," Mutti Burke said. Community leaders marginalized slavery, saying they wanted to look forward, not backward.

## Kansans wanted white rights more than abolition

The idea that Kansas was a racial utopia "is one of the biggest misconceptions by Missourians and Kansans," Mutti Burke said. "They might be anti-slavery but it was more about not wanting slavery in this new place than wanting to do away with slavery where it existed. Just because you were on that side of the question didn't mean you were racially enlightened."

Abolitionists were a small portion of free-soil immigrants. Most Kansans were afraid of "Negro equality," according to Neely. Most free-soil immigrants wanted to preserve the western territories for white Americans of modest means and some wanted to exclude blacks from Kansas entirely. As one minister wrote, "Their free soil is free for white, but not for black. They hate slavery, but they hate the Negro worse."

Carmaletta Williams, professor at Johnson County Community College who has given her presentation, "Free Did Not Mean Welcome: African-American Migration to Kansas," around the state, argues the border war was never about improving the plight of black people in this country whether free or enslaved. "The fight was about the rights of people with property, with power and with a vision for their futures and their children's futures. It is important for us to look at the border war in context, not just about its effect on white people, those people with property, power and control of their futures, but how the war affected the less possessed of all races."

After entering the Union as a free state, **there wasn't legal segregation in Kansas like there was in the Deep South, but there was a great deal of social segregation**, according to Armitage. "Many African-Americans during the Civil War came into the eastern border of Kansas and found some acceptance but not total acceptance," she said. "I think it's uncomfortable for Kansans to face that there was lingering segregation."

Segregation in Kansas was the focus of the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, in 1954. The court declared unconstitutional state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students. The ruling struck down the 1896 law allowing state-sponsored segregation. Racial segregation – in place throughout the U.S. – was ruled a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

## Given the complications, how should we commemorate the war?

The way we commemorate the war has changed over time as society's needs have changed. Right after the Civil War, commemoration was directed toward the needs of people to come to terms with death, defeat and devastation, according to social historian John Bodnar. Then, over time, **people began to create a story of what happened during the war that appealed to them.** By the 1880s, Bodnar wrote, the South had developed a memory narrative called **the Lost Cause**. As in, "southern soldiers had fought bravely but were simply outnumbered by the forces of the North. Southerners had a noble cause and had no reason to feel ashamed." Southerners eventually buried the idea that the war was about slavery and talked about it as a battle for state's rights. Missouri, a state that defined itself as Western before the war, began to identify itself as Southern after the war.

### The Lost Cause

For more information on the Lost Cause, see John Bodnar's *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1992.)

### The Treasury of Virtue

For more information on the Treasury of Virtue, see Robert Penn Warren's *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (Random House, 1961.)

When Robert Penn Warren studied the war for a book published at the centennial in 1961, he found that the war's psychological result for the North was what he dubbed **the Treasury of Virtue**. The Northerner feels redeemed by history, but in fact the North protected slavery or used abolition for its own purposes, and, Penn Warren writes, "racism and Abolitionism might, and often did, go hand in hand." Still, through the Treasury of Virtue, the Civil War appears "as a consciously undertaken crusade so full of righteousness

that there is enough overplus stored in Heaven, like the deeds of the saints, to take care of all small failings and oversights of the descendants of the crusaders."

Both sides eventually agreed on a story that worked for everyone. Fifty years after the war Confederates and Union soldiers commemorated the war by coming together at places like Gettysburg. Mutti Burke said, **"because they came to the conclusion that everyone was valiant, everyone was heroic, everyone was a good soldier, everyone was fighting for what they thought was right. They left behind the meaning of the war, especially regarding slavery."**

The same was largely true the last time the United States commemorated the Civil War, the centennial in the 1960s, a time that to some felt like the nation was at war with itself again. Bodnar argues the people who planned the centennial wanted ordinary citizens to interpret the war in terms of national unity and heroism, to reinforce loyalty to the nation.





Quantrill's Raiders march on Lawrence.

Image courtesy of KansasMemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.

While many areas of Missouri and Kansas were devastated by the border war, the community that suffered the most loss of life was Lawrence, Kansas. After Quantrill's raid, Armitage wrote, survivors had a variety of ways to deal with their memories. They erected a monument, told stories, made lists of victims and survivors, and participated in ceremonies on Decoration Day, later known as Memorial Day.

As long as people who experienced the raid lived, she said, which was into the 1950s, the newspaper would track the number of survivors who remained. "And in obituaries over and over and over, it would say, 'survivor of Quantrill's raid.'"

But there was no formal reunion of survivors until after Quantrill's guerrillas began to hold their own reunions some 30 years after the war. That the guerrillas scheduled them

around the time of the raid, August 21, did not go unnoticed in Lawrence. City leaders eventually organized a 50th anniversary reunion of survivors. The 500 invitations produced 200 guests.

The early reunions of Quantrill's raiders made a committed effort to not rehash old war stories. The guerrillas were 16-18 when the fighting began and now they were mentioned by the newspapers in Independence, Blue Springs and Lee's Summit as the city fathers. "These men had done things during the war that were now in the past and they had gone on to lead lives of respectability," Neely said. "As the years go by, they start telling war stories again. By now they're very elderly, grandfatherly men."

Today, divisions still remain between how Missourians and Kansans remember the war. The most recent memorial built to the border war is the Burnt District Monument, a stone chimney erected in 2009 on the grounds of the Cass County Justice Center in Harrisonville.



1906 Quantrill reunion in Blue Springs, Mo.

Image courtesy of Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives, JCHS005516L.

## Burnt District Monument

For more information, see the Cass County Historical Society's web page on the Burnt District Monument:

[www.casscountyhistoricalsociety.com/?p=4](http://www.casscountyhistoricalsociety.com/?p=4)

"We want to set the historical record straight about what happened here," Bohl said, noting that Missourians were viewed as illiterate and uncouth. "One side demonized another, like we did to the Japanese, to Muslims. It's all manipulative rhetoric." She says that it's important to acknowledge the suffering of people affected by Order No. 11. "Jayhawkers who came over after the war thought what Missourians got was what they deserved because they were morally wrong. They considered the people over here less than them, less than human."

We asked Johnson County Library patrons, “What comes closest to your opinion about commemorating the border war?” Here is what they told us: ▼

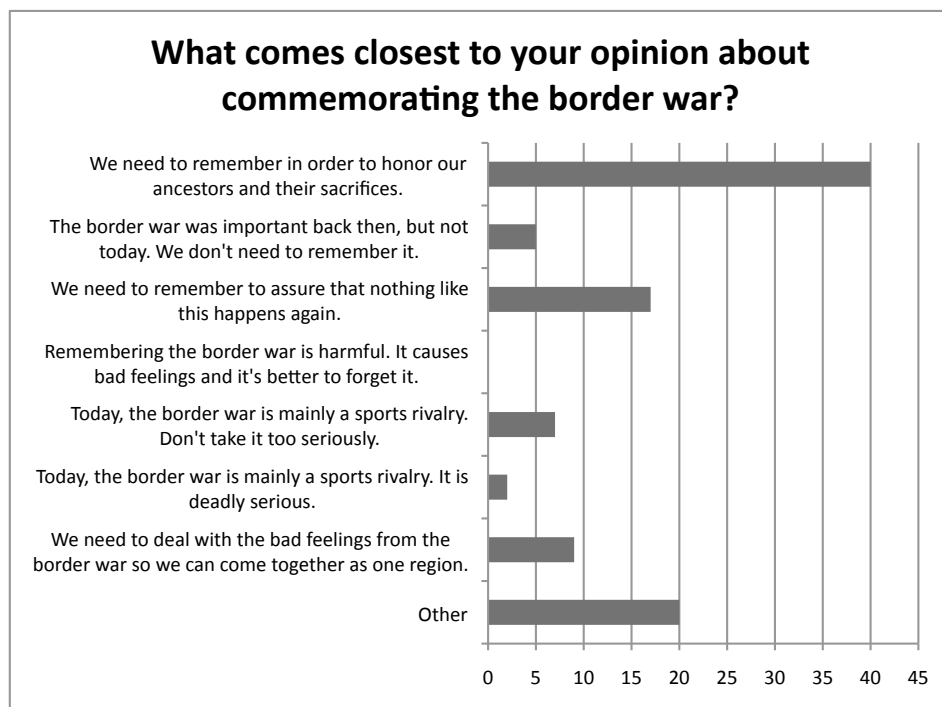
Among the “other” responses were:

- “Get a life, people; the War is over!”
- “We need to recognize the historical value, but de-emphasize current relevance.”
- “The present is informed by the past and will shape the region’s future. Today’s attitudes about race and ethnicity are the legacy of the border war, slavery and racism on both sides of the state line.”
- “It is the history of how both Kansas and Missouri got where they are today. It should be remembered, reflected on and honored.”

## What do you think?

How do you think the border war should be commemorated? We offer three possible ways, based upon different values. No one approach is correct. Each one has aspects that will be appealing to

you and some that won’t. The approaches reflect the major ways that people have written and talked about commemorating historical events, including the Civil War and border war. Discussing the approaches provides an opening into dealing with some of the challenging issues related to how we think of the conflict.



# APPROACH ONE:

## *Stick to the facts*

### VALUES

truth

humility

knowledge

**W**e should present all sides, even if the information is embarrassing or painful to some people. The purpose of remembering is to remember everything, or the lessons of history will be lost or twisted. As historian Margaret MacMillan writes, “History should not be written to make the present generations feel good but to remind us that human affairs are complicated.” Some say that history holds up a mirror. Without all the facts, our view of ourselves is distorted and we cannot really know who we are or from where we came.

*“[A] citizenry that cannot begin to put the present into context, that has . . . little knowledge of the past, can too easily be fed stories by those who claim to speak with the knowledge of history and its lessons. History is called in . . . to strengthen group solidarity, often at the expense of the individual, to justify treating each other badly, and to bolster arguments for particular policies and courses of action. Knowledge of the past helps us to challenge dogmatic statements and sweeping generalizations. It helps us all think more clearly.”*

**Margaret MacMillan**

Dwight Pitcaithley has led discussions on what caused the Civil War. He is the retired chief historian with the National Park Service and currently a professor with New Mexico State University. He says that facts create a neutral ground, and has found that bringing out as much historical evidence as possible on all sides heightens the chances for a productive discussion.

Part of building the conversation is creating the temporal distance. “This was 150 years ago,” he said, “and we’re not responsible for what our . . . great-grandparents did. Our job is not to continue mourning the loss of something but to think of those events and ask, how do we use that knowledge, how do we understand the events to build a better society today? The people who fought are dead and don’t care how we do this.” There is a place for emotion, but it is part of truth-seeking, “driven by a quest to understand so we can build a better society.”

Sticking to the facts means fighting against the tendency to make events very simplistic when we memorialize them. Mutti Burke teaches a course on memory of the Civil War. Her students are surprised by the complexity of the Civil War compared to the stories they’ve been told. “People have said to me, I had no idea that this history has been constructed by people to serve their present needs,” she said. “As much as historians can muddy up the story that’s all to the good.”

How to do that? It’s helpful to look at where people were coming from at the time and take them at face value, she said. Keep in mind that people were making really difficult decisions, ones that might save their lives or might cause their deaths or the deaths of loved ones, complicated life-and-death decisions.

As the Roundtable’s Calvert says, “If you don’t study it, you’re doomed to repeat it. We study it more than keep it alive. We don’t fight it.”



## Arguments for

- If all the facts are on the table, then every position has an equal chance to be understood. We need that neutral ground in order to create a shared view of the past and the future.
- Understanding all sides makes it hard to get too self-righteous about any one side and its role in history. A little humility, based on knowledge, can be valuable.
- History requires the truth from us. To be good citizens and good stewards of the sacrifices of our ancestors, we need to collect and learn all the facts.

## Arguments against

- When was the last time there was agreement on the facts? Depending on which version you read, the facts can be quite different.
- Complexity is too time-consuming. It is sufficient that a small group of history buffs understands the facts. The rest of us have other interests.
- Facts are important, but focusing on the facts takes all of the emotion out of history and makes it dry and bloodless. We need emotion to connect with people on a deeper level.

## APPROACH TWO:

### *Grapple with history at an emotional level*

#### VALUES

honesty

personal  
responsibility

empathy

**O**f course it matters what we put in history books, but printing the facts doesn't go far enough. Commemorating history is about people. Engaging people in history requires that we take ownership of what happened, acknowledge wrongs that were done and heroes who weren't perfect. We can know the fact, for example, that Missouri was a slave state without ever feeling what that meant to individual lives. It is the difficult conversations, the emotional conversations, which allow us to build something positive from the pain of the past. Grappling with the past allows us to accept difficult truths, make amends and move forward.

*"Anyone who has ever had an argument and said, 'You always do that' or 'I trusted you' or 'You owe me one,' is using history to gain an advantage in the present. And almost all of us, from heads of countries to private citizens, do it. We spin the events of the past to show that we always tend to behave well and our opponents badly or that we are normally right and others wrong. Therefore, it goes almost without saying, we are in the right again this time."*

**Margaret MacMillan**

Soon after the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in 1993, a columnist for *U.S. Catholic* toured the museum and wrote that what we remember needs to encourage us to accept our humanity. "Monuments to the Holocaust or other atrocities don't celebrate brutality or sensationalize particular events. Rather, they remind us of a sickness in the human spirit from which . . . no people or age is immune . . . And more than this, these memorials remind us of the need to acknowledge and repent of our own tragic participation in such events, whether it be the Holocaust, slavery or any other injustice."

Engaging with the border war challenges us to acknowledge the pain caused by slavery. We are confronted with the need to acknowledge the pain felt by slaves as well as the pain felt by Missourians, some of whom were pro-slavery, caught in Order No. 11. But instead of addressing slavery head-on and dealing with it, the border area and, indeed, the entire country has avoided grappling with the topic.

Chester Owens talked about his experience doing presentations from the First Kansas Colored Infantry perspective. "Persons from Missouri oftentimes don't like to remember it. Caucasians, because of the slavery aspect . . . it makes them uncomfortable, until you explain it's just part of American history, and nothing to be bitter or ashamed about." The First Kansas Colored Infantry was the first black unit to fight in the Civil War. In the Battle of Island Mound in 1862 near Butler, Missouri, Southern rebels outnumbered the black troops five to one, but after fierce hand-to-hand combat, the black troops won. A memorial in Butler says, "They Fought Like Tigers."

Joelouis Mattox has studied the Civil War and border war. He finds that it isn't just white people who have a hard time talking about slavery. "Many black adults and especially black youth cannot or do not want to accept the fact that black people were slaves in Missouri and Kansas," he said. "Slavery . . . is a very sensitive topic. Most black people don't want to talk about it and they don't want to hear white people talk about it because they're always going to be from the master's point of view."

Mattox added, "I know some white people who are very proud of their ancestors and some of those ancestors were slave owners," he said. "If they accept that slavery was wrong then we can move on." For many, though, even acknowledging that our ancestors might have owned or been owned can call up emotions too difficult to acknowledge.

Given that slavery is a painful topic that provokes a response that can include guilt, shame and anger, how should we approach the topic? There are no easy answers. Southerners often talk about the war as a war for states' rights rather than a war about slavery. "How does a person celebrate the heritage and people who were your ancestors who were Confederate soldiers or bushwhackers without the question of slavery coming into it? Can you do that?" Mutti Burke said. "It's a fundamental question with all the Civil War commemorations . . . It's the elephant in the room."

For Judge Tacha with the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, a fundamental question is, "What does freedom mean to you? That is as pertinent today," she said, "as it was in the war days . . . It is incumbent on people in any civil rights society to look back on the bloodshed and terrible struggles that surrounded questions of freedom."

## Arguments for:

- It has been 150 years. Americans avoided discussing the causes of the Civil War when the wounds were fresh, but surely we can find a way to discuss them now without beginning the battle anew.
- Strong individuals and strong societies are able to acknowledge the atrocities of the past and the role of our ancestors in causing them. If you can say, "I'm sorry for what happened," you can help healing to occur.
- Moral challenges are part of life. Grappling with what happened 150 years ago prepares us for difficult choices today.

## Arguments against:

- If the goal is to unearth the emotions caused by historical events like slavery, the danger is that we will end up stuck in emotions and beliefs rather than having a clear-eyed, factual understanding of what happened.
- Grappling with the issue of slavery is unnecessary. Nobody who is alive now played any part in creating slavery. We can all agree that it was a horrible institution. There is no need to discuss it further.
- People who occupied a slave-owning state like Missouri cannot be part of this conversation. While Order No. 11 caused problems for people who lived there, their pain was a small price to pay for helping to eliminate the scourge of slavery.



# APPROACH THREE:

## Promote positive values and pride

### VALUES

patriotism

pride

loyalty

**W**e should use history to promote values that are important to our society. We shouldn't make things up, but it is appropriate and right to spend more time on some aspects of history than others if it promotes greater patriotism, pride or unity. The feelings and beliefs of the people living now matter more than the factual information gathered by people who study the historical events. The perspective of the enemy, the story that makes us question our values or our motives, is damaging to us as a people. History is where we tell our shared story of the past. It is important that our story gives hope for the future.

*"'Who am I?' is one question we ask ourselves, but equally important is, 'Who are we?' We obtain much of our identity from the communities into which we were born or to which we choose to belong. Gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, class, nationality, religion, family, clan, geography, occupation, and, of course, history can go into the ways that we define our identity. As new ways of defining ourselves appear, so do new communities."*

**Margaret MacMillan**

We go through our lives as members of groups and joiners of groups that help build our sense of identity. If you're a KU Jayhawks supporter, you know which bars to visit when the game's on and you know what to chant; the same goes for Mizzou Tigers fans. If you are a lifelong Missouri resident, you may have a different sense of your people through history than a lifelong Kansas resident. The way we tell our story is likely to draw a strong response depending on what side, if any, you're on. Some ways of telling the story can bring people together and make them feel part of something bigger than themselves, and those unifying stories are good for our community.

"I don't think it's out of hand," Ashel said of the Jayhawks/Tigers rivalry. He produced the Metro Sports documentary on the border war. "There are instances where people take rivalries too far, but mainly it's good-natured. It's a better way to solve our disputes than we used 150 years ago. People should understand and embrace it. As much as we like to say we hate the other side, if the other side was gone, we would miss them. The history is what makes the games important to each side."

The way we tell history can make us proud of our identity. Challenging our beliefs, causing people to question the rightness of behaviors, is not an appropriate outcome of telling our story. We've seen this play out in the past in the public response to how history is presented. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for example, was controversial because its design didn't honor the greatness or heroism of American soldiers. Instead, it just listed the names of 58,000 men and women who died. Eventually, supporters paid for a statue that better expressed patriotic values to be placed near the black granite memorial.

History also promotes pride when it searches out stories of American heroes. For example, the actions of slaves in Missouri were those of people who took action rather than people who had things done to them. No matter how Caucasians saw it, African-Americans understood what the war was about, Mutti Burke said. They saw the war as being about them and their freedom. Missouri slaves used their social networks to collect and share the latest war news in an attempt to prepare for freedom. Slaves aggressively flocked to Union troops as their liberators, and did this against tremendous odds. Both Confederate and Unionist slaveholders "unleashed a reign of terror as they frantically tried to maintain Missouri's slavery regime." After black men began enlisting in the Union army in 1863-64, bushwhackers tried to keep them from it. Still, a tremendous percentage of black men from Missouri became Union soldiers. More than 8,300 Missouri slaves served in the five United States Colored Infantry regiments recruited in Missouri, and many more enlisted in nearby states.

Margaret MacMillan says that history is often used to enhance group solidarity, morality and knowledge about institutions. When we debate how best to transmit values, we often consider how we should teach history. “The danger is that what may be an admirable goal can distort history either by making it into a simple narrative in which there are black-and-white characters or by depicting it as all tending in one direction, whether that of human progress or the triumph of a particular group. Such history flattens out the complexity of human experience and leaves no room for different interpretations of the past,” she wrote.

Reducing the complexity, however, is sometimes the only way to live with the past. Let’s take the example of the days and years after the Civil War, when former enemies returned to their homes right next door to one another. What purpose would have been served by focusing on the hell they had just experienced and perpetrated? Instead, they created a “common construction of patriotic manhood that emphasized the bravery of veterans on both sides while minimizing slavery, secession and the origins of old divisions,” which was critical to eroding the political divisiveness of the state line, according to Neely. Doing so allowed Missouri and Kansas towns to join together to compete for economic development, which led to a rapid rebuilding of the border area.

Sometimes, it’s enough that a story brings people together to celebrate their shared history. “We should be respectful of how the Missouri border ruffians tried to come over and make Kansas a slave state instead of a free state,” Susan Keim said. Keim is a KU graduate and resident of Lawrence. In August, Lawrence residents celebrate surviving Quantrill’s raid with a walking historical tour. Why is that important? Keim said, “It’s important because it was such a brutal attack . . . Quantrill wanted to take out every person he could that would be a threat to Missouri’s way of life.” Lawrence is celebrating survival, not victimization, she said. Lawrence’s logo is a phoenix, “that we rose from the flames of Quantrill’s fire.”

History is the story we tell ourselves. Organizers of the Civil War centennial understood this, and they promoted values like unity and patriotism. When we consider the border war sesquicentennial, it is vital to tell a story that leaves us empowered and proud rather than powerless and ashamed.

## Arguments for:

- It is important to remember events like the border war so that we can honor our ancestors and their sacrifices. We can best do this by emphasizing the positive values rather than the errors.
- When people are proud of their group, that builds group loyalty, and group loyalty builds social capital. Social capital has a huge impact on the health of a society.
- The world is hard enough as it is. It hurts nothing if we build identities that have us be heroes rather than fools. A positive identity can lead to more positive acts in the future.

## Arguments against:

- Requiring that history promotes unity or patriotism benefits the status quo and people in power. Telling the whole story allows us to hear the dispossessed and powerless who have nothing to gain by making the status quo look good.
- The guerrillas saw themselves as brave, chivalrous heroes as they plundered, looted and killed. The world is better off if we can see when our actions do not match our identities.
- The hard reality is that people have made horrible mistakes that led to atrocities. Suppressing the facts reduces our ability to learn from our mistakes.

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## Interviews

Panel discussion with historians held at the Johnson County Central Resource Library on Jan. 5, 2011.

- Katie Armitage is the author of *Lawrence: Survivors of Quantrill's Raid*.
- Diane Mutti Burke is associate professor of history at UMKC and author of *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865*.
- Jeremy Neely is the author of *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line*.

**Erik Ashel** is producer of the Metro Sports documentary, "Border War: Kansas vs. Missouri."

**Carol Bohl** is president of the Missouri/Kansas Border War Network and is director of the Cass County Historical Society.

**Mike Calvert** is president of the Civil War Roundtable of Western Missouri, a group that studies the border war and Civil War and provides education and outreach to the community.

**Jim Heeter** is president of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce.

**Susan Keim** is a faculty member with Donnelly College and Lawrence resident.

**Joelouis Mattox** is an independent scholar and historian.

**Chester Owens** is an historian and reenactor for the First Kansas Colored Infantry.

**Dwight Pitcaithley** is the retired chief historian with the National Park Service, and is currently a professor with New Mexico State University.

**Judge Deanell Reece Tacha** is chair of the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area Trustees.

**Carmaletta Williams** is executive assistant to the president, diversity initiatives, and professor at Johnson County Community College. Her Ph.D. dissertation at KU was on African-American migration.

*Special thanks to Diane Mutti Burke for reviewing the guide and helping to assure its accuracy.*









*Through book discussions, community issues forums, author visits and other programs, Johnson County Library invites you to reflect on the Legacies of the Civil War during 2011 and 2012. The 150th anniversary provides an opportunity for us to examine how historical events shaped our community here in Johnson County, the site of notable conflict and strife before, during and after the War.*

The following special events will take place at Central Resource Library, 9875 W. 87th St., Overland Park, KS. For more information, visit [www.jocolibrary.org/civilwar](http://www.jocolibrary.org/civilwar) or call (913) 826-4600.

- **A Conversation with Historians Brian Craig Miller and Diane Eckhoff**  
Sunday, Aug. 28 • 1:30-3:45 p.m.  
Learn more about Kansas's role in the Civil War from these engaging local historians.
- **Johnson County Library Presents Daniel Woodrell**  
Saturday, Oct. 8 • 2:00 p.m.  
The author of *Winter's Bone* reads from and discusses his new book of short stories, *Outlaw Album*, which includes the story that inspired "Ride with the Devil."
- **A Johnson County Library Issues and Engagement Forum: The Border War**  
Tuesday, Oct. 25 • 6:30 p.m.  
Join your fellow citizens to discuss the impact the Border War has on our identities and on our metro area, and how it should be commemorated.
- **Johnson County Library Presents Mark Twain and the Civil War**  
Wednesday, Nov. 30 • 7:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain expert Martin Zehr will speak on the author's ongoing relevance in American literature and take questions about the man and his works.
- **Book Discussion: "Private History of a Campaign That Failed"**  
Wednesday, Jan. 18 • 7:00 p.m.  
Join patrons from around the county to discuss Mark Twain's fictionalized account of his brief and inglorious career as a Confederate irregular and deserter. Download this short story for free as a PDF file, e-book or audiobook at [www.jocolibrary.org/civilwar](http://www.jocolibrary.org/civilwar).
- **A Johnson County Library Issues and Engagement Forum: The Kansas-Nebraska Act**  
Thursday, Feb. 16 • 6:30 p.m.  
In 1854, should President Franklin Pierce give settlers in Kansas and Nebraska the right to vote on whether slavery would be permitted, should he ban slavery in the territories, or should he focus on practical considerations like the economy rather than moral rhetoric? Join with your fellow citizens to discuss how you would advise the president.
- **Johnson County Library Presents Jane Smiley**  
Tuesday, April 10 • Time to be announced  
Pulitzer Prize and PEN USA Lifetime Achievement Award winning author Jane Smiley comes to Johnson County to talk about her work, including *The All-True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton*.