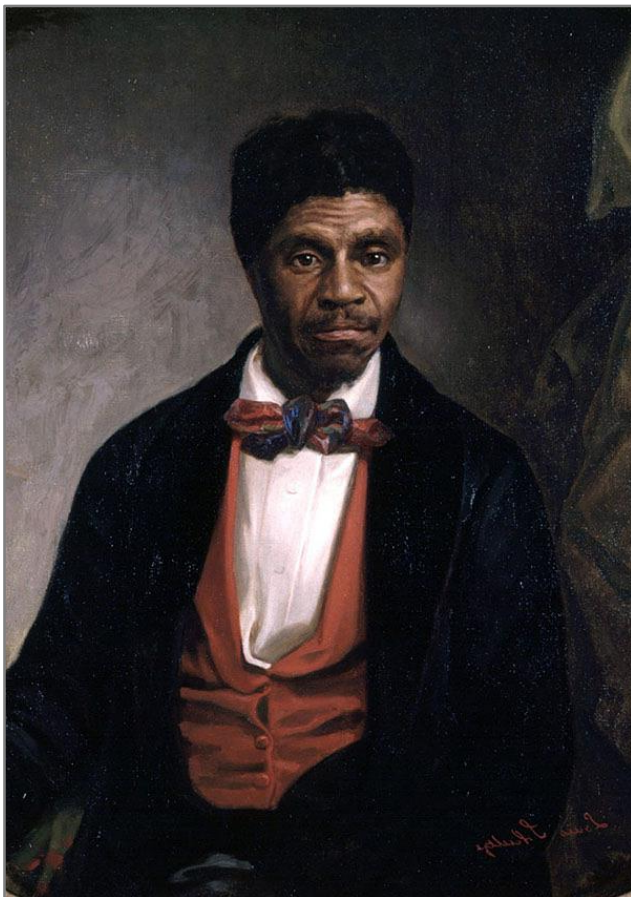


# The Artios Home Companion Series

## Unit 2: Prelude to the Civil War – 1850s

### Teacher Overview

Side by side, two civilizations had grown up in America – the one, dedicated to progress, had kept step with the spirit of the age – for the best portion of the civilized world had long since turned its back on slavery; the other had held tenaciously to a system in which it did not at first believe and which even in colonial days had been abhorred. Since the Compromise of 1850 they had been drifting rapidly apart and refused to be reconciled on the question of slavery. To protect that institution, the threat of secession had been carried out, and when, on March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln entered Washington, it was as the president of a severed republic.



Dred Scott

### Reading and Assignments

In this unit, students will:

- Complete three lessons in which they will learn about **presidents Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan's administrations**, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Define vocabulary words.
- Complete biography notebook pages on **Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan**.
- Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

### Vocabulary

**Lesson 1:**  
comptroller  
sagacious

**Lesson 2:**  
filibuster

**Lesson 3:**  
rhetoric  
secession  
consternation

sullen  
conciliate  
deportation

## Key People, Places, and Events

Zachary Taylor	Martin Koszta
Millard Fillmore	Commodore Perry
Daniel Webster	Stephen A. Douglas
The Compromise of 1850	John Brown
Henry Clay	The Lincoln-Douglas Debates
William H. Seward	Abraham Lincoln
John C. Calhoun	Harper's Ferry
The Fugitive Slave Law	Harriet Beecher Stowe
Franklin Pierce	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>
The Gadsden Purchase	Hinton Helper
Squatter Sovereignty and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill	

## Leading Ideas

### **Honesty is a character quality to be desired.**

*The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please Him.*

— Proverbs 20:23

### **The Bible provides the ethics upon which to judge people and nations.**

— Exodus 20:1-17

### **God is sovereign over the affairs of men.**

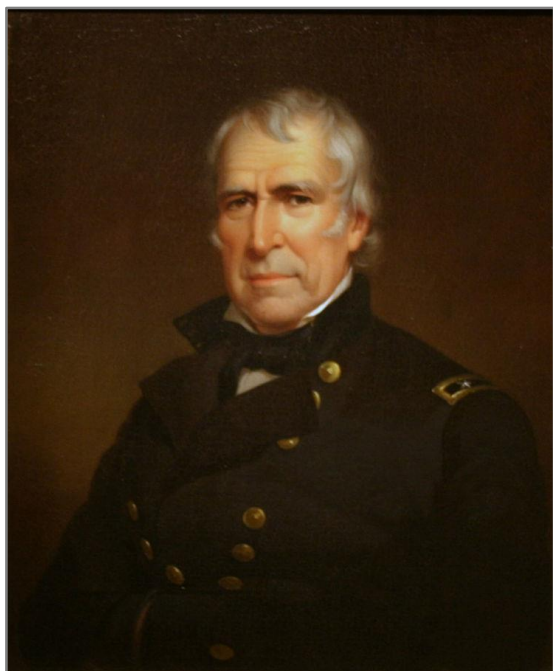
*From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.*

— Acts 17:26

## Lesson One

### History Overview and Assignments Taylor's and Fillmore's Administrations

With the new territory possessions, the South recognized that the whole question of the balance of power between the slave and free states was involved in the struggle, since if the South lost the new territory, there would be no territory left from which to construct additional slave states. The Compromise of 1850 was meant to bring warring factions together by compromise. Heated congressional debate followed led by Clay, Webster, Calhoun, and William H. Seward. Although passed, the bill only prolonged the inevitable crisis that we know as the Civil War.



President Zachary Taylor

#### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *Taylor's and Fillmore's Administrations*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Create a biography notebook page for Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore.
- Be sure to visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

#### Vocabulary

comptroller

sagacious

#### Key People, Places, and Events

Zachary Taylor  
Millard Fillmore  
Daniel Webster

The Compromise of 1850  
Henry Clay  
William H. Seward

John C. Calhoun  
The Fugitive Slave Law

#### Discussion Questions

1. Describe Zachary Taylor.
2. How did Millard Fillmore become president?

3. What portion of the new territory possessions was the richest?
4. When California applied for admission into the Union, what did their state constitution prohibit?
5. What was President Taylor's position on slavery and the expansion of slavery?
6. What were the five areas of compromise detailed in the Compromise of 1850?
7. Who were some of the famous men who debated the Compromise of 1850 while it was in Congress?
8. Describe the Fugitive Slave Law.
9. What was the Underground Railroad?

*Adapted for High School from the book:*

## *History of the United States*

*by William M. Davidson*

### *Taylor's and Fillmore's Administrations*

*Whig: 1849 – 1853*

#### ZACHARY TAYLOR

Zachary Taylor, the twelfth president of the United States, was born in Virginia in 1784. He was a Virginian by birth and a Kentuckian by breeding, his father having removed to the frontier country shortly after the close of the Revolution. As the son of a farmer in a frontier settlement, he had few scholastic advantages, but thrift, industry, and self-reliance soon won him a place among men and gave him that training which so well fitted him for military life.

Taylor served in the War of 1812 and took a conspicuous part in the Seminole War. His brilliant victories in the Mexican War made him a national hero. Previous to his nomination for president he had held no political aspirations. He did not seek the nomination—it was urged upon him. The large acquisition of territory which the successful closing of the Mexican War had brought to the United States caused violent agitation on the question of slavery in the territories. Taylor, in the beginning of his administration, took his stand on the

question of the organization of the new territory with a soldierly directness and definiteness of purpose which commands respect to the present day.

Sixteen months after his inauguration, President Taylor died on July 9, 1850, and for the second time in the history of the government, the vice president succeeded to the presidency.

On the following day Millard Fillmore took the Oath of Office in the presence of both houses of Congress and become the chief executive of the nation.

#### MILLARD FILLMORE

Millard Fillmore, the thirteenth president of the United States, was born in 1800. Like his predecessor, he was the son of a frontier farmer. At an early age he learned the trade of a fuller, who prepares woolen fabric for tailoring. In 1823 he was admitted to the bar. He was a member of the New York House of Representatives and later a Whig member of Congress from New York. While in Congress, Fillmore was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and authored of the Tariff of

1842. He was comptroller of the state of New York at the time of his election to the vice-presidency.

On assuming the presidency on July 10, 1850, he surrounded himself with an especially able Cabinet, with Daniel Webster as secretary of state.

His approval of the Omnibus Bill cost Fillmore his renomination to the presidency in 1852. Although the Whig members of his Cabinet had advised him to sign the bill, the northern Whigs were so bitterly opposed to the Fugitive Slave Law that in the nominating convention not twenty northern votes could be obtained for his renomination.

Four years later, while traveling on the continent of Europe, he received the news of his nomination for the presidency by the American or Know-Nothing Party. In the ensuing election he received the electoral vote of one state only—Maryland.

His later life was spent in dignified retirement at his beautiful home in Buffalo, and his name was connected with much of the charitable work of the city in which he had lived for nearly half a century. He was never considered a genius, but was widely regarded as a “safe and sagacious statesman.” He died in Buffalo, New York, in 1874.

### **The Newly Acquired Territory and President Taylor’s Policy**

The advocates of slavery extension who had been counting on carving slave states out of the newly acquired territory were doomed to disappointment. Slavery had been abolished in the Mexican Republic ten years before the war occurred; therefore all the territory which the United States acquired at the close of the war became a

part of the public domain as free territory. Within two years of the closing of the war, California, the richest of the new possessions, applied for admission to the Union, and, to the chagrin of the South, applied with a constitution prohibiting slavery. The southern leaders at once opposed its admission as a free state, thereby reopening the whole slavery question.

President Taylor, a slaveholder himself, was a Union man after the stamp of Andrew Jackson. He did not favor the further extension of slavery, though he believed in leaving the whole question of slavery to the choice of the inhabitants of new states themselves. Anticipating the question which would probably come before Congress, he had sent confidential agents to California and New Mexico to advise the citizens of those territories to organize their state governments so as to be ready to apply for admission as soon as Congress should convene. By the time Congress convened in December, 1850, California had done this and New Mexico had made some progress toward organization. This policy of the president was in keeping with the straightforward method of dealing with questions which was so characteristic of Taylor’s whole career. But to this policy the southern leaders objected, contending that the dividing line (36° 30') between slave and free territory should be extended to the Pacific coast, or that all the new territory should be open to slavery. So bitter was the discussion that followed the application of California for admission that it threatened to disrupt the Union. Should California come in as a free state, it was more than likely that slavery would be rejected in the remainder of the new territory. The South,

therefore, recognized that the whole question of the balance of power between the slave and free states was involved in the struggle, since if the South lost this territory, there would be no territory left from which to construct additional slave states.

### **Clay's Plan: The Compromise of 1850**

The struggle had not progressed far when Senator Clay placed himself in opposition to the president's policy and sought to bring the warring factions together by compromise. In January 1850, he introduced in the Senate a series of resolutions covering many and varied subjects. The resolutions were immediately referred to a committee of thirteen, of which Clay was chairman, with instructions to report a bill covering the suggestions. The committee reported a series of compromise measures, which after long discussion were passed as separate bills. These separate compromise measures, popularly known as the Omnibus Bill, provided:

- (1) That California be admitted as a free state.
- (2) That the territories of Utah (including Nevada) and New Mexico (including Arizona) be organized without mention of slavery.
- (3) That the boundary dispute between Texas and New Mexico be settled in favor of New Mexico, and that the United States pay Texas \$10,000,000 in indemnity.
- (4) That the slave trade be forever prohibited in the District of Columbia (though slavery was not to be abolished there).

- (5) That a stringent fugitive slave law should be enacted.

The debate in Congress over the Compromise was long and bitter. The struggle was indeed a battle of giants, in which Clay, Webster, Calhoun, and William H. Seward participated.

Clay pleaded as he never did before for the preservation of the Union and sought to restore harmony by his series of compromises. In this he was joined by Webster, who delivered on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1850 a calm, though eloquent, speech which by its advocacy of compromise alienated friends and admirers in every section of the country. Webster's speech was received with astonishment in the free states. The North felt that it had lost its chiefest support, and the South that it had gained a convert in New England's favorite son. The great orator never regained the popularity which he lost on account of this "Seventh of March" speech, and two years later died a broken-hearted man.

John C. Calhoun, unyielding to the last, spurned both the policy of Clay and that of the president and declared that unless the North ceased its interference with slavery, the Union must be dissolved. In such an event he pleaded for "peaceable secession."

It fell to the lot of William H. Seward, the newly elected senator from New York, to champion the policy of President Taylor. In an impassioned speech, the eloquence of which stirred the whole Senate, he condemned all compromises with slavery as being in opposition to the conscience and moral sentiment of the nation. He set himself squarely against the further extension of slavery in the territories and asserted that all territories belonging to the

government were free, and as such were devoted to liberty and justice, not only by the Constitution, but by a “higher law” than the Constitution—the moral law. In reply to Calhoun’s pleas for “peaceable secession,” Webster had declared such an event impossible, and Seward expressed unquestioned confidence in the “power of the American people to maintain their national integrity under whatever menace of danger.”

Before the compromise measure had passed Congress, President Taylor died. It therefore fell to the lot of Millard Fillmore, his successor, to attach his signature to the measures included in the Omnibus Bill, whereupon all its provisions became law.

The Fugitive Slave Law provoked violent opposition in the North, where private citizens were compelled by law to assist in the arrest of fugitive slaves. In many instances, officers from the slave states would appear in a free-state community and in defiance of local authority make arrests, even going so far as to kidnap freeborn colored persons whom they unjustly reduced to slavery. The North looked upon this whole procedure as an outrage and soon sought to defeat the force of the Fugitive Slave Law by enacting Personal Liberty laws. These laws prohibited the use of state jails for the confinement of fugitives and forbade any judge or officer to assist a slave owner in the recovery of his slave, or issue a writ looking to the arrest of a fugitive. These laws also provided that trial by jury should be granted alleged fugitives. Every free state, with the exception of New Jersey and California, opposed the returning of fugitive slaves.

## **The Underground Railroad**

In 1838, the Quakers in Pennsylvania established a series of secret stations reaching from the border state of Maryland on the south, through the states of Pennsylvania and New York to Canada on the north, to assist escaping slaves to reach Canada. As soon as a slave set foot upon Canadian soil he became a free man under Canadian law. Slaves would be clothed and fed at one station, then secretly passed on to the next until they reached their destination in Canada. These stations were located a day’s journey apart, and the chain of stations became known as the Underground Railroad. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, these underground railroads multiplied in number, and through their agency thousands of slaves escaped to Canada, where they became freemen. “The Abolitionists believed that they were justified in opposing and thwarting the Fugitive Slave Law for the sake of an oppressed humanity.”

## **Minor Events**

During this administration Fillmore began the agitation which in later years led to cheaper postage. The Department of the Interior was created to look after public lands, take care of the Native Americans, and to have charge of the Patent Office. Secretary of State John M. Clayton negotiated the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty with Sir Henry Bulwer of England. The treaty related to the establishment of a ship canal across Nicaragua, of which neither country was to have exclusive control. Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, made a tour of the United States and by his eloquence stirred the whole people, who

generously responded with supplies and money to aid his countrymen in their struggle against the oppression of Austria and Russia. The government, however, in pursuance of its policy to keep free from foreign entanglements, extended no aid. General Narcisso Lopez, an irresponsible adventurer, undertook a filibustering expedition against Cuba with a view to inducing the inhabitants of that island to revolt against Spain and to seek annexation to the United States. The expedition ended in disaster. The ringleader and his followers were captured by the Spaniards and taken to Havana, where Lopez and several of his men were executed. Though President Fillmore by proclamation withdrew the protection of the United States from all citizens engaging in such expeditions and in every way sought to prevent them, still Europe become concerned that the United States might seek to annex Cuba. With a view to prevent such an event, Great Britain and France proposed a treaty with the United States, in which each nation was to declare its intention never to possess Cuba. The proposal was declined by Edward Everett, secretary of state, in an able state paper in which he called the attention of the European powers to the fact that America intended to stand by the policy outlined in the Monroe Doctrine.

### **Death of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun**

Amidst the stirring political excitements of this administration three American statesmen, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster, passed from the scene of political action in which they had been the central figures for a period of nearly forty years. Calhoun died in the city of Washington on March 31, 1850, before the

compromise measures had passed Congress. Clay and Webster lived two years longer and each pronounced eulogies upon the departed southerner.

Calhoun, though professing to stand for the Constitution and the maintenance of the Union, still in 1832 preached the doctrine of “nullification,” and from that time until the day of his death sowed the seeds of secession and disunion. When he died, it is said that he requested that his only epitaph be the one word “nullification.”

Clay was a southerner by birth, and, like Calhoun, a slaveholder. And yet he would have been glad to see the emancipation of slavery accomplished. He regretted its further extension and believed that it should be confined to the states where it already existed. He ardently supported the Union, and whenever he felt that the ship of state was in peril, came forth with a compromise measure to calm the storm. Clay died at his post of duty in the nation’s capital on June 29, 1852.

Webster, like Clay, pleaded for national unity and begged that there might be emblazoned on the national ensign the “sentiment, dear to every American heart—Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!” as stated so eloquently in his reply to Robert Y. Hayne in 1830. Webster died in Marshfield, Massachusetts on October 24, 1852. Both Clay and Webster were ambitious for advancement—both had been candidates for the presidency and were bitterly disappointed when they failed to reach the goal.

No greater oratory has ever been heard in the halls of Congress than which fell from the lips of these three men. So inseparably were their names linked together from about the period of 1812 until the



Compromise of 1850 that they have been referred to in history as the American triumvirate. Calhoun was unyielding and uncompromising in his defense of the doctrine of “nullification” and in his support of slavery. Clay and Webster, more conciliatory, often yielded to compromise, almost to the point of sacrificing the very principles for which they most contended, as in evidenced in Clay’s advocacy of a fugitive slave law in which he did not believe, and in Webster’s Seventh of March oration. Calhoun excelled in logic and Clay in flowery eloquence, while Webster was the greatest orator.

When they died, a new generation of men was already occupying the stage of action. William H. Seward of New York had sounded the keynote of the future contest in his “higher law” doctrine. Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln had impressed themselves upon the great West. Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens were prominent in the South, while Charles Sumner and Edward Everett were recognized as New England’s favorite sons.

### **The Seventh Census - 1850**

The seventh census showed a population of 23,191,876, a gain of 36 percent over the census of 1840. Of this population 3,204,313 were slaves, of which 236 were in the state of New Jersey, 26 in the territory of Utah, and the remainder south of Mason and Dixon’s line. It will thus be seen that the decade of 1840 to 1850 was one of great growth in population. During this period 1.75 million people came to the shores of America from foreign countries. Fully a million of these were from the British Isles, mostly from Ireland—driven thence on

account of famine. The remainder represented every country of Europe.

### **The Presidential Election of 1852**

As the time for the presidential election arrived, the excitement over the Compromise of 1850 and the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law had somewhat abated. Both the Whigs and the Democrats, true to the Congressional compromise, endorsed the Omnibus Bill. The Democratic Party declared against further agitation on the slavery question; and the Whigs for national unity and obedience to the Constitution. The Free-Soil Party declared that “Slavery is a sin against God, and a crime against man, which no human enactment nor usage can make right. Slavery is sectional and freedom is national.” It further declared the Fugitive Slave Law to be repugnant to the Constitution, denied that it was binding upon the American people, and demanded its “immediate and total repeal.”

The Whigs nominated General Winfield Scott of New Jersey; the Democrats Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire; and the Free-Soil Party John P. Hale, from the same state. Pierce was elected with William R. King of Alabama, receiving two hundred fifty-four of the electoral votes to forty-two cast for Scott, and none for Hale. In the defeat of Scott the Whig Party received its death blow.

### **Slavery**

One of the greatest blights of shame upon the history of the United States was the institution of slavery. Common in many other countries before the American colonies were established, slavery was

introduced to all thirteen original colonies and eventually became a national institution. And once an institution becomes the basis for a nation's economic system, it becomes very difficult to eradicate.

American sentiment toward human liberty grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the colonists prepared to seek independence from

England. This, combined with a shift in northern economics toward manufacturing rather than agriculture, undergirded a powerful recognition of the wrongness of treating people as property.

As the evil of slavery plunged the nation into bitter division and bloody wars, it became more and more evident that its consequences would extend far into the future.

## Lesson Two

### History Overview and Assignments Pierce's Administration

While the arguments and conflicts over slavery continued in every state, it was the state of Kansas that took center stage due to "squatter sovereignty" and the issues that it caused. Meanwhile, America was reaching out to other countries such as Japan and China, as well as talking of annexing Cuba, in order to extend its trade and influence.



Franklin Pierce

### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *Pierce's Administration*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary word in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Create a biography notebook page on Franklin Pierce.
- Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

### Vocabulary

filibuster

## Key People, Places, and Events

Franklin Pierce	The Gadsden Purchase	Martin Koszta
Commodore Perry	Stephen A. Douglas	John Brown
Squatter Sovereignty and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill		

## Discussion Questions

1. Describe Franklin Pierce.
2. What was the Gadsden Purchase, and why was it significant?
3. Who was Martin Koszta?
4. Why was Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan significant?
5. What was the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and what problems did it cause? Describe these problems in detail.

*Adapted for High School from the book:*

### *History of the United States*

*by William M. Davidson*

#### *Pierce's Administration*

*Democratic: 1853 – 1857*

Franklin Pierce, the fourteenth president of the United States, was born in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, in 1804. The son of a New Hampshire farmer who had distinguished himself as an officer of the Revolution, he graduated from Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine, where he had as college mates the poet Longfellow and the novelist Hawthorne. He was soon thereafter admitted to the bar and later served in the legislature of his native state. In 1833 he was elected to represent New Hampshire in the national Congress, in which body he continued to serve until 1842—during his last three years as United States senator. He enlisted as a volunteer in the Mexican War, and was soon advanced to a brigadier-generalship. When nominated to the presidency he was looked upon as an obscure man, though devoted to the principles of his party.

His administration was disturbed throughout its entire terms by the renewal of the slavery struggle. Though a northern

man, he joined with the southern leaders in carrying out their wishes on the slavery question. He lost the favor of the North and was discarded by his own party in its national convention of 1856, lest he might lead it to defeat.

On his retirement from office in 1857 he spent several years abroad, and on his return built the Pierce Mansion in Concord, New Hampshire, where he continued to reside until the day of his death. Pierce opposed the issue of civil war in 1860, but once the die was cast he sided with the Union. He died in Concord, New Hampshire in 1869.

#### **The Gadsden Purchase – 1853**

Owing to the imperfect maps used while drawing up the treaty at the close of the Mexican War, a second boundary dispute had arisen between the United States and Mexico, which President Pierce was called upon to settle early in his administration. Both countries claimed that Mesilla Valley,

which includes that portion of the present territory of Arizona lying south of the Gila River, along with a section of New Mexico. This valley was reported to be very rich, and the United States desired it since it afforded the most available route for a proposed railroad to the Pacific. Captain James Gadsden, the minister of Mexico after whom the purchase was named, negotiated a treaty by which the United States paid Mexico \$10,000,000 for her claim to the valley. The United States also secured free navigation of the Gulf of California and the Colorado River. The territory acquired by this purchase contained 45,000 square miles—an area about equal in size to the state of New York.

#### **The Martin Koszta Affair – 1854**

In this administration the United States won a signal triumph in the field of diplomacy. Martin Koszta had been a prominent leader, along with Louis Kossuth, in the Hungarian rebellion. When the rebellion failed, he came to the United States and immediately took out naturalization papers, thereby taking the first steps toward becoming a citizen of the United States, and therefore entitled to its protection in any country of the world. In the year 1854 he went to Turkey and was given permission by the Turkish authorities to go ashore at Smyrna, under the passport of an American citizen. While ashore, at the instigation of the Austrian consul at Smyrna, he was seized by bandits, thrown into the bay, picked up by an Austrian boat in waiting for the purpose, and taken on board an Austrian man-of-war. The American consul at once demanded his release. This being refused, the American sloop-of-war, *St. Louis*, then in the bay of

Smyrna, loaded her guns, ran up her flag, prepared for action, and demanded Koszta's surrender at the cannon's mouth. The Austrian authorities agreed to turn Koszta over to the French government for safekeeping, and to refer the final question of his release to arbitration between the two governments. This proposal was at once agreed to by the American consul. In the controversy which ensued between the governments at Washington and Austria, the United States was completely triumphant, and Koszta was released. This diplomatic victory greatly strengthened national pride. It was now felt that "to be an American citizen was a greater honor than to be a king."

#### **Commodore Perry's Expedition to Japan – 1852-1854**

In the year 1852, during Fillmore's administration, Commodore Matthew C. Perry, a brother of Oliver H. Perry of Lake Erie fame, organized a government expedition to Japan. His mission was to make a treaty of friendship between the two powers, and to open the ports of Japan to the commerce of the United States. When Perry sailed unannounced into the harbor of Yedo in 1853, he threw the populace of that port into a panic, from fear of a foreign invasion. He was immediately warned to leave Japanese waters, but this he refused to do until he could deliver the letter of President Fillmore to the Japanese governor. Permission was finally granted him, and Perry and his suite were received on shore with great pomp. The letter delivered, Perry set sail for China, stating that he would return to Yedo for an answer in the following spring. Accordingly, in the spring of 1854, he returned and was so

cordially received that he at once negotiated a favorable treaty, which opened, almost for the first time in history, the ports of Japan to the commerce of any nation. In 1854 Perry returned to the United States, where he was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by President Pierce and the entire country. A brisk commerce between California and Japan was at once begun which has continued without interruption to the present day. Monuments have been erected to the memory of Commodore Perry in both America and Japan.

### **The Ostend Manifesto – 1854**

In 1854 the country was still involved in trouble over Cuba—due to the determination on the part of the “filibusters” to annex that island to the United States. The political leaders in the South were especially anxious to annex Cuba in order that it might be divided into states which, when admitted to the Union, would preserve the balance of power between the free and slave states. Hence it was that filibustering schemes and expeditions were secretly encouraged in the South. Cuba’s annexation had been attempted even during Polk’s administration—Polk having made an offer to Spain of \$100,000,000 for the “gem of the Antilles.” During Taylor and Fillmore’s administrations all filibustering movements had been promptly condemned. Pierce, knowing that the Spanish government was in needs of funds, thought the time now favorable to revive Polk’s plan, and accordingly instructed the American minister at the Court of Madrid, Pierre Soulé, to open negotiations for the purchase of Cuba. Soulé was soon joined by James Buchanan, minister to the Court of London,

and John Y. Mason, minister to the Court of Paris. These three ministers at Pierce’s suggestion met in conference at Ostend, Belgium, where they prepared a dispatch to the government of Washington, in which they declared that the sale of Cuba would be of advantage to both Cuba and the United States, and recommended, if Spain refused to sell Cuba, that the United States “wrest it from her,” rather than see it become an African republic like San Domingo. This dispatch is known as the “Ostend Manifesto.” It created great astonishment among European powers, which at once entered such vigorous protest against it that negotiations for the purchase of Cuba were cut short. Pierce, though urged to do so, refused to take steps looking toward the conquest of Cuba by force of arms.

### **Other Filibustering Schemes:**

#### **the Walker Expeditions – 1853-54**

Pierce’s administration was also disturbed by filibustering schemes against Mexico and Central American countries. The most noted of these was the expedition led by the bold and unscrupulous adventurer General William Walker, in the years 1853-54. Walker eluded the government’s officers at San Francisco and made an invasion of Lower California and the Mexican province of Sonora, where he was defeated and made a prisoner. He was turned over by the Mexican government to the authorities at San Francisco, where he was tried and acquitted. He at once organized a second expedition and set out for Central America. He landed in Nicaragua, where the natives rallied to his standard, thereby enabling him to win several important battles, which so added to his renown that he was elected president of

the Nicaraguan Republic, and was immediately recognized as such by President Pierce.

However, in 1857, the Central American countries combined against Walker, overthrew his authority, and made him a prisoner, though he soon regained his liberty. This bold spirit was no sooner released than he repaired to New Orleans, organized a third expedition, and, returning to Central America, made a descent upon the Republic of Honduras. Through the prompt actions of the president of Honduras, Walker was foiled, and by the aid of a British man-of-war, overpowered and taken prisoner a third time. This time he was court-martialed and shot September 12, 1860. Walker's expeditions created much excitement at the time. It was generally believed in the North that the leaders of the slaveholding sections were secretly aiding him. No proof, however, was ever produced to sustain this charge.

### **The Kansas-Nebraska Bill: "Squatter Sovereignty" – 1854**

After the Compromise of 1850, the general feeling throughout the nation was that the slavery question ought to be dropped by Congress. Great was the astonishment of the whole country when Stephen A. Douglas, senator from Illinois, introduced a resolution in the Senate providing for the organization of the territories of Kansas and Nebraska — the bill expressly stating that the question of slavery should be left entirely to the settlers themselves, without any interference on the part of Congress. The method of thus disposing of the slavery question became known as "squatter sovereignty." This unannounced step on the part of Douglas

came upon the people like a clap of thunder from a clear sky and produced great commotion. The whole slavery question was at once reopened, not to be closed again until the Wilmot Proviso was written into the Constitution of the United States.

The antislavery advocates claimed this was a repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which had expressly stated that both of these territories should be forever free. Douglas claimed that the Missouri Compromise was already repealed in the Compromise of 1850, and that therefore this bill was necessary in order to settle the status of these territories before they should apply for admission as states. After the most violent debates in both houses of Congress, which at times threatened bloodshed, the bill was passed May 22, 1854.

In effect, Congress surrendered to "squatters" and frontier settlers its constitutional authority over the public domain, and in so doing invited the issue of civil war in the prairie states of the West. The debate in the Senate which preceded the adoption of the bill, while not so able as that which preceded the passage of the Compromise of 1850, was far more bitter and produced animosities between the North and South which proved impossible to overcome in later years. The bill was looked upon in the North as an outrage committed in the name of the Constitution. Charles Sumner, Webster's successor in Congress, referred to it as the "crime against Kansas." All classes of people arrayed themselves against it and bitterly opposed it. The clergy in nearly every slave state spoke against it from the pulpit. Congress was flooded by petitions protesting against it. One petition alone from New England was signed by more than three thousand

clergymen from that section—including every clergyman in New England.

### **The Struggle for Kansas**

The Kansas-Nebraska bill had no sooner passed Congress than the struggle for Kansas began. The South, on its part, was determined that Kansas should come into the Union as a slave state. The North was equally determined that Kansas should be free. At the time of the passage of the bill, Kansas was in Native American country and had but a few hundred white inhabitants within its borders. Lying to its east was the slave state of Missouri. The South accordingly looked to Missouri to people the prairies of Kansas and capture the state government in the interests of slavery. In this she had the antislavery element of all the northern states to contend against. An emigrant aid society was organized in New England, and an expedition of free-state men started on the road to Kansas. Similar companies set out from every free state east of the Mississippi River, and even Iowa contributed her quota of free-state men. Massachusetts sent Charles Robinson; Indiana, General James H. Lane; and New York, John Brown.

Leavenworth, Atchison, Lecompton, and Topeka were soon founded. President Pierce appointed Andrew H. Reeder of Pennsylvania as first territorial governor.

An election was held, and a proslavery delegate elected to Congress. Reeder called an election in the spring of 1855 for the purpose of electing members to a territorial legislature. 5,427 proslavery votes were cast and 791 free-state votes. The census of the territory taken but a few weeks before the election showed but 2,905 voters. The Missourians had invaded the territory and

stolen the election. When the legislature convened at Pawnee a few months later, it adopted the state laws of Missouri and passed laws denying free speech and the liberty of the press on all questions referring to slavery. This bogus legislature with its bogus laws outraged not only the free-state settlers in Kansas but also the sense of justice of the whole North. The whole affair ended in a clash between the free-state men and the invaders from Missouri. Murders, mobs, lynching, and destruction of property followed – even the life of Governor Reeder was threatened and he left the state in disguise, to be succeeded by Governor Wilson Shannon. Meanwhile the Free-Soilers called a constitutional convention to meet at Topeka in October, 1855, by which a constitution was adopted, slavery prohibited in the territory, and an attempt made to set up a state government. Under this constitution a state election was held and the governorship fell to the lot of Charles Robinson.

At this juncture, President Pierce showed his hand. In a message to Congress he denounced the Topeka constitution, and through his approval the United States troops were called in to disperse the state legislature in session at Topeka. Strictly speaking, Pierce was within his powers, since no territory could become a state without the consent of Congress. This consent the Free-Soilers had not obtained. In the meantime a Congressional election had been held throughout the states, and the old Congress which had passed the Kansas-Nebraska bill had been repudiated in the North. A new House of Representatives appeared in Washington, through the old Senate remained. When the Topeka constitution was submitted to

Congress, the House approved it; the Senate, still under the leader of Douglas, rejected it. This rejection only prolonged the struggle. As it was unsafe to attempt to reach Kansas through the state of Missouri, a route was now established through Iowa and Nebraska, over which immigrants poured into the territory by the thousands, piloted by General Lane and John Brown. To offset this movement, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina sent whole companies west to join Missouri in her invasion of Kansas. This precipitated a border warfare which was marked by all the horrors incident to frontier life. Congress and the whole country stood aghast. The iniquity of the Kansas-Nebraska bill was now fully realized. But the die was cast—"squatter sovereignty" had invited the issue and neither side shrank from the conquest. Sharpe's rifles were sent from the North to arm the free-state settlers against the invaders. President Pierce came to the rescue of the proslavery party by encouraging the arrest and imprisonment of free-state men for treason. Governor Robinson was imprisoned without trial, and was refused bail for four months. The Missourians sacked Lawrence and burned part of the town. The Georgians, aided by other proslavery men, burned Osawatimie. The free-state men, under such leaders as John Brown and James Montgomery, retaliated. Finally a new governor, John W. Geary, arrived on the scene, and order was restored for a time. But a presidential contest had placed a new man at the helm in Washington and Geary, out of favor with the incoming administration, resigned. Pierce soon retired from office, leaving the Kansas troubles to be settled by his successor.

### **The Assault Upon Sumner by Brooks**

When President Pierce sent his message to Congress condemning the Topeka constitution, it drew from Charles Sumner, on the 20th of May, 1856, his celebrated speech, "The Crime against Kansas." Sumner was a scholar of distinguished ability, an eloquent orator, and a master of invective. When he pointed his shaft of scorn, it went straight to the mark and stung his victim. During his speech he took occasion to comment severely upon the conduct of Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina, who, happened to be absent from the Senate chamber. Two days later the Senate had adjourned earlier than usual and Sumner remained writing at his desk when Representative Preston Brooks, a relative of Butler's, entered the rear of the Senate Chamber, accompanied by Representative Lawrence M. Keitt, each armed with a cane. "You have libeled the state of South Carolina and my aged relative," shouted Brooks, as he rushed upon Sumner, violently striking him over the head with his cane. He struck blow after blow with his gutta percha weapon, while Keitt stood by to see that no one interfered. Sumner, although a powerful man, was so stunned by the first blow that he was unable to rise and turn upon his assailant. He soon fell bleeding and unconscious to the floor, and was carried from the chamber by friends who hastened to his assistance. His injuries were so serious that he was unable to resume his seat for three years, but during all that time the state of Massachusetts kept his seat vacant, as a silent protest against this cowardly attack upon freedom of debate.

The House of Representatives made an attempt to expel Brooks, but failing at this,



strong resolutions were passed condemning him for his cowardly assault, and a vote of censure was passed upon Keitt and Brooks. Both men resigned and returned to South Carolina, where they received an enthusiastic welcome and were at once re-elected to the positions which they had just made vacant—such was the false idea of chivalry held in those days. This personal assault upon Sumner aroused both houses of Congress and sparked a storm of outrage throughout the country.

### **New Political Parties:**

#### **Republican and Know-Nothing**

During this administration two new political parties appeared for the first time: the Republican Party, destined in a short time to gain and hold control of the government through one of the most dangerous and trying periods in the history of the Republic; the other, the Know-Nothing Party, to live but a single campaign and then to disappear.

The Whig party went to pieces upon the rock of the Compromise of 1850, and particularly the Fugitive Slave Law. The Kansas-Nebraska bill called into existence its successor, the Republican Party. This party had its rise in the states of the northwest. Its principles were first given definite form at a convention held in Pittsburg in February, 1854. The party was composed of Free-Soilers, antislavery Whigs, some Democrats, and eventually the Abolitionists and a majority of the Know-Nothing Party. On account of its opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska bill, the party was first called the Anti-Nebraska Party. The name “Republican” was suggested in a set of resolutions passed by the Michigan legislature in 1854 protesting against the

passage of Douglas’s Kansas-Nebraska Act, and Republican was soon thereafter substituted for Anti-Nebraska. The Pittsburg convention declared for free Kansas and free territory, and denounced the Kansas-Nebraska act as an outrage upon a free people and a crime committed in the name of the Constitution. When it adjourned, it was resolved to place a candidate in nomination for the presidency when Pierce’s term of office should expire. In the Congressional elections of 1854, it won a majority of the members in the lower house of Congress, and elected Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts as speaker of the House after one of the most exciting speakership contests in the history of the country. It was this Republican majority that approved the Topeka constitution of 1855.

The Know-Nothing Party was first organized as a secret political party, and advocated the control of the government by native citizens only. During the period of 1846 to 1856, thousands of foreigners had immigrated to America, and the Know-Nothing Party declared these were a menace to the government. Owing to the fact that the members in the lower degrees of society “knew nothing” of the plans and purposes of the leaders in the upper degrees, the party became known by the nickname “Know-Nothing” instead of the name under which it wished to appear—“American.” In 1855 it discarded its secret machinery and made its fight under the motto “America for Americans.”

#### **The Presidential Election of 1856**

In the presidential election of 1856, the free-state Democrats in the North united with the Republicans, while the proslavery

Whigs in the South united with the Democrats. This made the contest a sectional issue on the question of slavery. The Republicans nominated John C. Fremont of California, demanded the admission of Kansas with its Topeka constitution, opposed any further extension of slavery into new territory, and declared themselves content to leave the institution of slavery unmolested in the states where it already existed. The Democrats nominated James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, favored the principle of “squatter sovereignty,” and

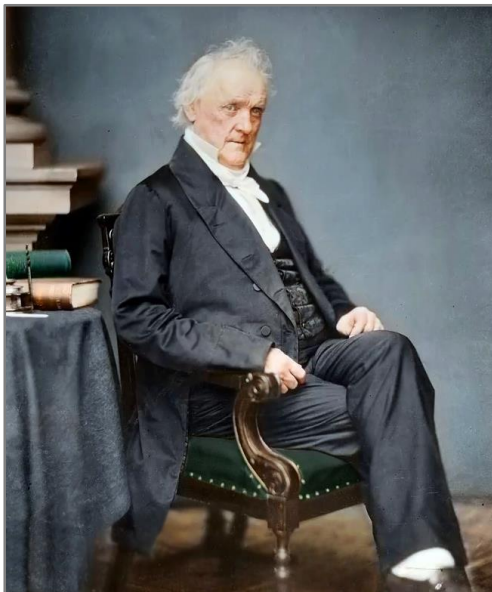
asserted that the policy pursued by slavery agitators in the North would, if persisted in, “lead to civil war and disunion.” The Know-Nothing Party nominated ex-President Fillmore of New York, declared for a strong federal union, passed a lukewarm resolution referring to Kansas, and adhered to its principle of “America for Americans.”

In the ensuing election the Democrats won, Buchanan received 174 of the electoral votes, Fremont 114, and Fillmore 8. John C. Breckinridge was elected vice president.

## Lesson Three

### History Overview and Assignments Buchanan’s Administration

Side by side, two civilizations had grown up in America – the one, dedicated to progress, had kept step with the spirit of the age – for the best portion of the civilized world had long since turned its back on slavery; the other had held tenaciously to a system in which it did not at first believe and which even in colonial days had been abhorred. Since the Compromise of 1850 they had been drifting rapidly apart and refused to be reconciled on the question of slavery. To protect that institution, the threat of secession had been carried out, and when, on March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln entered Washington, it was as the president of a severed republic.



President James Buchanan

### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *Buchanan’s Administration*.
- Narrate about today’s reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Create a biography notebook page for James Buchanan.
- Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

## Vocabulary

rhetoric  
sullen  
secession  
conciliate  
consternation  
deportation

## Key People, Places, and Events

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates  
Stephen A. Douglas  
Harper's Ferry  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Abraham Lincoln  
John Brown  
Harriet Beecher Stowe  
Hinton Helper

## Discussion Questions

1. Describe James Buchanan.
2. Who was Dred Scott, and what case did he bring before the Supreme Court?
3. How did the struggle and conflict in Kansas end?
4. What were the outcomes of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates?
5. Describe the events surrounding John Brown's Raid at Harper's Ferry.
6. Who was Harriet Beecher Stowe, and what did she do to further the cause of abolition?
7. What was the basis of Hinton Helper's argument against slavery?
8. Which state was the first to secede from the Union?
9. Within six weeks of that state's secession, what other states had joined the Confederate cause?
10. Who was elected president of the Confederate States of America?
11. What were the main arguments on both sides of the secession question?

*Adapted for High School from the book:*

### ***History of the United States***

*by William M. Davidson*

### ***Buchanan's Administration***

*Democratic: 1857 – 1861*

James Buchanan, the fifteenth president of the United States, was born near Mercersburg, Pennsylvania in 1791. The son of a Pennsylvania farmer, he graduated from Dickinson College in his native state at the age of nineteen, and three years later entered the profession of law. He served in the legislature of his native state and was elected to the lower house of Congress in 1820. He retired from Congress in 1831 and entered the United States Senate, where he continued as an active member until 1845, when he resigned to become Polk's

secretary of state. He retired to private life in 1849, but four years later was appointed minister to England, which position he held until 1856. He was still in London when he received the news of his nomination to the presidency by the Democratic Party. As a successful diplomat, Buchanan ranks high, as is shown in his splendid record while secretary of state and minister to England, as well as in his foreign policy while president. In home affairs, however, his administration fell upon troublous times. All the misfortunes of Pierce's

administration were visited upon Buchanan. The slavery question would not die down; the Kansas struggle still kept up and the North and the South were drifting farther and farther apart. The ship of state had come upon tempestuous seas, and Buchanan, despite all his years of experience, was not the helmsman to guide her safely through the storm. He was handicapped by a disposition which lacked the essential element of vigor. He owed his election to the solid South. His associates were largely from that section of the country, and he found it difficult to break the political ties which had bound him for more than a third of a century. It was charged that he was vacillating and weak, and such blame and censure has been heaped upon him as to obscure almost completely his achievements in the field of diplomacy. No president ever more willingly laid down the burden of official position than did Buchanan in 1861. He was not a candidate for renomination, nor did he wish to be. He retired to private life March 4, 1861, on his estate of Wheatland, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1868.

### **The Dred Scott Decision and the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise**

On March 6, 1857, two days after Buchanan's inauguration, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its celebrated Dred Scott decision. Dred Scott had been a slave in the slave state of Missouri, but in 1834 he had been carried by his master to the free state of Illinois, and two years later to the free territory of Minnesota, where, by the provision of the Missouri Compromise, slavery had been forever prohibited. While in the territory of

Minnesota, Scott was married with his master's consent, but on being brought back to Missouri, he and his wife and two children were sold to another master. Scott at once sued for his freedom and won his suit in the local court at St. Louis, on the grounds that his removal to Minnesota made him a free man by the provisions of the Missouri Compromise. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Missouri, which reversed the decision. While the case was still before the Missouri courts, Scott brought a second suit for his freedom on the grounds that he was a citizen of the United States and was therefore a citizen of Missouri, and as such entitled to his freedom. This suit was brought before the United States Circuit Court at St. Louis. This court granted his contention as to citizenship, but referred the question of his freedom to a jury, which decided that he was still a slave. The case was then appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. A majority of this court held (1) that colored persons, whether freed or slave, were not citizens of the United States; (2) that the act of temporary removal of a master from a slave to a free state did not entitle his slaves to freedom; (3) that the removal of a master into any of the territory made free by the Missouri Compromise did not entitle his slaves to freedom, because the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional and void. This decision emphatically said that there were no free territories within the meaning of the Constitution, and implied that a slaveholder could carry his slaves into any state of the Union without surrendering his right to hold them as slaves. Of all the points in the decision, this last one produced the greatest alarm in the North, where it was now felt that the boast of a

prominent southern slaveholder, that he would someday be able to call the roll of his slaves at the base of the Bunker Hill monument, could soon be fulfilled.

No decision from the Supreme Court of the United States had ever created such a storm. In the South it was applauded to the point of echo, while in the North it was condemned as an outrage against human freedom and opposed to the advancing civilization of the day. Many northern states resented the decision by passing more stringent personal liberty laws. Taney's unfortunate historic reference, "The negro had no right which the white man was bound to respect," was seized upon in the North as expressing the true meaning not only of the court but of the entire South as well. Two justices, John McLean and Benjamin R. Curtis, dissented from the majority opinion of the court. Justice Curtis set forth his objection in an able opinion, which became the generally accepted view in the North. His opinion was printed and circulated by the Republican Party as campaign literature in 1860. Within a week after the decision had been rendered, Taney's desire of thus putting to sleep the slavery question was recognized as hopeless, even by the chief justice himself. The whole North was aroused as never before, and looked upon Taney's judicial opinion as a political decision meant to bolster up the tottering institution of slavery. It was even charged openly that the decision had been made on the demand of the leaders of the slaveholding section.

### **The Kansas Struggle Ends in Victory for Freedom**

Notwithstanding the annulling of the Missouri Compromise by this decision of

the Supreme Court, the struggle for Kansas continued unabated. President Buchanan appointed Robert J. Walker governor of the territory. The old proslavery legislature still held the reins of government under the fostering care of the administration at Washington. This legislature met at Lecompton and called a convention to frame a new state constitution. Governor Geary, before leaving the territory, had vetoed this call, but after his retirement the convention met and proceeded to adopt the Lecompton constitution, which permitted slavery. The whole contest was transferred to the halls of Congress, when Kansas asked for admission to the Union under this fraudulently adopted constitution. In Congress the struggle was long and stubborn, but a bill was finally passed, known as the "English Bill," which submitted the constitution, for the third time, to the people of the territory for their approval or rejection. In the vote which followed in September, 1857, the Lecompton constitution was repudiated at the polls by a decided majority. During this controversy, Governor Walker was removed from his position because he declared for a free count. He was charged by the South as being a "turncoat." The action of the Lecompton convention in attempting to force this constitution upon the territory was so high-handed that even Stephen A. Douglas, champion of "squatter sovereignty" as he was, condemned it in the most scathing language.

In the meantime, a new election in the territory had resulted in the choice of a free-state legislature, which in December, 1857, met at Leavenworth and adopted the Leavenworth constitution, which declared that all men were equal before the law. The

attorney-general of the United States, however, declared that the bill calling this constitutional convention was illegal, and this third attempt to adopt a state constitution fell by the wayside. While the Lecompton constitution was before Congress for its consideration, both the free-state and proslavery advocates in the territory were comparatively quiet, awaiting the outcome. But in 1858 border warfare broke out again, and the old acts of plunder, pillage, massacre, murder, assassination, and destruction of property was repeated. The whole matter was finally disposed of in the year 1859, when a constitutional convention met at Wyandotte and adopted what is known as the Wyandotte constitution. On the 16th of October, 1859, this constitution was ratified by the people of the territory, and under it Kansas two years later became a free state. "Squatter sovereignty" in Kansas had been a costly experiment. Two million dollars' worth of property had been destroyed, many human lives had been lost, and the bitterest animosities engendered. For five years the Kansas struggle had been a national issue, which stirred the nation to its very depths. No doubt much wrong had been committed by irresponsible parties on both sides of the frontier struggle; but it all ended in the interest of human liberty; freedom had been victorious, the moral sentiment of the North had prevailed.

### **The Lincoln-Douglas Debates**

The year 1858 was made memorable by a contest in Illinois between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas for the United States senatorship from that state. Lincoln had become prominent in the West because of his opposition to Douglas's

Kansas-Nebraska Act. On account of his leadership of the Republican Party in Illinois, he became the logical candidate of that party against Douglas, the Democratic nominee. Douglas was a man of national reputation, and for years had been the recognized leader of his party in the Senate. He was a magnetic speaker, and was recognized as a debater of unusual ability. Lincoln, though he had served one term in Congress as a Whig member, was not prominent in national politics; indeed, his reputation may be said to date from the year of this senatorial contest. During the progress of the contest a series of seven joint debates was arranged between Lincoln and Douglas, which took place at various places throughout the state. In these debates the political questions which were then agitating the country were argued by both debaters with such skill and eloquence as to attract at once the attention of the entire country and bring the name of Lincoln into such national prominence as to signal him as one of the ablest leaders of the new Republican Party. In this campaign Lincoln lost, but with a political foresight which has seldom been surpassed, he so embarrassed Douglas by the question which he forced him to answer that he made it impossible for the Democratic Party of the South to consider his name in connection with the coming presidential contest.

In accepting the nomination for the senatorship, at the hands of the state Republican Convention at Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln responded in his now famous speech opening with these words:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe that this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free; I do not expect the Union to be

dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, north as well as south.”

Many friends urged him to omit these words from his speech, insisting he would lose the election if he did not, whereupon his law partner, William H. Herndon, exclaimed: “Lincoln, deliver that speech as written, and it will make you president.”

### **John Brown’s Raid at Harper’s Ferry – 1959**

On the morning of October 17, 1859, the whole country was startled by the news that a band of insurgents had seized the United States arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, captured the town, and taken a number of prominent citizens prisoner. It soon became known that the leader of the band was Captain John Brown, who had become known throughout the country in connection with the free-state struggle in Kansas. Virginia sent state troops flying to Harper’s Ferry, but their ill-planned and feeble efforts could not dislodge the insurgents. On the evening of the day of the alarm a company of United States marines, under command of Colonel Robert E. Lee, arrived upon the scene and immediately relieved the militia. The marines, with sledge hammers and battering ram, soon forced an entrance into the arsenal, where they found Brown on his knees, dazed and bleeding, with two of his sons dead by his side. Of the nineteen raiders, two had

escaped, seven were taken prisoner, and ten were found dead within the fort. Brown and his fellow prisoners were placed in chains and taken to Charleston, Virginia, where they were tried for treason and for inciting insurrection. Brown’s trial was a notable one, and excited the greatest interest throughout the country. He candidly and boldly declared to the court that he had planned to march into the slave districts, set up an anti-slavery government, and spread such terror among the slaveholders of the South that they would either emancipate their slaves or surrender them for a money consideration. In this way he had hoped to bring a revolution which would ultimately lead to the abolition of slavery.

Although Brown was found guilty and executed on the gallows, there were still thousands in the North who excused his raid as the logical outcome of the squatter sovereignty war and the Dred Scott decision. But the event threw the South into a frenzy of excitement. The cry went up that the insurrection had been planned at the instigation of the antislavery leaders in the North, and the breach between the opposing sections of the nation was widened.

### **Mrs. Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and Helper’s *Impending Crisis***

In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe, sister to the great Brooklyn preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, published a novel entitled *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly*. It was called forth as a protest against the Fugitive Slave Law, and was full of burning indignation against the wrongs done to the slaves in the South. Its sales soon ran into the thousands. By the second year of Buchanan’s administration 500,000 copies

had been scattered throughout the free states. The sale of the book was prohibited in many localities in the South, where it was claimed that the novel was overdrawn, imaginative, and misleading, and that the condition of the slave was much better than Mrs. Stowe's portrayal indicated. The circulation of the book was encouraged by the abolition and antislavery societies of the North, where it stirred the minds of the people to the profoundest depths and aroused a stronger opposition than ever before—not only against the further extension of slavery, but also against its continued existence in the United States.

In 1957 a second book appeared, which, if anything, produced even more indignation in the South than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This book was Hinton R. Helper's *Impending Crisis in the South: How to Meet It*. Helper was a representative of the non-slaveholding element in the South, an element which at the time represented about seven-tenths of the white population of that section. The "poor whites" in the South had never been able to make much economic progress owing to the fact that their farms were small and that they were forced at all times to put their free labor against slave labor. Their communities were poorly provided with schools, and in every way their growth and prospects had been retarded on account of slavery. The "poor white" usually had no love for the African, if anything, his feelings against him were far more bitter than that of the slaveholder. He felt that he was unjustly thrown into competition with the slave, and therefore deprived of his just rights as a free laborer. Helper in his book pleaded strongly for the non-slaveholding whites in the South, who, he insisted, longed to see the day arrive

when all slaves should be removed from the United States and their places filled by white men. His method of thus settling the slavery question by deportation, and his sound argument in defense of free labor in the South, were endorsed by many of the ablest men of the day. The indignation of the southerners, however, found some justification in the violence of Helper's language and the undisguised threat of using force to put down the slaveholder. The book had an immense sale. Whole sections of it were printed and circulated free by the New England Abolition Society, and the Republican Party used it as a campaign document in 1860.

### **The Presidential Election of 1860**

The Democratic Convention met at Charleston, South Carolina, on the 23rd of April, 1860, where it proceeded to adopt a platform before placing in nomination its candidate for the presidency. After a week's struggle over the question of slavery, in which the delegates from the northern states refused to endorse the extreme views advocated by the southern leaders, the convention was rent in twain. A number of the southern states dramatically withdrew their entire delegations from the convention. The remaining delegates, unable to agree upon a candidate, adjourned to the city of Baltimore, where, on the 18th of June, they selected Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois as their standard-bearer. The southern wing of the Democracy met in the same city a few days later and nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky. The Know-Nothing Party, having dissolved, had no candidate, but conservative men of all parties joined to organize the Constitutional Union Party,



which also met in Baltimore, and nominated John Bell of Tennessee. Following the disruption of the Democratic Party at Charleston, the Republican Party called its national convention to meet in the city of Chicago, and after an exciting contest nominated Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. The campaign was, perhaps, the most memorable in the history of the Republic. Though it began with the usual hurrah and enthusiasm, the canvass had not proceeded far when there suddenly fell upon the people a profound seriousness. Arguments were made in sober vein by party speakers, and listened to in sober mood by thousands of voters who had heretofore been unlikely to applaud the eloquence and rhetoric of campaign orators. A deep conviction laid hold upon the people that the Republic had come upon dangerous times, and was fast approaching the greatest crisis in its history. The southern leaders, sullen and angry, denounced both Douglas and Lincoln, and openly threatened that if Lincoln were elected the South would apply the doctrine of Calhoun and signify its disapproval by seceding from the Union. Douglas, in a personal campaign, took the field, and before the canvass had proceeded far, came out boldly and patriotically for the maintenance and preservation of the Union. Lincoln, standing firmly on the Constitution and advocating that slavery be confined to the states which it then occupied, patiently and anxiously awaited the result at Springfield—his audience now multiplied into the tens of thousands, reading by their firesides his speeches and debates. No matter how many questions were talked up, there was but one question uppermost in the public mind, the extension of slavery in the territories.

Election Day came and passed quietly by, in keeping with the orderly manner in which the campaign had been conducted. The returns showed that Lincoln and Hamlin had received 180 electoral votes; Douglas 12, Breckinridge 72, and Bell 39.

“On the day of the election,” writes the historian Rhodes, “the poet Longfellow wrote in his journal, ‘Voted early,’ and the day after, ‘Lincoln is elected. Overwhelming majorities in New York and Pennsylvania. This is a great victory; one can hardly overrate its importance. It is the redemption of the country. Freedom is triumphant.’”

“The meaning of the election was that the great and powerful North declared slavery an evil and instead that it should not be extended; that while the institution would be sacredly respected where it existed, the conduct of the national government must revert to the policy of the fathers, and confine slavery within bounds; hoping that if it were restricted the time might come when the southern people would themselves acknowledge that they were out of tune with an enlightened world and take steps gradually to abolish the system.

“The North had spoken. In every man’s mind rose unbidden the question, ‘What would be the answer of the South?’”

### **Secession**

The North had not long to wait; the answer of the South was secession. The presidential election was held on the 8th of November, 1860; on the 17th of December, the legislature of South Carolina met at Charleston. At the end of a three days’ session an act of secession was passed dissolving the Union hitherto existing between South Carolina and the United

States of America. The seed sown by Calhoun had at last borne fruit in an open act of disunion. This sentiment now rapidly spread throughout the southern states. Within six weeks Georgia and every state bordering on the Gulf of Mexico—Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas—had followed South Carolina’s example. Nearly all the senators and representatives from those states at once resigned their seats in Congress, hastened to the South, and lent their influence to spreading the doctrine of disunion.

On the 4th of February delegates from all the seceded states, excepting Texas, met at Montgomery, Alabama, set a government in opposition to the authority of the United States, and four days later elected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi president and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia vice president of the Confederate States of America.

### **Buchanan’s Policy**

While these events were taking place in the South, thoughtful men in every section of the country viewed with alarm the rapid spread of the disunion sentiment. The policy of the president and his chief advisers was to conciliate the South and “beg them to return to the Union.” In a message to Congress, Buchanan informed that body that “the long-continued interference of the northern people with the question of slavery in the southern states has at last produced its natural effect.” He begged the northern states to repeal their personal liberty laws. He insisted that the southern states had a “right to demand this simple act of justice from the states of the North.” Buchanan, however, was not a disunionist — he denied the right of any state to secede from the

Union, but he nevertheless arrived at the conclusion that “no power has been delegated to Congress, or to any other department of the federal government to coerce a state into submission which is attempting to withdraw, or has actually withdrawn from the Union.” This policy paralyzed the national government and spread consternation throughout the loyal states. The cry went up from Union people all over the land as they recalled how nullification had been suppressed by Andrew Jackson in 1832, “O for an hour of Old Hickory!” Buchanan’s Cabinet soon went to pieces, the disunionist members resigning their positions and flying to the South. A Union Cabinet at once took its place.

In this Cabinet was Edwin M. Stanton, a pronounced Union man, and John A. Dix, who on assuming his duties as secretary of the Treasury roused the patriotism of the whole North by his thrilling dispatch to the revenue office in New Orleans, “If anyone attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot.” The vigorous northern Democrats saved Buchanan’s administration in its final days from complete collapse, and restored confidence in the stability of the national government.

### **Last Efforts at Compromise – The Peace Convention**

In the meantime, Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed the “Crittenden Compromise,” which asked that an amendment be added to the Constitution separating the territory of the United States into slave-state and a free-state portions, the boundary between them to be the old line of 36° 30’. The compromise provided, among other things, that the United States

should pay owners for all fugitive slaves rescued. The compromise was not looked upon with favor in Congress. On the suggestion of the Virginia legislature, a peace conference was called to consider the state of public affairs. Accordingly, delegates from twenty-one states met at Washington on February 4, 1861, and proposed an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting slavery north of the parallel of 36° 30', and permitting it south of that line. By its provisions no state could pass a law giving freedom to a fugitive slave or to slaves accompanying a master temporarily into a free state. Congress could in no way interfere with slavery south of the dividing line. The slave trade was to be prohibited forever in the United States. Like the Crittenden Compromise, the recommendation of the peace conference fell by the wayside—a general feeling grew in Congress and throughout the North that there should be no further compromise with slavery.

### **Government Property Seized: *Star of the West* Fired Upon**

Meanwhile, officers were resigning from the army and the civil service, and joining their fortunes with the seceded states. Arsenals, custom houses, and post offices were taken possession of, and government property was seized on all sides. Of the southern fortresses, Fortress Monroe at the entrance of Chesapeake Bay, Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, Fort Pickens at Pensacola, and the defenses near Key West, alone remained in possession of the government. Fort Sumter had, after the hostile act of South Carolina, been taken possession of by Major Robert Anderson, who was in command of a small force of

United States troops at that point. His action was approved by Congress, although he received but little encouragement from the president. The steamer *Star of the West* was sent with supplies to Fort Sumter, but on nearing the fort was fired upon by a Confederate battery, whereupon it returned to the North and left Major Anderson to provision his garrison as best he could. Nothing was being done by either president or Congress; the state of state seemed becalmed in the face of threatening storm.

### **New States: The Census: Relative Strength of North and South**

The federal Union at this time comprised thirty-four states—Minnesota having been admitted in 1858 as the thirty-second state; Oregon in 1859 as the thirty-third; and Kansas in 1861 as the thirty-fourth. While all three came into the Union as free states, the constitution of Oregon was peculiar in that it forbade colored persons to settle within the borders of that state.

The total population in 1860, according to the eighth census, amounted to 31,443,332, an increase of more than eight million people in ten years. Of the white population 18,791,159 persons resided in the free states, as opposed to 8,182,684 in the slave states. There were 225,967 free colored persons in the North, and 262,003 in the South. In the North there remained but 64 slaves, while the South had a slave population of 3,953,696. Many people in the North declared that the South would never take up arms against the government for fear of provoking a slave insurrection in its very midst. The North, it will be seen, had a population of more than double that of the South, and in wealth and resources it far

surpassed the southern section. The spirit of nationality was strong. Free schools and colleges had been planted everywhere. The great west and northwest states had increased more rapidly in population than any other section. The third largest state of the Union, Ohio (white population 2,303,838), was in this section, as were Indiana (white population 1,339,000) and Illinois (white population 1,704,323), each with a larger population than either Virginia or Missouri, the only two southern states whose white population reached over a million.

Slavery had retarded the growth of the South in every conceivable way excepting in the raising of cotton and the cultivation of sugar-cane, and no doubt these industries would have thrived as well, if not better, in the hands of free labor. Indeed, as Helper had argued in his *Impending Crisis*, free labor in the South had been robbed of its just rewards. Free schools were lacking, railroads and means of intercommunication had not multiplied rapidly; hence travel between the North and South was not

fostered. On the other hand, railroads were numerous in the North, and had bound the East firmly to the West by commercial ties which could not be severed. Side by side, two civilizations had grown up in America—the one, dedicated to progress, had kept step with the spirit of the age—for the best portion of the civilized world had long since turned its back on slavery; the other had held tenaciously to a system in which it did not at first believe and which even in colonial days had been abhorred. Its whole social and political life had come under the iron rule of a landed aristocracy with slavery as the chief excuse for its existence. The people of the two sections had little in common. Neither understood the other. Since the Compromise of 1850 they had been drifting rapidly apart and refused to be reconciled on the question of slavery. To protect that institution, the threat of secession had been carried out, and when, on March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln entered Washington, it was as the president of a severed republic.



Slavery and secession