



# Chapter Fifteen

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## **The Coming Crisis, the 1850s**

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Part One:



**Introduction**



# Chapter Focus Questions

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- ✦ Why did the Whigs and Democrats fail to find a lasting political compromise on the issue of slavery?
- ✦ What caused the end of the Second American Party System and the rise of the Republican Party?
- ✦ Why did the secession of the southern states follow the Republican Party victory in the election of 1860?



Part Two:

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**Illinois Communities Debate  
Slavery**

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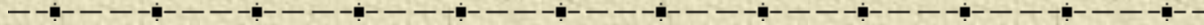
# Illinois Communities Debate Slavery

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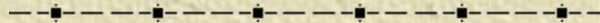
- ✦ Illinois voters gathered in 1858 to hear Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln debate slavery and the future of the Union.
  - ◆ Douglas accused Lincoln of favoring social equality of whites and blacks.
  - ◆ Lincoln denied this and accused Douglas of supporting the spread of slavery.
- ✦ Although Douglas won the senatorial election, the debates established both Lincoln and the Republican Party as contenders for national power.
- ✦ The debates demonstrated that the slavery question had divided American communities, but that Americans strongly valued their democratic institutions.



Part Three:



**America in 1850**



# Expansion and Growth

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- ✦ Map: U. S. Population and Settlement, 1850
- ✦ America had grown rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth century.
- ✦ The nation had experienced great growth of wealth, industry, and urbanization. Equally important, southern economic influence was waning.

# Politics, Culture, and National Identity

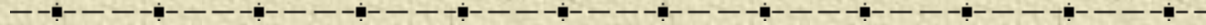
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- ✦ Pride in democracy was one unifying theme in a growing sense of national identity and new middle-class values, institutions, and culture that supported it.
- ✦ An American Renaissance produced writers who focused on social criticism, including:
  - ◆ Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson who experimented with poetic form
  - ◆ Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville who wrote about the darker side of human nature
  - ◆ Frederick Douglass's autobiography and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* condemn slavery

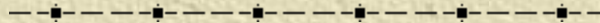




# Part Four



## **The Compromise of 1850**



# Political Parties and Slavery

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- ✦ Prior to the 1840s, compromises had eased the divisions of America based on slavery.
- ✦ The national party system had forced Whigs and Democrats to forge inter-sectional coalitions.
- ✦ By 1848 sectional interests were eroding these coalitions.
- ✦ Sectional divisions in religious and other organizations had begun to divide the country.

# Congressional Debate

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- ✦ John C. Calhoun had laid out the states' rights defense by claiming that:
  - ✦ the territories were the common property of each of the states
  - ✦ Congress could not discriminate against slave owners.
- ✦ Northerners grew increasingly concerned over what they saw as a southern conspiracy to control the government: the “slave power.”
- ✦ The three aging regional leaders—Daniel Webster of the North, Henry Clay of the West, and John C. Calhoun of the South—attempted to resolve the issues of 1850.

# Two Communities, Two Perspectives

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## ✦ Both North and South:

- ◆ were committed to expansion, but each viewed manifest destiny in its own terms
- ◆ shared a commitment to basic rights and liberties but saw the other as infringing on them.

## ✦ Two communities with two perspectives had emerged.

- ◆ Northerners viewed their region as a dynamic society that offered opportunity to the common man, in contrast to the stagnant slave owning aristocracy of the South.
- ◆ Southerners viewed their section as promoting equality for whites by keeping blacks in a perpetual state of bondage.

## ✦ The chances for national reconciliation were slim.

# Compromises

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## ✦ Map: The Compromise of 1850

✦ The Compromise of 1850 was actually five separate bills

- ◆ California came in as a free state.
- ◆ Other southwest territories were to be settled by popular sovereignty.
- ◆ A stronger fugitive slave law was enacted.
- ◆ The slave trade was outlawed in Washington, D.C.
- ◆ The Texas–New Mexico border dispute was settled.

# The Fugitive Slave Act

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- ✦ The issue of runaway slaves further divided the nation.
- ✦ The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 put the full force of the federal government behind slave catchers.
  - ◆ States had previously passed acts against aiding slave catchers.
- ✦ Mobs of northerners unsuccessfully tried to prevent the law from being carried out.
- ✦ Black fugitives described their experiences as slaves, helping to raise Northerners' consciousness.

# The Election of 1852

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- ✦ The growing polarization of opinion strained the party system.
- ✦ The Democrats won in the election of 1852 by avoiding sectional issues.
- ✦ The new President Franklin Pierce supported independent efforts to seize territory by “filibusters” like William Walker and endorsed efforts to buy Cuba.

# “Young America”: The Politics of Expansion

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- ✦ Between 1845 and 1848, the United States became a continental nation.
- ✦ The swift victory over Mexico served to reinforce American pride.
- ✦ A series of revolutions in Europe reinforced Americans’ sense that their ideals of democracy and manifest destiny were to be achieved.
- ✦ Expansionist Democrats styled themselves part of a “Young America” movement and pushed for further expansion in Mexico and Cuba.





Part Five:

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**The Crisis of the National  
Party System**

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# The Kansas-Nebraska Act

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## ✧ Maps: The Kansas-Nebraska Act

- ✧ In 1854, Stephen Douglas pushed through a bill to open the Kansas territory.
- ✧ To win southern support Douglas's bill declared that the territory would be organized on the principle of popular sovereignty, even though slavery in that territory had been banned under the Missouri Compromise.
- ✧ The Kansas-Nebraska Act proved to:
  - ◆ destroy the Whig Party
  - ◆ nearly destroy the northern wing of the Democratic Party
  - ◆ negate treaties with Indians removed to Kansas in the 1830s.

# “Bleeding Kansas”

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- ✦ The territory became a battleground of sectional politics.
- ✦ On election day, proslavery Missourians crossed over the border and took control of the territorial legislature.
- ✦ Northerners quickly responded by founding free-soil communities.
- ✦ By the summer of 1856 open warfare erupted.

# The Politics of Nativism

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- ✦ Concurrent with sectional pressures came an outburst of anti-immigrant feeling. Reformers were appalled by the influx of Irish into American cities.
- ✦ Former Whigs formed the “Know-Nothing” or American Party to prevent what they saw as a takeover by the immigrants.
- ✦ But the Know-Nothings succumbed to sectional divisions.

# The Republican Party and the Election of 1856

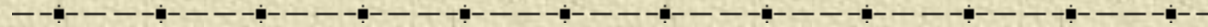
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## ✧ Map: The Election of 1856

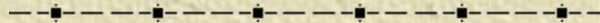
- ✧ The Republican Party linked northern nativists and former Whigs.
- ✧ In 1856, Democrats nominated James Buchanan as a compromise candidate.
- ✧ Southern Know-Nothings ran Millard Fillmore.
- ✧ Northern Republicans ran John C. Fremont who defeated Buchanan in the North. Buchanan carried nearly the entire South and won.
- ✧ The election signaled the rise of the Republican Party and showed northerners were more concerned about slavery than immigration.



Part Six:



**The Differences Deepen**



# The Dred Scott Decision

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- ✦ The *Dred Scott* decision worsened sectional divisions.
- ✦ The Supreme Court ruled that Congress could not ban slavery in the territories and that Dred Scott's long-term residence in free territory did not make him free.
- ✦ While Southerners applauded the decision, Northerners denounced it.

# The Lecompton Constitution

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- ✦ Conflict continued in Kansas as free-soilers:
  - ◆ organized their own territorial government
  - ◆ boycotted the proslavery government's elections for a constitutional convention
- ✦ The proslavery "Lecompton constitution" was submitted to Congress.
- ✦ Stephen Douglas fought against it, alienating his southern supporters.
- ✦ Kansas rejected the constitution and came into the Union as a free state.
- ✦ The defeat of Lecompton came as Congress continued to divide along sectional lines.



# The Panic of 1857

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- ✦ Adding to the conflict was a financial panic and sharp depression in 1857 and 1858.
- ✦ The Panic affected northern more than southern exports.
- ✦ Southerners believed the Panic showed the superiority of their system.

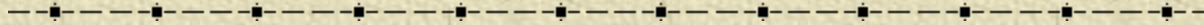
# John Brown's Raid

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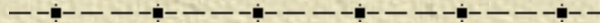
- ✦ Sectional tensions intensified when John Brown raided the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry in an unsuccessful effort to instigate a slave revolt.
- ✦ Brown was hanged but southern opinion was shocked by northerner's attempts to make Brown a martyr and northern support for slave revolts.



Part Seven:



**The South Secedes**



# The Election of 1860

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## ✧ Map: The Election of 1860

- ✧ In the election of 1860, four candidates ran for president.
  - ◆ The Democrats split over a proposed slave code for the territories.
    - Stephen Douglas won the nomination but Southerners nominated John C. Breckinridge.
  - ◆ Southern and border state Whigs created the Constitutional Union Party and nominated John Bell.
  - ◆ Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln, a moderate.
- ✧ Breckinridge and Lincoln represented the extreme positions on slavery in the territories.
- ✧ Douglas and Bell tried to find a middle ground.
- ✧ Lincoln won the election with 38 percent of the vote by virtually sweeping the North.

# The South Leaves the Union

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## ✦ Map: The South Secedes

- ✦ Southerners responded to the election of 1860 by initiating secession movements.
- ✦ The Lower South seceded, but the Upper South remained in the Union.

# The North's Political Options

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- ✦ Various Northerners unsuccessfully tried to find some compromise that would satisfy all sides.
- ✦ Some Northerners were willing to allow the South to go in peace.
- ✦ Lincoln believed that the idea of free government would be threatened if the South was permitted to leave.

# Establishment of the Confederacy

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- ✦ Southerners established the Confederate States of America.
- ✦ Jefferson Davis, a moderate, was chosen as its president.
- ✦ Davis tried to portray secession as a legal, peaceful step.
- ✦ Lincoln resolved to keep the nation together.

# Lincoln's Inauguration

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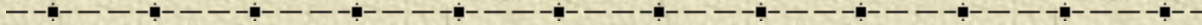
✦ *I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.*

- Abraham Lincoln  
Inaugural Address,  
March 4, 1861

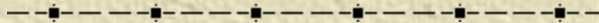




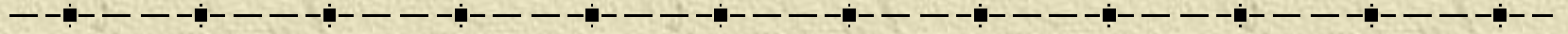
Part Eight:



**Conclusion**



# The Coming Crisis, the 1850s



## ✦ Media: Chronology