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Article Summary: Six nineteenth-century maps show the evolution of the shape of Nebraska.

Note: This special supplement to the Summer issue of *Nebraska History*, issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, featured in addition to what appears here a full-color reproduction of the first published map of the Nebraska and Kansas territories, produced by the J H Colton Company of New York in 1854. It was not possible to include that seventh map in this online file because of its large size.

Cataloging Information:

Photographs / Images: *Louisiana*, drawn by Samuel Lewis, engraved by Henry Tanner, Boston: Aaron Arrowsmith, 1804; *Map of Arkansas and Other Territories of the United States*, Stephen Harriman Long, 1822; *Map of the United States, Canada, and a Part of Mexico* (detail), drawn and engraved by Sherman and Smith, New York, 1850; *Plan of the Public Survey in Kansas and Nebraska*, John Calhoun, Surveyor General, 1856; *Johnson's Nebraska, Dakota, Colorado, and Kansas* (detail), from *Johnson and Ward's New Illustrated Family Atlas*, 1862; *Johnson's Nebraska, Dakota, Idaho, and Montana*, A J Johnson, 1865

NEBRASKA & KANSAS

J. H. Colton, New York, 1854

The map on the opposite side is a reproduction of the first published map of the Nebraska and Kansas territories. Donated to the Nebraska State Historical Society by Marilyn Forke of Lincoln, it is the first edition, first state, of this map published late in 1854. Later states (maps printed from the same plate but with minor alterations) were published in 1855 and 1857.

The map is beautifully ornamented with engravings of wildlife, explorers entering the region at the eastern edge of the map, and Native Americans hunting bison (near the center) and dancing (in the west). Note the text just above the “Kehah Paha” (now Keya Paha) River explaining that American Indian tribes are required to have a chief or head

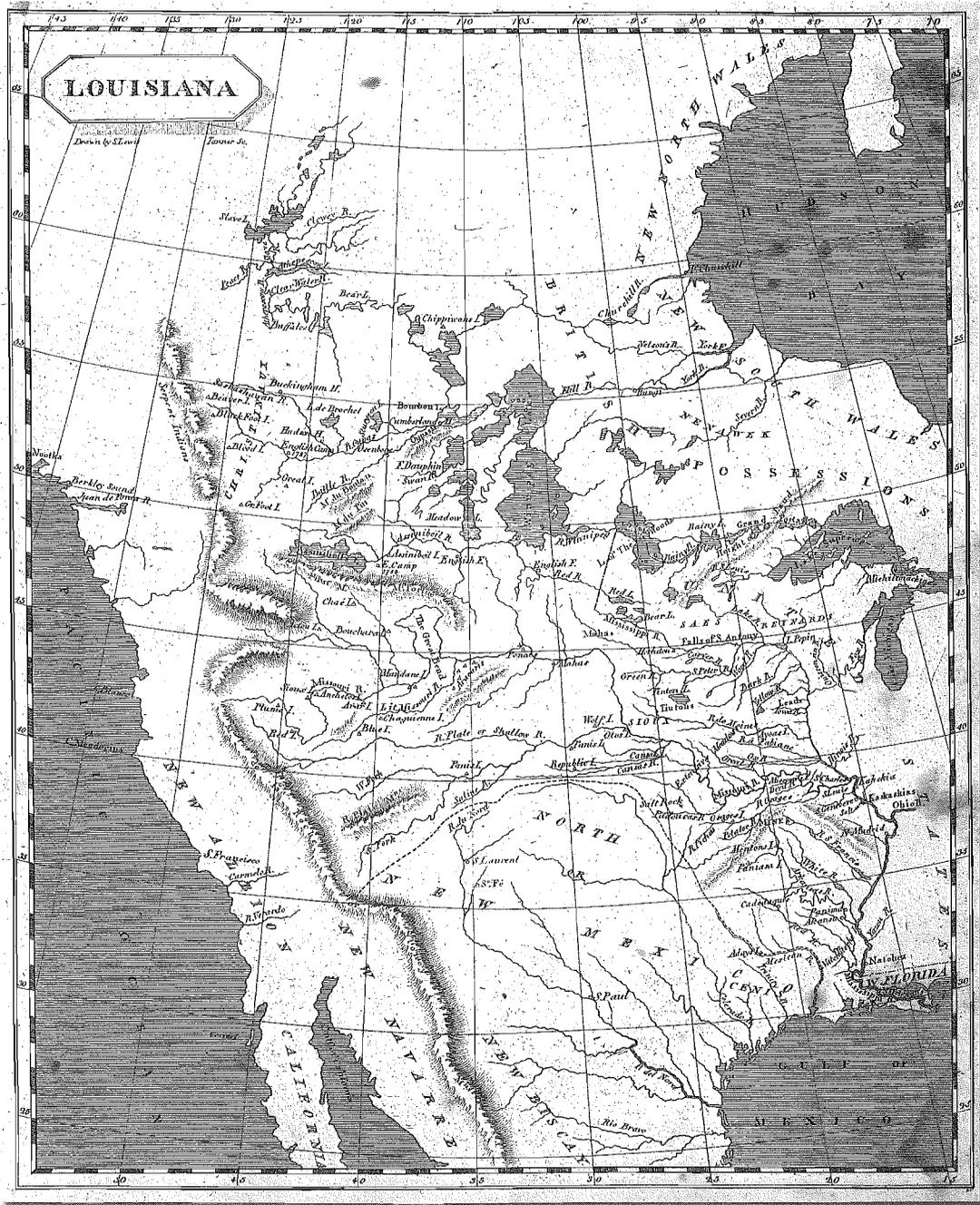
man to represent them in negotiations with the United States government. The idea of a single spokesman for the tribe was not a part of Native American culture, and this requirement stemmed from the government’s desire to have a single individual with whom to negotiate.

This reproduction, produced in 2004 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the creation of the Nebraska Territory, has been digitally enhanced and restored to improve colors that have faded over a century and a half. The original map has been physically stabilized and restored at the Nebraska State Historical Society’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, in Omaha. It is reproduced here in approximately its original size.

THE SHAPE WE’RE IN

Have you ever wondered how Nebraska became the odd-shaped state it is today?

The Coulton map on the opposite side and those reproduced below explore how the fledgling United States of America acquired this land from France and eventually shaped it into the state we know today.



1

The Louisiana Purchase

Louisiana, drawn by Samuel Lewis, engraved by Henry Tanner, Boston: Aaron Arrowsmith, 1804

Thomas Jefferson's interest in acquiring the port of New Orleans led debt-ridden France to sell the entire Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803, more than doubling the country's size and making it one of the largest nations, geographically, in the world.

This map shows Louisiana as Jefferson might have imagined it. Lacking information that would come from later exploration, cartographer Samuel Lewis drew the Rocky Mountains as a single continental ridge within spitting distance of the coast of California.

This map was the nation's standard until Lewis and Clark's highly detailed map, also drawn by Samuel Lewis (not related to Meriwether Lewis), was published in 1814. *Louisiana*, with its many errors and omissions, shows not flawed map-making, but rather how little Jefferson knew about the real estate he was purchasing.

Missouri Territory

Map of Arkansas and Other Territories of the United States, Stephen Harriman Long, 1822

In 1819, when Louisiana Territory's western boundaries were established, Congress divided it, creating the Missouri and Arkansas territories. Although it takes its title from Arkansas Territory, this map shows primarily the Missouri Territory.

The Convention of 1818 with Great Britain established the northern border of the future Nebraska Territory, and Missouri's petition to become a state touched off a national crisis. Its admission would undo the delicate political balance of free and slave states.

The Missouri Compromise temporarily resolved the issue by admitting Maine as a free state and Missouri as a slave state. The compromise also banned slavery in all the Louisiana Purchase north of Missouri's southern border. The debate over slavery in the new territories would arise again with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854.





Calling the Place Nebraska

Map of the United States, Canada and a Part of Mexico, (detail) drawn and engraved by Sherman and Smith, New York, 1850

Our region was called Nebraska at least as early as 1844, when Secretary of War William Wilkins proposed a Nebraska Territory in his annual report, and Illinois Congressman Stephen A. Douglas introduced a bill to organize such a territory.

By 1849 people traveling west had begun referring to the region between the northern borders of Texas and Indian Territory and the Canadian border as Nebraska.

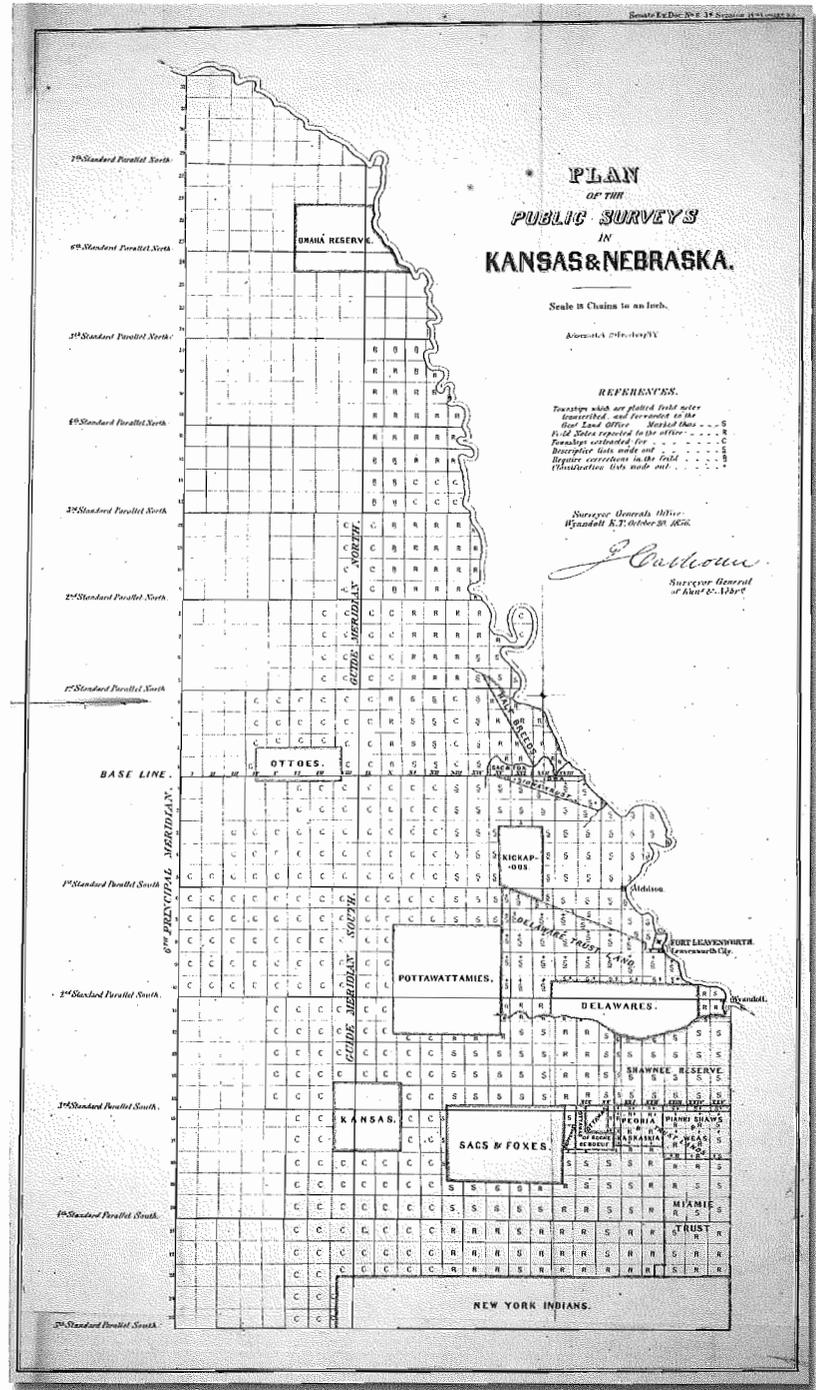
In July 1853 the Wyandot Indians led a convention to create a provisional Territory of Nebraska, and elected William Walker the first provisional governor. They sent Abelard Guthrie to represent the provisional government in Congress, forcing Congress to take up the issue of the Nebraska Territory, and helped bring about the passage of the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act that fixed the location of Nebraska's southern border.

Dividing the Territory

Plan of the Public Survey in Kansas and Nebraska, John Calhoun, Surveyor General, 1856

John Calhoun was appointed the first surveyor general for the Nebraska and Kansas territories in 1854. As required by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Calhoun arranged for the survey to begin at the 40th parallel, the boundary between Kansas and Nebraska. Townships were measured north and south from that point. Ranges were measured east and west from the 6th principal meridian. Townships were divided into sections containing 640 acres.

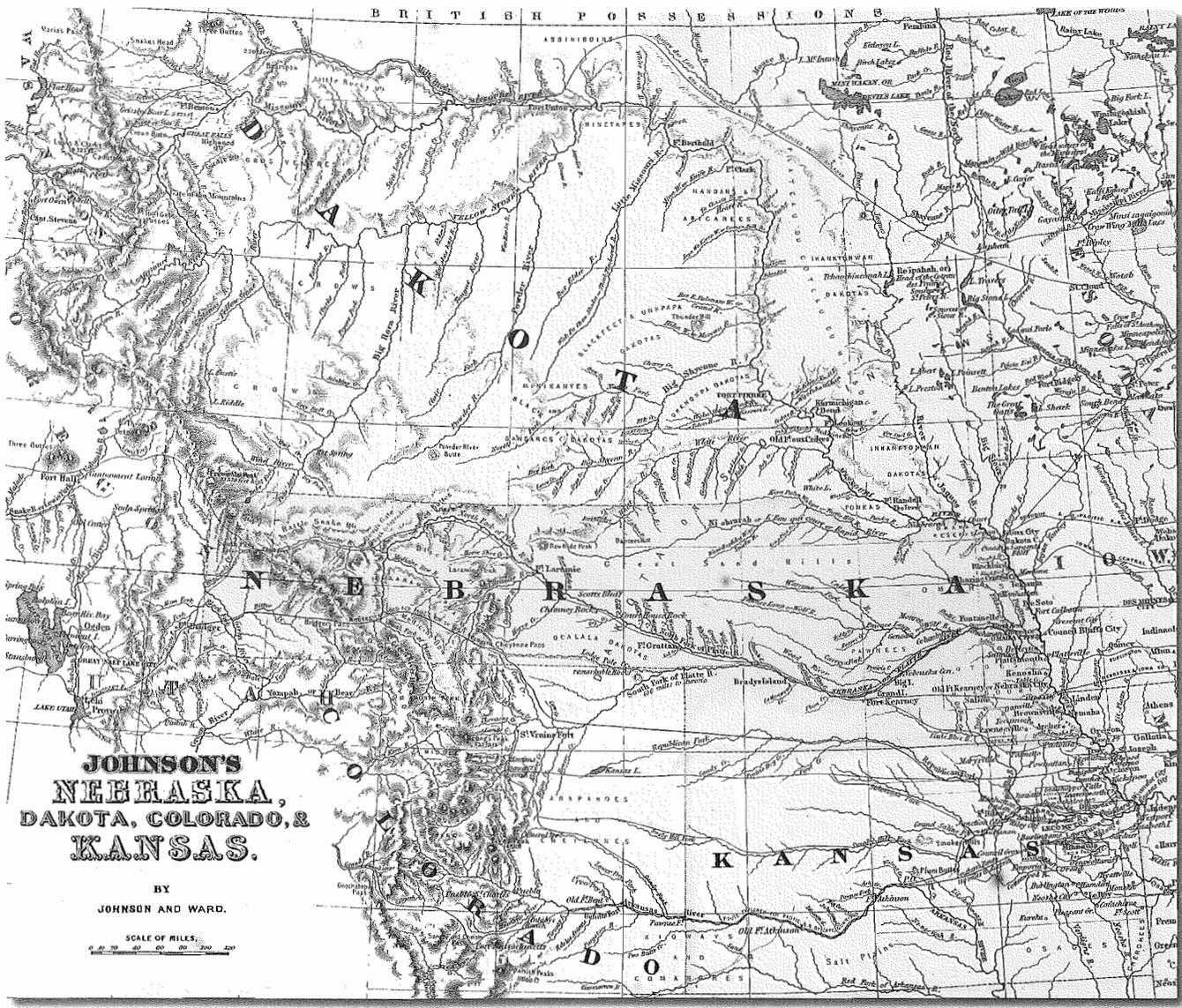
The Kansas-Nebraska Act excluded Indian lands from Euroamerican settlement, and reservation land was to be communally held, so reservations were not subdivided. Tribal lands held in trust to be sold at a later date were surveyed, as was the Half-Breed Tract where Indians with mixed blood were to be provided with individual parcels of land.

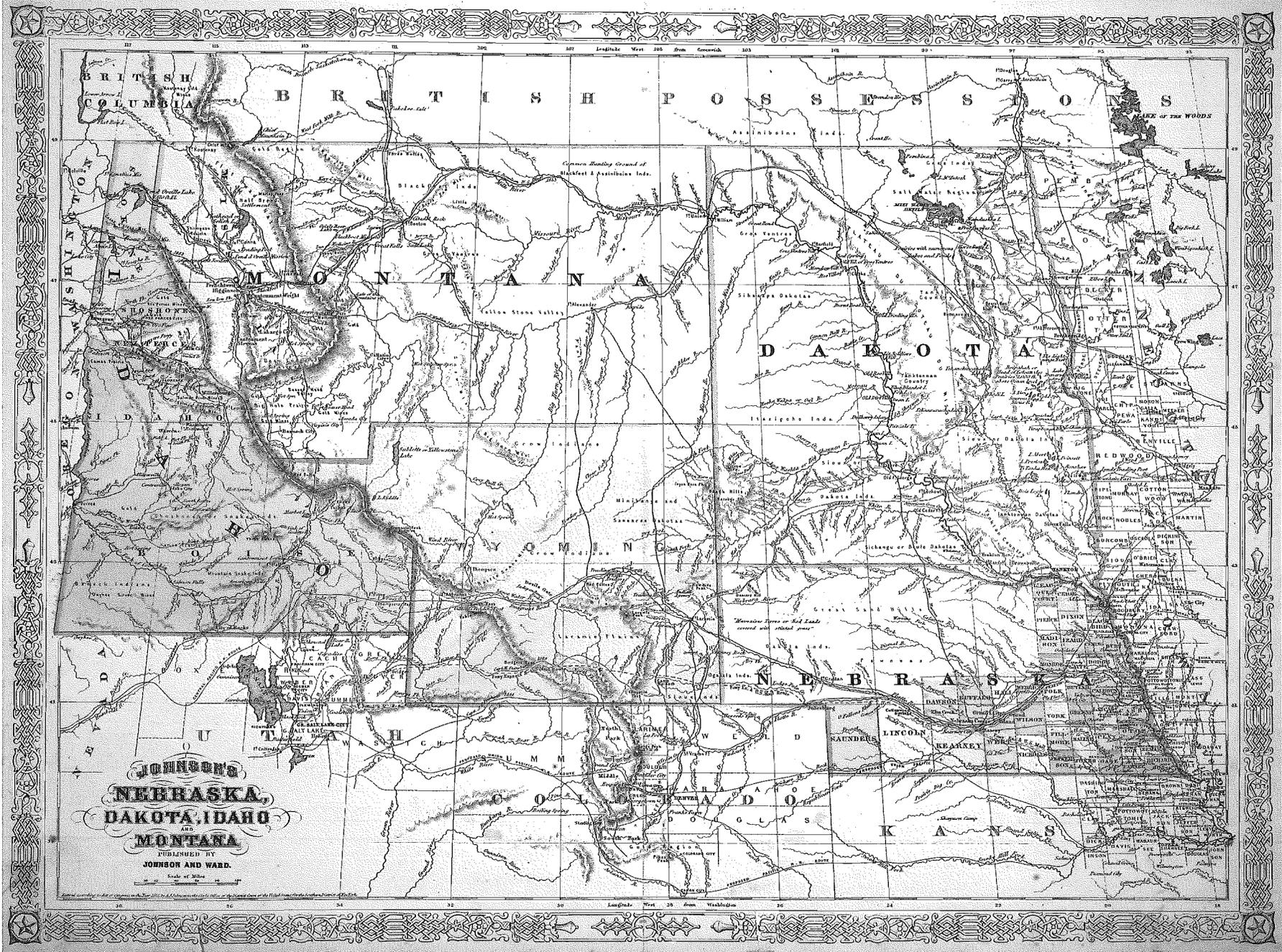


Making the Panhandle

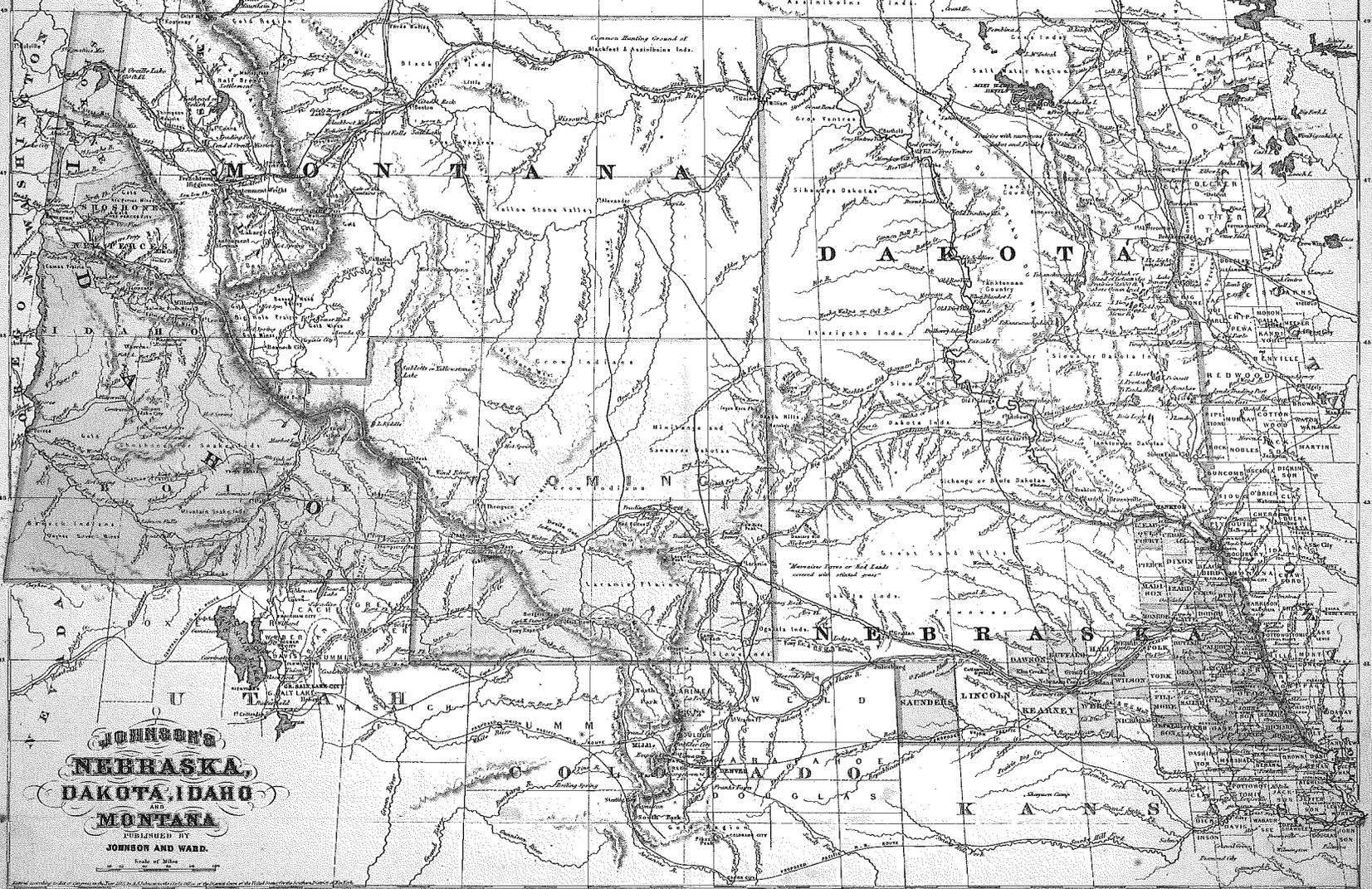
Johnson's Nebraska, Dakota, Colorado, and Kansas, (detail) from Johnson and Ward's New Illustrated Family Atlas, 1862

In 1861 Congress created two new territories that further refined the shape of Nebraska. To the north the Dakota Territory encompassed what would become North Dakota, South Dakota, and large parts of Wyoming and Montana. To the southwest, the creation of Colorado Territory left a Nebraska panhandle extending all the way to Utah.





BRITISH COLUMBIA BRITISH POSSESSIONS



JOHNSON'S
NEBRASKA,
DAKOTA, IDAHO
AND
MONTANA
PUBLISHED BY
JOHNSON AND WARD.

Scale of Miles

Longitude West from Greenwich Longitude West from Washington

The Final Shape

Johnson's Nebraska, Dakota, Idaho and Montana,
A. J. Johnson, 1865

In 1860 prospectors found gold on Nez Perce land in the Northwest, setting off a huge land rush. In 1863 the federal government created Idaho Territory from part of Dakota Territory. It included substantial areas of the present states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. In 1862 gold was discovered on Grasshopper Creek, and Montana was granted territorial status in 1864. The border between Montana and Dakota territories extended southward to the northern border of Colorado and separated Nebraska from Wyoming Territory, created in 1868.

This map shows Nebraska with nearly its present area and boundaries. In 1867 Nebraska became the 37th State, the first to join the Union after the Civil War. The addition of Boyd County in 1890 was the last major change to the state's boundaries.

The Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the Nebraska State Historical Society tell Nebraska's stories. A grant from the Foundation funded by an endowment established by the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc. of Lincoln underwrote production of this map.

Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation, 128 North 12th St. Suite 1010, Lincoln, NE 68508. (402) 435-3535. On the web at www.nebraskahistory.org/foundatn/index.htm

The Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, a division of the Nebraska State Historical Society, is a state-of-the-art regional conservation center in Omaha whose mission is to conserve historical, cultural, and educational materials through conservation, preservation, and restoration of paper, textile, and object collections. The maps reproduced here were treated and digitized at the Ford Center, which is supported in part by private funds raised by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

The Don Forke Collection, housed in the Nebraska State Historical Society's archives in Lincoln, includes nearly sixty rare maps assembled by longtime collector Don Forke of Lincoln. Following Mr. Forke's death, his wife, Marilyn Forke, generously donated the maps to the Historical Society to help fulfill his desire that the collection would continue to be used to help educate and inform the public about the history of Nebraska.



**The Nebraska State Historical Society collects,
preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.**

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