PART 5

Creating and Preserving a Continental Nation

1844–1877

Between 1844 and 1877, the United States became a continental nation by winning three wars and creating a stronger central government. This energetic process of national expansion and purposeful state building spanned three decades and three periods often treated as distinct: antebellum America, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. In fact, these decades constitute a single, distinct period of American political and constitutional development that produced a consolidated national republic.

This era of state building began in the 1840s as the United States expanded to the Pacific through a diplomatic deal with Great Britain and a war of conquest against Mexico. However, geographic expansion sharpened the conflict between free and slave states and led eventually to the secession of the South in 1861. The Union government defeated the secessionists in a bloody Civil War and reconstructed the Union under the ideals of the Republican Party. Freed from slavery, millions of African Americans fought for better pay and equal citizenship rights. Under pressure to assimilate, most Native Americans adapted selectively while maintaining tribal ties and traditional lifeways. Subsequently, the national government promoted Euro-American settlement of the West by conquering Indian peoples and confining them to reservations.

The story of these transforming events focuses on three sets of historical issues:

Continental Empire and Cultural Conflict

A romantic spirit of geographic expansion grew during the 1840s, prompting southerners to demand the annexation of Texas and midwesterners to favor the acquisition of Oregon. Northeastern railroad entrepreneurs championed western settlement, as did merchants eager to trade across the Pacific. The quest for western lands sparked seizure of the Mexican provinces of New Mexico and California and purchase of Russian claims to Alaska. We analyze these events in Chapter 13.

This process of expansion and state building, combined with the arrival of millions of immigrants, created new systems of racial and ethnic conflict. In the East, Irish Catholics and German-speaking migrants organized politically to protect their churches, saloons, and cultural identity, prompting a sharp reaction among native-born Protestants. In the West, the U.S. government fought wars against Cheyennes, Sioux, and Comanches on the Great Plains as it sought to integrate the region into the national economy. In the conquered Mexican territories, newly arriving whites jostled uneasily with Hispanic residents and despised Chinese immigrants. In an era of rapid economic development, western disputes often centered on access to land, jobs, and natural resources. For these conflicts, see Chapters 13 and 16.

Sectional Tensions, Political Divisions, and Civil War

The Mexican War prompted a decade-long debate over the expansion of slavery into the newly acquired lands. This bitter struggle led to the Compromise of 1850, a complex legislative agreement that won little support either in the North or in the South and divided the Whig Party. As southern Whigs became Democrats and northern Whigs turned into Republicans or Know-Nothings, the parties split along sectional lines. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 began a downward spiral of political conflict that ended in the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the secession of thirteen southern states. Chapter 13 details this breakdown of the political system.

In the long Civil War that followed, the military forces of the North and South were at first evenly matched. However, the North's superior financial and industrial resources gradually gave it the advantage, as did Lincoln's proclamation of freedom for slaves in 1863. Emancipation undermined European support for the secessionists and added thousands of African Americans to the northern armies. Union forces swept across the South and ended the war, which left a legacy of half-won freedom for blacks and decades of bitter animosity between northern and southern whites. The Civil War is the focus of Chapter 14.

National Power and Consolidation

The Civil War increased national authority. Three Republican-sponsored constitutional amendments limited the powers of the states and imposed definitions of citizenship—prohibiting slavery, mandating suffrage for black men, and forbidding state action that denied people equal protection under the law. The U.S. Army remained a significant force, enforcing Reconstruction in the South as late as 1877, while suppressing Indian uprisings and extending national control in the West.

The Civil War created a powerful American state, as the Union government mobilized millions of men and billions of dollars. It created a modern fiscal system, an elaborate network of national banks, and—for the first time in American history—a significant national bureaucracy. Inspired by Whig ideology, Republican-run Congresses intervened forcefully to integrate the national economy and promote industrialization, granting subsidies to railroad companies, protecting industries and workers through protective tariffs, and distributing western lands to farmers and cattlemen. In the 1850s and 1860s, U.S. officials also intervened aggressively in Japan and then built coaling stations that enabled U.S. steamships to carry products to Asia and bring Chinese workers to the United States. The nation's dynamic postwar economy had set the nation on a course toward global power. Chapters 15 and 16 discuss all of these events.

Creating and Preserving a Continental Nation 1844–1877

Thematic Understanding

This timeline arranges some of the important events of this period into themes. Consider the events listed under each of the five themes. Which set of events seems the most important? The least important? The theme of "Politics and Power" begins with a reference to sectional conflict and concludes with the section-driven Compromise of 1877. Based on other entries in this theme and your reading in Chapters 13, 14, and 15, explain how the nature of sectionalism and the power of the various sections changed between 1844 and 1877. >

	POLITICS & POWER	AMERICA IN THE WORLD	IDEAS, BELIEFS, & CULTURE	WORK, EXCHANGE, & TECHNOLOGY	IDENTITY
1840	• Mexican War and Wilmot Proviso (1846) increase sectional conflict • Gold rush makes California eligible for statehood—free or slave?	• U.S. confronts Mexico and Britain: annexes Texas (1845), acquires Oregon (1846), fights Mexican War (1846–1848) extending U.S. borders to Pacific	• Ideology of Manifest Destiny prompts U.S. expansionism • Free-Soil Party (1848) advocates white smallholder farm society • Women seek legal rights at Seneca Falls (1848)	• Irish immigrants build northern canal system • Some states default on canal bonds • Walker Tariff (1846) lowers rates, increases foreign imports	• Whites migrate to Oregon and California • Arrival of millions of Germans and Irish causes social conflicts • Wars against Seminole peoples in Florida (1835–1842, 1855–1858)
1850	• Compromise of 1850 • Whig Party disintegrates; Know-Nothing Party attacks immigrants • Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) sparks creation of Republican Party	• President Pierce opens Japan to trade; seeks to expand American territory and slavery into Caribbean by diplomacy and filibustering actions	• Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) attacks slavery • *Dred Scott* decision (1857) opens way to legalize slavery nationwide • Southern secessionists agitate for independence	• Enslaved blacks expand cotton output in South • White settlers expand farm society to trans-Mississippi west • Entrepreneurs promote railroad building and manufacturing in North and Midwest	• Conflict of Hispanics and Anglos in the Southwest • White diseases and brutality kill most California Indians • Comanches and Sioux dominate Great Plains peoples and control trade in horses and buffalo hides
1860	• Eleven southern states secede from Union, sparking Civil War (1861–1865); the Union's triumph preserves a continental nation • Fourteenth Amendment (1868) extends legal and political rights	• U.S. diplomacy and Union army victories in 1863 cause British government to stop sale of ironclad ships to the Confederacy • Secretary of State Seward buys Alaska from Russia (1867) • Burlingame Treaty (1868) protects missionaries in China and limits Chinese immigration	• Confederate States of America (1861–1865) vow to continue slavery • Republicans seek to impose equal rights ideology on South • Black families accept ideal of domesticity	• Republicans enact Whigs' economic policies: Homestead Act (1862), railroad aid, high tariffs, and national banking • Women assume new tasks in war economies	• Emancipation Proclamation (1863) and Thirteenth Amendment (1865) free blacks from slavery • Aided by Freedmen's Bureau, African Americans struggle for freedom, land, and education
1870	• Fifteenth Amendment (1870) extends vote to black men • Compromise of 1877 ends Reconstruction	• Britain pays the U.S. $15.5 million for the depredations of the *Alabama* during the war • Anti-Chinese riots in San Francisco in late 1870s prompt Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)	• Ku Klux Klan attacks Reconstruction governments • Republicans embrace classical liberalism • White elites challenge ideal of universal suffrage and deny women's suffrage	• Sharecropping spreads in South • Ranchers create cattle empire on Great Plains • Depression of 1873 halts railway expansion	• U.S. wars against Plains Indians (Cheyennes, Sioux, Apaches, and Nez Perce) open their lands to white miners, ranchers, and farmers • Dawes Act (1887) seeks Indian assimilation

CHAPTER 13

Expansion, War, and Sectional Crisis 1844–1860

IDENTIFY THE BIG IDEA

What were the causes of the Mexican War, and in what ways did it bring about a growing sectional crisis during the 1850s?

The expansionist surge of the 1840s had deep roots. Since the nation's founding in 1776, visionaries conceived its future both as a republic and as an empire, and they predicted a glorious expansion across the continent. "It belongs of right to the United States to regulate the future destiny of North America," declared the *New-York Evening Post* in 1803. Politicians soon took up the refrain. "Our natural boundary is the Pacific Ocean," asserted Massachusetts congressman Francis Baylies in 1823. "The swelling tide of our population must and will roll on until that mighty ocean interposes its waters." However, the creation of a continental republic was far from inevitable. It would require a revolution in transportation—canals and railways—to access the nation's fertile core in the vast Mississippi River basin and a growing population and dynamic economy to exploit its riches. By the 1840s, all those prerequisites were in place.

Other obstacles remained. Well-armed Indian peoples controlled the Great Plains, Mexico held sovereignty over Texas and the lands west of the Rocky Mountains, and Great Britain laid claim to the Oregon Country. To extend the American republic would involve new Indian wars and possibly armed conflict with Great Britain and with Mexico (and perhaps France, its main creditor). An ardent imperialist, President James Polk willingly assumed those risks. "I would meet the war which either England or France . . . might wage and fight until the last man," he told Secretary of State James Buchanan in 1846.

Polk's aggressive expansionism sparked fighting abroad and conflict at home. A war with Mexico intended to be "brief, cheap, and bloodless" became "long, costly, and sanguinary," complained Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Even Polk's great territorial acquisitions—New Mexico, California, the Oregon Country—proved double-edged by reigniting a bitter debate over slavery. Northerners vowed to prevent the expansion of bound labor into the newly acquired territories, prompting southerners to threaten secession from the Union. Rhetoric spiraled downward into violence, as white and black abolitionists attacked slave catchers in the North and secessionists harassed Union supporters in the South. When Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner accused his South Carolina colleague Andrew P. Butler of taking "the harlot slavery" as his mistress, a southern congressman beat Sumner unconscious with a walking cane. As this violence shook Washington in 1856, proslavery migrants fought armed New England abolitionists in the Kansas Territory. Passion had replaced compromise as the hallmark of American political life.

John Gast, *American Progress* In 1845, journalist John O'Sullivan coined the term *Manifest Destiny* to describe Americans' suddenly urgent longing to extend the boundaries of the republic to the Pacific Ocean. More than a quarter century later, John Gast's *American Progress* (1872) gave visual form to that aspiration in an allegorical painting that was widely distributed through color lithographs. The goddess Liberty floats westward, holding a "School Book" in one hand and telegraph lines trailing from the other as symbols of the advance of Anglo-American civilization across the continent. Library of Congress.

Manifest Destiny: South and North

The upsurge in violence reflected a generational shift in culture and politics. The Missouri crisis of 1819–1822 (Chapter 8) had frightened the nation's leaders. For the next two decades, the professional politicians who ran the Second Party System avoided policies, such as the annexation of the slaveholding Republic of Texas, that would prompt regional strife. Then, during the 1840s, many citizens embraced an ideology of expansion and proclaimed a God-given duty to extend American republicanism to the Pacific Ocean. But whose republican institutions: the hierarchical slave system of the South, or the more egalitarian, reform-minded, capitalist-managed society of the North and Midwest? Or both? Ultimately, the failure to find a political solution to this question would rip the nation apart.

The Push to the Pacific

As expansionists developed continental ambitions, the term ***Manifest Destiny*** captured those dreams. John L. O'Sullivan, editor of the *Democratic Review*, coined the phrase in 1845: "Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." Underlying the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny was a sense of Anglo-American cultural and racial superiority: the "inferior" peoples who lived in the Far West — Native Americans and Mexicans — would be subjected to American dominion, taught republicanism, and converted to Protestantism.

Oregon Land-hungry farmers of the Ohio River Valley had already cast their eyes toward the fertile lands of the Oregon Country, a region that stretched along the Pacific coast between the Mexican province of California and Russian settlements in Alaska. Since 1818, a British-American agreement had allowed settlement by people from both nations. The British-run Hudson's Bay Company developed a lucrative fur business north of the Columbia River, while Methodist missionaries and a few hundred American farmers settled to the south, in the Willamette Valley (Map 13.1).

In 1842, American interest in Oregon increased dramatically. The U.S. Navy published a glowing report of fine harbors in the Puget Sound, which New England merchants trading with China were already using. Simultaneously, a party of one hundred farmers journeyed along the Oregon Trail, which fur traders and explorers had blazed from Independence, Missouri, across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains (Map 13.2). Their letters from Oregon told of a mild climate and rich soil.

"Oregon fever" suddenly raged. A thousand men, women, and children — with a hundred wagons and

MAP 13.1

Territorial Conflict in Oregon, 1819–1846

As thousands of American settlers poured into the Oregon Country in the early 1840s, British authorities tried to keep them south of the Columbia River. However, the migrants — and fervent expansionists — asserted that Americans could settle anywhere in the territory, raising the prospect of armed conflict. In 1846, British and American diplomats resolved the dispute by dividing most of the region at the forty-ninth parallel while giving both nations access to fine harbors (Vancouver and Seattle) through the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Settling Oregon

Americans quickly populated the Far West and re-created there the small-town life of the eastern states. As early as 1845, as this drawing by a British military officer shows, Oregon City boasted a steepled church, several large merchandise warehouses, and several dozen houses. On the riverbank opposite the town stand several Native Americans, who had a very different way of life and would be steadily pushed off the lands of their ancestors. Library of Congress.

five thousand oxen and cattle—gathered in Independence in April 1843. As the spring mud dried, they began their six-month trek, hoping to miss the winter snows. Another 5,000 settlers, mostly yeomen farm families from the southern border states (Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee), set out over the next two years. These pioneers overcame floods, dust storms, livestock deaths, and a few armed encounters with native peoples before reaching Oregon, a journey of 2,000 miles.

By 1860, about 250,000 Americans had braved the Oregon Trail, with 65,000 heading for Oregon, 185,000 to California, and others staying in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. More than 34,000 migrants died, mostly from disease and exposure; fewer than 500 deaths resulted from Indian attacks. The walking migrants wore paths 3 feet deep, and their wagons carved 5-foot ruts across sandstone formations in southern Wyoming—tracks that are visible today. Women found the trail especially difficult; in addition to their usual chores and the new work of driving wagons and animals, they lacked the support of female kin and the security of their domestic space. About 2,500 women endured pregnancy or gave birth during the long journey, and some did not survive. "There was a woman died in this train yesterday," Jane Gould Tortillott noted in her diary. "She left six children, one of them only two days old."

IDENTIFY CAUSES
Did the idea of Manifest Destiny actually cause events, such as the political support for territorial expansion, or simply justify actions taken for other reasons?

The 10,000 migrants who made it to Oregon in the 1840s mostly settled in the Willamette Valley. Many families squatted on 640 acres and hoped Congress would legalize their claims so that they could sell surplus acreage to new migrants. The settlers quickly created a race- and gender-defined polity by restricting voting to a "free male descendant of a white man."

California About 3,000 other early pioneers ended up in the Mexican province of California. They left the Oregon Trail along the Snake River, trudged down the California Trail, and mostly settled in the interior along the Sacramento River, where there were few Mexicans.

MAP 13.2

The Great Plains: Settler Trails, Indian Raiders, and Traders

By the 1850s, the Mormon, Oregon, and Santa Fe trails ran across "Indian Country," the semiarid, buffalo-filled Great Plains west of the 95th meridian, and then through the Rocky Mountains. Tens of thousands of Americans set out on these trails to found new communities in Utah, Oregon, New Mexico, and California. This mass migration exposed sedentary Indian peoples to American diseases, guns, and manufactures. However, raids by Comanches and Sioux affected their lives even more significantly, as did the Euro-American traders who provided a ready market for Indian horses and mules, dried meat, and buffalo skins.

A remote outpost of Spain's American empire, California had few nonnative residents until the 1770s, when Spanish authorities built a chain of forts and religious missions along the Pacific coast. When Mexico achieved independence in 1821, its government took over the Franciscan-run missions and freed the 20,000 Indians whom the monks had persuaded or coerced into working on them. Some mission Indians rejoined their tribes, but many intermarried with mestizos (Mexicans of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry).

William Henry Jackson, *California Crossing, South Platte River*, detail, 1867

The South Platte River was wide (stretching from the foreground to the low bluff in the middle of the picture) but shallow, allowing relatively easy passage for the migrants' cattle and covered wagons. Wagon trains followed the course of the various branches of the Platte River for more than 300 miles across the Great Plains. During the late spring and early summer, wagons often stretched as far as the eye could see. National Park Service/Picture Research Consultants & Archives.

They worked on huge ranches — the 450 estates created by Mexican officials and bestowed primarily on their families and political allies. The owners of these vast properties (averaging 19,000 acres) mostly raised Spanish cattle, prized for their hides and tallow.

The ranches soon linked California to the American economy. New England merchants dispatched dozens of agents to buy leather for the booming Massachusetts boot and shoe industry and tallow to make soap and candles. Many agents married the daughters of the elite Mexican ranchers — the **Californios** — and adopted their manners, attitudes, and Catholic religion. A crucial exception was Thomas Oliver Larkin, a successful merchant in the coastal town of Monterey. Although Larkin worked closely with Mexican politicians and landowners, he remained strongly American in outlook.

Like Larkin, the American migrants in the Sacramento River Valley did not assimilate into Mexican society. Some hoped to emulate the Americans in Texas by colonizing the country and then seeking annexation. However, in the early 1840s, these settlers numbered only about 1,000, far outnumbered by the 7,000 Mexicans who lived along the coast.

The Plains Indians

As the Pacific-bound wagon trains rumbled across Nebraska along the broad Platte River, the migrants encountered the unique ecology of the Great Plains. A vast sea of wild grasses stretched from Texas to Saskatchewan in Canada, and west from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains. Tall grasses flourished in the eastern regions of the future states of Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, where there was ample rainfall. To the west, in the semiarid region beyond the 100th meridian, the migrants found short grasses that sustained a rich wildlife dominated by buffalo and grazing antelopes. Nomadic buffalo-hunting Indian peoples roamed the western plains, while the eastern

river valleys were home to semisedentary tribes and, since the 1830s, the Indian peoples whom Andrew Jackson had "removed" to the west. A line of military forts—stretching from Fort Jesup in Louisiana to Fort Snelling, then in the Wisconsin Territory—policed the boundary between white settlements and what Congress in 1834 designated as Permanent Indian Territory.

For centuries, the Indians who lived on the eastern edge of the plains, such as the Pawnees and the Mandans on the Upper Missouri River, subsisted primarily on corn and beans, supplemented by buffalo meat. They hunted buffalo on foot, driving them over cliffs or into canyons for the kill. To the south, the nomadic Apaches acquired horses from Spanish settlers in New Mexico and ranged widely across the plains. The Comanches, who migrated down the Arkansas River from the Rocky Mountains around 1750, developed both a horse-based culture and imperial ambitions. Skilled buffalo hunters and fierce warriors, the Comanches slowly pushed the Apaches to the southern edge of the plains. They also raided Spanish settlements in New Mexico, incorporating captured women and children into their society.

After 1800, the Comanches gradually built up a pastoral economy, raising horses and mules and selling them to northern Indian peoples and to Euro-American farmers in Missouri and Arkansas**.** Many Comanche families owned thirty to thirty-five horses or mules, far more than the five or six required for hunting buffalo and fighting neighboring peoples. The Comanches also exchanged goods with merchants and travelers along the Santa Fe Trail, which cut through their territory as it connected Missouri and New Mexico. By the early 1840s, goods worth nearly $1 million moved along the trail each year.

By the 1830s, the Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos had also adopted this horse culture and, allied with the Comanches, dominated the plains between the Arkansas and Red rivers. The new culture brought sharper social divisions. Some Kiowa men owned hundreds of horses and had several "chore wives" and captive children who worked for them. Poor men, who owned only a few horses, had difficulty finding marriage partners and often had to work for their wealthy kinsmen.

While European horses made Plains Indians wealthier and more mobile, European diseases and

***Comanches Meeting the Dragoons*, 1830s**

In the 1830s, when artist George Catlin accompanied the dragoons of the U.S. Army into Indian Territory, the Comanches were masters of the southern plains. They hunted buffalo, raised horses and mules for sale, and used their skills as horsemen to dominate other Indian peoples and control the passage of Americans along the Santa Fe Trail. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY.

guns thinned their ranks. A devastating smallpox epidemic spread northward from New Spain in 1779–1781 and killed half of the Plains peoples. Twenty years later, another smallpox outbreak left dozens of deserted villages along the Missouri River. Smallpox struck the northern plains again from 1837 to 1840, killing half of the Assiniboines and Blackfeet and nearly a third of the Crows, Pawnees, and Cheyennes. "If I could see this thing, if I knew where it came from, I would go there and fight it," exclaimed a distressed Cheyenne warrior.

European weapons also altered the geography of native peoples. Around 1750, the Crees and Assiniboines, who lived on the far northern plains, acquired guns by trading wolf pelts and beaver skins to the British-run Hudson's Bay Company. Once armed, they drove the Blackfoot peoples westward into the Rocky Mountains and took control of the Saskatchewan and Upper Missouri River basins. When the Blackfeet obtained guns and horses around 1800, they emerged from the mountains and pushed the Shoshones and Crows to the south. Because horses could not easily find winter forage in the snow-filled plains north of the Platte River, Blackfoot families kept only five to ten horses and remained hunters rather than pastoralists.

The powerful Lakota Sioux, who acquired guns and ammunition from French, Spanish, and American traders along the Missouri River, also remained buffalo hunters. A nomadic war-prone people who lived in small groups, the Lakotas largely avoided major epidemics. They kept some sedentary peoples, such as the Arikaras, in subjection and raided others for their crops and horses. By the 1830s, the Lakotas were the dominant tribe on the central as well as the northern plains. "Those lands once belonged to the Kiowas and the Crows," boasted the Oglala Sioux chief Black Hawk, "but we whipped those nations out of them, and in this we did what the white men do when they want the lands of the Indians."

The Sioux's prosperity also came at the expense of the buffalo, which provided them with a diet rich in protein and with hides and robes to sell. The number of hides and robes shipped down the Missouri River each year by the American Fur Company and the Missouri Fur Company increased from 3,000 in the 1820s, to 45,000 in the 1830s, and to 90,000 annually after 1840. North of the Missouri, the story was much the same. The 24,000 Indians of that region — Blackfeet, Crees, and Assiniboines — annually killed about 160,000 buffalo. The women dried the meat to feed their people and to sell to white traders and soldiers. The women also undertook the arduous work of skinning and tanning the hides, which they fashioned into tepees, buffalo robes, and sleeping covers. Over time, Indian hunters increased the kill and traded surplus hides and robes — about 40,000 annually by the 1840s — for pots, knives, guns, and other Euro-American manufactures. As among the Kiowas, trade increased social divisions. "It is a fine sight," a traveler noted around 1850, "to see one of those big men among the Blackfeet, who has two or three lodges, five or six wives, twenty or thirty children, fifty to a hundred head of horses; for his trade amounts to upward of $2,000 per year."

TRACE CHANGE OVER TIME

Why did some Great Plains peoples flourish between 1750 and 1860 while others did not?

Although the Blackfeet, Kiowas, and Lakotas contributed buffalo hides to the national economy, they did not fully grasp their market value as winter clothes, leather accessories, and industrial drive belts. Consequently, they could not demand the best price. Moreover, the increasing size of the kill diminished the buffalo herds. Between 1820 and 1870, the northern herd shrank from 5 million to less than 2 million. When the Assiniboines' cultural hero Inkton'mi had taught his people how to kill the buffalo, he told them, "The buffalo will live as long as your people. There will be no end of them until the end of time." Meant as a perpetual guarantee, by the 1860s Inkton'mi's words prefigured the end of time — the demise of traditional buffalo hunting and, perhaps, of the Assiniboines as well.

The Fateful Election of 1844

The election of 1844 changed the American government's policy toward the Great Plains, the Far West, and Texas. Since 1836, southern leaders had supported the annexation of Texas, but cautious party politicians, pressured by northerners who opposed the expansion of slavery, had rebuffed them (Chapter 12). Now rumors swirled that Great Britain was encouraging Texas to remain independent; wanted California as payment for the Mexican debts owed to British investors; and had designs on Spanish Cuba, which some slave owners wanted to add to the United States. To thwart such imagined schemes, southern expansionists demanded the immediate annexation of Texas.

At this crucial juncture, Oregon fever altered the political landscape in the North. In 1843, Americans in the Ohio River Valley and the Great Lakes states organized "Oregon conventions," and Democratic and Whig politicians alike called for American sovereignty over the entire Oregon Country, from Spanish California to Russian Alaska (which began at 54°40' north latitude). With northerners demanding Oregon,

President John Tyler, a proslavery zealot, called for the annexation of Texas. Disowned by the Whigs because he thwarted Henry Clay's nationalist economic program, Tyler hoped to win reelection in 1844 as a Democrat. To curry favor among northern expansionists, Tyler supported claims to all of Oregon.

In April 1844, Tyler and John C. Calhoun, his proslavery, expansionist-minded secretary of state, sent the Senate a treaty to bring Texas into the Union. However, the two major presidential hopefuls, Democrat Martin Van Buren and Whig Henry Clay, opposed Tyler's initiative. Fearful of raising the issue of slavery, they persuaded the Senate to reject the treaty.

UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW
Why did party politicians initially oppose the annexation of Texas, and how did this view change during the election of 1844?

Nonetheless, expansion into Texas and Oregon became the central issue in the election of 1844. Most southern Democrats favored Texas annexation and refused to support Van Buren's candidacy. The party also passed over Tyler, whom they did not trust. Instead, the Democrats selected Governor James K. Polk of Tennessee, a slave owner and an avowed expansionist. Known as "Young Hickory" because he was a protégé of Andrew Jackson, Polk shared his mentor's iron will, boundless ambition, and determination to open up lands for American settlement. Accepting the false claim in the Democratic Party platform that both areas already belonged to the United States, Polk campaigned for the "Re-occupation of Oregon and the Re-annexation of Texas." He insisted that the United States defy British claims and occupy "the whole of the territory of Oregon" to the Alaskan border. **"Fifty-four forty or fight!"** became his jingoistic cry.

The Whigs nominated Henry Clay, who again advocated his American System of high tariffs, internal improvements, and national banking. Clay initially dodged the issue of Texas but, seeking southern votes, ultimately supported annexation. Northern Whigs who opposed the admission of a new slave state refused to vote for Clay and cast their ballots for James G. Birney of the Liberty Party (Chapter 11). Birney garnered less than 3 percent of the national vote but took enough Whig votes in New York to cost Clay that state — and the presidency.

Following Polk's narrow victory, congressional Democrats called for immediate Texas statehood. However, they lacked the two-thirds majority in the Senate needed to ratify a treaty of annexation. So the Democrats admitted Texas using a joint resolution of Congress, which required just a majority vote in each house, and Texas became the twenty-eighth state in December 1845. Polk's strategy of linking Texas and Oregon had put him in the White House and Texas in the Union. Shortly, it would make the expansion of the South — and its system of slavery — the central topic of American politics.

War, Expansion, and Slavery, 1846–1850

The acquisition of Texas whetted Polk's appetite for the Mexican lands between Texas and the Pacific Ocean. If necessary, he was ready to go to war for them. What he and many Democrats consciously ignored was the domestic crisis that a war of conquest to expand slavery would unleash.

The War with Mexico, 1846–1848

Since gaining independence in 1821, Mexico had not prospered. Its civil wars and political instability produced a stagnant economy, a weak government, and modest tax revenues, which a bloated bureaucracy and debt payments to European bankers quickly devoured. Although the distant northern provinces of California and New Mexico remained undeveloped and sparsely settled, with a Spanish-speaking population of only 75,000 in 1840, Mexican officials vowed to preserve their nation's historic boundaries. When its breakaway province of Texas prepared to join the American Union, Mexico suspended diplomatic relations with the United States.

Polk's Expansionist Program President Polk now moved quickly to acquire Mexico's other northern provinces. He hoped to foment a revolution in California that, like the 1836 rebellion in Texas, would lead to annexation. In October 1845, Secretary of State James Buchanan told merchant Thomas Oliver Larkin, now the U.S. consul for the Mexican province, to encourage influential Californios to seek independence and union with the United States. To add military muscle to this scheme, Polk ordered American naval commanders to seize San Francisco Bay and California's coastal towns in case of war with Mexico. The president also instructed the War Department to dispatch Captain John C. Frémont and an "exploring" party of soldiers into Mexican territory. By December 1845, Frémont's force had reached California's Sacramento River Valley.

With these preparations in place, Polk launched a secret diplomatic initiative: he sent Louisiana congressman John Slidell to Mexico, telling him to secure the Rio Grande boundary for Texas and to buy the provinces of California and New Mexico for $30 million. However, Mexican officials refused to meet with Slidell.

Events now moved quickly toward war. Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor and an American army of 2,000 soldiers to occupy disputed lands between the Nueces River (the historic southern boundary of Spanish Texas) and the Rio Grande, which the Republic of Texas had claimed as its border with Mexico. "We were sent to provoke a fight," recalled Ulysses S. Grant, then a young officer serving with Taylor, "but it was essential that Mexico should commence it." When the armies clashed near the Rio Grande in May 1846, Polk delivered the war message he had drafted long before. Taking liberties with the truth, the president declared that Mexico "has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon the American soil." Ignoring pleas by some Whigs for a negotiated settlement, an overwhelming majority in Congress voted for war — a decision greeted with great popular acclaim. To avoid a simultaneous war with Britain, Polk retreated from his demand for "fifty-four forty or fight" and in June 1846 accepted British terms that divided the Oregon Country at the forty-ninth parallel.

American Military Successes American forces in Texas quickly established their military superiority. Zachary Taylor's army crossed the Rio Grande; occupied the Mexican city of Matamoros; and, after a fierce six-day battle in September 1846, took the interior Mexican town of Monterrey. Two months later, a U.S. naval squadron in the Gulf of Mexico seized Tampico, Mexico's second most important port. By the end of 1846, the United States controlled much of northeastern Mexico (Map 13.3).

Fighting also broke out in California. In June 1846, naval commander John Sloat landed 250 marines in Monterey and declared that California "henceforward will be a portion of the United States." Simultaneously,

MAP 13.3
The Mexican War, 1846–1848

After moving west from Fort Leavenworth in present-day Kansas, American forces commanded by Captain John C. Frémont and General Stephen Kearny defeated Mexican armies in California in 1846 and early 1847. Simultaneously, U.S. troops under General Zachary Taylor and Colonel Alfred A. Doniphan won victories over General Santa Anna's forces south of the Rio Grande. In mid-1847, General Winfield Scott mounted a successful seaborne attack on Veracruz and Mexico City, ending the war.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How was the American acquisition of California similar to, and different from, the American-led creation of the Texas Republic (discussed in Chapter 12)?

American settlers in the Sacramento River Valley staged a revolt and, supported by Frémont's force, captured the town of Sonoma, where they proclaimed the independence of the "Bear Flag Republic." To cement these victories, Polk ordered army units to capture Santa Fe in New Mexico and then march to southern California. Despite stiff Mexican resistance, American forces secured control of California early in 1847.

Polk expected these victories to end the war, but he underestimated the Mexicans' national pride and the determination of President Santa Anna. In February 1847 in the Battle of Buena Vista, Santa Anna nearly defeated Taylor's army in northeastern Mexico. With most Mexican troops deployed in the north, Polk approved General Winfield Scott's plan to capture the port of Veracruz and march 260 miles to Mexico City. An American army of 14,000 seized the Mexican capital in September 1847. That American victory cost Santa Anna his presidency, and a new Mexican government made a forced peace with the United States.

Street Fighting in the Calle de Iturbide, 1846

Monterrey, which had resisted Spanish troops during Mexico's war for independence (1820–1821), was captured by the Americans only after bloody house-to-house fighting in the Mexican War (1846–1848). Protected by thick walls and shuttered windows, Mexican defenders pour a withering fire on the dark-uniformed American troops and buckskin-clad frontier fighters. A large Catholic cathedral looms in the background, its foundations obscured by the smoke from the Mexicans' cannons. West Point Museum, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY.

A Divisive Victory

Initially, the war with Mexico sparked an explosion of patriotic expansionism. The *Nashville Union* hailed it as a noble struggle to extend "the principles of free government." However, the war soon divided the nation (American Voices, p. 422). Some northern Whigs — among them Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts (the son of John Quincy Adams) and Chancellor James Kent of New York — opposed the war on moral grounds, calling it "causeless & wicked & unjust." Adams, Kent, and other **conscience Whigs** accused Polk of waging a war of conquest to add new slave states and give slave-owning Democrats permanent control of the federal government. Swayed by such arguments, troops deserted in droves (creating the highest desertion rate of any American war), and antiwar activists denounced enlistees as "murderers and robbers." "The United States will conquer Mexico," Ralph Waldo Emerson had predicted as the war began, but "Mexico will poison us."

When voters repudiated Polk's war policy in the elections of 1846, the Whig Party took control of Congress. Whig leaders called for "No Territory" — a congressional pledge that the United States would not seek any land from the Mexican republic. "Away with this wretched cant about a 'manifest destiny,' a 'divine mission' . . . to civilize, and Christianize, and democratize our sister republics at the mouth of a cannon," declared New York senator William Duer.

The Wilmot Proviso Polk's expansionist policies also split the Democrats. As early as 1839, Ohio Democrat Thomas Morris had warned that "the power of slavery is aiming to govern the country, its Constitutions and laws." In 1846, David Wilmot, an antislavery Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania, took up that refrain and proposed the so-called **Wilmot Proviso**, a ban on slavery in any territories gained from the war. Whigs and antislavery Democrats in the House of Representatives quickly passed the bill, dividing Congress along sectional lines. "The madmen of the North . . . ," grumbled the *Richmond Enquirer*, "have, we fear, cast the die and numbered the days of this glorious Union." Fearing that outcome, a few proslavery northern senators joined their southern colleagues to kill the proviso.

Fervent Democratic expansionists now became even more aggressive. President Polk, Secretary of State Buchanan, and Senators Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi called for the annexation of a huge swath of Mexican territory south of the Rio Grande. However, John C. Calhoun and other southern whites feared this demand would extend the costly war and require the assimilation of many dark-skinned mestizos. They favored only the annexation of sparsely settled New Mexico and California. "Ours is a government of the white man," proclaimed Calhoun, which should never welcome "into the Union any but the Caucasian race." To unify the Democratic Party, Polk and Buchanan accepted Calhoun's policy. In 1848, Polk signed, and the Senate ratified, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which the United States agreed to pay Mexico $15 million in return for more than one-third of its territory (Map 13.4).

Congress also created the Oregon Territory in 1848 and, two years later, passed the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act, which granted farm-sized plots of "free land" to settlers who took up residence before 1854. Soon, treaties with native peoples extinguished Indian titles to much of the new territory. With the settlement of Oregon and the acquisition of New Mexico and California, the American conquest of the Far West was far advanced.

Free Soil However, the political debate over expansion was far from over and dominated the election of 1848. The Senate's rejection of the Wilmot Proviso revived Thomas Morris's charge that leading southerners were part of a "Slave Power" conspiracy to dominate national life. To thwart any such plan, thousands of ordinary northerners, including farmer Abijah Beckwith of Herkimer County, New York, joined the **free-soil movement**. Slavery, Beckwith wrote in his diary, was an institution of "aristocratic men" and a danger to "the great mass of the people [because it] . . . threatens the general and equal distribution of our lands into convenient family farms."

The free-soilers quickly organized the Free-Soil Party in 1848. The new party abandoned the Garrisonians' and Liberty Party's emphasis on the sinfulness of slavery and the natural rights of African Americans. Instead, like Beckwith, it depicted slavery as a threat to republicanism and to the Jeffersonian ideal of a freeholder society, arguments that won broad support among aspiring white farmers. Hundreds of men and women in the Great Lakes states joined the free-soil organizations formed by the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. So, too, did Frederick Douglass, the foremost black abolitionist, who attended the first Free-Soil Party convention in the summer of 1848 and endorsed its strategy. However, William Lloyd Garrison and other radical abolitionists condemned the Free-Soilers' stress on white freehold farming as racist "whitemanism."

The Mexican War: Expansion and Slavery

Conflict with Mexico prompted debates over the Polk administration's aggressive efforts to acquire territory and spread slavery. Here, Polk's critics face off against the expansionists.

John L. O'Sullivan, Editor

"Manifest Destiny," from *United States Magazine and Democratic Review,* July 1845

Texas is now ours . . . [Britain and France tried] to intrude themselves [into Texas affairs] . . . for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions. . . .

The independence of Texas was complete and absolute. It was an independence, not only in fact, but of right. . . . What then can be more preposterous than all this clamor by Mexico and the Mexican interest, against Annexation, as a violation of any rights of hers . . . ?

Nor is there any just foundation for the charge that Annexation is a great pro-slavery measure — calculated to increase and perpetuate that institution. Slavery had nothing to do with it. . . . That it will tend to facilitate and hasten the disappearance of Slavery from all the northern tier of the present Slave States, cannot surely admit of serious question. The greater value in Texas of the slave labor now employed in those States, must soon produce the effect of draining off that labor southwardly. . . .

California will, probably, next fall away. . . . Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses. A population will soon be in actual occupation of California. . . . And they will have a right to independence — to self-government . . . a better and a truer right than the artificial title of sovereignty in Mexico, a thousand miles distant, inheriting from Spain a title good only against those who have none better.

Source: Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787–1848* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991), 525–528.

James Buchanan, U.S. Secretary of State

Letter to John Slidell, Minister Plenipotentiary to Mexico, November 1845

In your negotiations with Mexico, the independence of Texas must be considered a settled fact, and is not to be called in question. . . .

It may, however, be contended on the part of Mexico, that the Nueces and not the Rio del Norte [Rio Grande], is the true western boundary of Texas. I need not furnish you arguments to controvert this position. . . . The jurisdiction of Texas has been extended beyond that river [the Nueces] and . . . representatives from the country between it and the Del Norte have participated in the deliberations both of her Congress and her Convention. . . .

The case is different in regard to New Mexico. Santa Fe, its capital, was settled by the Spaniards more than two centuries ago; and that province has been ever since in their possession and that of the Republic of Mexico. The Texans never have conquered or taken possession of it. . . . [However,] a great portion of New Mexico being on this side of the Rio Grande and included within the limits already claimed by Texas, it may hereafter, should it remain a Mexican province, become a subject of dispute. . . . It would seem to be equally the interest of both Powers, that New Mexico should belong to the United States. . . .

It is to be seriously apprehended that both Great Britain and France have designs upon California. . . . This Government . . . would vigorously interpose to prevent the latter from becoming either a British or a French Colony. . . . The possession of the Bay and harbor of San Francisco, is all important to the United States. . . . Money would be no object.

Source: Victoria Bissell Brown and Timothy J. Shannon, eds., *Going to the Source: The Bedford Reader in American History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 1: 260–262.

Charles Sumner, Conscience Whig and Future Republican Senator from Massachusetts

Letter to Robert Winthrop, Whig Congressman from Massachusetts, October 25, 1846

If we regard Texas as a province of Mexico, its boundaries must be sought in the geography of that republic. If we regard it as an independent State, they must be determined by the extent of jurisdiction which the State was able to maintain. Now it seems clear that the river Nueces was always recognized by Mexico as the western boundary; and it is undisputed that the State of Texas, since its Declaration of Independence, never exercised any jurisdiction beyond the Nueces. . . .

In the month of January, 1846, the President of the United States directed the troops under General Taylor, called the Army of Occupation, to take possession of this region [west of the Nueces River]. Here was an act of aggression. As might have been expected, it produced collision. The Mexicans, aroused in self-defence, sought to repel the invaders. . . .

Here the question occurs, What was the duty of Congress in this emergency? Clearly to withhold all sanction to unjust war, — to aggression upon a neighboring Republic. . . . The American forces should have been directed to retreat, not from any human force, but from wrongdoing; and this would have been a true victory.

Alas! This was not the mood of Congress. With wicked speed a bill was introduced, furnishing large and unusual supplies of men and money. . . . This was adopted by a vote of 123 to 67; and the bill then leaped forth, fully armed, as a measure of open and active hostility against Mexico.

Source: Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787–1848* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991), 541.

Walt Whitman, Poet and Editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*

Editorial, September 1, 1847

The question whether or no there shall be slavery in the new territories . . . is a question between the grand body of white workingmen, the millions of mechanics, farmers, and operatives of our country, with their interests on the one side — and the interests of the few thousand rich, "polished," and aristocratic owners of slaves at the South, on the other side.

Experience has proved . . . that a stalwart mass of respectable workingmen, cannot exist, much less flourish, in a thorough slave State. Let any one think for a moment what a different appearance New York, Pennsylvania, or Ohio, would present — how much less sturdy independence and family happiness there would be — were slaves the workmen there, instead of each man as a general thing being his own workman. . . .

Slavery is a good thing enough . . . to the rich — the one out of thousands; but it is destructive to the dignity and independence of all who work, and to labor itself. . . . All practice and theory . . . are strongly arrayed in favor of limiting slavery to where it already exists.

Source: Sean Wilentz, ed., *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787–1848* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991), 543.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What arguments do Buchanan and Sumner make about the boundaries of Texas, the issue that sparked the fighting? Whose argument is more persuasive and why?
2. Do O'Sullivan's and Buchanan's assertions support or undercut the claim that the Mexican War was an aggressive act of imperialism?
3. Why does Whitman oppose the expansion of slavery? Given Whitman's views, who might have gotten his vote in the election of 1848? Why?
4. Two of the sources are newspaper editorials; two are letters written by or addressed to public officials. How does the nature of each of these sources influence its content?

MAP 13.4
The Mexican Cession, 1848

In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), Mexico ceded to the United States its vast northern territories—the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and half of Colorado. These new territories, President Polk boasted to Congress, "constitute of themselves a country large enough for a great empire, and the acquisition is second in importance only to that of Louisiana in 1803."

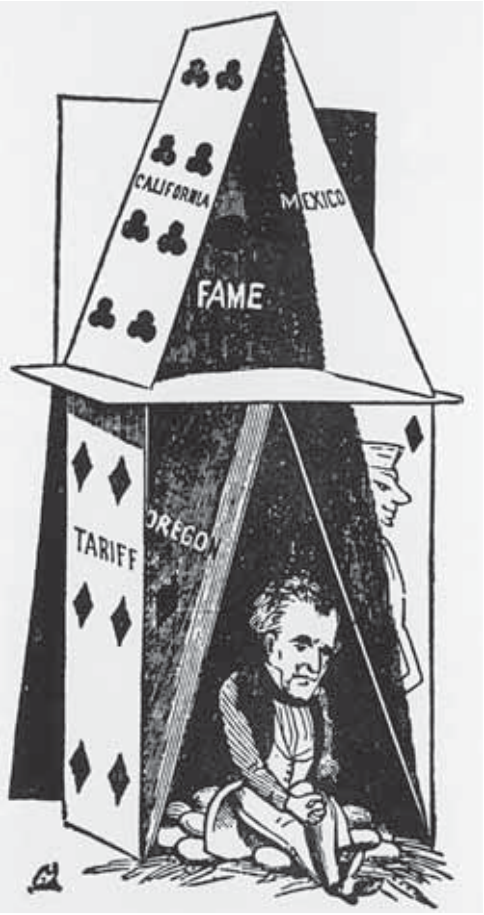
The Election of 1848

The conflict over slavery took a toll on Polk and the Democratic Party. Scorned by Whigs and Free-Soilers and exhausted by his rigorous dawn-to-midnight work regime, Polk declined to run for a second term and died just three months after leaving office. In his place, the Democrats nominated Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan, an avid expansionist who had advocated buying Cuba, annexing Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, and taking all of Oregon. To maintain party unity on the slavery issue, Cass promoted a new idea, **squatter sovereignty**. Under this plan, Congress would allow settlers in each territory to determine its status as free or slave.

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT
What did conscience Whigs, David Wilmot, and free-soilers have in common, and why did they all rise to prominence between 1846 and 1848?

Cass's doctrine of squatter sovereignty failed to persuade those northern Democrats who opposed any expansion of slavery. They joined the Free-Soil Party, as did former Democratic president Martin Van Buren, who became its candidate for president. To attract Whig votes, the Free-Soilers chose conscience Whig Charles Francis Adams for vice president.

The Whigs nominated General Zachary Taylor. Taylor was a Louisiana slave owner firmly committed to the defense of slavery in the South but not in the territories, a position that won him support in the North. Moreover, the general's military exploits had made him a popular hero, known affectionately among his troops as "Old Rough and Ready." In 1848, as in 1840 with the candidacy of William Henry Harrison, running a military hero worked for the Whigs. Taylor took 47 percent of the popular vote to Cass's 42 percent. However, Taylor won a majority in the electoral college (163 to 127) only because Van Buren and the Free-Soil ticket



"This Is the House That Polk Built"

President James Polk's administration started off with a bang—a long-sought Democratic free-trade tariff, a compromise settlement of the Oregon boundary dispute with Great Britain, and a war to seize California and other Mexican provinces. This ambitious agenda promised fame for the president, but the cartoonist pictures Polk as a worried man, afraid that he has built a house of cards that might collapse at any time. © Bettmann/Corbis.

took enough votes in New York to deny Cass a victory there. Although their numbers were small, antislavery voters in New York had denied the presidency to Clay in 1844 and to Cass in 1848. The bitter debate over slavery had changed the dynamics of national politics.

California Gold and Racial Warfare

Even before Taylor took office, events in sparsely settled California took center stage. In January 1848, workers building a milldam for John A. Sutter in the Sierra Nevada foothills came across flakes of gold. Sutter was a Swiss immigrant who came to California in 1839, became a Mexican citizen, and accumulated land in the Sacramento River Valley. He tried to hide the discovery, but by mid-1848 Americans from Monterey and San Francisco were pouring into the foothills, along with hundreds of Indians and Californios and scores of Australians, Mexicans, and Chileans. The gold rush was on (America Compared, p. 426). By January 1849, sixty-one crowded ships had left New York and other northeastern ports to sail around Cape Horn to San Francisco; by May, twelve thousand wagons had crossed the Missouri River bound for the goldfields (Map 13.5). For Bernard Reid, the overland trip on the Pioneer Line was "a long dreadful dream," beset by cholera, scurvy, and near starvation. Still, by the end of 1849, more than 80,000 people, mostly men—the so-called **forty-niners**—had arrived in California.

The Forty-Niners

The forty-niners lived in crowded, chaotic towns and mining camps amid gamblers, saloon keepers, and prostitutes. They set up "claims clubs" to settle mining disputes and cobbled together a system of legal rules based on practice "back East." The American miners usually treated alien whites fairly but ruthlessly expelled Indians, Mexicans, and Chileans from the goldfields or confined them to marginal diggings. When substantial numbers of Chinese miners arrived in 1850, often in the employ of Chinese companies, whites called for laws to expel them from California.

The first miners to exploit a site often struck it rich. They scooped up the easily reached deposits, leaving small pickings for later arrivals. His "high hopes" wrecked, one latecomer saw himself and most other forty-niners as little better than "convicts condemned to exile and hard labor." They faced disease and death as well: "Diarrhea was so general during the fall and winter months" and so often fatal, a Sacramento doctor remarked, that it was called "the disease of California." Like many migrants, William Swain gave up the search for gold in 1850 and borrowed funds to return to his wife, infant daughter, and aged mother on a New York farm. "O William," his wife Sabrina had written, "I wish you had been content to stay at home, for there is no real home for me without you."

Thousands of disillusioned forty-niners were either too ashamed or too tired or too ambitious to go home. Some became wageworkers for companies that engaged in hydraulic or underground mining; others turned to farming. "Instead of going to the mines where fortune hangs upon the merest chance," a frustrated miner advised emigrants, "[you] should at once commence the cultivation of the soil."

The Gold Rush: California and Australia

In 1849, hundreds of Australian men booked passage for San Francisco, hoping to make their fortune in the California goldfields. A mere two years later, thousands more Australian "diggers" flocked to the colony of Victoria in Australia itself, drawn by a gold strike that yielded one-third of the world's gold output during the 1850s.

In California and Victoria, miners lived mostly in canvas tents and flimsy wood shanties and found gold initially in stream beds. In both territories, the huge migration virtually wiped out the aboriginal peoples. Similarly, both rushes attracted about 40,000 Chinese miners, an influx that, in the race-conscious, English-speaking world of the nineteenth century, prompted riots and legislation in both regions to restrict Asian migrants. Finally, only a few California "forty-niners" or Australian "diggers" made a fortune, perhaps 5 of every 100.

There were differences as well. Upon a gold strike in California, the prospectors would stake their claims and collectively protect those claims—a rough system of democratic self-rule. In Victoria, the British crown owned much of the land and gold commissioners and police administered the diggings, selling licenses to dig for 30 shillings a month (about $200 in present-day U.S. dollars). Distressed by license fees and corrupt local officials, 10,000 miners at Ballarat voted to create a Reform League, which demanded abolition of fees and universal male suffrage. When authorities ignored their demands, 500 miners seized a rich mine at Eureka. In the ensuing struggle, British troops killed 22 miners, ending the armed uprising.

Despite these differences—as well as a significant disparity in the proportion of women—California and Victoria were both transformed by the nearly simultaneous discovery of gold. Within a few decades a mining boom vastly increased their wealth and boasted their populations, as the following chart indicates:

TABLE 13.1

Nonnative Population Increases from Gold Rush in United States and Australia

	California, United States					Victoria, Australia			
	Total	Women		Nonwhite		Total	Women		Nonwhite
1845	11,000								
1850	93,000	7,000	7%	1%	1851	97,000	39,000	40%	0%
1860	380,000	120,000	31%	15%	1861	540,000	219,000	40%	5%
1870	560,000	211,000	37%	11%	1871	746,000	339,000	45%	4%

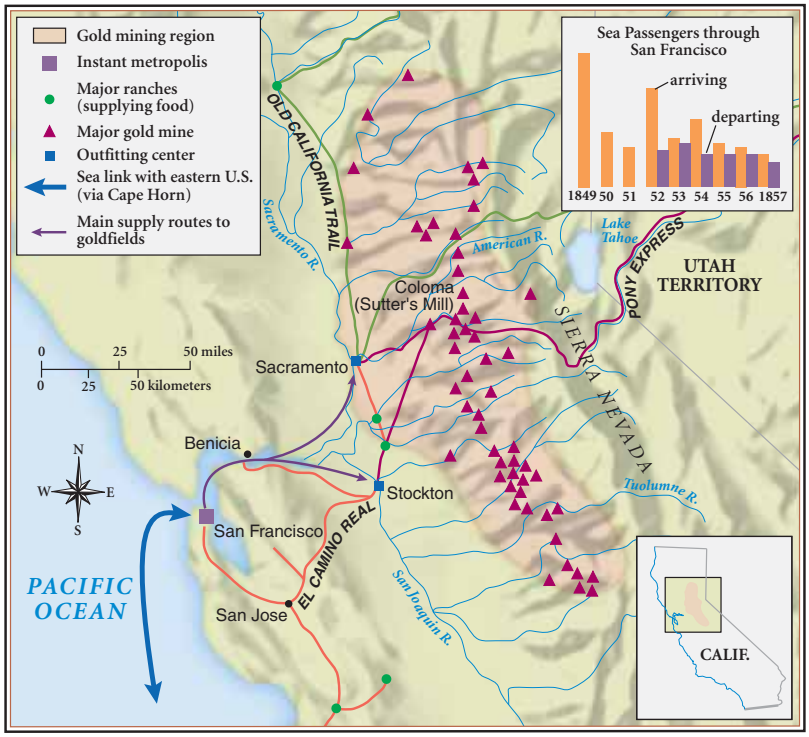
QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How would you account for the relative numbers of women in Victoria and California and how those proportions changed over time? How might the percentage of women affect the character of the two societies?
2. Why were there no equivalents of the Ballarat Reform League and the Eureka Stockade in California, given that the two rushes were similar in so many ways and fostered similar anti-Chinese violence and legislation?

Racial Warfare and Land Rights Farming required arable land, and Mexican grantees and native peoples owned or claimed much of it. The American migrants brushed aside both groups, brutally eliminating the Indians and wearing down Mexican claimants with legal tactics and political pressure. The subjugation of the native peoples came first. When the gold rush began in 1848, there were about 150,000 Indians in California; by 1861, there were only 30,000. As elsewhere in the Americas, European diseases took the lives of thousands. In California, white settlers also undertook systematic campaigns of extermination,

MAP 13.5
The California Gold Rush, 1849–1857

Traveling from all parts of the world—South America, Europe, China, and Australia, as well as the eastern United States—tens of thousands of bonanza-seekers converged on the California goldfields. Miners traveling by sea landed at San Francisco, which mushroomed into a substantial city; many other prospectors trekked overland to the goldfields on the California Trail. By the mid-1850s, the gold rush was over: almost as many people were sailing from San Francisco each year as were arriving to seek their fortune.



and local political leaders did little to stop them: "A war of extermination will continue to be waged . . . until the Indian race becomes extinct," predicted Governor Peter Burnett in 1851. Congress abetted these assaults. At the bidding of white Californians, it repudiated treaties that federal agents had negotiated with 119 tribes and that had provided the Indians with 7 million acres of land. Instead, in 1853, Congress authorized five reservations of only 25,000 acres each and refused to provide the Indians with military protection.

Consequently, some settlers simply murdered Indians to push them off nonreservation lands. The Yuki people, who lived in the Round Valley in northern California, were one target. As the *Petaluma Journal* reported in April 1857: "Within the past three weeks, from 300 to 400 bucks, squaws and children have been killed by whites." Other white Californians turned to slave trading: "Hundreds of Indians have been stolen and carried into the settlements and sold," the state's Indian Affairs superintendent reported in 1856. Labor-hungry farmers quickly put them to work. Indians were "all among us, around us, with no house and kitchen without them," recalled one farmer. Expelled from their lands and widely dispersed, many Indian peoples simply vanished as distinct communities. Those tribal communities that survived were a shadow of their former selves. In 1854, at least 5,000 Yukis lived in the Round Valley; a decade later, only 85 men and 215 women remained.

EXPLAIN CONSEQUENCES
What were the main changes caused by the huge increase in California's population and its composition between 1849 and 1870?

The Mexicans and Californios who held grants to thousands of acres were harder to dislodge. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed that the property owned by Mexicans would be "inviolably respected." Although many of the 800 grants made by Spanish and Mexican authorities in California were either fraudulent or poorly documented, the Land Claims Commission created by Congress eventually upheld the validity of 75 percent of them. In the meantime, hundreds of Americans had set up farms on the sparsely settled grants. Having come of age in the antimonopoly Jacksonian era, these American squatters rejected the legitimacy of the Californios' claims to unoccupied and unimproved land and successfully pressured local land commissioners and judges to void or reduce the size of many grants. Indeed, the Americans' clamor for land was so intense and their numbers so large that many Californio claimants sold off their properties at bargain prices.

In northern California, farmers found that they could grow most eastern crops: corn and oats to feed work horses, pigs, and chickens; potatoes, beans, and

A Californio Patriarch

The descendant of a Spanish family that had lived—and prospered—in Mexico since the Spanish Conquest, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo served in Mexican California as a military officer. In the 1830s and 1840s, he received land grants totaling 270,000 acres in the Sonoma Valley north of San Francisco. Vallejo, the father of seventeen children (eleven of whom survived childhood), presents himself in this photograph as a proud patriarch, surrounded by two daughters and three granddaughters. Although he favored the American conquest of 1846, Vallejo was imprisoned for a short period and subsequently suffered severe financial setbacks, losing most of his vast landholdings to squatters and rival claimants.
University of California at Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

peas for the farm table; and refreshing grapes, apples, and peaches. Ranchers gradually replaced Spanish cattle with American breeds that yielded more milk and meat, which found a ready market as California's population shot up to 380,000 by 1860 and 560,000 by 1870. Most important, using the latest agricultural machinery and scores of hired workers, California farmers produced huge crops of wheat and barley, which San Francisco merchants exported to Europe at high prices. The gold rush turned into a wheat boom.

1850: Crisis and Compromise

The rapid settlement of California qualified it for admission to the Union. Hoping to avoid an extended debate over slavery, President Taylor advised the settlers to skip the territorial phase and immediately apply for statehood. In November 1849, Californians ratified a state constitution prohibiting slavery, and the president urged Congress to admit California as a free state.

Constitutional Conflict California's bid for admission produced passionate debates in Congress and four distinct positions regarding the expansion of slavery. First, John C. Calhoun took his usual extreme stance. On the verge of death, Calhoun reiterated his deep resentment of the North's "long-continued agitation of the slavery question." To uphold southern honor (and political power), he proposed a constitutional amendment to create a dual presidency, permanently dividing executive power between the North and the South. Calhoun also advanced the radical argument that Congress had no constitutional authority to regulate slavery in the territories. Slaves were property, Calhoun insisted, and the Constitution restricted Congress's power to abrogate or limit property rights. That argument ran counter to a half century of practice: Congress had prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory in 1787 and had extended that ban to most of the Louisiana Purchase in the Missouri Compromise of 1820. But Calhoun's assertion that **"slavery follows the flag"**—that planters could by right take their slave property into new territories—won support in the Deep South.

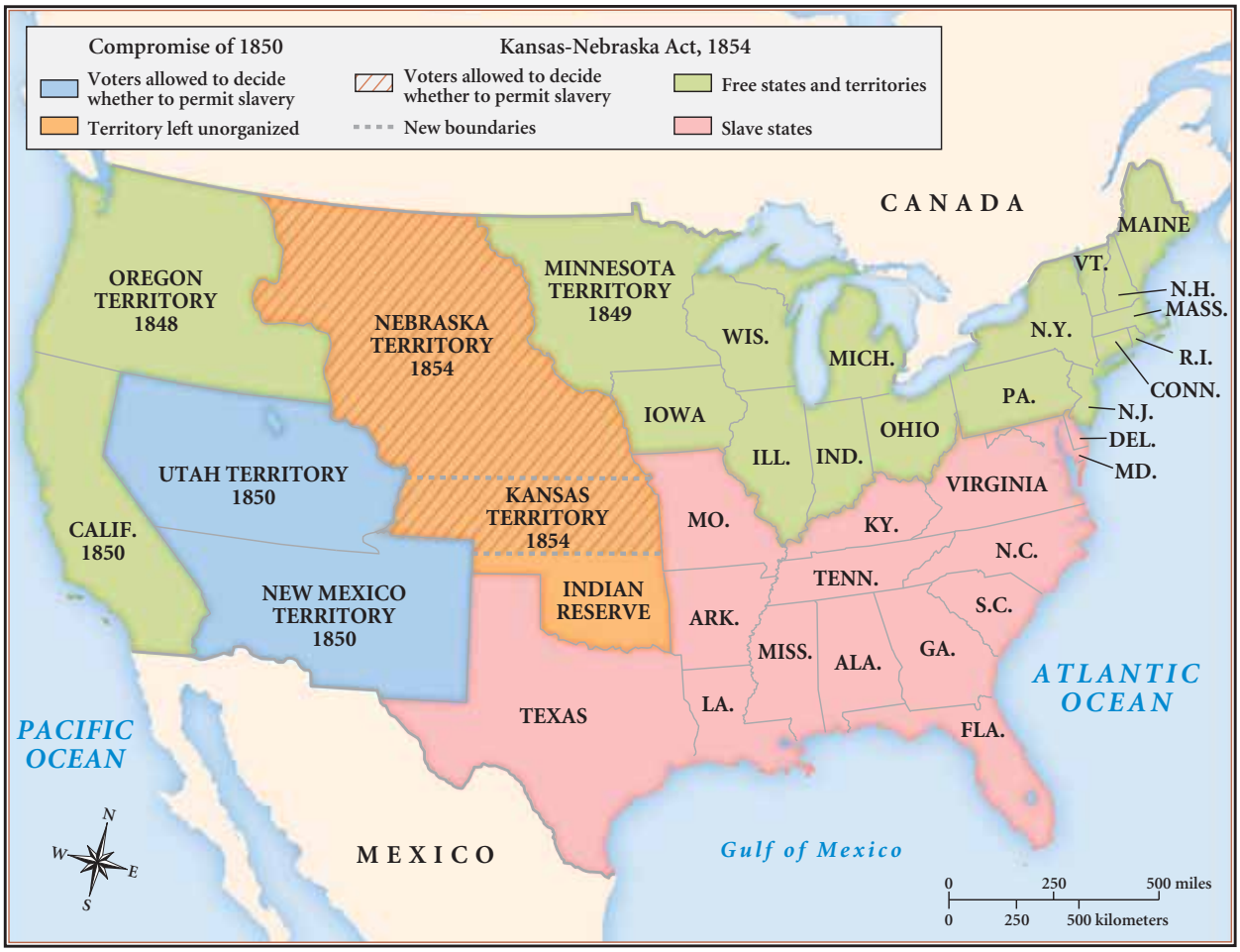
However, many southerners favored a second, more moderate proposal to extend the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific Ocean. This plan won the backing of Pennsylvanian James Buchanan and other influential northern Democrats. It would guarantee slave owners access to some western territory, including a separate state in southern California.

A third alternative was squatter sovereignty—allowing settlers in a territory to decide the status of slavery. Lewis Cass had advanced this idea in 1848, and Democratic senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois now became its champion. Douglas called his plan "popular sovereignty" to link it to republican ideology, which placed ultimate power in the hands of the people (Chapter 5), and it had considerable appeal. Politicians hoped it would remove the explosive issue of slavery from Congress, and settlers welcomed the power it would give them. However, popular sovereignty was a slippery concept. Could residents accept or ban slavery when a territory was first organized? Or must they delay that decision until a territory had enough people to frame a constitution and apply for statehood? No one knew.

For their part, antislavery advocates refused to accept any plan for California or the territories that

would allow slavery. Senator Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, elected by a Democratic–Free-Soil coalition, and Senator William H. Seward, a New York Whig, urged a fourth position: that federal legislation restrict slavery within its existing boundaries and eventually extinguish it completely. Condemning slavery as "morally unjust, politically unwise, and socially pernicious" and invoking "a higher law than the Constitution," Seward demanded bold action to protect freedom, "the common heritage of mankind."

A Complex Compromise Standing on the brink of disaster, senior Whig and Democratic politicians worked desperately to preserve the Union. Aided by Millard Fillmore, who became president in 1850 after Zachary Taylor's sudden death, Whig leaders Henry Clay and Daniel Webster and Democrat Stephen A. Douglas won the passage of five separate laws known collectively as the **Compromise of 1850**. To mollify the South, the compromise included a new Fugitive Slave Act giving federal support to slave catchers. To satisfy the North, the legislation admitted California as a free state, resolved a boundary dispute between New Mexico and Texas in favor of New Mexico, and abolished the slave trade (but not slavery) in the District of Columbia. Finally, the compromise organized the rest of the conquered Mexican lands into the territories of New Mexico and Utah and, invoking popular sovereignty, left the issue of slavery in the hands of their residents (Map 13.6).



MAP 13.6

The Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854

The contest over the expansion of slavery involved vast territories. The Compromise of 1850 peacefully resolved the status of the Far West: California would be a free state, and settlers in the Utah and New Mexico territories would vote for or against slavery (the doctrine of popular sovereignty). However, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 voided the Missouri Compromise (1820) and instituted popular sovereignty in those territories. That decision sparked a bitter local war and revealed a fatal flaw in the doctrine.

Resolving the Crisis of 1850

By 1850, Whig Henry Clay had been in Congress for nearly four decades. Now in partnership with fellow Whig Daniel Webster and Democrat Stephen Douglas, Clay fashioned a complex—and controversial—compromise that preserved the Union. In this engraving, he addresses a crowded Senate chamber, with Webster sitting immediately to his left. Clay addresses his remarks to his prime antagonist, southern advocate John C. Calhoun, the man with the long white hair at the far right of the picture. Library of Congress.

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

How did the Compromise of 1850 resolve the various disputes over slavery, and who benefitted more from its terms?

The Compromise of 1850 preserved national unity by accepting once again the stipulation advanced by the South since 1787: no Union without slavery. Still, southerners feared for the future and threatened secession. Militant activists (or "fire-eaters") in South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama organized special conventions to safeguard "southern rights." Georgia congressman Alexander H. Stephens called on convention delegates to prepare "men and money, arms and munitions, etc. to meet the emergency." A majority of delegates remained committed to the Union, but only on the condition that Congress protect slavery where it existed and grant statehood to any territory that ratified a proslavery constitution. Political wizardry had solved the immediate crisis, but not the underlying issues.

The End of the Second Party System, 1850–1858

The Missouri Compromise had endured for a generation, and the architects of the Compromise of 1850 hoped their agreement would have an even longer life. Religious leaders, conservative businessmen, and leading judges called upon citizens to support the compromise to preserve "government and civil society." Their hopes quickly faded. Demanding freedom for fugitive slaves and free soil in the West, antislavery northerners refused to accept the legitimacy of the compromise. For their part, proslavery southerners plotted to extend slavery into the West, the Caribbean, and Central America. The resulting disputes destroyed the Second Party System and deepened the crisis of the Union.

Resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act

The Fugitive Slave Act proved the most controversial element of the compromise. The act required federal magistrates to determine the status of alleged runaways and denied them a jury trial or even the right to testify. Using its provisions, southern owners re-enslaved about 200 fugitives (as well as some free blacks).

The plight of the runaways and the presence of slave catchers aroused popular hostility in the North and Midwest. Ignoring the threat of substantial fines and prison sentences, free blacks and white abolitionists protected fugitives. In October 1850, Boston abolitionists helped two slaves escape from Georgia slave catchers. Rioters in Syracuse, New York, broke into a courthouse, freed a fugitive, and accused the U.S. marshal of kidnapping. Abandoning nonviolence,

Frederick Douglass declared, "The only way to make a Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make half a dozen or more dead kidnappers." Precisely such a deadly result occurred in Christiana, Pennsylvania, in September 1851, when twenty African Americans exchanged gunfire with Maryland slave catchers, killing two of them. Federal authorities indicted thirty-six blacks and four whites for treason and other crimes, but a Pennsylvania jury acquitted one defendant, and the government dropped charges against the rest.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) boosted opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act. Conveying the moral principles of abolitionism in heartrending personal situations — using the now familiar literary trope of sentimental domesticity — Stowe's book quickly sold 310,000 copies in the United States and double that number in Britain, where it prompted an antislavery petition signed by 560,000 English women. As *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sparked an unprecedented discussion of race and slavery, state legislators in the North protested that the Fugitive Slave Act violated state sovereignty, and they passed **personal-liberty laws** that guaranteed to all residents, including alleged fugitives, the right to a jury trial. In 1857, the Wisconsin Supreme Court went further, ruling in *Ableman v. Booth* that the Fugitive Slave Act was unconstitutional because it violated the rights of Wisconsin's citizens. Taking a states' rights stance — traditionally a southern position — the Wisconsin court denied the authority of the federal judiciary to review its decision. In 1859, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney led a unanimous Supreme Court in affirming the supremacy of federal courts — a position that has withstood the test of time — and upholding the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Act. By then, as Frederick Douglass had hoped, popular opposition had made the law a "dead letter."

The Whigs Disintegrate and New Parties Rise

The conflict over slavery split both major political parties along sectional lines. Hoping to unify their party, the Whigs ran another war hero, General Winfield Scott, as their presidential candidate in 1852. Among the Democrats, southerners demanded a candidate who embraced Calhoun's constitutional argument that all territories were open to slavery. However, northern and midwestern Democrats stood behind the three leading candidates — Lewis Cass of Michigan, Stephen Douglas of Illinois, and James Buchanan of Pennsylvania — who advocated popular sovereignty. Ultimately, the party settled on Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, a congenial man who was sympathetic to the South. As the Whig Party fragmented over slavery, Pierce swept to victory.

IDENTIFY CAUSES
Why did the Fugitive Slave Act fail?

Proslavery Initiatives

As president, Pierce pursued an expansionist foreign policy. To assist northern merchants, who wanted a commercial empire, he negotiated a trade-opening treaty with Japan. To mollify southern expansionists, who desired a plantation empire, he sought extensive Mexican lands south of the Rio Grande. Ultimately, Pierce settled for a smaller slice of land — the **Gadsden Purchase** of 1853, now part of Arizona and New Mexico — that opened the way for his negotiator, James Gadsden, to build a transcontinental rail line from New Orleans to Los Angeles.

Pierce's most controversial initiatives came in the Caribbean and Central America. Southern expansionists had long urged Cuban slave owners to declare independence from Spain and join the United States. To assist the expansionists and the American traders who still supplied enslaved Africans to Cuba, Pierce threatened war with Spain and covertly supported filibustering (private military) expeditions to Cuba. When Secretary of State William L. Marcy arranged in 1854 for American diplomats in Europe to compose the **Ostend Manifesto**, which urged Pierce to seize Cuba, northern Democrats denounced these aggressive initiatives and scuttled the planters' dreams of American expansion into the Caribbean.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

The Caribbean was a sideshow. The main stage was the trans-Mississippi west, where a major controversy in 1854 destroyed the Whig Party and sent the Union spinning toward disaster. The Missouri Compromise prohibited new slave states in the Louisiana Purchase north of 36°30', so southern senators had long prevented the creation of new territories there. It remained Permanent Indian Territory. Now Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois wanted to open it up, allowing a transcontinental railroad to link Chicago to California. Douglas proposed to extinguish Native American rights on the Great Plains and create a large free territory called Nebraska.

Southern politicians opposed Douglas's initiative. They hoped to extend slavery throughout the Louisiana Purchase and to have a southern city — New Orleans, Memphis, or St. Louis — as the eastern terminus of a transcontinental railroad. To win their support, Douglas amended his bill so that it explicitly repealed

the Missouri Compromise and organized the region on the basis of popular sovereignty. He also agreed to the formation of two territories, Nebraska and Kansas, raising the prospect that settlers in the southern one, Kansas, would choose slavery. Knowing the revised bill would "raise a hell of a storm" in the North, Douglas argued that Kansas was not suited to plantation agriculture and would become a free state. After weeks of bitter debate, the Senate passed the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**. As 1,600 petitions opposing the bill flooded the House of Representatives, the measure barely squeaked through.

The Republican and American Parties

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 was a disaster for the American political system. It finished off the Whig Party: "We went to bed one night old fashioned, conservative Union Whigs & and waked up stark mad abolitionists," cotton textile magnate Amos Lawrence lamented. And it crippled the Democracy, because "anti-Nebraska Democrats" denounced the act as "part of a great scheme for extending and perpetuating supremacy of the slave power." In 1854, they joined ex-Whigs, Free-Soilers, and abolitionists to form a new Republican Party.

The new party was a coalition of "strange, discordant and even hostile elements," one Republican observed. However, all its members opposed slavery, which, they argued, drove down the wages of free workers and degraded the dignity of manual labor. Like Thomas Jefferson, Republicans praised a society based on "the middling classes who own the soil and work it with their own hands." Abraham Lincoln, an ex-Whig from Illinois, conveyed the new party's vision of social mobility. "There is no permanent class of hired laborers among us," he declared, ignoring the growing social divisions in the industrializing North and Midwest. Lincoln and his fellow Republicans envisioned a society of independent farmers, artisans, and proprietors, and they celebrated middle-class values: domesticity and respectability, religious commitment, and capitalist enterprise.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST
What were the main policy objectives of the Republican and American parties?

The Republicans faced strong competition from the **American, or Know-Nothing, Party**, which had its origins in the anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic movements of the 1840s (Chapter 9). In 1850, these nativist societies banded together as the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner; the following year, they formed the American Party. When questioned, the party's secrecy-conscious members often replied, "I know nothing," hence the nickname. The American (or Know-Nothing) Party program was far from secret, however: party supporters wanted to mobilize native-born Protestants against the "alien menace" of Irish and German Catholics, prohibit further immigration, and institute literacy tests for voting. Northern members of the party had a strong antislavery outlook. In 1854, voters elected dozens of American Party candidates to the House of Representatives and gave the party control of the state governments of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. The emergence of a Protestant-based nativist party to replace the Whigs became a real possibility.

Bleeding Kansas

Meanwhile, thousands of settlers rushed into the Kansas Territory, putting Douglas's

Armed Abolitionists in Kansas, 1859

The confrontation between North and South in Kansas took many forms. In the spring of 1859, Dr. John Doy (seated) slipped across the border into Missouri and tried to lead thirteen escaped slaves to freedom in Kansas, only to be captured and jailed in St. Joseph, Missouri. The serious-looking men standing behind Doy, well armed with guns and Bowie knives, attacked the jail and carried Doy back to Kansas. The photograph celebrated and memorialized their successful exploit.
Kansas State Historical Society.

concept of popular sovereignty to the test. On the side of slavery, Missouri senator David R. Atchison encouraged residents of his state to cross temporarily into Kansas to vote in crucial elections there. Opposing Atchison was the abolitionist New England Emigrant Aid Society, which dispatched free-soilers to Kansas. In 1855, the Pierce administration accepted the legitimacy of a proslavery legislature in Lecompton, Kansas, which had been elected with aid from border-crossing Missourians. However, the majority of Kansas residents favored free soil and refused allegiance to the Lecompton government.

In 1856, both sides turned to violence, prompting Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* to label the territory **"Bleeding Kansas."** A proslavery force, seven hundred strong, looted and burned the free-soil town of Lawrence. The attack enraged John Brown, a fifty-six-year-old abolitionist from New York and Ohio, who commanded a free-state militia. Brown was a complex man with a record of failed businesses, but he had an intellectual and moral intensity that won the trust of influential people. Avenging the sack of Lawrence, Brown and his followers murdered five proslavery settlers at Pottawatomie. Abolitionists must "fight fire with fire" and "strike terror in the hearts of the proslavery people," Brown declared. The attack on Lawrence and the Pottawatomie killings started a guerrilla war in Kansas that took nearly two hundred lives.

Buchanan's Failed Presidency

The violence in Kansas dominated the presidential election of 1856. The new Republican Party counted on anger over Bleeding Kansas to boost the party's fortunes. Its platform denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act and demanded that the federal government prohibit slavery in all the territories. Republicans also called for federal subsidies for transcontinental railroads, reviving a Whig economic proposal popular among midwestern Democrats. For president, the Republicans nominated Colonel John C. Frémont, a free-soiler who had won fame in the conquest of Mexican California.

The Election of 1856 The American Party entered the election with equally high hopes, but like the Whigs and Democrats, it split along sectional lines over slavery. The southern faction of the American Party nominated former Whig president Millard Fillmore, while the northern contingent endorsed Frémont. During the campaign, the Republicans won the votes of many northern Know-Nothings by demanding legislation banning foreign immigrants and imposing high tariffs on foreign manufactures. As a Pennsylvania Republican put it, "Let our motto be, protection to everything American, against everything foreign." In New York, Republicans campaigned on a reform platform designed to unite "all of the Anti-Slavery, Anti-Popery and Anti-Whiskey" voters.

The Democrats reaffirmed their support for popular sovereignty and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and they nominated James Buchanan of Pennsylvania. A tall, dignified, and experienced politician, Buchanan was staunchly prosouthern. He won the three-way race with 1.8 million popular votes (45.3 percent) and 174 electoral votes. Frémont polled 1.3 million popular votes (33.2 percent) and 114 electoral votes; Fillmore won 873,000 popular votes (21.5 percent) but captured only 8 electoral votes.

The dramatic restructuring of the political system was now apparent (Map 13.7). With the splintering of the American Party, the Republicans had replaced the Whigs as the second major party. However, Frémont had not won a single vote in the South; had he triumphed, a North Carolina newspaper warned, the result would have been "a separation of the states." The fate of the republic hinged on President Buchanan's ability to quiet the passions of the past decade and to hold the Democratic Party — the only national party — together.

Dred Scott: Petitioner for Freedom Events — and his own values and weaknesses — conspired against Buchanan. Early in 1857, the Supreme Court decided the case of ***Dred Scott v. Sandford***, which raised the controversial issue of Congress's constitutional authority over slavery. Dred Scott was an enslaved African American who had lived for a time with his owner, an army surgeon, in the free state of Illinois and at Fort Snelling in the northern part of the Louisiana Purchase (then part of the Wisconsin Territory), where the Missouri Compromise (1820) prohibited slavery. Scott claimed that residence in a free state and a free territory had made him free. Buchanan opposed Scott's appeal and pressured the two justices from Pennsylvania to side with their southern colleagues. Seven of the nine justices declared that Scott was still a slave, but they disagreed on the legal rationale (Thinking Like a Historian, p. 434).

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT
Why did northern Democratic presidents, such as Pierce and Buchanan, adopt prosouthern policies?

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Biography as History

Sometimes the life of one individual can exemplify an era, and Bridget "Biddy" Mason was such a person. Mason was born into slavery in Georgia in 1818, of mixed African American and Native American descent. In 1836, her owner gave Biddy, age eighteen, to his recently married cousins, Robert and Rebecca Smith, who owned a Mississippi plantation. Trained as a midwife, Biddy delivered all six of Rebecca's babies as well as working in the fields. Biddy herself gave birth to three daughters, probably fathered by Smith, as were at least two of her sister Hannah's eight children. In the mid-1840s, the Smiths converted to Mormonism and, in 1847, along with other Mississippi converts and their slaves, journeyed 1,700 miles to the Utah Territory.

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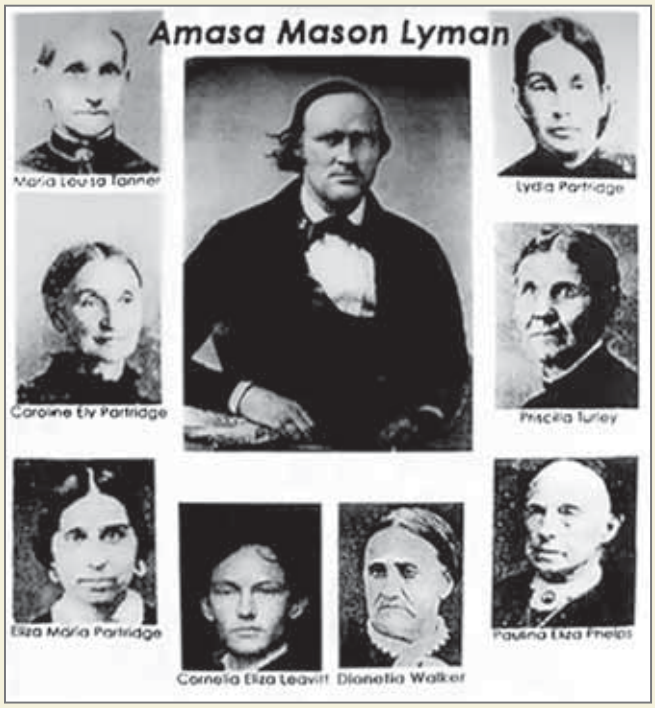
1. **Joseph Smith's Plan to End Slavery, February 7, 1844.** *Like many Americans, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints struggled with the question of slavery. Running for president in 1844, its founder, Joseph Smith, decried the institution.*

Petition, also, ye goodly inhabitants of the slave States, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850, or now. . . . Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress. Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire him to labor like other human beings; for "an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage."

2. **Orson Hyde on slavery, the *Millennial Star*, February 15, 1851.** *Orson Hyde was an important Mormon missionary who, like most Mormons, refused to baptize slaves without their owner's permission.*

The laws of the land recognize slavery, we do not wish to oppose the laws of the country. . . . Our counsel to all our ministers in the North and South is, to avoid contention upon the subject, and to oppose no institution which the laws of the country authorize; but to labor to bring men into the Church and Kingdom of God, and teach them to do right, and honor their God in His creatures.

3. **Mormon apostle Amasa Mason Lyman and his wives.** *In 1851, at the behest of Brigham Young, five hundred Mormons—including the Robert Smiths and their slaves—moved to San Bernardino, California. They settled on land purchased from Antonio Maria Lugo, who held the 35,000 acres of the Rancho Bernardino under a Mexican grant, a claim protected by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) that ended the Mexican War. The settlement's leader was Amasa Mason Lyman, whom Biddy knew through the Smith family and whose middle name she eventually took for her surname.*



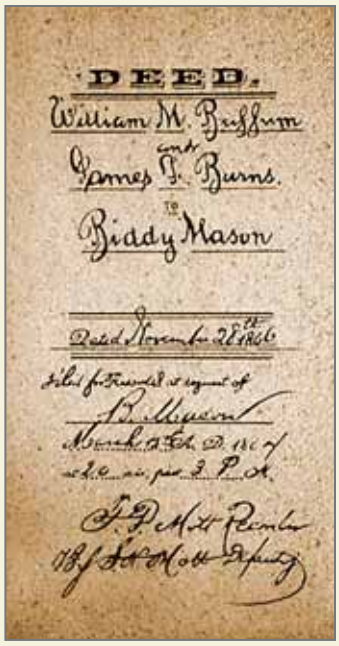
Source: George and Sadie Frey Family.

4. ***Mason v. Smith*, 1856 (the Bridget "Biddy" Mason case).** *Most Mormon migrants to California heeded Brigham Young's advice to free their slaves, as California was a free state. Robert Smith refused to do so and, in 1855, prepared to move to Texas. However, in 1856, members of the free black community assisted Biddy to file a habeas corpus petition and obtain freedom for herself and her extended family of thirteen women and children. In a later interview, Mason stated: "I feared this trip to Texas since I first heard of it."*

And it further appearing by satisfactory proof to the judge here, that all of the said persons of color are entitled to their freedom, and are free and cannot be held in slavery or involuntary servitude . . . And it further appearing to the satisfaction of the judge here that the said Robert Smith intended to and is about to remove from the State of California where slavery does not exist, to the State of Texas, where slavery of Negroes and persons of color does exist, and is established by the municipal laws, and intends to remove the said before-mentioned persons of color, to his own use without the free will and consent of all or any of the said persons of color, whereby their liberty will be greatly jeopardized, and there is good reason to apprehend and believe that they may be sold into slavery or involuntary servitude . . . and it further appearing that none of the said persons of color can read and write, and are almost entirely ignorant of the laws of the state of California as well as those of the State of Texas, and of their rights and that the said Robert Smith, from his past relations to them as members of his family does possess and exercise over them an undue influence in respect to the matter of their said removal insofar that they have been in duress and not in possession and exercise of their free will so as to give a binding consent to any engagement or arrangement with him.

5. **Photograph of Biddy Mason and the deed of her first land purchase, 1866.** *Once free, Biddy prospered as a midwife and an investor in Los Angeles real estate. When she died in 1891, Biddy had accumulated a fortune of $300,000 (about $7.6 million today). Despite her contact with Mormonism, Biddy Mason never joined the Mormon church. Instead, in 1872 she was a founding member of the first African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Los Angeles. An active philanthropist of charitable causes, she funded a traveler's aid society and an elementary school for black children.*

Source: Los Angeles Public Library.



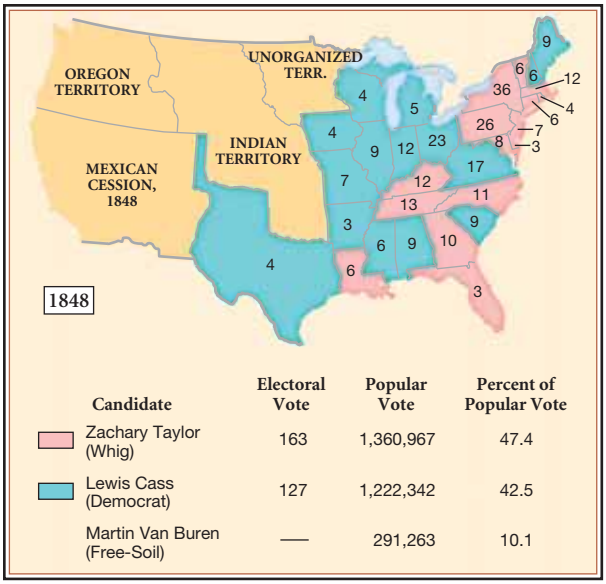
Sources: (1) *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Vol. VI (Salt Lake City, UT: Mormon Church, 1912), 205; (2) *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. XIII (Liverpool: Franklin D. Richards, 1851), 63; (4) Golden State Insurance Company Records, UCLA, Dept. of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

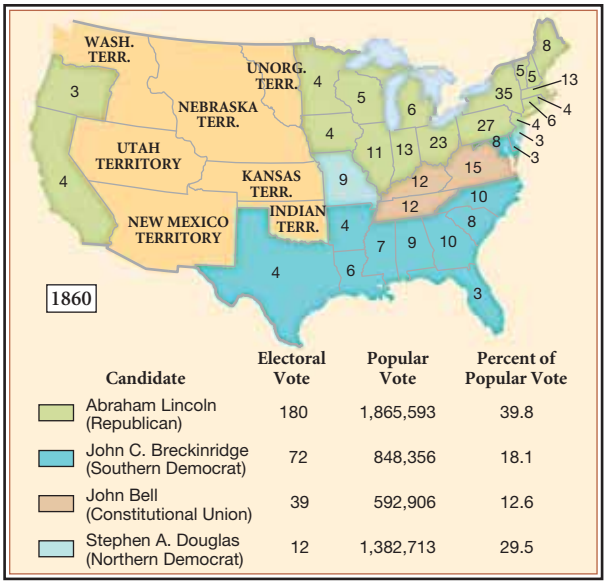
1. Were Smith's and Hyde's positions on slavery and property rights (sources 1 and 2) similar or different?
2. How might the set of photographs of Amasa Mason Lyman and his wives (source 3) suggest that Mormon family life resembled Biddy's experience in growing up on a southern plantation? How might it mirror her own sexual experience, and that of her sister Hannah, as Robert Smith's slaves?
3. As a slave, Biddy did not have a surname. Why might have she taken Lyman's middle name as her surname when she became free in 1856?
4. How does the ruling in Biddy's case (source 4) by Judge Benjamin Ignatius Hayes, in a California state court, reflect the political and constitutional turmoil that westward expansion created with regard to slavery? How is this ruling similar to, and different from, the famous case brought by Dred Scott in Missouri and decided eventually by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857)?
5. What do you think explains Biddy Mason's religious choices and charitable activities as described in the headnote to source 5?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

List the main themes and arguments presented in Chapters 12 and 13. Then, write an essay that explores the ways in which Biddy Mason's experiences—plantation labor in Georgia and Mississippi, coerced miscegenation, exposure to the new religion of Mormonism, a trek by foot across a continent, legally won emancipation, and entrepreneurial success in formerly Mexican California—either exemplify or are inconsistent with those themes and arguments.



Candidate	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	Percent of Popular Vote
Zachary Taylor (Whig)	163	1,360,967	47.4
Lewis Cass (Democrat)	127	1,222,342	42.5
Martin Van Buren (Free-Soil)	—	291,263	10.1



Candidate	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	Percent of Popular Vote
Abraham Lincoln (Republican)	180	1,865,593	39.8
John C. Breckinridge (Southern Democrat)	72	848,356	18.1
John Bell (Constitutional Union)	39	592,906	12.6
Stephen A. Douglas (Northern Democrat)	12	1,382,713	29.5

MAP 13.7

Political Realignment, 1848 and 1860

In the presidential election of 1848, both the Whig and Democratic candidates won electoral votes throughout the nation. Subsequently, the political conflict over slavery and the Compromise of 1850 destroyed the Whig Party in the South. As the only nationwide party, the Democrats won easily over the Whigs in 1852 and, with the opposition split between the Republican and American parties, triumphed in 1856 as well. However, a new region-based party system appeared by 1860 and persisted for the next seventy years—with Democrats dominant in the South and Republicans usually controlling the Northeast, Midwest, and Far West.

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney of Maryland, a slave owner himself, wrote the most influential opinion. He declared that Negroes, whether enslaved or free, could not be citizens of the United States and that Scott therefore had no right to sue in federal court. That argument was controversial, given that free blacks were citizens in many states and therefore had access to the federal courts. Taney then made two even more controversial claims. First, he endorsed John C. Calhoun's argument that the Fifth Amendment, which prohibited "taking" of property without due process of law, meant that Congress could not prevent southern citizens from moving their slave property into the territories and owning it there. Consequently, the chief justice concluded, the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance and the Missouri Compromise that prohibited slavery had never been constitutional. Second, Taney declared that Congress could not give to territorial governments any powers that it did not possess, such as the authority to prohibit slavery. Taney thereby endorsed Calhoun's interpretation of popular sovereignty: only when settlers wrote a constitution and requested statehood could they prohibit slavery.

In a single stroke, Taney had declared the Republican proposals to restrict the expansion of slavery through legislation to be unconstitutional. The Republicans could never accept the legitimacy of Taney's constitutional arguments, which indeed had significant flaws. Led by Senator Seward of New York, they accused the chief justice and President Buchanan of participating in the Slave Power conspiracy.

Buchanan then added fuel to the raging constitutional fire. Ignoring reports that antislavery residents held a clear majority in Kansas, he refused to allow a popular vote on the proslavery Lecompton constitution and in 1858 strongly urged Congress to admit Kansas as a slave state. Angered by Buchanan's machinations, Stephen Douglas, the most influential Democratic senator and architect of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, broke with the president and persuaded Congress to deny statehood to Kansas. (Kansas would enter the Union as a free state in 1861.) Still determined to aid the South, Buchanan resumed negotiations to buy Cuba in December 1858. By pursuing a proslavery agenda — first in *Dred Scott* and then in Kansas and Cuba — Buchanan widened the split in his party and the nation.

Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Triumph, 1858–1860

As the Democratic Party split along sectional lines, the Republicans gained support in the North and Midwest. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois emerged as the only Republican leader whose policies and temperament might have saved the Union. However, few southerners trusted Lincoln, and his presidential candidacy revived secessionist agitation.

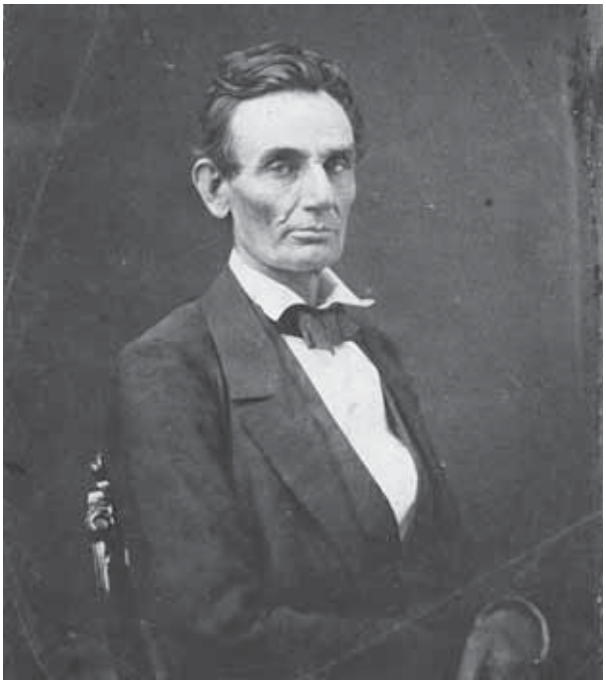
Lincoln's Political Career

The middle-class world of storekeepers, lawyers, and entrepreneurs in the small towns of the Ohio River Valley shaped Lincoln's early career. He came from a hardscrabble yeoman farm family that was continually on the move — from Kentucky, where Lincoln was born in 1809, to Indiana, and then to Illinois. In 1831, Lincoln rejected his father's life as a subsistence farmer and became a store clerk in New Salem, Illinois. Socially ambitious, Lincoln won entry to the middle class by mastering its culture; he joined the New Salem Debating Society, read Shakespeare, and studied law.

Admitted to the bar in 1837, Lincoln moved to Springfield, the new state capital. There, he met Mary Todd, the cultured daughter of a Kentucky banker; they married in 1842. Her tastes were aristocratic; his were humble. She was volatile; he was easygoing but suffered bouts of depression that tried her patience and tested his character.

An Ambitious Politician Lincoln's ambition was "a little engine that knew no rest," a close associate remarked, and it propelled him into politics. An admirer of Henry Clay, Lincoln joined the Whig Party and won election to four terms in the Illinois legislature, where he promoted education, banks, canals, and railroads. He became a dexterous party politician, adept in the use of patronage and the passage of legislation.

In 1846, the rising lawyer-politician won election to a Congress that was bitterly divided over the Wilmot Proviso. Lincoln believed that human bondage was unjust but doubted that the federal government had the constitutional authority to tamper with slavery. With respect to the Mexican War, he took a middle ground by voting for military appropriations but also for the Wilmot Proviso's ban on slavery in any acquired territories. Lincoln also introduced legislation that would require the gradual (and thus compensated) emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia. To avoid future racial strife, he favored the colonization of freed blacks in Africa or South America. Both abolitionists and proslavery activists heaped scorn on Lincoln's middle-of-the-road policies, and he lost his bid for reelection. Dismayed by the rancor of ideological debate, he withdrew from politics and prospered as a lawyer by representing railroads and manufacturers.



Abraham Lincoln, 1859

Lincoln was not a handsome man, and he photographed poorly. His campaign managers had this photo — and many others — retouched to soften Lincoln's features. However, no photograph, no matter how realistic, captured Lincoln's complex personality and wit or the intensity of his spirit and intellect. To grasp Lincoln, it is necessary to read his words.
Chicago History Museum.

Lincoln returned to the political fray because of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Shocked by the act's repeal of the Missouri Compromise and Senator Douglas's advocacy of popular sovereignty, Lincoln reaffirmed his opposition to slavery in the territories. He now likened slavery to a cancer that had to be cut out if the nation's republican ideals and moral principles were to endure.

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates Abandoning the Whigs, Lincoln quickly emerged as the leading Republican in Illinois, and in 1858 he ran for the U.S. Senate seat held by Douglas. Lincoln pointed out that

the proslavery Supreme Court might soon declare that the Constitution "does not permit a state to exclude slavery," just as it had decided in *Dred Scott* that "neither Congress nor the territorial legislature" could ban slavery in a territory. In that event, he warned, "we shall awake to the reality . . . that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave state." This prospect informed Lincoln's famous "House Divided" speech. Quoting the biblical adage "A house divided against itself cannot stand," he predicted that American society "cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. . . . It will become all one thing, or all the other."

The Senate race in Illinois attracted national interest because of Douglas's prominence and Lincoln's reputation as a formidable speaker. During a series of seven debates, Douglas declared his support for white supremacy: "This government was made by our fathers, by white men for the benefit of white men," he said, attacking Lincoln for supporting "negro equality." Lincoln parried Douglas's racist attacks by arguing that free blacks should have equal economic opportunities but not equal political rights. Taking the offensive, he asked how Douglas could accept the *Dred Scott* decision (which protected slave property in the territories) yet advocate popular sovereignty (which allowed settlers to exclude slavery). Douglas responded with the so-called **Freeport Doctrine**: that a territory's residents could exclude slavery by not adopting laws to protect it. That position pleased neither proslavery nor antislavery advocates. Nonetheless, when Democrats won a narrow majority in the state legislature, they reelected Douglas to the U.S. Senate.

UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW
What was Lincoln's position on slavery and people of African descent during the 1840s and 1850s?

The Union Under Siege

The debates with Douglas gave Lincoln a national reputation, and in the election of 1858 the Republican Party won control of the U.S. House of Representatives.

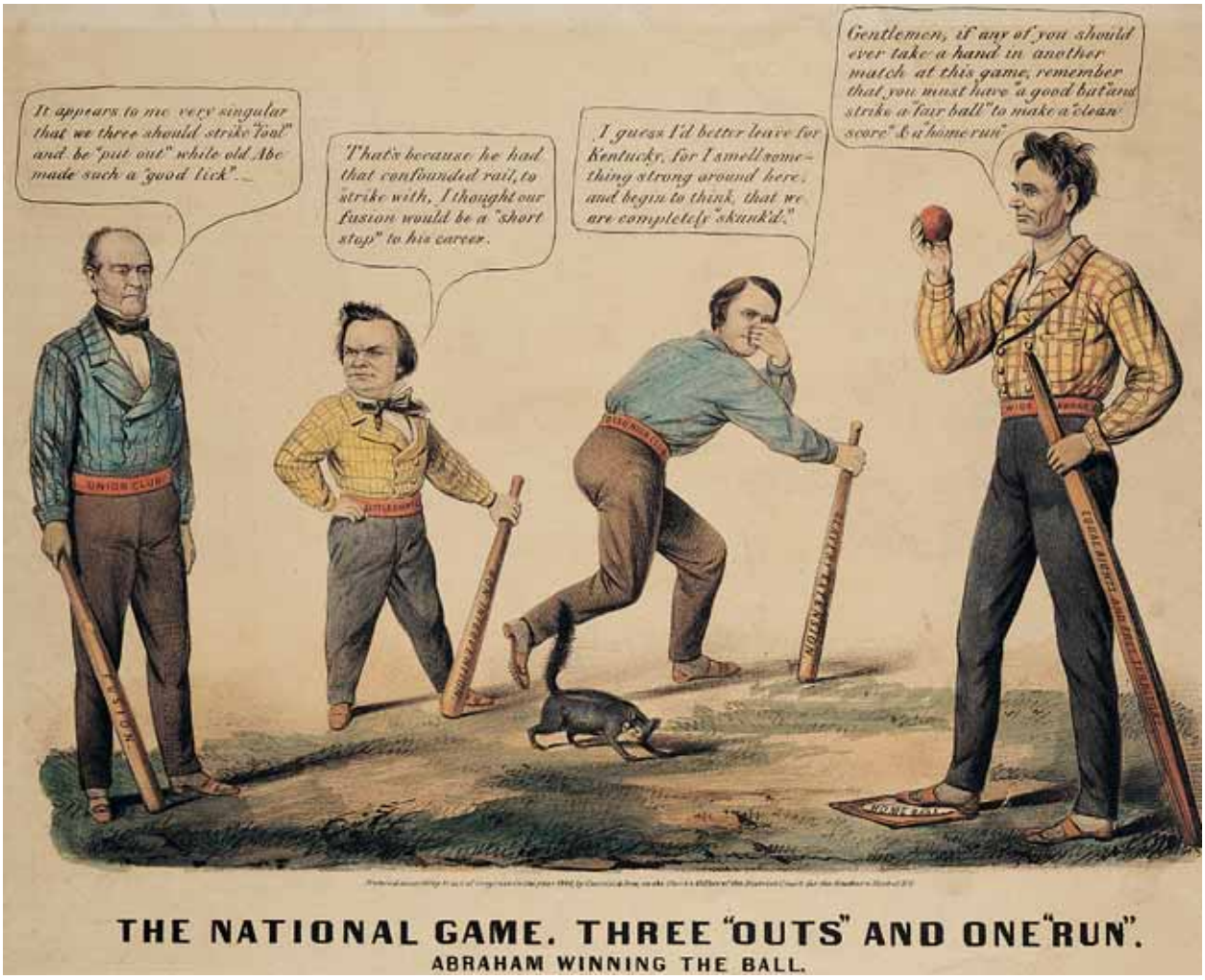
The Rise of Radicalism Shaken by the Republicans' advance, southern Democrats divided again into moderates and fire-eaters. The moderates, who included Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, strongly defended "southern rights" and demanded ironclad political or constitutional protections for slavery. The fire-eaters — men such as Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina and William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama — repudiated the Union and actively promoted secession. Radical antislavery northerners likewise took a strong stance. Senator Seward of New York declared that freedom and slavery were locked in "an irrepressible conflict," and ruthless abolitionist John Brown, who had perpetrated the Pottawatomie massacre, showed what that might mean. In October 1859, Brown led eighteen heavily armed black and white men in a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown hoped to arm slaves with the arsenal's weapons and mount a major rebellion to end slavery.

Republican leaders condemned Brown's unsuccessful raid, but Democrats called his plot "a natural, logical, inevitable result of the doctrines and teachings of the Republican party." When the state of Virginia sentenced Brown to be hanged, transcendentalist reformers Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson (Chapter 11) proclaimed him a "saint awaiting his martyrdom." The slaveholding states looked to the future with terror. "The aim of the present black republican organization is the destruction of the social system of the Southern States," warned one newspaper. Once Republicans came to power, another cautioned, they "would create insurrection and servile war in the South — they would put the torch to our dwellings and the knife to our throats."

Nor could the South count any longer on the Democratic Party to protect its interests. At the party's convention in April 1860, northern Democrats rejected Jefferson Davis's proposal to protect slavery in the territories, and delegates from eight southern states quit the meeting. At a second Democratic convention, northern and midwestern delegates nominated Stephen Douglas for president; meeting separately, southern Democrats nominated the sitting vice president, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky.

The Election of 1860 With the Democrats divided, the Republicans sensed victory. They courted white voters with a free-soil platform that opposed both slavery and racial equality: "Missouri for white men and white men for Missouri," declared that state's Republican platform. The national Republican convention chose Lincoln as its presidential candidate because he was more moderate on slavery than the best-known Republicans, Senators William Seward of New York and Salmon Chase of Ohio. Lincoln also conveyed a compelling egalitarian image that appealed to small-holding farmers, wage earners, and midwestern voters.

The Republican strategy worked. Although Lincoln received less than 1 percent of the popular vote in the South and only 40 percent of the national poll, he won every northern and western state except New Jersey, giving him 180 (of 303) electoral votes and an absolute



Lincoln on Home Base

Beginning in the 1820s, the language and imagery of sports penetrated politics, cutting across the lines of class and party. Wielding a long, bat-like rail labeled "EQUAL RIGHTS AND FREE TERRITORY," Abraham Lincoln holds a baseball and appears ready to score a victory in the election. His three opponents—from left to right, John Bell (the candidate of a new Constitutional Union Party), Stephen A. Douglas, and John C. Breckinridge—will soon be "out." Indeed, according to the pro-Lincoln cartoonist, they were about to be "skunk'd." As Douglas laments, their attempt to put a "short stop" to Lincoln's presidential ambitions had failed. Museum of American Political Life.

majority in the electoral college. Breckinridge took 72 electoral votes by sweeping the Deep South and picking up Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina. Douglas won 30 percent of the popular ballot but secured only 51 electoral votes in Missouri and New Jersey. The Republicans had united voters in the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific coast behind free soil.

A revolution was in the making. "Oh My God!!! This morning heard that Lincoln was elected," Keziah Brevard, a widowed South Carolina plantation mistress and owner of two hundred slaves, scribbled in her diary. "Lord save us." Slavery had permeated the American federal republic so thoroughly that southerners saw it as a natural part of the constitutional order—an order that was now under siege. Fearful of a massive black uprising, Chief Justice Taney recalled "the horrors of St. Domingo [Haiti]." At the very least, warned John Townsend of South Carolina, a Republican administration in Washington would suppress "the inter-State slave trade" and thereby "cripple this vital Southern institution of slavery." To

PLACE EVENTS IN CONTEXT

What was the relationship between the collapse of the Second Party System and the Republican victory in the election of 1860?

many southerners, it seemed time to think carefully about Lincoln's 1858 statement that the Union must "become all one thing, or all the other."

To see a longer excerpt of Keziah Brevard's diary, along with other primary sources from this period, see ***Sources for America's History***.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we examined four related themes: the ideology of Manifest Destiny and the westward movement of Americans in the 1840s, the impact of American traders and settlers on the Indian peoples of the Great Plains and California, the causes and consequences of the Mexican War (1846–1848), and the disintegration of the Second Party System during the 1850s.

We saw that the determination of Presidents John Tyler and James Polk to add territory and slave states to the Union pushed the United States into the Mexican War and into a new debate over the expansion of slavery. To resolve the resulting crisis, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Stephen Douglas devised the Compromise of 1850. Their efforts were in vain: antislavery northerners defied the Fugitive Slave Act, and expansionist-minded southerners sought new slave states in the Caribbean. Ideology (the pursuit of absolutes) replaced politics (the art of compromise) as the ruling principle of American political life.

The Second Party System rapidly disintegrated. The Whig Party vanished, and two issue-oriented parties, the nativist American Party and the antislavery Republican Party, competed for its members. As the Republicans gained strength, the Democratic Party splintered into sectional factions over Bleeding Kansas and other slavery-related issues. The stage was set for Lincoln's victory in the climactic election of 1860.

CHAPTER REVIEW

MAKE IT STICK Go to **LearningCurve** to retain what you've read.

TERMS TO KNOW

Identify and explain the significance of each term below.

Key Concepts and Events

Manifest Destiny (p. 412)
Californios (p. 415)
"Fifty-four forty or fight!" (p. 418)
conscience Whigs (p. 421)
Wilmot Proviso (p. 421)
free-soil movement (p. 421)
squatter sovereignty (p. 424)
forty-niners (p. 425)
"slavery follows the flag" (p. 428)
Compromise of 1850 (p. 429)
personal-liberty laws (p. 431)
Gadsden Purchase (p. 431)
Ostend Manifesto (p. 431)
Kansas-Nebraska Act (p. 432)
American, or Know-Nothing, Party (p. 432)
"Bleeding Kansas" (p. 433)
Dred Scott v. Sandford (p. 433)
Freeport Doctrine (p. 438)

Key People

James K. Polk (p. 418)
Frederick Douglass (p. 421)
Zachary Taylor (p. 424)
Lewis Cass (p. 424)
Stephen Douglas (p. 431)
Harriet Beecher Stowe (p. 431)
John Brown (p. 433)
Abraham Lincoln (p. 437)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer these questions to demonstrate your understanding of the chapter's main ideas.

1. In what specific ways did the ideology of Manifest Destiny influence events during the 1840s and 1850s?
2. What were the main constitutional arguments presented during the debate over slavery in the territories? Which of those arguments influenced Chief Justice Taney's opinion in *Dred Scott*?
3. How did the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the *Dred Scott* decision seek to address the issue of slavery, and what was the effect of each of them on sectional conflicts?
4. **THEMATIC UNDERSTANDING** Some historians claim that the mistakes of a "blundering generation" of political leaders led, by 1860, to the imminent breakup of the Union. Using the events from "Politics and Power" on the thematic timeline on page 409, explain why you agree or disagree.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters by answering these questions.

1. **ACROSS TIME AND PLACE** How were the American territorial acquisitions of the 1840s similar to, and/or different from, those of the Louisiana Purchase and the Paris Treaty of 1783 (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7)?
2. **VISUAL EVIDENCE** In *American Progress* (p. 411), why does John Gast choose Liberty to lead the republic westward? How does he interpret the American experience, and what stories does he tell in the image's foreground, middle ground, and background? How does the evidence in the chapter challenge Gast's interpretation of westward expansion?

MORE TO EXPLORE

Start here to learn more about the events discussed in this chapter.

Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (1970). Still offers the best analysis of the ideology of the Republican Party.

Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (1989). Highlights social conflicts in the West.

William A. Link, *Roots of Secession* (2003). A good state-focused study about the causes of secession.

Stephen Oates, *With Malice Toward None* (1977). A classic biography about Lincoln.

Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780–1860* (2000). Offers a broad cultural analysis.

The PBS documentary *The West* and its Web site **(pbs.org/weta/thewest)** offer a comprehensive history of the West, and the PBS Web site on the *U.S.-Mexican War: 1846–1848* (**pbs.org/usmexicanwar**) covers both American and Mexican perspectives of this pivotal event.

TIMELINE

Ask yourself why this chapter begins and ends with these dates and then identify the links among related events.

1844	• James Polk elected president
1845	• Texas admitted into Union
1846	• United States declares war on Mexico • Treaty with Britain divides Oregon Country • Wilmot Proviso approved by House but not by Senate
1847	• American troops capture Mexico City
1848	• Gold found in California • Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transfers Mexican lands to United States • Free-Soil Party forms
1850	• President Taylor dies • Millard Fillmore assumes presidency • Compromise of 1850 preserves Union • Northern abolitionists reject Fugitive Slave Act
1851	• American (Know-Nothing) Party forms
1852	• Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
1854	• Ostend Manifesto urges seizure of Cuba • Kansas-Nebraska Act tests policy of popular sovereignty • Republican Party forms
1856	• Turmoil in Kansas undermines popular sovereignty • James Buchanan elected president
1857	• *Dred Scott v. Sandford* allows slavery in U.S. territories
1858	• President Buchanan urges Congress to admit Kansas under the proslavery Lecompton constitution and seeks to buy and annex Cuba as a slave state • Abraham Lincoln debates Stephen Douglas for U.S. Senate seat
1859	• John Brown raids federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry
1860	• Abraham Lincoln elected president in four-way contest

KEY TURNING POINT: Three new political parties appeared in the six years from 1848 to 1854: Free-Soil, American (Know-Nothing), and Republican. What accounts for this upsurge in political activity, and what was its result?