

Compromises Fail

Background Information

In 1820 Henry Clay earned himself the nickname the Great Compromiser by persuading congress to admit Maine into the Union as a free state and Missouri as a slave state. The compromise provided that the Louisiana territory north of Missouri would be free. The compromise also gave southern slave owners the right to pursue escaped fugitives.

The compromise kept both slave and free states content until 1848 when the United States gained more territory by the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe- Hidalgo (which ended the Mexican-American War). The question of the territory entering the Union as free or slave states was being asked again.

People like David Wilmot and the newly formed Free Soil Party thought that Congress should ban slavery in all territory that became a part of the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War. Others like Lewis Cass suggested letting the people in each new territory or state decide for themselves by popular sovereignty whether to allow slavery.

In 1850 Henry Clay made a series of proposals that spurred one of the greatest debates in American history. John C. Calhoun, a senator of South Carolina and great supporter of states rights, debated Daniel Webster, senator of Massachusetts and supporter of Henry Clay...

Compromise of 1850

Free State

In September 1850 a series of bills were passed based on Henry Clay's proposals.

1. California entered the Union as a free state

2. Slave trade in Washington D.C. was banned

3. Popular sovereignty was used to decide the question of slavery in the rest of the Mexican cession

4. Fugitive Slave Act of 1850- allowed special government officials to arrest any person accused of being a runaway slave.

John C. Calhoun thought the Fugitive Slave Act would force northerners to admit that slaveholders had rights to their property, but instead it convinced more northerners that slavery was evil.



Uncle Tom's Cabin

UNCLE
TOM'S CABIN.

BY
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

WITH
Twenty-seven Illustrations on Wood

BY
GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, ESQ.



EVA AND TOPSY.

LONDON:
JOHN CASSELL, LUDGATE HILL.

1852.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, the daughter of an abolitionists minister, was very disturbed by the Fugitive Slave Law. She wrote a fictional novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, about the ills of slavery in the south. The novel shocked many people who previously unconcerned with slavery. Southern critics said it was just propaganda: false or misleading information that is spread to further cause.

The Kansas Nebraska Act

Senator Stephen Douglas was eager to develop lands of current day Kansas and Nebraska to build railroads through to the pacific ocean. Knowing southerners feared this territory would become free territory he proposed that it be decided through popular sovereignty. Even though this proposal undid the Missouri Compromise congress passed it anyway. It became the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

Bleeding Kansas

Both proslavery and antislavery citizens moved into the Kansas area. The people could not agree on legislature so Kansas basically had two governments. Violence inevitably broke out. A proslavery sheriff was shot by antislavery settlers when trying to arrest them in the town of Lawrence. He returned with 800 men and attacked the town. John Brown and antislavery followers murdered five proslavery men at Pottawatomie Creek. The violence was widespread through Kansas.



<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/neh/interactives/sectionalism/lesson3/>

Violence in the Senate

Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, a leading abolitionist, denounced the proslavery legislature in Kansas. In his speech he attacked his southern foes singling out Andrew Butler, who was not there at the time. Later Butler got news of the speech. Butler's nephew beat Sumner to death with a cane.