

A train thunders past smoking metal forges in this late-1850s print of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Though the North was still largely a land of farms, its landscape increasingly resembled this scene.  
**Economics** How did the growth of railroads contribute to the growth of cities?

by Samuel F. B. Morse in 1844. The telegraph allowed people to send messages over wire by using a code of short and long pulses of electricity that represented the alphabet. Because telegraph wires were strung along the ever-growing network of railroad tracks, the communications revolution in the North advanced more quickly than in the South.

Railroads and improved communications nourished the booming industries of the North. In 1860 the North had 110,000 factories, compared to 20,000 in the South; it produced \$1.5 billion worth

of goods, compared to the South's \$155 million. In fact, in terms of numbers, the South outdid the North in only two notable ways: it had more enslaved people and it had more cotton.

Certainly, the North and the South in 1860 had much in common. They both cherished their democratic tradition. Even on the issue of the status of African Americans, whites in both the North and South displayed tremendous prejudice. But despite these similarities, they differed greatly in their beliefs about what American society should be.

## SECTION 1 REVIEW

### Comprehension

- 1. Key Terms** Define: (a) Union; (b) prejudice; (c) obsolete.
- 2. Summarizing the Main Idea** How did slavery affect the views that Northerners and Southerners had of each other?
- 3. Organizing Information** Create a chart listing the major economic contrasts between the North and South in 1860.

### Critical Thinking

- 4. Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. What impact did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* have on northern views of slavery?

- 5. Drawing Inferences** Describe the two main views held by historians on the issue of whether the Civil War could have been avoided. What can you infer about each group's views of people's abilities to deal with differences?

### Writing Activity

- 6. Writing an Expository Essay** Write an essay in which you describe Harriet Beecher Stowe's use of contrast in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to make her case against slavery.



**1848**  
Zachary Taylor  
elected President

**1850**  
Compromise  
of 1850

**1852**  
Franklin Pierce  
elected  
President

**1854**  
Kansas-  
Nebraska Act

**1854**  
Republican  
party founded

**1845**

**1850**

**1855**

## 2 New Political Parties

### SECTION PREVIEW

#### Objectives

- 1 Explain the effects of the Missouri Compromise, and how the Compromise of 1850 tried to deal with them.
- 2 Summarize the changes in political parties in the 1850s.
- 3 Describe the causes and effects of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, including its role in the creation of the Republican party.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: Compromise of 1850; Fugitive Slave Act; states' rights; nativism; Kansas-Nebraska Act; popular sovereignty.

#### Main Idea

A compromise during the 1850s failed to end disagreement over slavery in the territories. Meanwhile, the existing political party system broke down as new political parties arose.

#### Reading Strategy

**Organizing Information** As you read this section, create a graphic organizer that lists the actions and ideas of Northerners and Southerners in two separate columns.

So what if there were differences between North and South? Perhaps the differences were bound to cause political conflict, but did they have to lead to a lengthy war that would kill hundreds of thousands of people? The answer to this question requires an understanding of politics in the 1850s. The war came *when* it did and *how* it did because politicians could not solve the question of slavery. The rest of this chapter explains that political breakdown.

### Effects of the Missouri Compromise

Politicians might have been able to keep slavery from tearing the nation apart if Americans had not settled new lands to the west of the Mississippi. This newly acquired land forced an old question back into politics: whether or not slavery would be allowed in the territories.

Congress had made its first attempt to address this question with the Missouri Compromise of 1820. In the short run, the

compromise maintained the balance in the Senate between slave and free states so that neither North nor South would have more power.<sup>†</sup> It also sought to address the long-term issue of westward expansion by stating that newly formed states north of 36° 30' N latitude would be free states. The compromise did not, however, settle the issue of whether slavery would be legal while the lands to the west were still territories.

After the Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 gave the United States a large piece of land that had been part of Mexico. Because much of this new territory was south of the line set by the Missouri Compromise, Northerners feared that it would eventually be divided into several slave states. This would give the South a majority vote in the Senate and perhaps in the Electoral College. The best way to prevent the creation

<sup>†</sup>Balance in the Senate was especially important to the southern states which were already outnumbered in the House because of the North's larger population.



of more slave states, reasoned antislavery Northerners, was to keep slavery out of these areas while they were still territories.

Southerners were equally firm in insisting that the national government had no business telling its free citizens they could not take their property to the territories if they wanted to. Property, after all, was what they considered enslaved people to be.

In the presidential election of 1848, both major parties hoped to gain voters from all sides of the slavery debate. Thus they avoided discussing the slavery issue and nominated non-controversial candidates. The Democrats chose Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan, while the Whigs chose Mexican War general Zachary Taylor.

Angered by their parties' unwillingness to deal with the slavery issue, some members from both parties split off and formed their own Free Soil party to oppose slavery in the territories.

The Free Soilers did not win any states in the 1848 election, but they did take enough votes away from Cass to give Taylor a narrow victory.

## *The Compromise of 1850*

Westward expansion once again raised the issue of slavery in 1849. In that year the thousands of Americans who had rushed into California during the Gold Rush requested admission to the United States as a free state. Admitting California as a free state would upset the fragile balance between free and slave states in the Senate. The stage was set for one of the most dramatic events in American history.

**Clay Proposes a Compromise** At the center of this drama were three of the most respected senators of that (or any) era: John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, Henry Clay of Kentucky, and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. All three



During the debate that led to the Compromise of 1850, all the great speakers of Congress had their say. Among them was Henry Clay, shown here in February 1850 as he warned that a failure to compromise would lead to “furious” and “bloody” war. **Government** What led Clay to propose a compromise?



## GOVERNMENT CONCEPTS

**federalism:** a system of government in which power is divided between a central government and smaller governments

▼ **The Historical Concept** A central issue in the debates of the 1850s was the proper division of authority between the federal government and the states. Northerners and Southerners disagreed over whether the federal government could limit slavery in the territories and whether states could secede from the Union.

▼ **The Concept Today** Through most of the 1900s, the federal government gained power at the expense of the states. In recent years, however, the states have become increasingly active and powerful in areas such as social welfare policy.

men had begun their long political careers in Congress prior to the War of 1812. When the Senate convened in 1849, the 73-year-old Clay, who was called “Gallant Harry of the West,” tried to solve the nation’s dilemma with words rather than blood.

Clay’s plan for a compromise over slavery would become known as the **Compromise of 1850**. Seeking a middle ground on the slavery debate, Clay proposed five separate laws, two of which favored the North and two of which favored the South:

- (1) Congress would admit California as a free state.
- (2) The people of the territories of New Mexico and Utah would decide for themselves whether slavery would be legal.
- (3) Congress would abolish the sale of enslaved people in Washington, D.C.
- (4) Slavery itself would remain legal in Washington, D.C.
- (5) A **Fugitive Slave Act** would order all citizens of the United States to assist in the return of enslaved people who had escaped from their owners. It would also deny a jury trial to escaped slaves.

**Calhoun Opposes Compromise** Debate over the compromise dragged on for months. On March 4, 1850, the Senate gathered to hear the opinion of John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. Calhoun was a direct and dynamic orator. As it turned out, Calhoun’s speech was one of the great summaries of the southern view of the crisis.

Many in the Senate felt great emotion when it was Calhoun’s turn to present his views. Everyone knew that the 67-year-old senator was ill and that he probably did not have long to live. He was so weak that he asked James Mason of Virginia to read his speech for him.

As the speech began, Calhoun—through Senator Mason—stated the problem the nation faced:

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“I have, Senators, believed from the first that . . . the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion [of the United States]. . . . It has reached a point when it can no longer be disguised or denied that the Union is in danger. You have thus had forced upon you the greatest and the gravest question that can ever come under your consideration: How can the Union be preserved?”

—John C. Calhoun

The “great and primary” cause of the crisis, Calhoun said, was that the North now had “the exclusive power of controlling the Government, which leaves the [South] without any adequate means of protecting itself against . . . encroachment and oppression.”

Over the years, the North had indeed gained power—not only through its greater wealth, but also through its larger population, which gave it more representatives in the House and more votes in the Electoral College. Like many other Southerners, Calhoun had responded to the growth in northern power by embracing the theory of **states’ rights**. According to this theory, states have the right to nullify acts of the federal government and even to leave the Union if they wish to do so.

In his speech, Calhoun made clear that the South did not want to leave the Union. He also stated, however, that the South would not give up its liberty to save the Union: “The South asks for justice, simple justice, and less she ought not to take,” he stated. “She has no compromise to offer, but the Constitution; and no concession or surrender to make.”

Today Americans believe that slavery is morally wrong, because it robs people of their liberty. Calhoun and other white southern planters believed that stopping slavery was morally wrong, because it interfered with their liberty to own enslaved people as property. Government, they believed, should protect this basic liberty.

Southern planters held that if the federal government intended to reduce their rights or threaten their property, then it was no longer a government worthy of their respect. From the point of view of Calhoun, it was the northern section, not the southern section, that was twisting the Constitution and the intentions of the Framers. The ringing finale of his speech made this clear: “I have exerted myself . . . with the intention of saving the Union, if it could be



done; and if it could not, [with saving] the section . . . which I sincerely believe has justice and the Constitution on its side.”

**Webster Favors Compromise** Three days after Calhoun’s speech, Daniel Webster, the nation’s leading orator, stood to speak. Webster was a large man with dark, intense eyes. His voice was both magnetic and persuasive. During his speech, Webster surprised his audience with a reversal of opinion. Senator Webster had previously opposed any extension of slavery. Now, fearing for the existence of the Union, Webster supported each of Clay’s proposals:



“I wish to speak today, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a northern man, but as an American. . . . I speak today for the preservation of the Union. ‘Hear me for my cause.’”

—Daniel Webster

Webster went on to speak for several hours. Believing that slavery would never be practical in New Mexico, he supported Clay’s compromise. He also maintained that it was a constitutional duty to return fugitive slaves. Webster’s speech outraged northern abolitionists and many of his long-time supporters. They accused Webster of putting financial matters ahead of issues of freedom and humanity. Northern business owners, however, supported Webster’s stance because they feared the loss of valuable southern trade if the Union was dissolved.

**Congress Approves the Compromise** As the debate continued over the Compromise of 1850, President Taylor made his own set of proposals and many feared a presidential veto. Taylor’s sudden death in July 1850, however, brought Millard Fillmore to the presidency. Working with Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, who had taken over for an exhausted Clay, Congress eventually passed the Compromise of 1850.

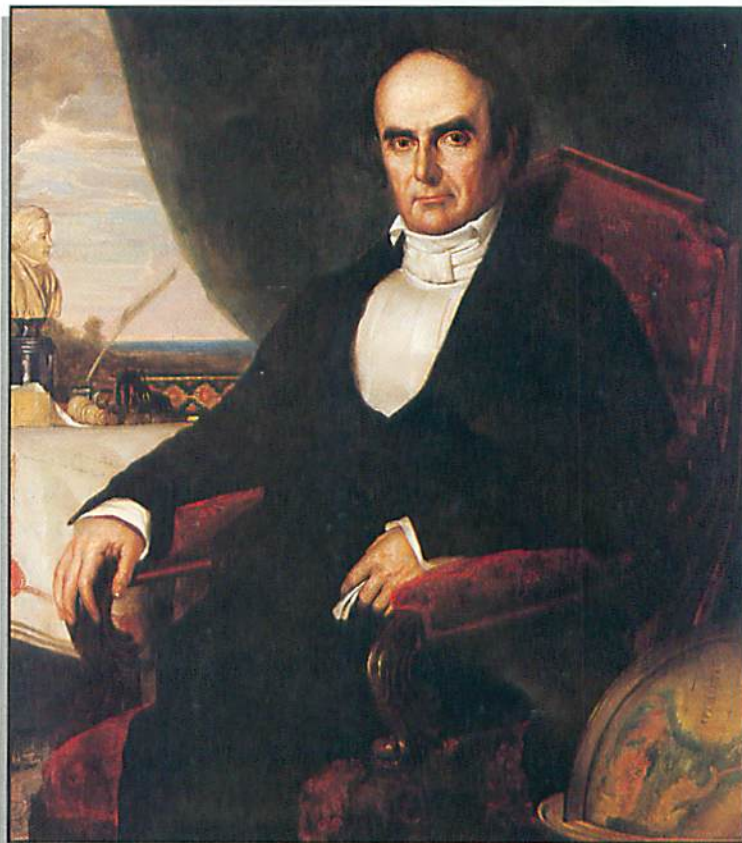
As Calhoun had foreseen, Southerners were not satisfied with the compromise, although the legislation did bring a brief calm to the nation. In reality, it solved nothing beyond determining that California would be a free state. The compromise did not settle the issue of slavery in the new area acquired from Mexico. Part of the compromise, the Fugitive Slave Act, actually made the situation worse by infuriating many Northerners—including Harriet Beecher Stowe, who expressed her outrage in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

## Changes in Political Parties

During the early 1850s, the American party system began to break down. One sign of this breakdown was the decline of the Whig party. In 1852 the Whigs, rejecting President Fillmore because of his support for the Compromise of 1850, instead nominated Winfield Scott, a general from the Mexican War. The Democrats nominated Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, and Pierce won the election in a landslide.

**Decline of the Whigs** The Whigs never won another presidential contest, and by the end of the 1850s the Whig party had largely disappeared. The slavery issue badly hurt the Whigs. Many of their northern voters were Protestants who were disgusted with the politicians’ fondness for compromise.

Another reason the Whigs faded away was that the old issues that had divided political parties in the 1830s now seemed largely resolved. Why argue about banks? The United States was prosperous and expanding. The



Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster used his powerful oratorical skill to persuade Congress to adopt the Compromise of 1850. **Economics** Why did northern businessmen favor the compromise?



As if the growing turmoil among the parties were not enough trouble for the nation, Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois again raised the issue of slavery in the territories. Douglas had two conflicting ambitions. First, he wanted Chicago to benefit from the development of the West. The sooner the territories of Kansas and Nebraska became states, the sooner railroads could be built across them to link Chicago with the West. Second, Douglas wanted to run for President. To do that, he needed the support of southern Democrats. Pushing statehood for Kansas and Nebraska was not the way to gain supporters in the

## The Kansas-Nebraska Act

The Know-Nothings did very well in local elections in northern states. Their main supporters were Americans worried that immigration would lead to crime and vice, and working men fearful of losing jobs to Irish and German immigrants.

—The American party

“[E]very American and naturalized Protestant citizen throughout the Union, [should] use his utmost exertions to aid the cause by organizing and freeing the country from that monster [Catholicism] which . . . is only waiting . . . to approach to plant its flag of tyranny, persecution, and oppression among us.”

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In 1854, nativists went public by forming a political organization, the American party. It pledged to work against Irish Catholic candidates and for laws requiring immigrants to wait longer before they could become citizens. Because it was closely associated with the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner, the American party came to be called the Know-Nothings. Know-Nothings claimed that they were committed to “the great work of Americanizing Americans.” They declared:

“I know nothing.”  
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1854, close to 3 million Europeans arrived in a surge in immigration: between 1846 and 1850, they did emerge. Whether they would be able to deal with the new issues facing the nation was another question.

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men at the center of the Jacksonian-Whig struggles—Jackson, Clay, Webster, Calhoun—seemed to be lumbering onward only to keep their hold on government jobs and contracts. The time had come for a new generation of leaders to come forward, and during the 1850s, they did emerge. Whether they would be able to deal with the new issues facing the nation was another question.

Stephen Douglas champions popular sovereignty in this 1858 cartoon. Douglas believed that slavery in the territories would no longer be a national issue if it were decided by voters in the territories themselves. *Government What role did Douglas's political ambitions play in his proposal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act?*







A banner of one of the new political parties of the 1850s—the Republicans—shows John Frémont, candidate for President in 1856. **Culture** Read the proclamations on the banner. How do they reflect the members of the party?

South. Under the terms of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Kansas and Nebraska would become free states. The North would then become still more powerful, and Southerners would blame Douglas.

Trying to win the support of both Northerners and Southerners, Douglas introduced the **Kansas-Nebraska Act** in the Senate in January 1854. The act supported the practice of **popular sovereignty**, or letting the people in a territory decide whether slavery would be allowed there. In effect, Douglas was asking the nation to repeal the Missouri Compromise and its boundary line of 36° 30' N and rely instead on popular sovereignty. As Douglas wrote to a Southerner in April 1854:

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“The great principle of self-government is at stake, and surely the people of this country are never going to decide that the principle upon which our whole republican system rests is vicious and wrong.”

—Stephen A. Douglas

Douglas knew that the Kansas-Nebraska Act would make Southerners happy. After all, it raised the possibility that Kansas and Nebraska might become slave states, which would have been impossible under the Missouri Compromise. Douglas also thought that Northerners would back his proposal. Northerners, he believed, would decide that slavery would never take hold on the Great Plains, where cotton could not grow. The people of Kansas and Nebraska would no doubt vote peacefully to become free states.

After nine months of debate, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. But instead of applauding the bill, as Douglas had expected, Northerners were outraged by it. Northern members of Douglas’s own party, the Democrats, denounced Douglas for what they saw as a sellout to the South. As you will read, Douglas was also wrong about a peaceful vote in the territories.

#### Main Idea CONNECTIONS

Why did the Kansas-Nebraska Act anger Northerners?



## Political Parties of the 1850s

Party	Views	Supporters
Democrats (North)	Favored deciding issue of slavery in the territories by popular sovereignty	A variety of backgrounds, but particularly northern voters in urban areas and Catholics; some of those born in the South who had moved to the Old Northwest
Democrats (South)	Favored expanding slavery in territories	Those living in southern areas undergoing growth in economy and population
Republicans	Opposed to slavery, supported nativist movement	People in New England and people born in New England living in the Old Northwest; Protestant English, Scotch-Irish immigrants; former American party followers
American Party	Known as "Know-Nothings"; anti-Catholic, fearing "Papal Power"; nativist, favoring a longer naturalization period for immigrants; antislavery	Supporters were generally northern Protestants born in the United States

**Interpreting Tables** During the 1850s, three major parties jostled for power in the North, but only one major party represented the South.

**Culture** Why did the Republicans lack support in the South? What views did the Republican party share with the American party that enabled it to win over American party members?

## The Creation of the Republican Party

During the summer of 1854, people throughout the North held meetings to protest the Kansas-Nebraska bill. During one of these meetings in Michigan, disgusted Northerners launched a new Republican party. This party is the direct ancestor of today's party by the same name. Members of the new Republican party dedicated themselves to stopping the "Slave Power," or the South. They declared that slavery was a great moral evil and vowed to fight against its extension into new territories. They also demanded the repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Act.

The new Republicans drew their support almost entirely from antislavery Democrats, Whigs, and Free Soilers in the North. Farmers, professionals, small business owners, craftworkers—these were the Republicans.

New parties appear frequently in American history. Few last very long. In the mid-1850s, however, the disappearance of the Whigs and the emotional issues of nativism and slavery produced two strong parties, the Know-Nothings and the Republicans. It remained to be seen which would become the more powerful.

## SECTION 2 REVIEW

### Comprehension

- Key Terms** Define: (a) Compromise of 1850; (b) Fugitive Slave Act; (c) states' rights; (d) nativism; (e) Kansas-Nebraska Act; (f) popular sovereignty.
- Summarizing the Main Idea** List the reasons why the Whig party declined and the Know-Nothing party was created.
- Organizing Information** Create a list of the main points of the Compromise of 1850. Indicate which points favored the North and which points favored the South.

### Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. How are the last two events on the time line related?
- Identifying Central Issues** Describe why neither Northerners nor Southerners were satisfied with the Missouri Compromise. Did the Compromise of 1850 satisfy them? Explain.

### Writing Activity

- Writing a Persuasive Essay** Write a persuasive speech from the point of view of either a Southerner or Northerner supporting or opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act.