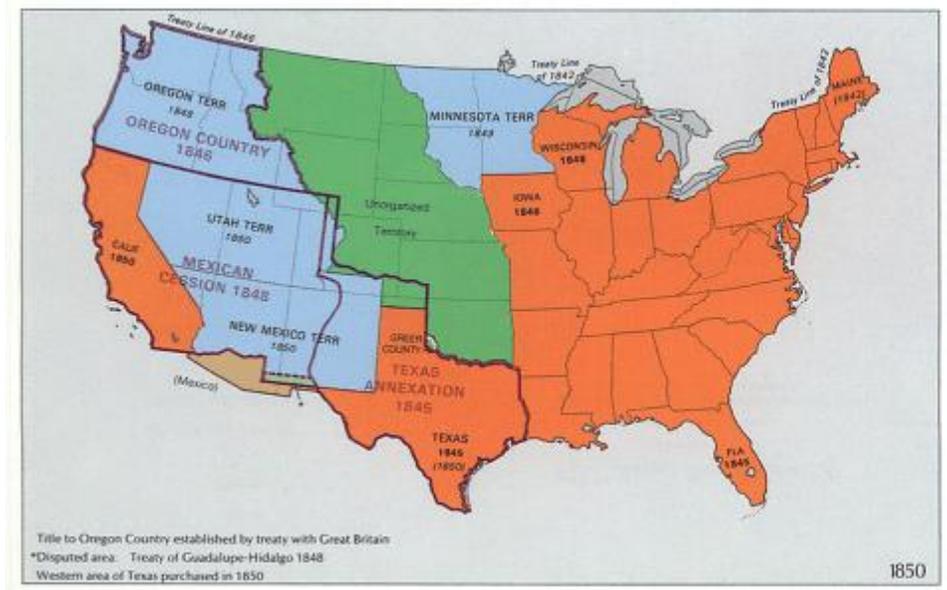


Chapter 10 – Cracks in the Union – 1850 to 1859

Review

The 1840s brought expansion to the United States. After defeating Mexico, the new territory (Mexican Cession) became the next topic of debate when it came to the issue of slavery. How would that issue be determined in the new territory? The slave issue had threatened to split the Union at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. In the 1830s, supporters of states' rights (primarily in the South) had threatened to secede over the tariff issue. Abolitionists were making their case more popular throughout the nation, but still remained a minority. The decade of the 1850s would be a turning point for the country when it came to these issues.



Millard Fillmore was a Whig from New York who had served in the U.S. House of Representatives for eight years. He had been chosen as Taylor's vice-presidential running mate because he could provide geographical balance – Taylor was from Kentucky. Ironically, it was Fillmore who was more pro-slavery than Taylor. Although he found the practice “an existing evil”, Fillmore felt it was guaranteed in the Constitution and that it was better to see it expand and keep the southern states happy than to oppose it and see the Union ripped apart. This point of view was important in Fillmore's support of the Compromise of 1850.



Millard Fillmore

LESSON 1 – KEEPING THE UNION TOGETHER

Main Idea: *As the nation expanded, the debate between abolitionists and the slave-holding south threatened to pull the country apart.*

President Millard Fillmore

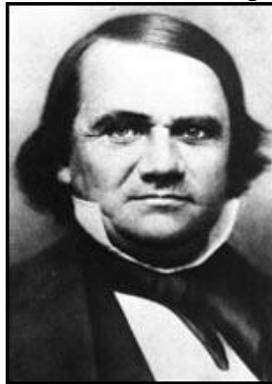
In Chapter 8, we learned about the unfortunate demise of President Zachary Taylor. Let that be a warning to you people who plan on wearing wool clothing, eating ice cream, cold pickles and cherries in extreme hot and humid conditions. Anyway, **Millard Fillmore**, Taylor's vice president, now became the 13th President of the United States.

The Compromise of 1850

You have learned about a number of compromises regarding the history of the United States. The Great Compromise of Roger Sherman at the Constitutional Convention resulted in the creation of the current U.S. Congress. In 1820, the

Missouri Compromise kept the balance of slave and free states in the Senate and Henry Clay played an important role. Clay again helped avert problems during the Nullification Crisis in 1833 when introduced a lowering of the tariff. In 1850, Clay's country would need him again for yet another compromise.

By 1850, the territory of California was ready for statehood. Thanks to the gold rush, California had the people necessary to become a state. It had intended to come into the Union as a free state. Obviously, this meant that there would be an imbalance in the Senate. But more importantly, there needed to be a decision as to the slavery issue in the remaining lands that made up the Mexican Cession. This issue was a big one because it would help determine whether slavery would be extended westward. Without a compromise, the nation would be in serious trouble.



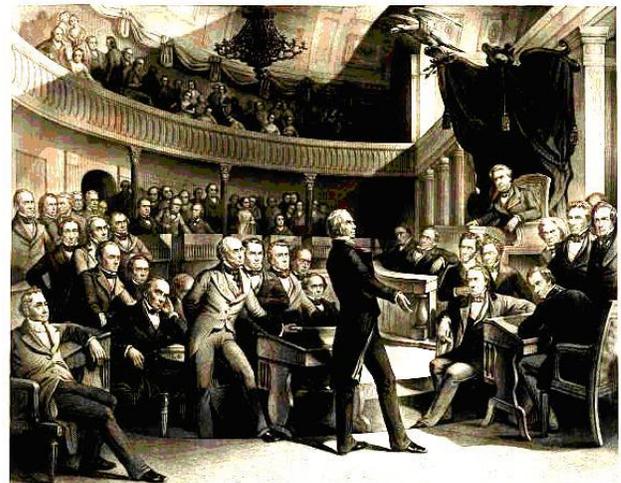
Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas

Henry Clay, now a leading member of the Whig Party in the Senate, was 73 years old and in poor health. In fact, credit for getting the compromise through has to be given to **Stephen Douglas**, a Democratic Senator from Illinois. There was opposition to the compromise from both North and South, but in the end it passed. Here are the things about the Compromise of 1850 that you have to know:

1. California became a free state.
2. The slave trade (buying & selling of slaves – not slavery) was banned in Washington, D.C.
3. The territories of New Mexico and Utah (the remaining Mexican Cession) would decide on the issue of slavery under **popular sovereignty**.
4. A strict **fugitive** slave law was passed.

In case you haven't figured it out already, the first two points favor the northern states and/or abolitionist movement. The last two points favor the southern states and/or pro-slavery movement. So let's break it down. California becoming a free state was big and not just because it's a big state. Essentially this doomed the spread of slavery from ocean to ocean. Banning the slave trade in the capital was more of a superficial¹ thing. It was embarrassing for a nation that was founded on the principal that "all men are created equal ..." to have human beings bought and sold at auction in its capital city. Slavery remained legal, but slaves couldn't be traded within the District of Columbia.

Point 3 was a big one for the pro-slavery cause. The idea of popular sovereignty means that the people within a territory vote on the issue. It literally means the people rule. So when it came to slavery in the rest of the Mexican Cession, the people living there would vote on whether or not they wanted it. It sounds great because it allows the people to make the decision directly. Unfortunately, as you will see in a few pages, it didn't turn out to be as great as it sounded.



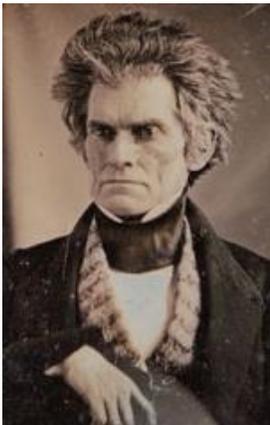
Henry Clay speaks in the Old Senate Chamber

¹ **Superficial:** insubstantial or insignificant.



The Fugitive Slave Law was also a big one for the pro-slavery people. For years, southern slave owners had been quite upset with previous fugitive slave laws. Runaway slaves had only to cross into

free states in order to escape to freedom. Unless they were pursued into slave states (which was costly to owners), they could often find communities where they could live in freedom. This new law changed that. Now, any official who did not arrest an alleged fugitive slave could face a fine of \$1,000. Anyone helping a fugitive slave could be jailed for 6 months and also face the \$1,000 fine. Ultimately, this made it a whole lot easier for slave owners to reclaim their property and a whole lot more difficult for runaway slaves to escape to freedom. Now the only guarantee of freedom lied in getting to Canada. People helping these fugitives could be considered criminals themselves.

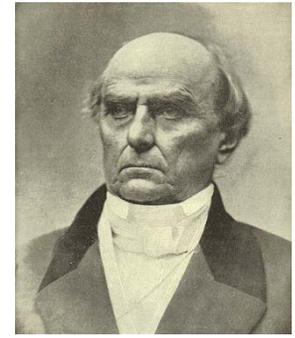


John C. Calhoun

For southerners like John C. Calhoun, the compromise was an outrage. Calhoun called for the expansion of slavery westward without compromise. Unfortunately for him, he died of tuberculosis² in March of 1850, but not before arguing against the compromise.

Northerners were unhappy because the Wilmot Proviso was now officially dead along with the Missouri Compromise. Slavery could, if voted upon

via popular sovereignty, exist in the Mexican Cession and north of the Missouri Compromise line.



Daniel Webster

Massachusetts Whig Senator Daniel Webster, a respected politician and famous **orator**, made a famous speech supporting the compromise. Webster said that he spoke “not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American.” He felt that this was the best way to keep the Union together and that preserving the Union was the most important thing. His support helped the compromise to pass.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin

It’s not often that a book has a huge impact on history. But in 1852 a woman named **Harriet Beecher Stowe** wrote a book that made a big impression on many Americans. First of all, let’s remember that this is the mid-1800s and the competition for Americans’ free time was not what it is today. Educated Americans often read for both information and entertainment. Without television, radio, movies or the Internet, people who knew how to read did just that. (You might want to try it sometime – it’s amazing what you can learn).



Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe was the daughter of a New England minister and her brothers were all ministers, including Henry Ward Beecher, considered to be one of the

² **tuberculosis:** An infectious disease caused by bacteria that mainly attack the lungs. The disease is characterized by the formation of patches, called tubercles, that appear in the lungs and, in later stages, the bones, joints, and other parts of the body.

greatest preachers of his day. Her family had moved to Cincinnati, Ohio and it was here that she came to form her view on slavery. She had visited friends in Kentucky where she witnessed the treatment of slaves, both good and bad, first hand. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Stowe became an abolitionist. Having written stories to supplement her husband's income as a teacher, she decided to use her skills to write a story depicting the cruelty of slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law.

What makes her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, so unique is that it makes a slave the central character of a novel. He becomes the hero. Uncle Tom and members of his race were humanized for the first time in a story that many Americans read. So passionate is this story, that it moved many people who had previously dismissed the slavery issue to become abolitionists. Within a year, Stowe's book had sold 300,000 copies – an incredibly high number in proportion to the number of reading Americans. It can be said that her book helped to bring slavery to the forefront of American politics in the 1850s and that it changed history.



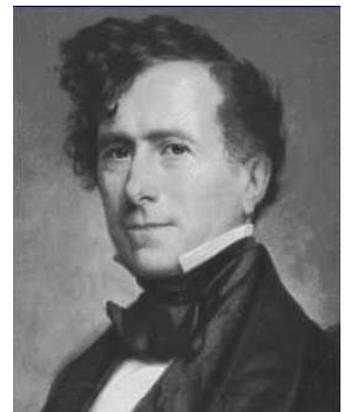
LESSON 2 – POLITICS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Main Idea: *Disappointment over the Compromise of 1850 led to a change in the White House while the country looked to the Far East for trade.*

The Election of 1852

Millard Fillmore upset the northern members of the Whig Party when he signed the Fugitive Slave Law and they refused to nominate him for re-election in 1852. Once again turning to the war hero formula, the Whigs nominated General Winfield Scott of Virginia, one of the heroes of the Mexican War. It had worked in 1848 with Zachary Taylor so they had hoped it would work again with Scott.

The Democrats, on the other hand, were having problems deciding on a candidate. They went into their convention in Baltimore in June with four candidates – none of which could get the majority



Franklin Pierce

needed to become the Democratic nominee. With the convention deadlocked, the Democrats looked for a “dark horse³” candidate and found one in **Franklin Pierce** of New Hampshire. Pierce had served as both a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. He had also served under Winfield Scott as a volunteer Brigadier General during the Mexican War. What made him an appealing candidate was that so little was known about him, especially his position on slavery. On the 49th ballot at the Democratic

Lesson 1 Review Questions – (write answers in complete sentences on a piece of loose-leaf paper).

1. What did the concept of popular sovereignty mean to pro-slavery people?
2. Why was John C. Calhoun so against the Compromise of 1850?
3. What part of the Compromise of 1850 does Harriet Beecher Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* show as being cruel?

³ **dark horse:** a candidate who is unexpectedly nominated at a political convention

convention, Pierce was given the nomination.

The campaign between Scott and Pierce was not all that interesting when comparing it to previous elections. Scott's campaign was disorganized and his anti-slavery views didn't make him very popular especially in the South. When all was said and done, Pierce won the election by 6% of the popular vote and winning 27 of the 31 states for the electoral vote. The Democrats were happy but Pierce's wife was not.



Perry meets with Japanese officials in Edo, Japan - 1853

President Franklin Pierce

So, you're probably wondering why Jane Pierce, the president's wife, wasn't so happy about him winning the election. She was cool to the idea of him running for president in the first place. The Pierces had three sons. The first son died three days after birth and the second at age 4 from typhus⁴. In addition, Mrs. Pierce hated living in Washington, D.C. The situation got worse after the election. While traveling to Washington, the train that the Pierce family was riding in derailed and killed 11-year-old Benjamin Pierce while his parents watched. The tragedy cast gloom over the President and First Lady. Jane Pierce wore only black from that day on.

As a president, Pierce was largely ineffective and he's not remembered as one of our better presidents. It's hard to blame him really, when you consider his family tragedies as well as the fact that he was elected because he didn't offend anyone. But there are some things that you'll need to know about that happened while he was in the White House.

Commodore Perry and Japan

By the middle of the 19th Century, Europeans had established some really

profitable trade routes with eastern Asia. In fact, some European countries like Great Britain, had established colonies in India and along the Chinese coast. Thanks to their control of India, the British controlled the opium trade. Opium is a narcotic – a drug. Heroin is made from opium. The British had been selling the drug to in China but the Chinese government wanted them to stop. This started the first Opium War. The British with their technical and military superiority easily defeated the Chinese and won control of port cities like Hong Kong. The United States recognized that controlling trade with Asia could be profitable for them.

Establishing trade with China would mean competing with European countries like Great Britain. Japan, on the other hand, was a nation with which no Europeans had been able to set up trade. It was a closed nation. Very few European countries had ever been able to trade with the Japanese. In 1852, Commodore **Matthew Perry** led a **squadron** of U.S. ships to Edo (modern Tokyo), Japan, arriving in 1853. The Japanese told him to go to Nagasaki, a city in southern Japan, where the Netherlands had limited trading rights. Perry refused, insisting that he give a letter from President Fillmore to the Japanese government calling

⁴ **typhus**: an acute, infectious disease caused by several species of *Rickettsia*, transmitted by lice and fleas, and characterized by acute prostration, headache, and a peculiar eruption of reddish spots on the body.

for trade with the U.S. Because of the firepower of Perry's ships, the Japanese allowed him to enter Edo.

When Perry returned in 1854 with twice as many ships, the Japanese had agreed to the American demands. As a result, the Convention of Kanagawa was signed between the U.S. and Japan. This opened Japan up for trade for the first time in 200 years. The U.S. got an important



Commodore Perry

trading partner in Asia. The Japanese started down a path toward **modernization** with the Western Europe in hopes that they could avoid the fate of their Chinese neighbors. The Japanese adjusted quickly to modernization and in less than 50 years they were able to defeat a European

force in a war with Russia. In less than 90 years, the Japanese exercised their naval power in an attack on the American fleet that forced them toward modernization when they bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. That's all stuff we'll get into much later.

Lesson 2 Review Questions – (write answers in complete sentences on a piece of loose-leaf paper).

1. Why did Franklin Pierce win the Democratic nomination in 1852?
2. What personal tragedies combined to help make Pierce an ineffective president?
3. How did the Convention of Kanagawa change Japan forever?

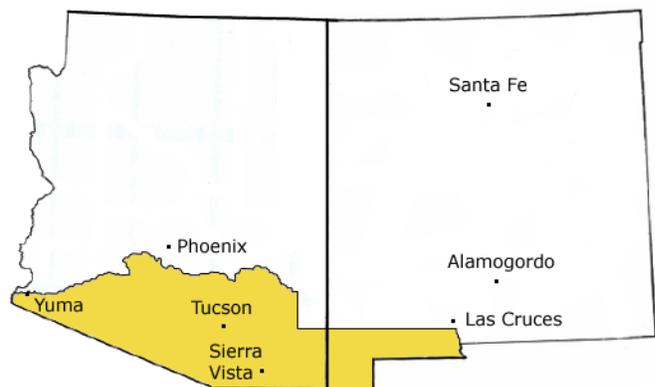
LESSON 3 – NEW TERRITORIES & THE SLAVE QUESTION

Main Idea: *The nation was clearly divided on the issue of expanding slavery in the territories to the west. The division would grow deeper.*

Gadsden Purchase

Since we're talking about trade, you should realize the importance of transportation – especially here in the United States. Now that California was a state, finding a quick means of sending goods and people back and forth between it and the rest of the United States became important. Talk of building a **transcontinental** railroad began in Congress. Southerners in Congress wanted to link Texas and California with a railroad. The problem was that where they wanted to build it included part of what was Mexico.

We were just a few years past the whole war with Mexico and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. You'll recall that America paid Mexico \$15 million for the Mexican Cession. Now the U.S. government wanted to buy a small section that was just south of that area. President Pierce sent James Gadsden to negotiate a deal with Mexico. Back in 1845 President



The Gadsden Purchase (shown with present-day Arizona. & New Mexico)

Polk had sent John Slidell to negotiate and we all know how that turned out. The Mexican government obviously remembered, and they agreed to sell the section of land to the U.S. for \$10 million. That's a pretty good deal considering that they were selling a much smaller area for just \$5 million less. And they didn't have to go to war.



Kansas-Nebraska Act

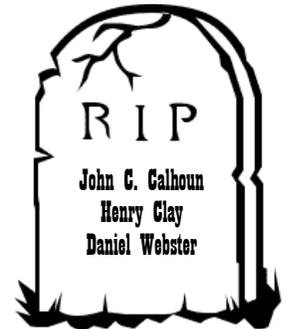
As long as we're on the subject of a possible transcontinental railroad, it should be noted that the southern route was not the only possible route. More likely was the possibility of building a route through the remainder of the old Louisiana Purchase. This was more likely because many railroads were using Chicago as a hub for routes crisscrossing the country. Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas knew this as well. Douglas wanted to organize this territory and solve the potential problem of slavery there as well. So in 1854 he came up with the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It did the following:

1. Divided the territory into Kansas and Nebraska.
2. The issue of slavery would be determined by popular sovereignty.

This doesn't really sound like that big of a deal, does it? Well, the whole popular sovereignty thing cancelled out the Missouri Compromise. You should remember that part of the compromise that declared no slavery north of Missouri's southern border for the rest of the Louisiana Purchase. Both Kansas and Nebraska were north of that border and now that people could vote on the issue, that provision was dead. That's no big deal, right? People voting for what they want is part of the democratic process and the country was founded on that so this should all be fine. It's too bad that it turned out to be anything but fine.

News Flash: Three Powerful Americans Dead

Within 2-½ years, three of the most powerful and influential Americans passed away. All three burst onto the scene during as War Hawks, members of Congress who pushed for war against Great Britain in 1812. The first to go was John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. Calhoun had been vice president and senator. He was an adamant supporter of states' rights (resigning from the vice presidency over this issue) and a champion for the extension of slavery. He died condemning the Compromise of 1850.



Next to go was Henry Clay of Kentucky in June 1852. Clay was a constant presence in American politics. He had served as Speaker of the House, Secretary of State and Senator. Clay ran several times for president but never won. He's obviously remembered best for negotiating a number of compromises that kept the country from civil war. Without Clay, the possibility of the Union breaking apart became a very real possibility.

Just a few months after Clay died, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts died. Webster served in both houses of Congress and twice as Secretary of State. He was best remembered for his great speaking skills. He felt very strongly in preserving the Union and proved that in pushing for the passage of the Compromise of 1850.

The passing of these three men signaled a turning of the page in American history. Their influence was great, but now the future of the U.S. for the remainder of the 19th Century would be in the hands of others. Those people would look back on their legacies for inspiration to guide the nation.

Bleeding Kansas

When President Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, it became law. The concept of popular sovereignty would be put to the test. The Kansas Territory would be where it would all start. Pro-slavery southerners organized migrations to Kansas. The easiest *migration* was from the neighboring slave state of Missouri. At the same time, anti-slavery societies in New England undertook the organizing of their own migrations. Henry Ward Beecher, the famous New England preacher and brother of author Harriet Beecher Stowe, helped organize groups and raised money to arm them in case of violence with pro-slavery settlers.

By 1855, it was time to vote in the territory for a government and therefore determine the Kansas's position on the issue of slavery. Pro-slavery people spread rumors that over 30,000 abolitionists had moved to Kansas (when in truth about 1,200 anti-slavery New Englanders had moved there). In response thousands of "Border Ruffians⁵" from Missouri crossed into Kansas and voted illegally. The result was a

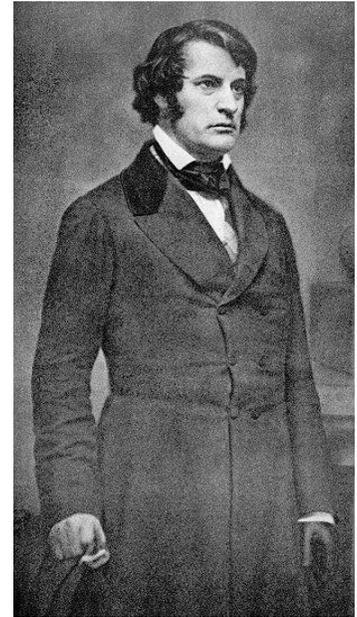
pro-slavery legislature that began passing laws to make Kansas a slave territory.

Anti-slavery settlers in Kansas were outraged. They felt the election of a pro-slavery legislature was illegal and they were right. In response they formed their own anti-slavery government in Kansas. Kansas now had two governments. The result would be a horrible preview of the violence that would erupt in the Civil War.

In May 1856, a group of pro-slavery settlers raided the anti-slavery town of Lawrence, Kansas. They destroyed the two printing presses and set fire to the Free State Hotel, which was more like a fort than a hotel. In the end a number of buildings were burned but there were no fatalities.

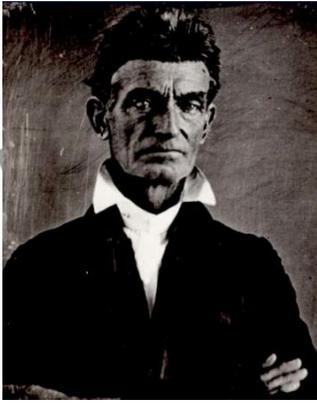
The violence spilled over onto the floor of the United States Senate. Abolitionist Senator **Charles Sumner** of Massachusetts had given a speech attacking southerners in Kansas and in particular, South Carolina Senator Andrew Butler.

Congressman Preston Brooks, a member of the House of Representatives from South Carolina and Butler's nephew took offense at Sumner's remarks and confronted the senator at his desk on the floor of the Senate. He then proceeded to beat him with a cane until he broke it and Sumner fell unconscious. It would be three years before Sumner could return to duty. Meanwhile, many South Carolinians sent Brooks new



Charles Sumner

⁵ *ruffian*: a tough, lawless person; roughneck; bully.



John Brown

canes to replace the one he broke over Sumner. He was viewed as a hero in the South. Maybe C-Span would be a lot more exciting if members of Congress were beating the heck out of each other today.

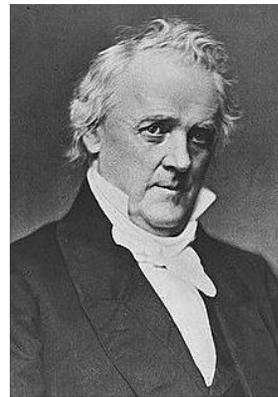
The anti-slavery response to the sacking⁶ of Lawrence and the beating of Sumner came quickly. **John Brown**, an unsuccessful farmer from Ohio had moved to Kansas inspired to help abolitionists secure the territory against pro-slavery forces. Brown and a group of his followers that included several of his sons, went to the cabins of pro-slavery settlers they believed to be responsible for the attack on Lawrence. Five men were then hacked to death with broadswords. Over the course of the next few years, hundreds of people were killed in the fighting over slavery in Kansas. It was becoming clear that the debate over the slavery issue would become more and more violent.

The Election of 1856

The Whig Party was dead by 1856. In the election of 1852, the Whigs were divided over the slavery issue and in particular, the Compromise of 1850. The deaths of prominent Whig leaders Henry Clay and Daniel Webster in 1852 only split the party further. The Kansas-Nebraska Act further divided the Whigs and by the 1856 they were no more. Also dead, was the Free Soil Party.

Two new political parties filled the void. In 1854 the new Republican Party was born, opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the extension of slavery into the new

territories (former Free Soilers loved that part). The anti-immigrant movement gave rise to the American Party, sometimes referred to as the "Know-Nothing" Party". They got that nickname because they previously had formed secret organizations particularly against the influence Catholics within the Democratic Party. Whenever they were asked about these organizations, members would respond, "I know nothing." This **xenophobic** political party would never become as powerful as the Democrats or the Republicans, yet they had a great deal of influence in elections of the middle 1800s.



James Buchanan

The Democrats were so unhappy with President Pierce that they actually decided not to nominate him for a second term. This is the only time in American history that an elected president lost his political party's nomination. Instead, the Democrats turned to **James Buchanan**

of Pennsylvania. Buchanan had served in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate as well as Secretary of State. One of the reasons the Democrats chose him was because he had been serving as a U.S. representative in Great Britain at the time of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and couldn't be seen as taking sides on that issue. In fact, Buchanan didn't even really want the job but accepted his party's nomination just the same.

The new Republican Party nominated John C Frémont of California as their first presidential candidate. You'll remember that



John C. Frémont

⁶ **sack:** The looting or pillaging of a captured city or town

Frémont played a role in liberating California from Mexican rule during the Mexican War. He served as one of the state's first U.S. Senators. The Republican slogan was "Free speech, free press, free soil, free men, Frémont and victory!"

The American Party nominated former president Millard Fillmore. They were united in their opposition to the increase in the number of immigrants coming to the United States. They were deeply divided, however, in their position on slavery. As a result, the best showing for the "Know-Nothings" came in the election of 1856 with Fillmore coming in third place with 22% of the popular vote. The American Party essentially died out after that.

James Buchanan and the Democrats won 45% of the popular vote, but more importantly, won the majority in the Electoral College that made him president. Frémont won 33% of the popular votes – only 60 electoral votes behind Buchanan. The results proved that the Republicans had become a force to be reckoned with and could possibly win the next presidential election.

President Buchanan

When giving his inaugural address, President Buchanan promised that he would not run for re-election in 1860. This makes sense since he really didn't seem to want the job in the first place. As far as his opinions on slavery, he is said to have personally opposed it, however, he was sympathetic to the plight of slave owners and claimed that slaves were "treated with kindness and humanity." Regarding the expansion of slavery into the new territories, Buchanan was content to wait for the

Supreme Court to decide on that. Like Franklin Pierce, Buchanan was also an ineffective leader.

In terms of trivia, James Buchanan is our only bachelor president. In his youth he was engaged to Ann Coleman, but she broke off the engagement and later overdosed on laudanum⁷. After this traumatic event, Buchanan is said to have sworn off ever getting married. His niece, Harriet Lane, served as his First Lady, attending to those duties within the White House. There is speculation that Buchanan's life-long bachelorhood is due to other, more nefarious⁸ reasons, but there is no hard evidence confirming any 19th Century rumors.



Dred Scott

The Dred Scott Case

Dred Scott was a Missouri slave who was purchased by Dr. John Emerson in 1833. Emerson was employed as a surgeon in the U.S. Army. Over the course of several years, Emerson was sent by the army to live in Illinois as well as the Wisconsin Territory (what is now Minnesota). In these locations slavery was illegal and by law Dred Scott could not be considered a slave. Subsequently Dred Scott returned to Missouri and after Dr. Emerson died suddenly, he sued for his freedom. He, and abolitionist lawyers acting on his behalf, argued that since he lived in both a free state and free territory, he should be considered a free man. Mrs. Emerson turned the case over to her brother, John Sanford and by 1857 the case of *Dred Scott v. Sanford* had reached the Supreme Court.

You really haven't had as important a Supreme Court case to remember since the *Marbury v. Madison* case of 1803. That's

⁷ **laudanum:** narcotic consisting of an alcohol solution of opium or any preparation in which opium is the main ingredient

⁸ **nefarious:** wicked, vile, - offense against divine or moral law

because this case is only the second time that the Supreme Court struck down a law passed by Congress (*Marbury v. Madison* was the first). What's more important is that this case polarized the slavery issue – that is to say that it divided the nation. The Supreme Court ruled that Dred Scott did not have the right to even file a lawsuit. Chief Justice **Roger Taney** wrote the majority opinion and ruled that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because Congress did not have the power to declare any region to be a free territory. Taney went further stating that the Fifth Amendment was violated because a slave holder cannot be deprived of his property without due process of law. Since Dred Scott was property, he could not be considered free simply because he resided in a state where slavery was outlawed.

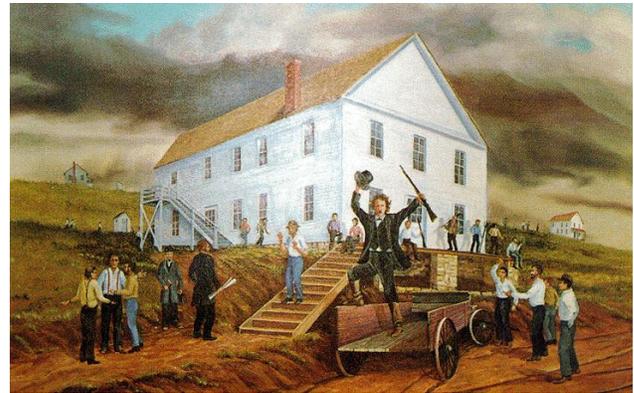
President Buchanan felt that the Court's ruling ended the slavery question. Southerners were overjoyed with the decision. Northerners were shocked. The Fugitive Slave Law forced people in the North to be involved in the slave issue when it threatened prison time and a fine for people who helped runaway slaves. Now the Supreme Court's decision in the Dred Scott case basically said that slave owners could take their slaves anywhere in the United States that they wanted. States could outlaw slavery but since a right to property is guaranteed under the Fifth Amendment, states could not deny a slave owner his property. People in the North who had previously never concerned themselves with the slave issue found themselves forced into it and they didn't like it much. The case that Buchanan had thought put the issue to rest actually made it far more inflammatory⁹.



Chief Justice Roger Taney

Back to Kansas – The Lecompton Constitution

The Kansas Territory continued to have its problems. By 1857 the territory was preparing to join the Union and had already prepared a constitution. The Lecompton Constitution was written in Lecompton, Kansas and it was a pro-slavery constitution. Under this, Kansas would become a slave state. President Buchanan was in favor of this and hoped that Congress would accept it. The Republicans, who were a minority in Congress voted against it but Buchanan's Democratic Party split over accepting the Lecompton Constitution.



Constitution Hall – Lecompton, Kansas

Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, who had become the voice of compromise in the Democratic Party between northern and southern Democrats, was opposed to the Lecompton Constitution. As a supporter of popular sovereignty, Douglas felt that all the people of Kansas had not been allowed to vote. He broke with the southern Democrats and the political party began to split apart. This split would have horrible consequences for the Democrats in the upcoming political elections.

The U.S. Senate debated and barely passed acceptance of the Lecompton Constitution, but the U.S. House of Representatives rejected it. The procedure would begin again in Kansas. The Lecompton Constitution was the second of

⁹ **inflammatory**: tending to arouse anger, hostility, passion, etc.

four constitutions passed in Kansas. It wasn't until the fourth constitution, the Wyandotte Constitution of 1859 (written in ... can you guess? ... Wyandotte, Kansas) that Kansas finally joined the Union and as a free state in 1861.

Lesson 3 Review Questions – (write answers in complete sentences on a piece of loose-leaf paper).

1. How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act cancel out the Missouri Compromise?
2. In 1855, why was a pro-slavery legislature elected in Kansas?
3. How did John Brown respond to the sacking of Lawrence, Kansas by pro-slavery people?
4. Why did the Democrats nominate James Buchanan to run for president in 1856?
5. What did the Dred Scott decision mean for states and territories that had outlawed slavery?

LESSON 4 – MOVING TO THE TIPPING POINT

Main Idea: *By the end of the 1850s the United States was reaching the point where the country's future regarding slavery would have to be decided.*

Abraham Lincoln

You already know a few things about **Abraham Lincoln** but there still are a lot of things about him you probably don't know. So, in order to understand this part of our nation's history, it's important that you understand Abraham Lincoln. And considering that you live in Illinois where his image adorns license plates and the state is called the "Land of Lincoln" you owe it to yourself to know something about him.

Lincoln was born in Kentucky in 1809 to a poor frontier family, which included his mother, father and older sister Sarah. His father, Thomas, was the uneducated son of Abraham Lincoln, Sr. a Pennsylvania farmer who had fought in the American Revolution but was killed by Native Americans in Kentucky. The Lincoln family struggled to make a decent living and by 1816 the family had to move to Indiana. It was there when young Abraham was 9 years old that his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln died of the "milk sickness". This was brought on by drinking the milk of cows that had eaten white snakeroot, which is a poison.



Thomas Lincoln

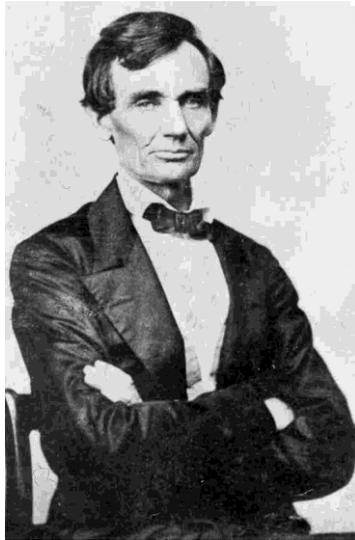
The death of Lincoln's mother was horribly painful for him. The rest of his life he would struggle with bouts of depression, all of which dated back to this traumatic event. His father left the children in the care of a relative while returning to Kentucky to seek a new wife to help him raise his children. He returned with Sarah Bush Johnston who was a widow with three children of her own. She quickly adopted the two Lincoln children and treated them no differently from than her children. Lincoln so loved his stepmother that he always referred to her as "Mother" and much of his education was provided by her. In fact he was much closer to her than his father.



Sarah Bush Johnston – Lincoln's Stepmother

In 1830, Thomas Lincoln relocated the family again, this time to Illinois. The next year, a 22-year-old Abraham Lincoln set out on his own. He met a man named Denton Offutt and

traveled down the Sangamon, Illinois and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans taking goods on a flatboat for sale. Lincoln witnessed the brutality of the slave trade first-hand. This along with his journeys to Kentucky and his family's impressions made him firmly against slavery but not an outright abolitionist. He came back to the town of New Salem, Illinois and worked a number of odd jobs. All the while, Lincoln read whatever he could get his hands on and took a liking to reading law books.



tuberculosis shortly before turning 4 years old. Their third son, William (Willie) died at age 11 when Lincoln was president in Washington, D.C. Thomas (Tad) Lincoln died at age 18 in Chicago after his father's death.

Lincoln became the senior partner in a new law firm in 1844 with William Herndon. The only time Lincoln served in Washington before being elected president was in 1847-48 when he served one term in the U.S. House of

Representatives. While in Washington, Lincoln was opposed to the Mexican War. He also believed that the spread of slavery should be stopped. After returning from his stint in Congress, Lincoln went back to work as a lawyer but after the Kansas-Nebraska Act made the expansion of slavery possible, he returned to politics. In a speech against the act in Peoria, Lincoln said the following:

The Act has a declared indifference, but as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate it. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest

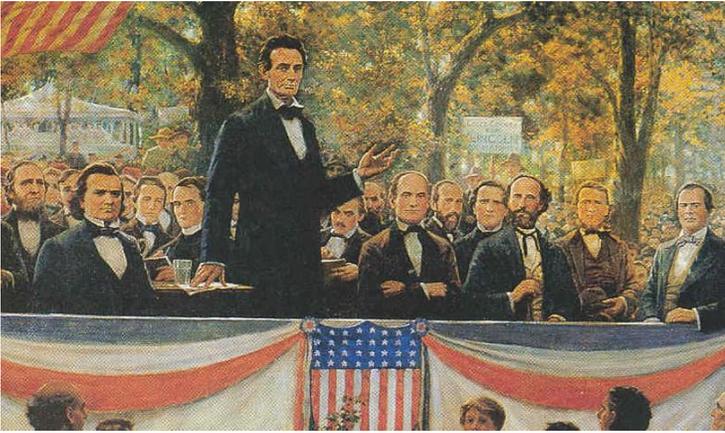
When the Black Hawk War broke out in 1832, Lincoln, along with others in New Salem, volunteered. He knew that a military record would be handy if he decided to run for political office. Lincoln was elected captain of the group but they never really saw any of the fighting. Upon returning from the Black Hawk War, he ran for the Illinois General Assembly as a Whig but lost. But two years later Lincoln ran again and this time was successful. While serving in the capital in Vandalia, Lincoln championed the cause to move the state capital to Springfield. But in 1837 he left the legislature to study law in Springfield under John Stuart. Lincoln became a successful lawyer in Springfield and a prominent member of the Whig Party. Henry Clay was his political hero.



Mary Todd Lincoln

In 1842 Lincoln married **Mary Todd**, a well-educated, young lady who was raised by a slave-owning family in Kentucky. The couple had four boys with only the oldest, Robert, surviving to adulthood. Edward Lincoln, the couple's second child died of

Lincoln helped form the new Republican Party in Illinois from the remains of the old Whig and Free Soil parties. In 1858, Lincoln was nominated to run against Stephen Douglas for U.S. Senator. Douglas and Lincoln were very familiar with one another, having both served in the Illinois



General Assembly and with Lincoln having argued cases in front of Douglas when he was a judge. Upon accepting the nomination, Lincoln gave one of his most famous speeches – his “House Divided” speech. He said,

'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.

During the course of the campaign, Lincoln and Douglas held a series of debates. The two men obviously held different political views but they were quite contrasted physically. Lincoln stood 6' 4" and had a high, nasally voice that was tinged with the backwoods accent that revealed his upbringing. Douglas was only 5' 4" tall but had a booming, eloquent voice. He was known as the “Little Giant” because of his short stature and his power in politics. The debates did much to make Lincoln a national figure. It also helped to doom any chance that Douglas might have had to win the presidential election in 1860. Lincoln was able to pin down Douglas on the issue of the Dred Scott decision. Douglas, needing to win the Illinois Senate race to remain in power was forced to admit that he did not completely agree with the Supreme Court's decision. Ultimately Douglas defeated Lincoln for U.S. Senate but

southern Democrats never forgave this admission when Douglas sought the Democratic nomination for president in 1860.

Raid on Harpers Ferry

You remember John Brown, don't you? He was that guy who was responsible for the killing of pro-slavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas. Over the course of several years, Brown traveled back and forth between Kansas and the Northeast where he was considered a hero with radical abolitionists. He was collecting money for a plan he was trying to put together but he wanted to keep his investors in the dark about his ambitions. By June 1859, Brown had moved to a farmhouse outside Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

Harpers Ferry was the location of a federal **arsenal**. That means is that it was a location for the federal government to store weapons. Brown's plan was to take his small group and capture the federal arsenal. The group would then move south into Virginia and begin to arm slaves. John Brown was essentially trying to start a slave revolt. His plans were not very good. After cutting telegraph lines, Brown's group was able to take control of the arsenal easily but he allowed a train to leave Harpers Ferry and news of the attack reached Washington, D.C.

A number of locals organized and pushed Brown's force back to the arsenal. During the course of the fighting, two of Brown's sons were shot and killed. By the next morning, a group of U.S. Marines under the command of Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee of the U.S. Army arrived and captured Brown. He was tried and found guilty of murder and treason against the state of Virginia. (Brown could have been tried in a federal court for treason because the arsenal was federal property but he was not.) He was sentenced to death. On December 2, 1859,

before his hanging, Brown wrote, "I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away; but with Blood."

John Brown became a martyr¹⁰ for the abolitionist movement. In the South he summed up everything that was wrong with the abolitionists of the North. He continues to be debated even to this day. There are those who feel he was a brave man who believed so strongly in the evil of slavery that he was willing to sacrifice himself to bring an end of it. Others argue that Brown is the first American terrorist – that his ideas were fanatical, especially as innocent people were killed (in Harpers Ferry) in the effort to achieve his goal. Regardless, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry signaled that violence was becoming the only means to settle the issue of slavery.

Extra Credit Question (worth 10 points – answer in complete sentences on a piece of loose-leaf paper)

- The Crimean War was fought from 1854 to 1856 in another part of the world. Do some research – what was this war fought over? What countries were involved? Who was Florence Nightingale and what did she do during the war?
- By the end of 1852, three of the most powerful people in Congress for the first half of the century had died. Do some research – come up with the names of at least three people who currently have served the longest time in Congress. Also, be sure to explain at least one important contribution for each to our country made by these people.

Lesson 4 Review Questions – (write answers in complete sentences on a piece of loose-leaf paper).

1. What was it about slavery that Abraham Lincoln found to be so hypocritical?
2. What did Lincoln mean when he said "A house divided against itself cannot stand"? (for 3 extra credit points, find out where Lincoln got that quote.)
3. How would you describe John Brown's actions at Harpers Ferry? Was he a hero or a terrorist? Explain why you feel that way.

Timeline of Events

1850	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California becomes a free state under the Compromise of 1850
1852	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncle Tom's Cabin published • Franklin Pierce elected president • Henry Clay and Daniel Webster die
1854	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas-Nebraska Act • Republican Party formed
1856	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence in Kansas • Congressman Brooks attacks Senator Sumner • Buchanan elected president
1857	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dred Scott Decision
1858	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transatlantic cable laid • Minnesota becomes a free state • Lincoln-Douglas debates
1859	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry

¹⁰ **martyr**: a person who is put to death or endures great suffering on behalf of any belief, principle, or cause