

Ch. 18 "Telling the Story" Notes

Column 1 : Groups / policies formed over disputes on slavery ,  
rapid search for wealth in California ( 378 - 381 )

During the presidential election of 1848 , the doctrine of popular sovereignty emerged with the Democrat's nominee , General Lewis Cass . As a veteran of the War of 1812 , he promoted the idea that stated that the sovereign people of a territory , under the general principles of the Constitution , should themselves determine their status of slavery . Although popular sovereignty had the opportunity to sweep the nation with the cruel practice , it held many persuasive appeals . First , a majority of the public liked it because it fostered the democratic tradition of self-determination . In a similar manner , politicians liked it because they would not have to deal with the pressing problem . Under this theory , politicians hoped to dissolve the national issues into smaller , local issues . On the Whig's side , their candidate Zachary Taylor ( " Hero of Buena Vista " ) did not establish a stance on slavery , but he did own scores of slaves in Louisiana . Upon evaluating these two men , antislavery advocates in the North decided to make their own political party called the Free Soil Party . This party agreed wholeheartedly with the Wilmot Proviso , as they were against slavery in the territories ( not morally , but because slavery was destroying the chances of free white workers to rise up from wage - earning dependence to the status of self - employment ) . The Free Soil Party attracted all outcasts , including the Conscience Whigs , northerners who disliked the thought of working alongside blacks ( white supremacy ) , and Democrats resentful at Polk's insistence on acquiring all of Texas . The party nominated former president Martin van Buren . Although he did not win , he received enough votes to tip the scale towards

General Zachary Taylor.

During Taylor's presidency, gold was discovered in California near Sutter's Mill in 1848. By 1849, tens of thousands of people across the globe traveled to "strike it rich" in the California Gold Rush. As the state filled with miscreants and outcasts, the decent, law-abiding citizens needing protection applied as a free state into the Union. Southern politicians arose in violent opposition, and the slavery issue threatened the preservation of the Union yet again.

Themes: Belief Systems, Peopling, Politics and Power

The election of 1848 involved not only politics but different belief systems. People joined different groups that aligned with their own stance on slavery. This issue became even more pressing when many migrated to California in their search for gold (forcing California to apply for statehood, in which its antislavery policy violated the Missouri Compromise of 1820).

Column 2: Compromises on territories and slavery, Underground Railroad movement and its consequences (381 - 387)

As the later years of the 1840s rolled around, agitation from the slavery problem continued to increase between the North and the South. Southerners were worried about California's admission tipping the political balance in government. Moreover, they were angered by the federal government's attempts in detaching Texan territory (1/2 of current day New Mexico) and the appeals from New Mexico and Utah to join the Union as free states. On top of all that, the South faced the loss of runaway slaves, many of whom were assisted to the North by the Underground Railroad. This virtual freedom train consisted

of stops ( anti-slavery homes ) through which slaves would be assisted by both black and white abolitionists to freedom in Canada. One noteworthy example of a rescuer associated with the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman , an illiterate runaway slave who brought over 300 slaves ( including her parents ) to freedom. By October 1849 , southerners announced their planning to organize a convention in Nashville , Tennessee the next year to consider seceding from the Union. This threat , along with California asking for admission , brought together a " congressional forum " made up of distinguished statesmen and the " immortal trio " of Henry Clay , John C. Calhoun , and Daniel Webster. Webster's proposition in his Seventh of March Speech of 1850 was to redesign the fugitive slave law as well as let the Mexican Cession territory decide ( popular sovereignty ) on keeping slavery or not. In conclusion , Webster decided , the best way to solve the mounting problems was to draft a compromise. Following his speech , the Compromise of 1850 was written to balance interests for both extremes. It was passed under vice president - turned - President Millard Fillmore once former President Zachary Taylor passed away ( who opposed concession ). This Compromise gave to the North the admittance of California as a free state , Texas' disputed territory to New Mexico , and the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. The South in turn received popular sovereignty for New Mexico and Utah , a \$10 million compensation fee from the federal government to Texas , and a brand - new Fugitive Slave Law. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 allowed for the capture of any blacks seen in Northern states , free or runaway , to be returned to the South. It also set high penalties for anyone to aided escaped slaves. " The Bloodhound Bill " faced strong opposition in the North and changed those from a moderate

→ partially to defy the South, partially because they saw its immorality.

stance to an abolitionist one. However, the Compromise did help to alleviate some tensions. It pushed the inevitable Civil War a decade back, giving the North time to accrue the material and moral strength that would lead to their victory. Arguably, the Compromise of 1850 won the Civil War for the Union.

### Themes: Belief Systems, Politics and Power

The heightening tensions between the North and the South were largely due to belief systems. Groups such as the Free Soil Party did exist, but the moral wrongs of slavery were made known once the harsher Fugitive Slave Law was enacted by Congress as part of the Compromise of 1850. Politics played a huge role in preserving the Union years after disputes over slavery began to occur.

Column 3: Foreign affairs, southern attempts to give advantages to slave states, foreign trade policies ( 388 - 392 )

After the Mexican - American War and the California Gold Rush of 1849, the spirit of Manifest Destiny was reignited. Americans laid their eyes on Central America as a result and spotted an isthmus near Nicaragua and Panama that held the key to a continuous Atlantic - to - Pacific transportation route. This route was particularly important because it would hold imperial sway over all maritime nations ( including the US ). Thus, a treaty between the US and New Grenada ( later Colombia ) was made, guaranteeing the Americans' right of transit across the isthmus as long as "perfect neutrality" ( so as not to interrupt the free transit of traffic was preserved. In order to satisfy the British as well ( who had already encroached on the area ), the Clayton - Bulwer Treaty of 1850 was established, which stated that neither Britain nor America

and avoid war!

would fortify or seek control over any future isthmian waterway. However, Southerners still sought after more slave territory due to the diminishing amount of territory still open to the "peculiar institution" in the US. The Central American countries of Nicaragua and Cuba were alluring. In these countries, the climate was perfect for cultivating sugar cane. They also had a large black slave population, which would restore political balance in the Senate. Attempts to wrest control by adventurer William Walker failed in just a couple of years, but Cuba made it further to admittance in the United States. After both President Polk and President Pierce's attempts to make a deal with Spain (Cuba's authority) were shot down, the Secretary of State sent for the American ministers in Spain, England, and France to strike up a deal for the acquisition of Cuba. Meeting in Ostend, Belgium, the three drew up the Ostend Manifesto, urging the administration \$120 million for Cuba. If they refused, the US would be "justified in wresting" the island from the Spanish. Eventually it leaked out into the public and Northern free-soilers opposed it vehemently, shutting down the scheme.

Upon seeing Britain's trading policy with the Chinese (and their victory in the Opium War — the fight for British traders to peddle opium into China. They gained free access to five treaty ports as well as total control over Hong Kong), the President Taylor sent Caleb Cushing to secure <sup>trading</sup> concessions for the United States. Chinese diplomats agreed, and the Treaty of Wanghia (1844) became the first formal diplomatic agreement between the US and China. Later, in 1852, President Millard Fillmore commanded Matthew C. Perry to strike a trade agreement with Japan. After coaxing them with impressive American goods (such as a miniature steam locomotives), Japan ended their

two-century period of economic isolationism and signed the Treaty of Kanagawa on March 31, 1854.

Next, the plan for a transcontinental railroad became reality. After a period of debate between the South and the North, the South received the <sup>rights to the</sup> railroad. However, in order to have the train run from Houston to Los Angeles, it would need to enter Mexican territory. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis then arranged James Gadsden to negotiate with Santa Anna. Anna agreed, and ceded to the US the Gadsden Purchase in exchange for \$10 million.

Theme: America in the World

All the terms in Column 3 fit into this theme. Both the Clayton - Bulwer Treaty and the Ostend Manifesto relate to Central America. The Opium War prompted the US to issue trade policies with Asian countries. Lastly, the Gadsden Purchase, a negotiation between the US and Mexico, expanded the US just enough to link parts of the nation together with a transcontinental railroad.

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