

The Compromise of 1850 and Fugitive Slaves

Why do we call it the “Civil War”

- What are the connotations of that term?
- Lincoln spoke of the “insurrection” and later the “rebellion”
 - The “Official Record” published by the U.S. in late 19th century is titled *The War of the Rebellion*
- Confederates spoke of the “War of Secession,” the “War between the States,”
 - and later, even the “War of Northern Aggression”
- Gradual consensus on the term “Civil War” was part of the movement toward sectional reconciliation

KY. (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 22

KENTUCKY (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 22

SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
OFFICIAL
RECORDS
OF THE
UNION
AND
CONFEDERATE
ARMIES

DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 22

SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
OFFICIAL
RECORDS
OF THE
UNION
AND
CONFEDERATE
ARMIES

PART II
—Record—
of Events
Vol. 20

NEBRASKA (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEBRASKA
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW JERSEY (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW JERSEY
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW MEXICO (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW MEXICO
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

NEW YORK (Cont'd.)
—Con. (See 111-112)

NEW YORK
DATA
10
Suppl.
PA-2
Vol. 20

Food for thought

What if we'd kept calling it the “War of the Rebellion”?

Or, what if we'd followed Frederick Douglass and called it “The Slave Holders’ Rebellion”?

The Politics of Language

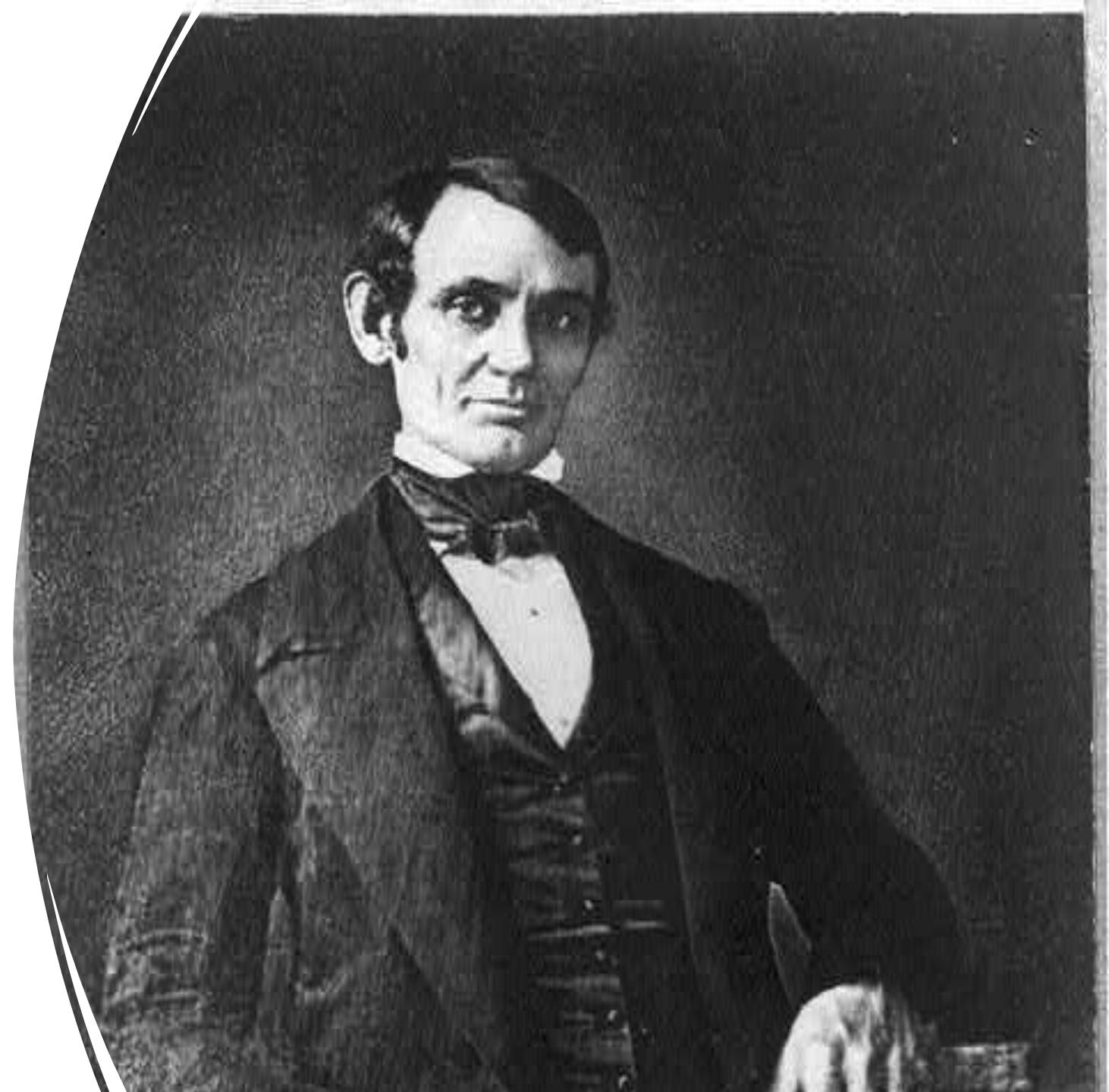
- Point is *not* to make you anxious about using the wrong words
 - In many cases, there's legitimate debate about what terminology is most appropriate
- Point is to make you conscious of the hidden power of language
- “slave” v. “enslaved person”
- “master,” “slaveowner,” or “slaveholder” v. “enslaver”
 - “plantation mistress” v. “woman enslaver” or “female enslaver”
- “plantation” v. “labor camp”
- “Union” v. “United States”
- “Union army” v. “U.S. army”
- “North” v. “South” v. “U.S.” v. “Confederacy”

Mexican-American War (1846-48)

- Provoked by Pres. James K. Polk
- Popular in the South and West
 - Wealthy enslavers viewed wanted more land to expand
 - Fear rapid growth of Northern population
 - Disliked the presence of free republic right on the southern border
 - Wanted to prevent US enslaved population from fleeing to Mexico
 - By pushing the border further south
- Far less popular in the North
 - Most northern Democrats supported it
 - But northern Whigs vehemently opposed
 - Mostly on grounds that it would endanger the republic
 - But some on antislavery grounds

Abraham Lincoln on Mexican- American War

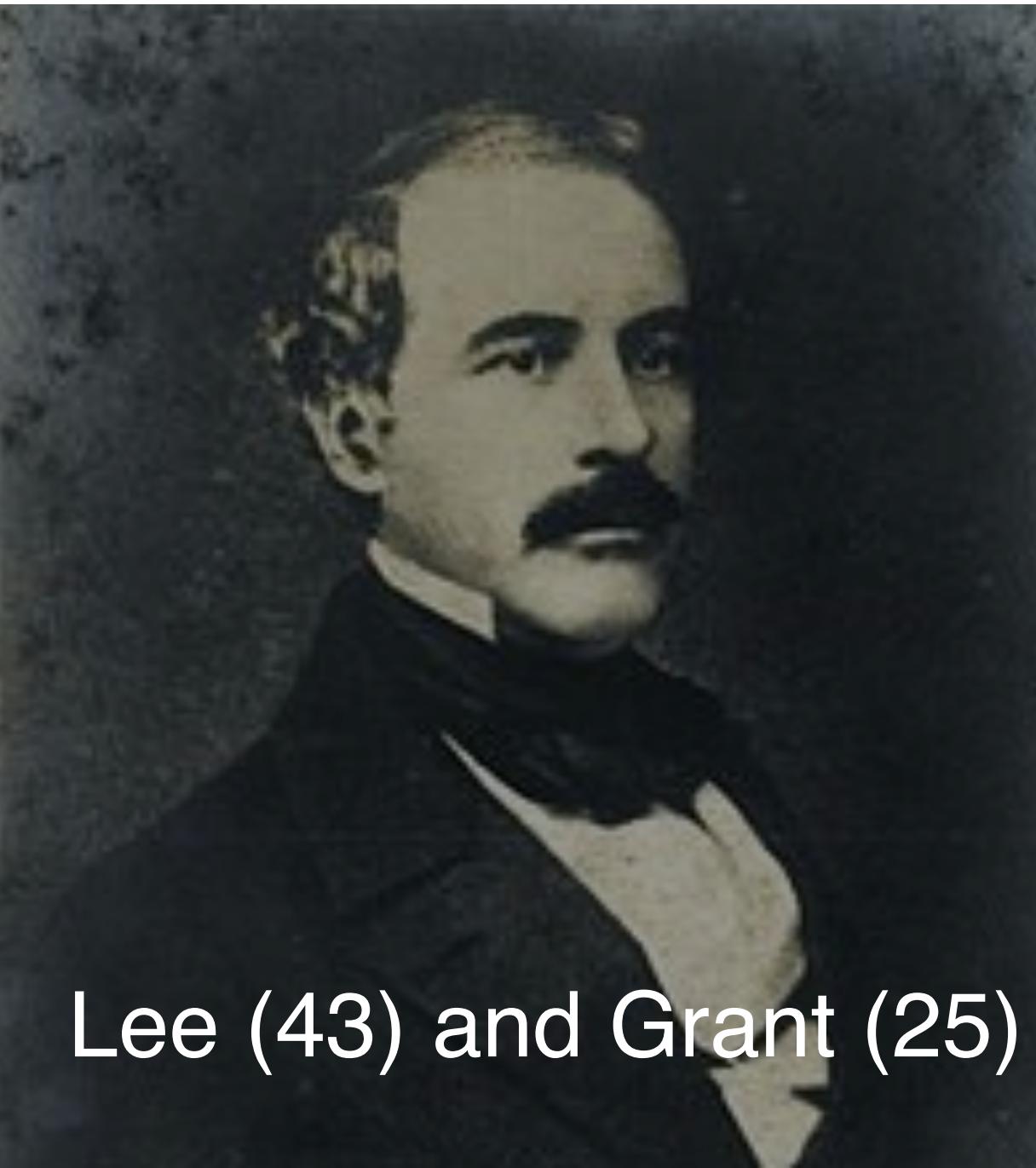
- A young US congressman, voted against the war with Mexico
- Later said it was “*unnecessary*”
 - “inasmuch as Mexico was in no way molesting, or menacing the U.S. or the people thereof”
- And that it was “*unconstitutional*”
 - “because the power of levying war is vested in Congress, and not in the President.”
- Lost re-election in 1848



Views on Mexican-American War

- Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The U.S. will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows the arsenic, which brings him down in turn. Mexico will poison us.”
- Frederick Douglass: “The present unholy war is not the accident of a day, but the result of long years of national transgression. Pride and ambition, when once in the full possession of a nation’s heart, and roused to action, cannot be easily expelled, by any means this side of national ruin.... **Slavery, treachery and mad ambition, are at the head of the government, in the person of James K. Polk;** and the means of checking them are naught.”
- Walt Whitman: “We pant to see our country and its rule far-reaching, only inasmuch as it will take off the shackles that prevent men the even chance of being happy and good....”

Lee (43) and Grant (25)



Civil War military leaders who fought in the Mexican American War

- Robert E. Lee
- Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson
- Braxton Bragg
- P.G.T. Beauregard
- Ulysses S. Grant
- James Longstreet
- George McClellan
- George Meade

Background to the Compromise of 1850

- Compromise meant to deal with aftermath of the Mexican-American War, which involved a huge territorial acquisition



Background: Compromise of 1820

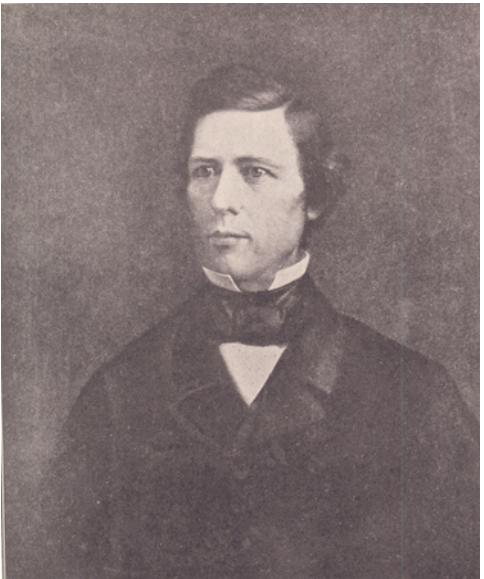
- Missouri was part of the Louisiana Purchase
 - First settled by enslavers
 - Applied for statehood in 1819
- Northern states balked
 - Argued that the Northwest Ordinance had set a precedent blocking expansion of slavery
 - Worried about balance of power in the Senate
- Southern legislators argued the Constitution did not permit the prohibition of slavery in new areas

The Missouri Compromise, 1820



Compromise of 1820

- Maine admitted as a free state
- Missouri as slave state
- Slavery prohibited in other LA Purchase territories north of the parallel 36° 30'
 - Thomas Jefferson deeply alarmed: “*...this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union...a geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once concieved [sic] and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated...*
- Mexican-American War had opened up the question again



Free Soil: David Wilmot, Democratic Congressman from Pennsylvania who introduced a law to restrict the extension of slavery into territory gained from war with Mexico

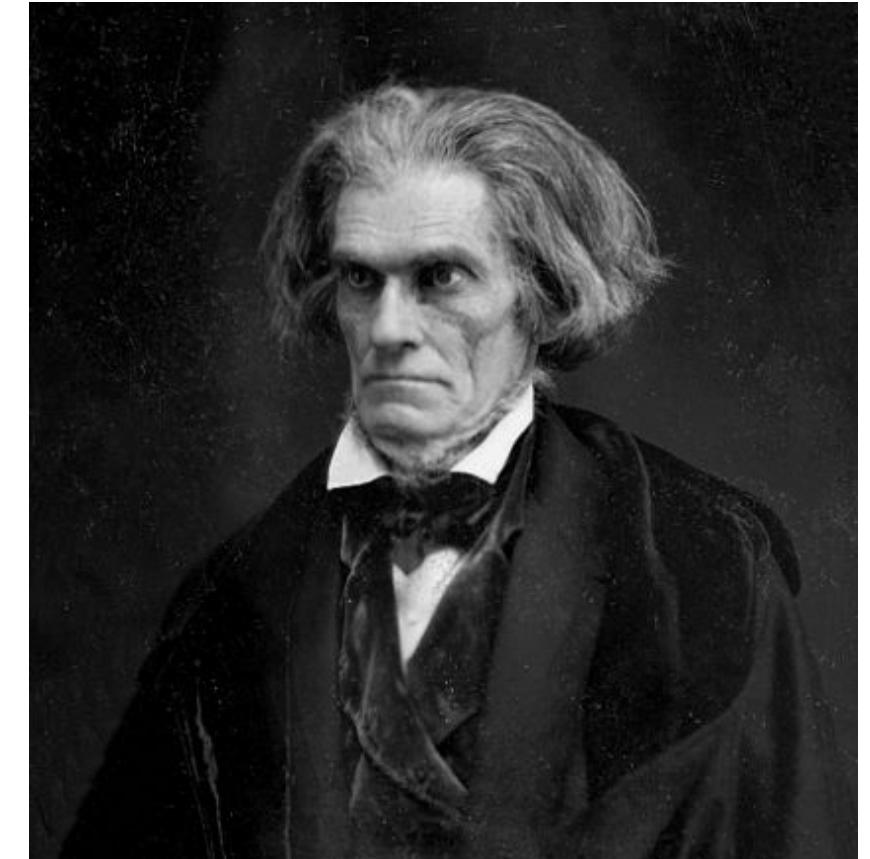
Wilmot Proviso (1846): Unsuccessful attempt to ban slavery in the new territories.

"I have no squeamish sensitiveness upon the subject of slavery, nor morbid sympathy for the slave . . . I plead for the cause of the rights of white freemen. I would preserve for free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of my own race and own color, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor."

- David Wilmot, December 1846

John C. Calhoun's reply to the Wilmot Proviso

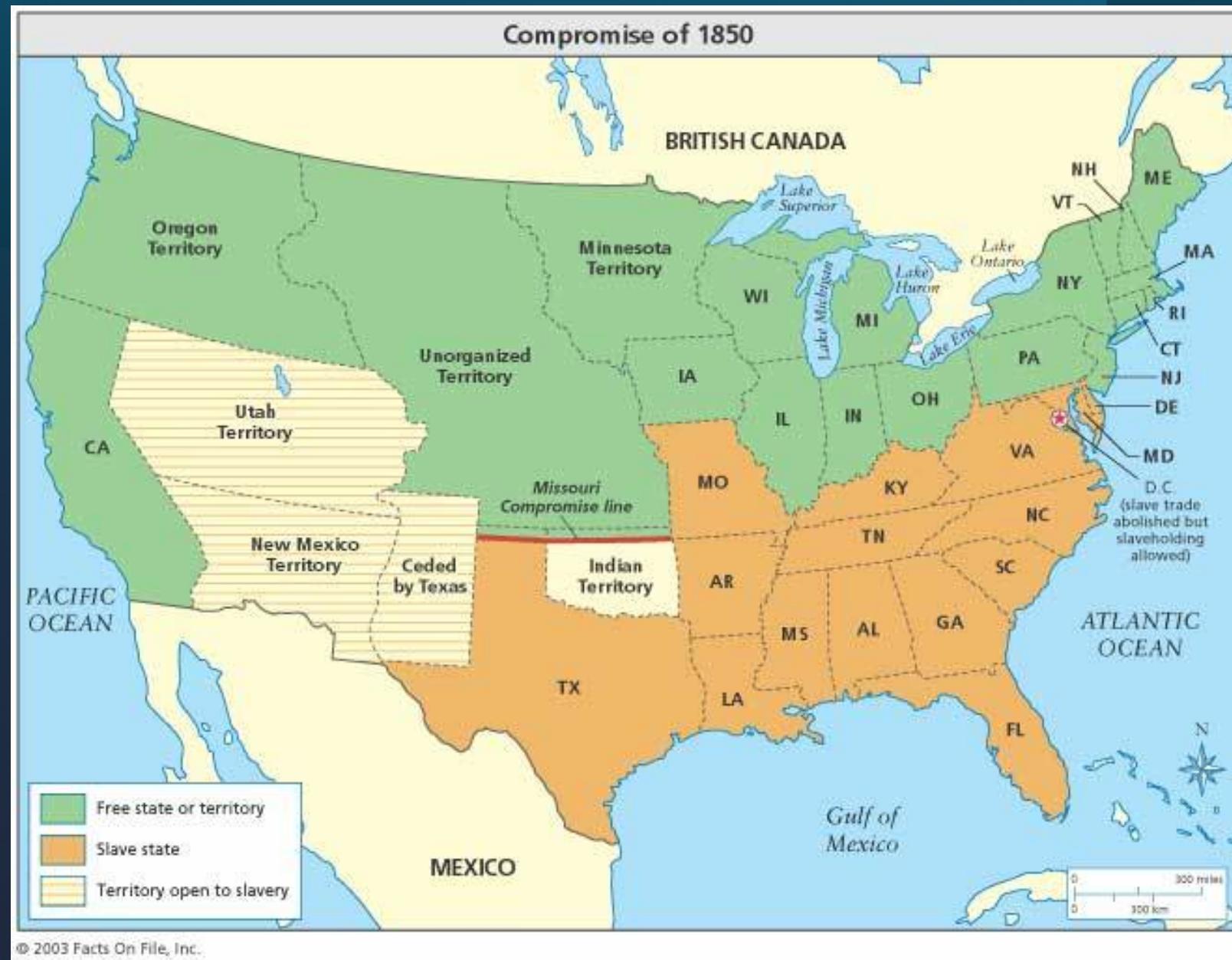
“That the enactment of any law, which should directly, or by its effects, deprive the citizens of any of the States of this Union from emigrating, with their property, into any of the territories of the United States, will make such discrimination, and would, therefore, be a violation of the constitution and the rights of the States from which such citizens emigrated, and in derogation of that perfect equality which belongs to them as members of this Union--and would tend directly to subvert the Union itself.”



Compromise of 1850

- California admitted as a free state
 - Tipped the balance: 16 free states; 15 slave states
- *BUT* all other lands acquired during the Mexican-American War to be organized as territories in which
 - “Popular sovereignty” would determine if they were admitted as slave or free states
 - In theory, this went against the Compromise of 1820
- Outlawed slave trading (but not slavery itself) in Washington, DC
- Stronger fugitive slave law
- Ended up simply forestalling the crisis

Compromise of 1850



Fugitive slave law (1850)

- Increased power of enslavers to recapture slaves
 - Backed by full authority of the federal government
- Law imposed federal penalties on citizens who assisted fugitives or refused to cooperate in their return
 - \$1,000 fine (average yearly wage about $\frac{1}{2}$ this amount)
 - Could face 6 months in jail
- Established a separate judicial system to process those accused of being runaways
 - Cases would be heard by a federal commissioner
 - Alleged slaves not allowed to testify
 - Financial incentive for commissioners to rule in favor of enslavers
- Made slavery a *national* issue in newly visible ways

Threat to Free African Americans

- Community most likely to be assisting fugitives
- Made them more vulnerable to illegal enslavement
 - This had already been an issue for decades
 - Case of Solomon Northrop (*Twelve Years a Slave*)
 - Free-born New York resident; drugged and captured in Washington, D.C.
 - Kidnapping especially extensive in Maryland and Pennsylvania; children often targeted
- Publicity surrounding such cases had led some northern states to pass “personal liberty laws”
- 1850 Fugitive Slave Law sought to override these state laws
- In response, some states enacted even more such laws
 - Some preventing local and state officials from cooperating with federal authorities

SOLOMON NORTON,

A CITIZEN OF NEW-YORK,

KIDNAPPED IN WASHINGTON CITY IN 1841,

AND

RESCUED IN 1853,

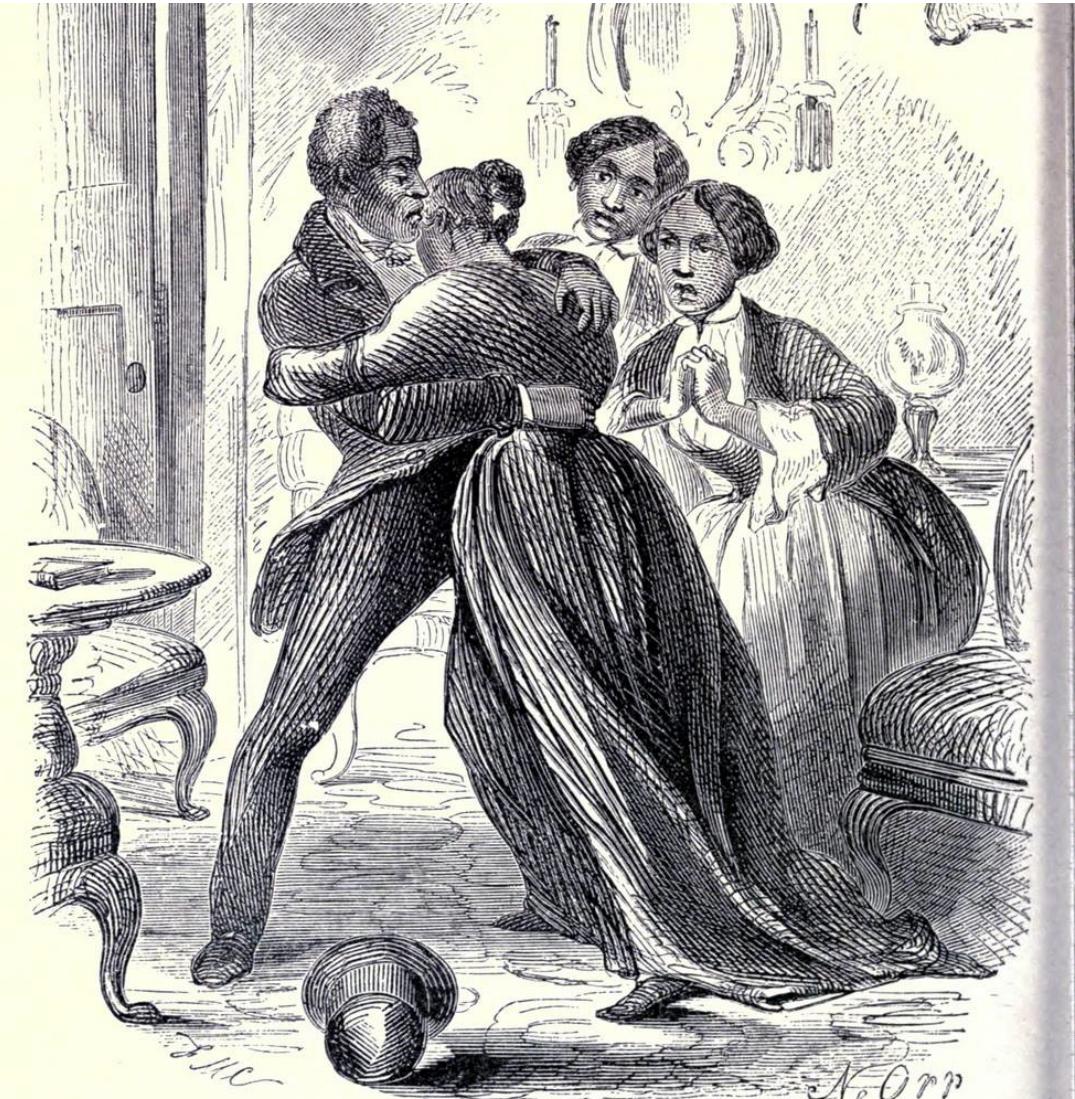
FROM A COTTON PLANTATION NEAR THE RED RIVER,
IN LOUISIANA.

(1965.93
12.6.25)

NEW YORK AND AUBURN:
MILLER, ORTON & MULLIGAN.

New York: 25 Park Row—Auburn: 107 Genesee-st.

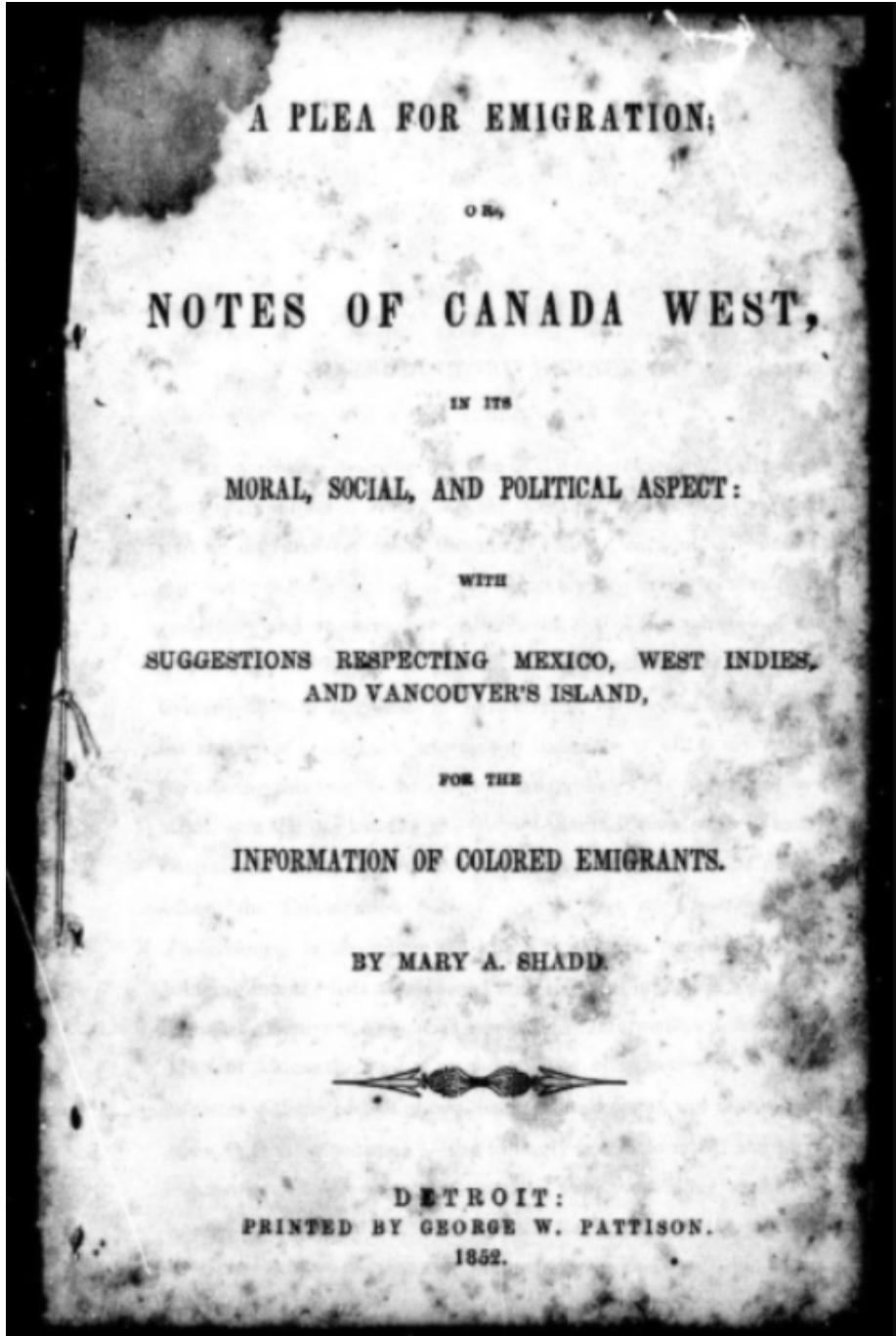
1856.



ARRIVAL HOME, AND FIRST MEETING WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN

Mary Ann
Shadd

Promoted
emigration
to Canada



Hortons' article

- How did the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law alter the views of African Americans in the northern states?
- Radicalized the community
 - Some advocated for armed self-defense and began questioning non-violence as a strategy
 - Formed militia companies
 - Frederick Douglass: “The only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make half a dozen or more dead kidnappers.”
- Some free African Americans rethought the question of colonization or emigration
 - Accelerated emigration to Canada
 - Most, but not all, still rejected idea of moving to Liberia/Africa
 - But some seriously considered areas such as Jamaica, Haiti, Mexico, and Central America
 - Notion that there was no future in the US

Widely publicized cases

- Shadrach Minkins
 - Escaped in 1850; captured in Boston in 1851
 - Abolitionists seized him; helped him escape to Canada
 - 9 indicted; jury refused to convict them
- Thomas Sims
 - 1851: 300 federal troops sent to return him to slavery
- Anthony Burns
 - 1852: Marines, cavalry, artillery prevented his rescue
 - President blocked his purchase with abolitionist money
 - Marched back into slavery with all of Boston watching
- 1850s, 322 Black freedom seekers were sent into slavery
 - Issue outraged northerners; even those who hadn't previously opposed slavery

CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE

OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the

**Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,**

For since the recent ORDER OF THE MAYOR &
ALDERMEN, they are empowered to act as

**KIDNAPPERS
AND
Slave Catchers,**

And they have already been actually employed in KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES. Therefore, if you value your LIBERTY, and the Welfare of the Fugitives among you, Shun them in every possible manner, as so many HOUNDS on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

**Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have**

1851 poster warning the Black community in Boston that local police and watchmen were aiding slave catchers

Burns rendered back into slavery



Anthony Burns memorial poster

