

Chapter 18: Renewing the Sectional Struggle (1848-1854)

- Slavery in the newly acquired Texas and California regions was a major issue in 1848 (after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo)
 - Northerners backed the Wilmot Proviso, which aimed to stop all slavery in the new territories from Mexico, while Southerners blocked the Proviso

The Popular Sovereignty Panacea

- Political parties were distributed throughout both North and South, and therefore held the nation together
 - If parties were sectional (i.e., one in North and one in South), the U.S. would likely have erupted in war much earlier and fell apart
- Most politicians tried to ignore the slavery issue completely and avoid conflict
- Democrats chose General Lewis Cass as their presidential candidate for the election of 1848
 - President Polk only was taking one term because of his failing health
 - Cass was a senator, diplomat, and veteran of the War of 1812
 - Cass supported idea of popular sovereignty, which meant that the *people* had the right to rule themselves and choose their own policies
 - For the new territories that were taken from Mexico, this meant that their citizens should be able to choose whether or not they should continue slavery or not
 - Popular sovereignty was popular among the general public because it went along with democratic ideals (the idea of “power derived from the consent of the people” and “self-determination”)
 - Also popular amongst politicians because it was a sort of compromise between the anti-slavery North and the pro-slavery South; didn’t have to pick a side, just let the people choose

Politics and Power: American political power between the North and the South was both split and unified at the same time. While the current issue of slavery was the major source of discord, the U.S. still had its strong roots in Enlightenment principles such as those governing popular sovereignty, or power based on the consent of the people. Under the latter ideal, the nation was still strongly held together by its democratic roots. This showed that American politics could be swayed by current events such as slavery, but it would always be held in place stably by its democratic foundations. Also helping to hold the nation together were the unlocalized political powers, which meant that while sectionalism was strong, the political parties held people from both sides of the slavery issue together for a political goal that transcended the social goal of slavery. It was these political parties that really helped American politics to continue in other aspects of life, such as expansionism and foreign relations, instead of totally getting stuck on the issue of slavery.

Political Triumphs for President Taylor

- Whigs chose General Zachary Taylor as their presidential candidate for the election of 1848
 - He was the “Hero of Buena Vista,” solely a popular military general (from the Mexican-American War) with no prior political experience

- Henry Clay, who was the most outspoken and prominent among the Whigs, was not chosen because of his old age and because he had too many political enemies
- His position on slavery was not strong during his campaign, but he was a slaveowner in Louisiana
- Antislaverites in the North who didn't like either presidential candidate (Cass or Taylor) formed the Free Soil party
 - While the two major political parties (the Democrats and the Whigs) tried to avoid the issue of slavery in their campaigns, the Free Soilers were ardently against slavery
 - Advocated for Wilmot Proviso and no slavery in the new territories
 - Also advocated for federally-funded reform and free government homes for settlers (out West)
 - Attracted many groups of people
 - Attracted industrialists from North who didn't like the lowering of tariffs (i.e., the Walker Tariff of 1846 that lowered tariffs significantly)
 - Attracted Northerners who opposed negotiations on Oregon and Texas (part of Oregon but all of Texas)
 - Attracted anti-slavery Northerners, who didn't hate slavery so much for moral reasons as much as hating it as a form of free labor that puts any white-man farmers out of business (cannot compete with unpaid labor)
 - Attracted "Conscience Whigs," who were against slavery for moral reasons
 - Van Buren (former president) was the presidential candidate for the Free Soil party
 - Slogan was: "Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men"
 - These were the freedoms the Free Soilers based themselves on
 - Believed that expansion into the West was the only way the Americans could blossom and have the "traditional American commitment to upward mobility"
 - Slavery would be an impediment to this, because it doesn't allow costly white-man labor to compete against unpaid labor
 - Was the first sectional (primarily in the North) but still widely-inclusive party; set this precedent that helped the Republican Party form six years later
- During presidential election campaign, Taylor was portrayed as amateur politician by Democrats and heroic fighter by Whigs
 - The Whigs won with Taylor's wartime popularity
 - Taylor became the president of the U.S. in 1848

"Californy Gold"

- Taylor would have preferred to keep ignoring the slavery issue (as he had done during his campaign), but the California gold rush revitalized the issue
 - Gold was discovered in California, attracted tens of thousands of people in California
 - A few people "struck it rich," but many people were without luck and ended up poor; poor standard of living
 - These gold diggers received high costs of living and high rates of disease

- Many people who came to California were people who had “failed” were unsuccessful in the states or were criminals, who liked the prospect of a new life through the prospect of quick profits in gold digging
- People in California wanted rights of a state
 - Wrote a constitution in 1849 that excluded slavery
 - Asked Congress for admission as a state into the U.S. (without previously being a territory—bold move to bypass this stage)
 - Directly becoming a state would upset balance of pro-slavery and anti-slavery states

Sectional Balance and the Underground Railroad

- The South had a lot of political power in 1850
 - President Taylor was from the South
 - The majority of the cabinet and Supreme Court were from the South
 - The South was equal in the Senate and could stop a majority for anti-slavery policies
- If California was admitted into the Union, the South were worried because it would offset Southern power
 - There was not much territory in the U.S. left to become slave territory, the majority of which was in California
 - New Mexico and Utah, other new territories, also were trying to be non-slave states
- Texas claimed a region west of itself that constituted about half of New Mexico, among other areas
- The South was angered about the loss of runaway slaves
 - Many slaves were helped northward to freedom by the Underground Railroad
 - The Underground Railroad was a path to freedom for slaves by passing through slave-sympathetic people’s homes from the South all the way to Canada, which was anti-slavery under British rule
 - Harriet Tubman was the most prominent leader of the Underground Railroad; she was an escaped slave herself that helped many other slaves escape through the Underground Railroad
 - About 1,000 slaves escaped a year (out of about 4 million (1/4,000))
 - The helping of runaway slaves was out of the goodwill and morality of the abolitionists, to whom there was no material gain; to the slaveowners in the South, however, it was an insulting loss of property
 - The South wanted a stronger fugitive-slave law
 - The old one from 1793 was not stringent enough in their opinion
 - Felt strongly the loss of possession (slaves) and honor
 - Believed that state laws and the Constitution protected slavery

Culture and Society: The issue of slavery and the North-South division in the U.S. was largely avoided during the election of 1848 (at least by the dominant parties). However, slavery still quickly permeated American politics soon after the election. The question of California’s entrance to the U.S. as a free or

slave state soon complicated Taylor's presidency. The introduction of slavery to the U.S. would offset the balance of North-South states in the Senate, and it would turn a large chunk of the newly-won lands into a free state, thus reducing the amount of possible land for future slave states to be carved out of the newly ceded lands. This worry from the South was further aggravated by the growth of the Underground Railroad and slave escapes, which prompted the call for a fugitive slave law. In both of these cases, the increase in anti-slavery efforts, a general societal movement, led to political policy change.

Twilight of the Senatorial Giants

- Passionate pro-slavery advocates of the South known as “fire-eaters”; they organized a meeting in Tennessee in 1849
 - Henry Clay (the “Great Compromiser” that had intervened in the Nullification Crisis of 1832 and the Missouri Compromise of 1820) asked for a series of compromises on part of both the North and the South
 - John Calhoun had stronger pro-slavery stance, believing that Clay's requests were not adequate; wanted “[North] to leave slavery alone, return runaway slaves, give the South its rights as a minority, and restore the political balance”
 - Also had an idea of a sectional government with two presidents, one in the North and the South; highly impractical
 - Daniel Webster asked for the same concessions to the South as Clay, including a fugitive slave law, wanted popular sovereignty in new territory gained from Mexico; these were expressed in his famous Seventh of March speech
 - Thought that making laws to decide slavery in new region was sacrilege, wanted people to decide for themselves
 - Argued that the new region gained from Mexico wasn't very suitable for farming anyways, not so important to keep them as slave states
 - This was a very popular position that supported national unity; industry in North was very pleased because it would likely keep Union together and prevent loss of money invested in the South
 - Webster “had long regarded slavery as evil but disunion as worse” — wanted to preserve the nation more than only the institution of slavery

Deadlock and Danger on Capitol Hill

- Senator William H. Seward was a radical Northerner who was against concessions to the South
 - Held a very strong anti-slavery position
 - Did not realize that compromise would likely keep the Union together; he was more focused on idealism of loss of slavery than the practical consequences of separation
 - Argued that there was a law greater than the Constitution, a “Higher Law” instituted by God
 - “Higher Law” philosophy influenced President Taylor and was bent on vetoing any pro-slavery bill that favored the South
- Taylor was ready to send troops into Texas to try and restrain them to their borders (which they had surpassed, claiming territory from other states) like Jackson
 - This might have set off the Civil War early

American and National Identity: Multiple actions typical of American politics took place here. Henry Clay and Daniel Webster argued that both the North and the South offer concessions to each other, forming a compromise to solve the solution. This was the type of American diplomacy that had previously been used to solve many foreign and domestic problems, such as with the Missouri Compromise or the Constitutional Convention compromise over the structure of Congress in the constitutional government. However, because both sides have to give some as well as take some, there are opponents, as with Seward of New York and the President. This— a diplomatic opposition and questioning— too is an Americanized version of politics and is part of a healthy democracy, because, like the two-party system, it keeps power in check by questioning the rationale of these new bills.

Breaking the Congressional Logjam

- President Taylor died during this heated debate in 1850
 - Millard Fillmore, formerly the vice-president, became president
- Millard supported conciliation with the South, approved the Compromise of 1850 (table below copied verbatim from textbook)

Concessions to the North	Concessions to the South
California admitted as a free state	The remainder of the Mexican Cession area to be formed into the territories of New Mexico and Utah, without restriction on slavery, hence open to popular sovereignty
Territory disputed by Texas and New Mexico to be surrendered to New Mexico	Texas to receive \$10 million from the federal government in compensation
Abolition of the slave trade (but not slavery) in the District of Columbia	A more stringent fugitive-slave law going beyond that of 1793

- Many northerners argued on behalf of the Compromise, such as Clay, Webster, and Douglas
 - This was supported by prosperity from gold digging in California
- “Fire-eaters” of the South still opposed to Compromise
 - Some radical Southerners claimed that they “hated the Union”
 - Some Southerners tried to boycott Northern products, but failed as a movement because it was at the cost of their own financial loss
- After the Compromise was passed, a “Second Era of Good Feelings” emerged as the North and South felt more united again with the concessions by both sides

Balancing the Compromise Scales

- The North benefitted more from the Compromise of 1850
 - Introduction of California as a free state made free states have majority in Senate, which they would keep permanently
 - New Mexico and Utah had free sovereignty, but they were going in the direction of being free states like California
 - Texas was paid only \$10 million for loss of claimed lands, not very much in the long run
- The Fugitive Slave Law (1850) was passed

- Slaves could not testify on their own behalf and were denied right of trial by jury
- People who helped slaves escaped were given heavy fines and long prison sentences
- Angered many Northerners, set dangerous precedents for white Americans (it broke the Constitutional rights to trial by jury in the Bill of Rights)
- Judges were paid \$10 if slave was not freed and \$5 if they were; extra \$5 was an incentive for judges to condemn slaves, almost like a bribe
- Harshness of this new law shocked many moderate Americans into abolitionists
 - Number of slaves who escaped by the Underground Railroad grew from this increase in abolitionists
 - Some northern states such as Massachusetts passed laws that made it illegal to uphold the law, essentially nullifying it
 - Increase in abolitionists meant that “time was fighting for the North” — as time went on, the North became stronger because of its increase in anti-slavery sentiment (and it also grew because of its industrial prowess)

Politics and Power: The Compromise of 1850 was truly a compromise: both sides gave up much to achieve their purposes. However, the Compromise eventually favored the North in the long run. California was admitted as a free state, much to the benefit of the North. The rest of the new Southern territories of Utah and New Mexico were given the popular sovereignty choice of legalizing slavery or not— however, they were already inclined to choose to be free states like their new free neighbor, California. There was also a large territory that was wrested away from Texas, also likely to become free territory, for only a relatively small sum of money. The abolition of the slave trade in Washington, D.C. was a movement towards anti-slavery in the nation’s capital. Lastly, the fugitive slave law only strengthened anti-slavery opposition in reaction to the horrors it created. The Compromise of 1850 essentially solely strengthened the North, either directly or indirectly.

Defeat and Doom for the Whigs

- Democrats chose Franklin Pierce, another “dark-horse” candidate, as the presidential candidate for the election of 1852
 - He was a “prosouthern northerner” who supported the Compromise of 1850 and Fugitive Slave Law, which made him appealing to both North and South
- Whigs chose Winfield Scott as their presidential candidate
 - Scott was the military general who had won over Mexico City in the Mexican-American War, thus winning the war
 - It would have been more logical for the Whigs to choose someone more politically qualified, such as Henry Clay or the incumbent president Fillmore, but they went with a military general because they had only won with military generals (Taylor and Harrison)
 - His personality was haughty and not likeable, even amongst Whigs
- John Hale was the Free Soil Party candidate for the presidential election of 1852
- Pierce won by a lot (254 to 42 electoral votes) to become the president of the U.S. in 1852
 - Effectually ended the end of the Whig Party

- The Whig Party had helped the nation by producing statesmen such as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster that helped to create compromises (e.g., Henry Clay created the Compromise of 1850, the Missouri Compromise, and worked with the Nullification Crisis of 1832)

Politics and Power: The Whig Party was inept at choosing effective leaders in its conventions (i.e., choosing military generals over its most prominent statesmen such as Daniel Webster or Henry Clay) and therefore died out. However, it still epitomized American power and presidency by providing a strong opposition to the Democrats to create an effective second two-party system (after the first one between the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans). The party also produced prominent supporters of national unity, especially Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, that helped the nation stay unified during the intensely trying times shortly preceding the Civil War, as well as during earlier movements such as the Missouri Compromise.

Expansionist Stirrings South of the Border

- Victory in the Mexican-American War and the great increase of land from it increased the expansionist sentiment of Manifest Destiny in the U.S.
- Americans were thinking of ways to cross Central America by sea, which would greatly control trade in the Americas if they could control a route directly through Central America (which is much shorter than going all the way around the Southern tip of South America or crossing Central America by land and continuing the journey by sea on the other side)
- Treaty signed between Britain and U.S. led to signing of a treaty in 1848 that allowed American passage across the isthmus of Central America
 - Allowed for the construction of a transcontinental railroad between North and South America in 1855
- Increasing British influence in Central America, such as in Nicaragua's "Mosquito Coast" region, led British and Americans to sign the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty (1850)
 - This forced neither the Americans nor the British to seek exclusive control over trade across Central America, thus avoiding conflict between the two nations
- Because many pro-slavery people in the South knew that much of the rest of the U.S. was going to become free territory, they looked towards Central America and the Caribbean for potential areas to make into slave territories
 - William Walker took an American army, took over Nicaragua, established himself as president in 1856 and allowed slavery
 - Central American countries teamed up against him and executed him
 - Cuba was enticing as a slave state because it already had many slaves from its previous occupation by the Spanish empire
 - President Polk had offered \$100 million for Cuba from Spain, but the Spanish declined
 - Two expeditions of armed men went into Cuba because they were rejected as buyers of Cuba, were rejected by the Spanish
 - President Pierce was provoked to begin war with Spain to take Cuba, especially when Europe was involved in the Crimean War and unable to aid Spain

- U.S. ministers in Spain, England, and France met and drafted the secret Ostend Manifesto (Ostend, Belgium, 1854) that was made up of recommendations for the U.S. to acquire Cuba
- Ostend Manifesto stated that the U.S. should offer \$120 million for Cuba; if the Spanish declined, then the U.S. should have the right to militarily take Cuba
- Ostend Manifesto was discovered by Northerners, made them furious
 - They were angry that the government was making secret arrangements to try and induct another slave state into the U.S.
 - Pierce backed down after strong opposition in the North emerged
 - Anti-slavery slowed down the American expansionist movement (it countered Manifest Destiny)

Culture and Society: The push to expand and stop slavery, as well as the expansionist motivation of Manifest Destiny, was a large driver of some adventurous American ventures during the 1850s. Central America, especially Nicaragua. William Walker was even bold enough to militarily take over Nicaragua and essentially establish himself as dictator and declare the nation a slave country, before he was ousted and executed. Cuba too was looked into as a promising buy; however, federal action to take Cuba, either diplomatically or militarily, was stopped by abolitionist opposition. Therefore, Manifest Destiny provoked Americans to expand, and slavery both helped to start (pro-slavery) and stop (anti-slavery) movements towards new slave states in the U.S.

The Allure of Asia

- The British had won China in the Opium War, which allowed the British to trade opium in China and gave Britain access to some ports in China, such as Hong Kong
 - Americans were prompted to secure better trading relationships with Great Britain to stop their monopoly of trade with China; President Tyler sent Caleb Cushing to negotiate with China
 - Cushing took warships and presented gifts to China, which, along with the fact that the Chinese wanted someone besides the British to trade with, created economic trade relations between them and the U.S. in the Treaty of Wanghia (1844), which was the first diplomatic agreement between the two nations
 - Treaty granted U.S. a “most favored nation” status gave U.S. full trading rights with China
 - Treaty gave U.S. “extraterritoriality” rights that allowed U.S. criminals to be tried in China under U.S. officials
 - The Treaty opened up the way for missionaries to try and Christianize China, who were faced with resentment from China because they (like the slaves and Native Americans who also refused to be Christianized) felt that this was stripping them of their culture
 - Japan was also a prospective nation to trade with
 - It had went into strict isolation in the early 1600s

- President Fillmore sent Matthew C. Perry in 1852 to try to break Japan's isolationism and initiate trade relations with them
 - Perry landed in Japan with a fleet of warships and had a tense introduction of the idea of trade relations with Japan; he left to allow the Japanese to consider the decision and returned the next year
 - The next year, he brought larger ships and gifts (including a miniature train), and he signed the Treaty of Kanagawa (1854) that gave Americans "coaling rights in Japan, and the establishment of consular relations"
 - This new trade relationship helped move Japan from isolationist shell into the modern world

America in the World: The establishment of U.S. diplomatic relationships with East Asian nations was primarily from an economic viewpoint. America showed off its technology to woo both China and isolationist Japan into establishing trade with itself. However, it risked creating war with Japan, who previously was closed off to any foreign interaction and was on the verge of panic when American warships arrived at its capital city. More important than the economic relations established was the precedent that these interactions set for American diplomacy with other nations. Rather than charging into these countries and forcing an economic bond, the U.S. created a diplomatic bond of free trade that benefited both ends of the relationship without provoking conflict. They also created a sense of respect for the Americans by using their initial display of advanced American products, such as the locomotive and pistol shown to the Japanese.

Pacific Railroad Promoters and the Gadsden Purchase

- An easy form of transportation was necessary in order to keep California strongly in the hands of the U.S.
 - Land transportation by railroad was the most practical way, because going by sea all the way around South America or taking a land-and-sea trip through the isthmus of Central America was too taxing
- Decision of the railroad's location was important
 - There could only be one railroad built, because it was so expensive
 - The region in which the railroad was to be built would "reap rich rewards in wealth, population, and influence" — thus, both the North and the South vied for its construction
- The South was eager to have the railroad built in the South because they were not as economically strong as the industrial north
 - They decided that the best location of the railroad would pass through a region of Mexico
 - Secretary of War Davis sent James Gadsden to negotiate buying of region necessary for railroad construction in the South
 - Santa Anna, dictator of Mexico, still needed money and ceded the some land in present-day Arizona/New Mexico area to U.S. for \$10 million in the Gadsden Purchase (1853)

- Now that Gadsden purchase had succeeded, the South had a clear route to California, without the high mountains of the Rocky Mountains and without going through the unorganized territories of the North that were ravaged by Native Americans; instead, it passed through established states with troops available to protect and maintain the railroad
 - Northerners responded by trying to organize Nebraska

Work, Exchange, and Technology: The decision to place the railroad in the South and to purchase land under the Gadsden treaty were purely economic reasons that would bolster the failing economic strength of the South. A new railroad scheme through the South through to California would create a sense of unity throughout it, as well as a flow of economic exchange through the relatively new technology of railroads that would also provide a critical link to California. Therefore, this railroad's purpose was multifaceted: politically, it held the nation, especially with its new Western sections, together; economically, it established an advanced system of work and exchange through East-West exchange; and socially, railroads were an advanced piece of technology that America could boast about. However, it was primarily economically important to the South, who needed the railroad to compete with the profitable industrial North. It was also economic logistics that determined that only one railroad could be built, which intensified the competition between North and South to build the railroad.

Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Scheme

- Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the “Little Giant” that had supported Clay during the Tennessee convention of 1849
 - He wanted to “break the North-South deadlock over westward expansion and stretch a line of settlements across the continent,” and wanted to benefit personally from having the railroad end in Chicago, where he owned real estate; in other words, he wanted economic benefits for the North by increased Westward expansion
 - He proposed that the Nebraska Territory be split into a northern and southern region (Nebraska in the north, Kansas in the south), both of which would be up to popular sovereignty on the issue of slavery; this was the compromise known as the Kansas-Nebraska Act
 - The southern region of Kansas would likely become a slave state because it was adjacent to slave state Missouri
 - The northern region of Nebraska would likely become a free state because it was far north and next to free state Minnesota
 - However, this contradicted the Missouri Compromise of 1820 by giving the option for Kansas to become a slave state above the established 36° 30' line that no slave states (besides Missouri) could be above
 - Douglas boldly attempted to totally repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820 to achieve his goal
 - The Southerners who wanted another slave state in the North supported this, along with President Pierce
 - Anti-slavery free soilers in the North were against this, believed that the Missouri Compromise should not be broken so easily

- Some people believe that his action to promote slavery in the North was primarily a rash action meant to benefit him financially, and that his morals considering slavery were not very strong
 - He did not consider that many northerners felt very strongly against slavery, even if he didn't
 - As a result, he faced great unpopularity in the North, but had even greater popularity in the South and select regions of the North, such as Illinois, which would benefit greatly from having one end of the railroad end there in his plan

Congress Legislates a Civil War

- After Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed, the North was greatly infuriated, made any future negotiations with the South very tense
 - As a result, many northerners unofficially nullified the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
 - More people in the North became opposed to slavery
- Many opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act formed the new Republican Party
 - Attracted people from all of the political parties who were against the new act: Whigs (such as Abraham Lincoln), Democrats, Free Soilers, Know Nothings
 - Its wide appeal made it very powerful very quickly, and its sectional power foreshadowed the Civil War to come

Culture and Society: Douglas's scheme of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a geographical division to economic ends, but the societal tensions that resulted most influenced American culture. The "unorganized territory" of the U.S. was to be broken up into a northern Nebraska and southern Kansas region, which seemed to Douglas a reasonable compromise that would allow both a free state and a likely slave state to be admitted into the Union to help maintain sectional balance while maintaining national unity. However, it also broke the Missouri Compromise, which was already well-established and firmly held onto by Northerners. As a result, many people rose in revolt of this new act, forming the Republican party that actively spoke up against it, as well as unofficially nullifying the Fugitive Slave Act that shortly preceded it. Anger rose high and negotiations with the South became very tense and difficult. While it may have made sense on a simple basis of equality for North and South, it resulted in widespread societal anger and opposition that permanently worsened sectional relations (until the Civil War).