

KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT, 1854.

Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Birth of the Republican Party



The Kansas-Nebraska Bill, introduced by Douglas in 1854 provided that the territory north of the 37th parallel between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains be divided into two Territories, Kansas and Nebraska. People residing in these territories.

To cover
today

Ideology of free labor

Rise of the Republican Party

Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854)

Outbreak of violence in
Kansas

Free Labor Ideology

- Northerners believed in the superiority of free labor
 - Broad definition of “labor”
 - Belief in the possibility for social advancement
 - Goal is economic *independence*, not great wealth
 - To own one’s own land or shop
 - Free labor v. slavery or “wage slavery”
- Western land/migration viewed as safety valve
- American exceptionalism
- Problem: Southern legislators blocked proposals for a Homestead Act to give away free land
 - Calls for “Free Soil” – “free soilism”

Lincoln on free labor

- Lincoln's critique of slavery was always implicitly a defense of free labor
 - Notion that no man should profit from the sweat of another man's brow
 - It's a *moral* critique, but very different from antislavery literature like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)

1847: “And, inasmuch [as] most good things are produced by labour, it follows that [all] such things of right belong to those whose labour has produced them. But it has so happened in all ages of the world, that some have laboured, and others have, without labour, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue. **To [secure] to each labourer the whole product of his labour, or as nearly as possible, is a most worthy object of any good government.**”

Lincoln on free labor and upward mobility

September 1859: *“The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land, for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This, say its advocates, is **free labor—the just and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way for all—gives hope to all, and energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all.**”*

Northern critique of the South

- Free labor advocates critique the whole social order created by slavery
 - Southern economy inefficient and stagnant
 - Class structure a fixed hierarchy
 - Society dominated by an aristocracy of slaveholders
 - Antithesis an economically fluid, socially mobile, democratic society
- Northerners believed the slave system affected *all* workers
 - Because it degraded the dignity of labor
 - And its spread into new areas threatened opportunity for upward mobility
 - Threat of excess labor, unemployment building up in eastern cities

Republican Party Handbill (1856)

- Quoting a Democratic paper, the *Richmond Enquirer*:
- “The expansion of slavery is a question not only of FREE SOIL but of FREE MEN. Do you doubt it? Read the words of the highest authorities in the south . . .
- ‘Slavery is the natural condition of the laboring man, whether white or black. The great evil of Northern free society is that it is burdened with a servile class of mechanics and laborers unfit for self-government and yet clothed with the attributes and powers of citizens.’”

REPUBLICAN BULLETIN, No. 9.

THE ISSUE.

WHITE SLAVERY.

THE EXTENSION OF SLAVERY IS THE QUESTION NOT ONLY OVER **FREE SOIL**, BUT OVER **FREE MEN**. DO YOU DOUBT IT? READ THE WORDS OF THE HIGHEST AUTHORITIES IN THE SOUTH.

The *Richmond (Va.) Enquirer*, the oldest Democratic paper in the Old Dominion, a most able supporter of Buchanan for the Presidency, and of the Oincinnati Platform, speaks thus on this question. We take its own forcible words.

“Until recently, the defence of Slavery has labored under great difficulties, because its apologists, (for they were mere apologists,) took half way ground. They confined the defence of slavery to mere negro slavery; thereby giving up the slavery principle, admitting other forms of slavery to be wrong.

“But this line of defence has now been changed. The South maintains that **SLAVERY IS RIGHT, NATURAL AND NECESSARY, AND DOES NOT DEPEND UPON DIFFERENCE OF COMPLEXION. THE LAWS OF THE SLAVE STATES JUSTIFY THE HOLDING OF WHITE MEN IN BONDAGE.**”

Another leading press of the Democratic party, and a worthy organ of Mr. Buchanan, published in South Carolina, sustains the views we have quoted from the *Enquirer*. It uses this plain, straightforward language on the subject:—

“Slavery is the natural and normal condition of the laboring man, whether white or black. The great evil of Northern free society is, that it is burdened with a **SERVILE CLASS OF MECHANICS AND LABORERS, UNFIT FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT**, and yet clothed with the attributes and powers of citizens. Master and slave is a relation in society as necessary as that of parent and child; and the Northern States will yet have to introduce it. Their theory of a free government is a delusion.

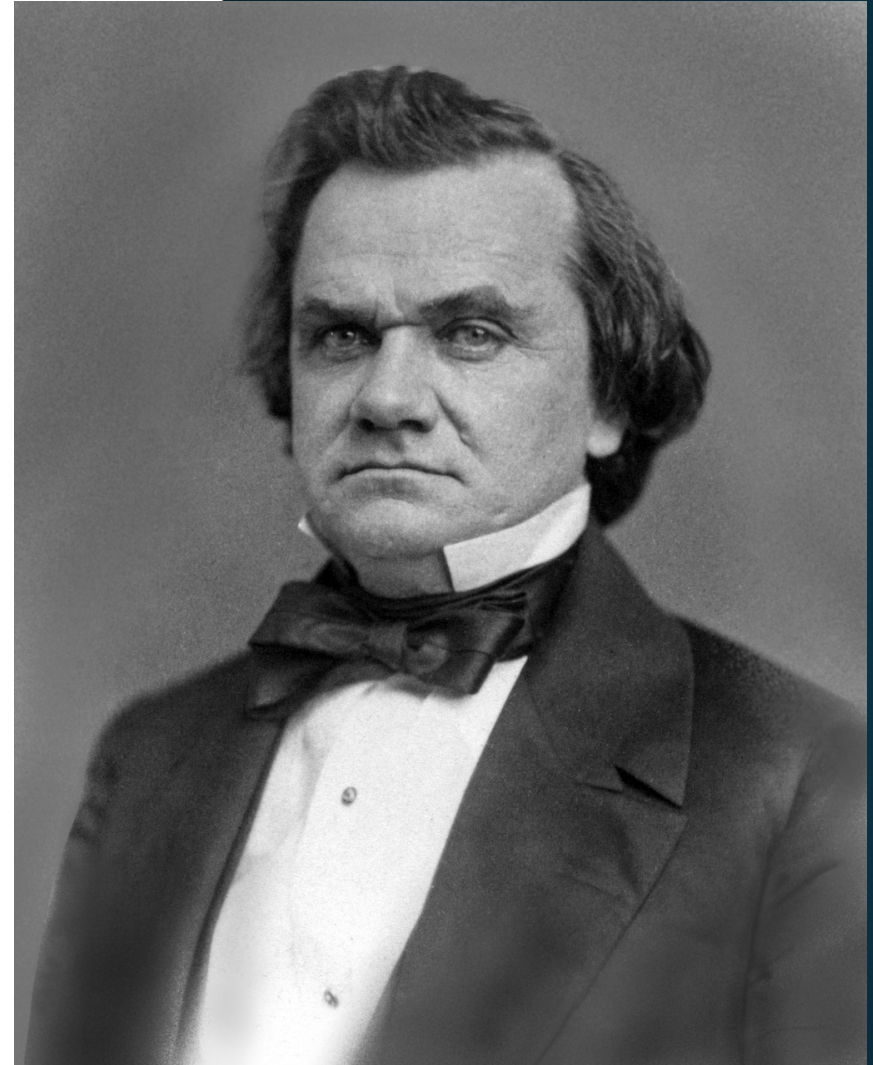
“But there is still broader ground in the subject of society, taken by the *Richmond Enquirer*. It says, in a recent number:—

“Repeatedly have we asked the North, ‘Has not the experiment of universal liberty failed? Are not the evils of **FREE SOCIETY** insufferable? And do not most thinking men among you propose to subvert and reconstruct it?’ Still no answer. This gloomy silence is another conclusive proof, added to many other conclusive evidences we have furnished, that **FREE SOCIETY, IN THE LONG RUN, IS AN IMPRACTICABLE FORM OF SOCIETY.**”

Another paper, published in Virginia, the *South Side Democrat*, a journal distinguished for its faithful support of Mr. Buchanan, says:

Sen. Stephen Douglas

- Democrat, Illinois
 - Most famous politician of 1850s
 - Last major “compromise” politician
- 1813: Born in VT; apprenticed to a cabinet maker at age 15
- 1833: Moved to Illinois at age 20
- Quickly declared himself a “western man”
- Firmly committed to manifest destiny Tried to appease white southerners



Kansas- Nebraska Act (1854)

- Douglas wanted a railroad to go through Illinois
- Needed to organize NB Territory
- Needed southern votes
- Wanted to keep southern support for a future presidential run
- His bill split the territory in two—KS and NB—both of which would be organized according to *popular sovereignty*
 - Final version of the bill explicitly repealed Missouri Compromise of 1820
 - Assumption: KS would be a slave state, NB a free state
- *Hugely* controversial, but passed in 1854

Kansas- Nebraska Act



The Extension of Slavery in the United States

MISSOURI COMPROMISE, 1820

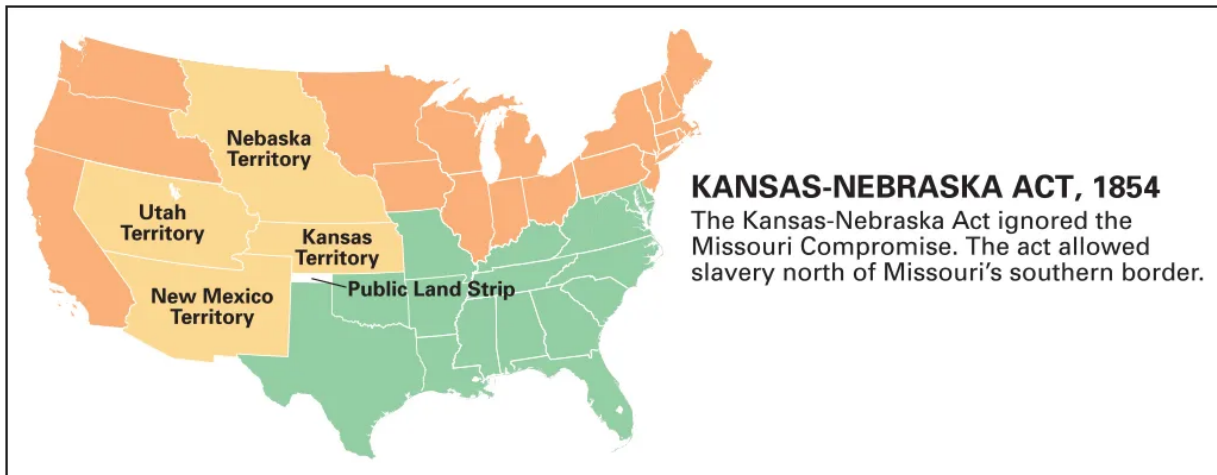
The Missouri Compromise declared that Maine was a free state and Missouri was a slave state. The compromise did not allow any new slave states north of Missouri's southern border.



- Slavery prohibited
- Slavery permitted
- Decision left to territories

COMPROMISE OF 1850

The Compromise of 1850 allowed California to be a free state in exchange for a much stricter Fugitive Slave Act. The slavery issue was not mentioned in the organization of the Utah and New Mexico territories.



KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT, 1854

The Kansas-Nebraska Act ignored the Missouri Compromise. The act allowed slavery north of Missouri's southern border.

0 400 800 mi
0 600 1200 km

Upshot of Kansas- Nebraska Bill

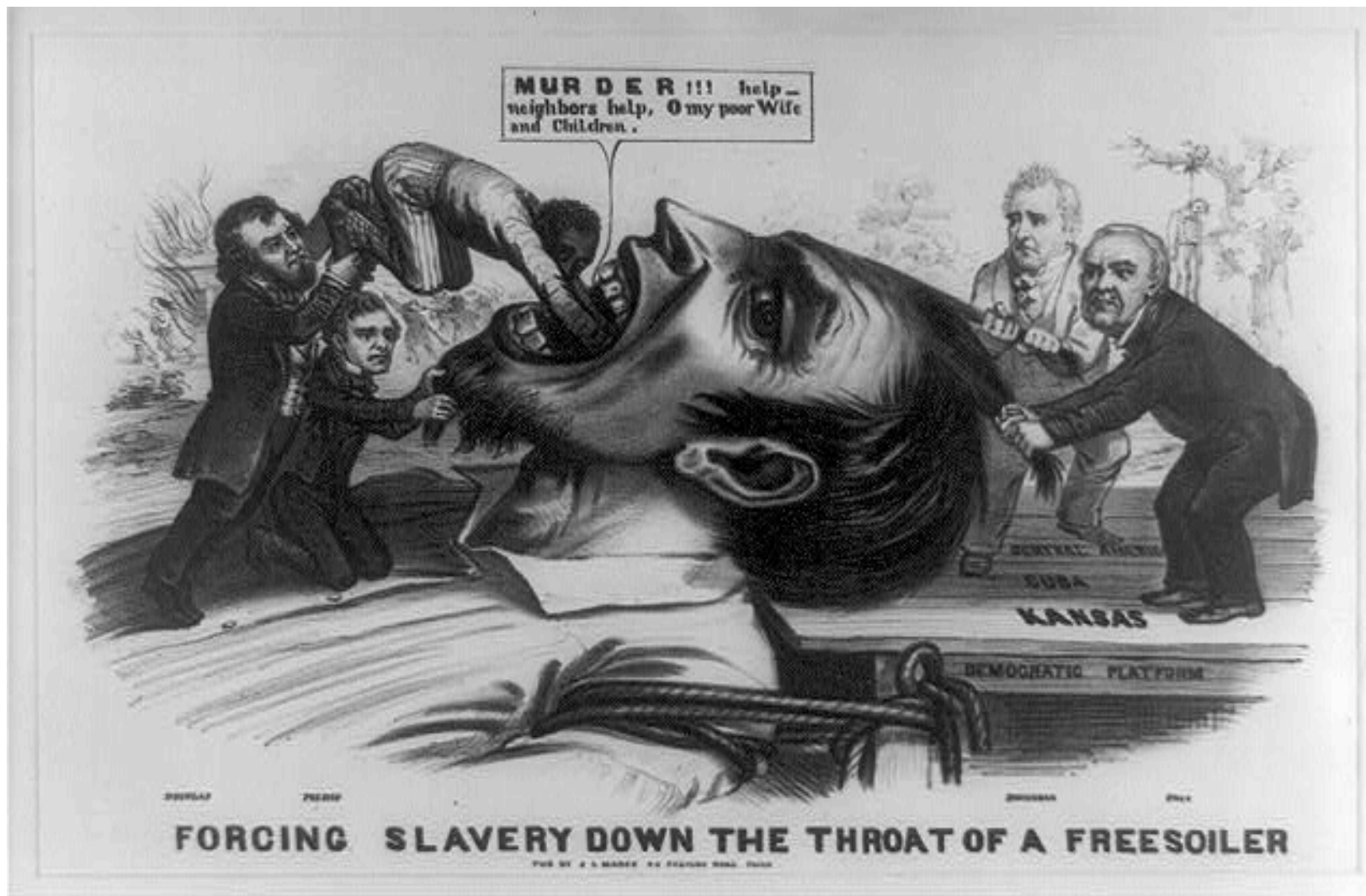
- Killed the so-called Second Party System
 - Destroyed the Whig Party
 - Spilt the Democrats into regional factions, North and South
 - Badly damaged Northern Democrats
- Idea of “Slave Power” gains credibility
- Many wealthy Northern merchants, bankers, and manufacturers turned against the South
- Paved the way for the Republican Party
 - “No slavery in the territories, and no more slave states”
 - Southerners called them the “Black Republicans”

Divisions among Republicans

- Most were former Whigs—moderate Republicans
 - Like Lincoln
- Minority were abolitionists
 - “Radical Republicans”
 - What made them radical?
 - Stance on slavery, not economics
- About 20% of Republicans were former Democrats
 - Jacksonian Unionism
- Others were from third parties that had sprung up in the 1840s and 1850s

“Bloody Kansas”

- Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) moves the slavery issue from halls of Congress to the territories
- Essentially Act I of the Civil War
- Election set for March 1855
 - Area flooded with settlers from both North and South
- Proslavery partisans (“border ruffians”) from Missouri cast phony ballots and fraudulently won
 - Lecompton Constitution
 - Crime to even *question* slavery; *capital* crime to protect fugitive slaves
- Free-soilers established their own government in Lawrence, Kansas
- Violent raids—more than 200 people died
 - Proslavery men attacked Lawrence
 - John Brown organized retaliatory raids; killed proslavery settlers



1856 political cartoon. A "freesoiler" is forcibly bound to the "Democratic Platform," which is associated with the expansion of slavery, not only into Kansas, but also into Cuba and Central America. The freesoiler is restrained by presidential nominee James Buchanan and Senator Lewis Cass, while Senator Stephen A. Douglas and current President Franklin Pierce literally force a male slave down his throat.

“Crime Against Kansas”

Sen. Charles Sumner, abolitionist, delivered a speech in the Senate on May 19 and 20, 1856. Singled out Senator Andrew Butler, a Democrat, for special rebuke:

*“The Senator from South Carolina has read many books of chivalry, and believes himself a chivalrous knight, with sentiments of honor and courage. **Of course he has chosen a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who, though ugly to others, is always lovely to him; though polluted in the sight of the world, is chaste in his sight I mean the harlot, Slavery.** For her, his tongue is always profuse in words. Let her be impeached in character, or any proposition made to shut her out from the extension of her wantonness, and no extravagance of manner or hardihood of assertion is then too great for this Senator.”*

Caning of Charles Sumner (1856)

- Two days later, Rep. Preston Brooks beat him severely on the Senate floor with a cane
 - Significant that he did not challenge him to a duel
 - Afterwards, Brooks was wholly unrepentant
 - Resigned from Congress, but was immediately re-elected
- Episode horrified Northerners
 - Confirmed their stereotype of Southerners as hot-headed, intemperate
 - Led to big gains for the Republican Party



SOUTHERN CHIVALRY — ARGUMENT VERDUE CLUB'S.