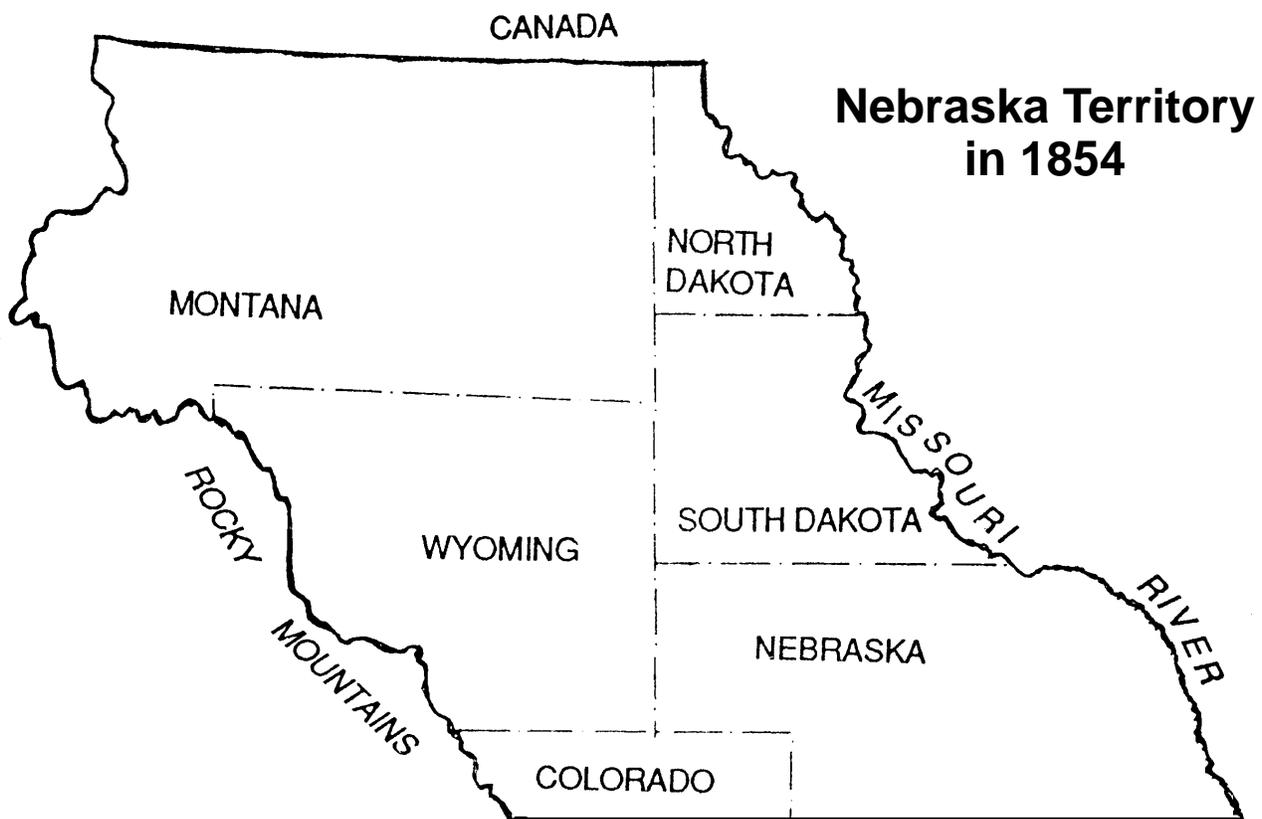




No. 6

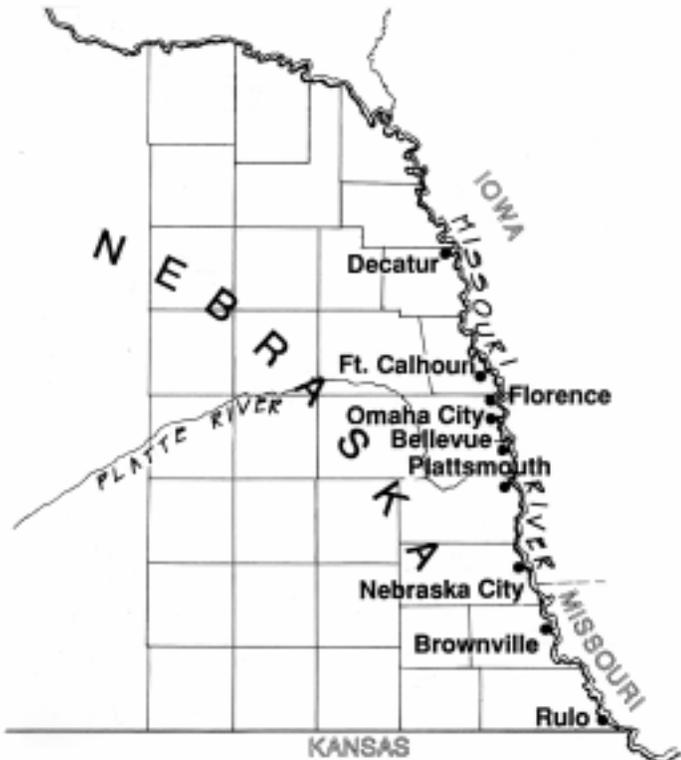
Nebraska Territory



**Nebraska was not always shaped the way it is today.** President Thomas Jefferson bargained for the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Part of this vast land became Nebraska Territory in 1854. The territory, which was part of the United States but lacked the rights of a state, was much larger than present-day Nebraska.

Nebraska Territory stretched from the Canadian border at the north to Kansas at the south. The eastern boundary was the Missouri River; the western was the Rocky Mountains. The territory included parts of today's states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. Over the years Nebraska Territory became smaller.

The Missouri River formed a **natural boundary** between Nebraska and the states of Iowa and Missouri. When Nebraska was created in 1854 and opened for white settlement, towns sprang up along the Missouri's banks. It served as a highway for settlers. Steamboats on the Missouri carrying people and their belongings. It also became a barrier. It was not until 1872 that the railroad was built which connected Nebraska to Iowa.



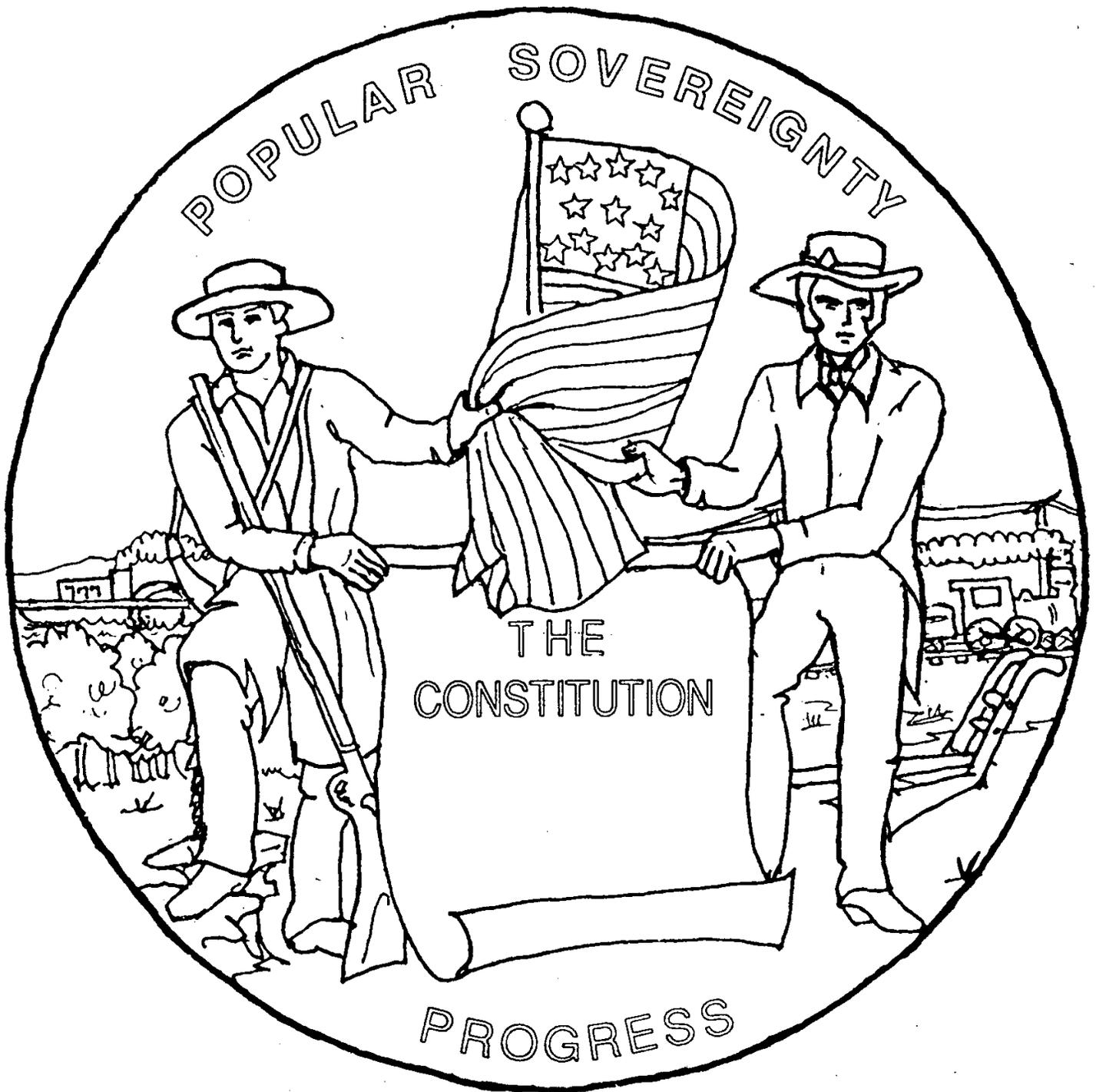
This map of Nebraska Territory is based on one from 1859. The mapmaker then only included the eastern portion of the territory. Few towns had then been founded away from the Missouri River.

Nebraska City was one of the early towns along the Missouri River. Steamboats regularly landed at the town's docks.



Nebraska Territory in 1862. The United States government reduced the size of the territory and made it easier to manage. It still extended hundreds of miles west to the Rocky Mountains.

## Nebraska Territory Seal



**Popular sovereignty** (sov-ron-tee) refers to the right of citizens to have an active voice in their government.

# Great Seal of the State of Nebraska

The United States Congress made Nebraska the 37<sup>th</sup> state in 1867.



Since 1867 the Governor of Nebraska has used a seal to place an official stamp on the important papers of government. The Secretary of State keeps the seal in a safe place.

The Nebraska state seal contains many **symbols** which stand for important events in the building and growth of our state, like the blacksmith holding the hammer. A steamboat moves up the Missouri River. A railroad train heads toward the Rocky Mountains in the west. The settler's cabin, the sheaves of wheat, and the stalks of growing corn represent agriculture. If we drew a new seal today, how would you change it? Can you think of any modern features, or symbols, to add?

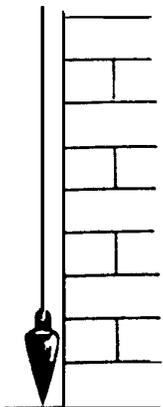
Nebraska is composed of 93 counties, each with its own distinct boundaries. In most cases these are **man-made boundaries**. "Invisible lines" often divide the lands of one county from another. Only by reading signs can you know that you have left one county and are entering a neighboring one.

### Nebraska-Kansas Marker

A six foot iron marker has stood on a high hill overlooking the Missouri River near **Rulo**, Nebraska, since 1855. It marks our border which we share with the state of Kansas. From this starting point, **surveyors** ran a straight, "invisible" line west to set Nebraska's southern boundary.



Surveyor Robert Harvey stands proudly beside the tools of his trade. He worked on boundary line surveys in the 1870s. Great dangers and hardships were braved by the pioneer surveyors. His kit included rifles for protection.



The surveyor in the photo on the right is shown holding a tool known as a plumb line. At the end of the line is a weight called a plumb bob. This tool uses the earth's gravity to find a vertical (straight up and down) line.



Two markers stand at the corner where Nebraska, Wyoming, and South Dakota meet. They were set in the ground in 1869 (left) and 1893 (right). The nearest Nebraska town is **Harrison**.



## A North-South Boundary

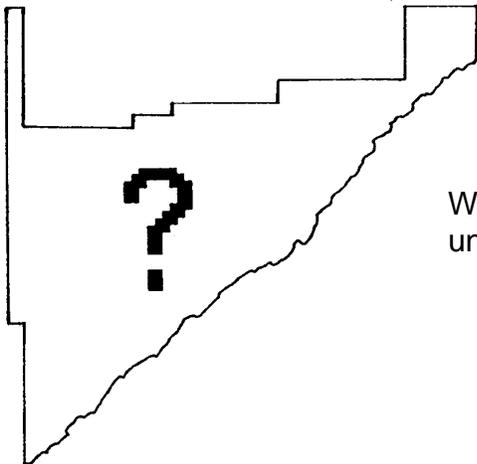
Our nation was once bitterly divided over the question of slavery. The Civil War between the North and South was fought during the years 1861-1865.

Nebraska, like the states, was split between North and South with the boundary being the Platte River. More people lived south of the Platte, and they disagreed with those north of the river on how to run the territory.

This quarrel boiled over when the location of the new state capital was debated. Omaha, located north of the Platte, wanted to keep the territorial capital. "South Platters" opposed this. When they finally had more votes in the legislature, the issue was decided. The capital was moved south of the Platte River to a brand new town – to be called Lincoln!



Territorial politicians were divided into North and South groups. They fought with words and fists over whether to establish Nebraska's state capital north or south of the Platte River. This picture of the legislature is from the book *History of Omaha*, 1876.



What Nebraska county has the most unusual shape?

**What is the shape of your county? Draw it in the space below.**

Does the county in which you live have any natural boundaries, like a river?

What are the names of the counties next to yours?

Be sure to mark on your drawing the location of your hometown.

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