

# The 1850's

Sociology, Slavery



The 1850's were one of a chaotic time in American history. The North and the South were fighting over the slavery issues such as its legality, and the south's economic dependency on it. The North viewed slavery as immoral and unconstitutional, but the South wanted slavery to stay because it was the South's right to do so. Africans were long viewed by other people as the lowest beings, as property; therefore, in their favor the constitution justified slavery, William Lloyd Garrison even went as far as burning the constitution because it was a ' pro'-slavery document. The North and the South were divided but they could not let go of each other's throats. They attempted to compromise to prevent larger conflicts, but unfortunately, there were various events that happened along the way that made compromise impossible. The expression, " The 1850's were a time of attempted compromise when compromise was no longer possible, " is a true and valid description of the United States at that time, though they were able to patch some problems with compromises such as the slave trade compromise, the Missouri Compromise, and the Compromise of 1850. When the Compromise of 1850 was passed. It admitted California as a free state. The Compromise was supported by Henry Clay, who helped present the idea, but two of the larger opponents were State Representative John C. Calhoun and President Zachary Taylor. Compromise had to wait for President Taylor to die or for his term to expire because he so strongly opposed it, he later died from a stomach disease. The original sponsors of the bill either died, resigned, or their terms ended. They were replaced by a newer lot of congressmen who mostly approved of the bill, without President Taylor, passed without much more trouble. It allowed Utah and New Mexico to decide whether to be Free states

or slave states by themselves which is called popular sovereignty. It also passed the Fugitive Slave Act. This law required that authorities in the North had to assist southern slave catchers to retrieve and return slaves to their owners. Southern slave owners could get their slaves back when they escaped to the North. Southerners favored the Compromise of 1850 because of the Fugitive Slave Act could help preserve slavery in the South and protects its economy, but Northerners on the other hand, gained the admission of California as a Free state which delighted the North, and upset the South. One of the Northerners, Joshua Giddings, in his speech to Congress, condemned the ones who enacted the act as " guilty as he under whose lash the victim express. " The blacks in the North would be the most terrified ones. This act would allow slave owners to capture free blacks and put them back into Southern plantations. This led to the creation of resistance groups in the North. This Compromise of 1850 attempted to hold the Union but it failed because it created even more hatred of the North for the South and the South for the North, it also nullified the Missouri Compromise, which was to keep slavery below 36<sup>^</sup>, 30'. The Election of 1852 damaged the Whig party and left the democrats in power, but they will soon crash as well. (Doc. A, B, C, D) The Kansas — Nebraska Act was a very serious, critical, and crucial piece of legislature. It causes a lot of debates and arguing that was eventually settled. With this act the Missouri Compromise was nullified. It was a plot to coax slavery into the North. Nebraska Territory would be split into the Kansas and Nebraska Territories, which cause another argument, this one over slavery, which would eventually be settled through popular sovereignty. The South wanted them

to be Slave states, and the North wanted them to be Free states, the North also would have liked if the territories would have nothing to do with the black people. They eventually settled on letting the territories decide for themselves through popular sovereignty. Once this was decided the Southerners and the Northerners pulled more and more people in so they could have their way in the territories. This even causes a mini Civil War in Kansas between slave holders and the abolitionists. The Kansas-Nebraska act highlighted problems with America and the Democratic Party. It created an even larger tear between the North and the South. The John Brown Raids on Harpers Ferry in Virginia played a large role in this mini civil war; they made the southerners feel like they were not safe while still in America, no matter where they were. It eventually ended with the popular sovereignty saying it would become a free Territory. (Doc. A, B, E) The long hatred of the North for slavery in the South was partially about morals. The rest was about economic and jobs. The North started the slave trading system, but soon found out that their rocky soil was not fit for great cash crop plantations. The South picked up on the slave trading and the use of slaves thus flourished. The North obviously was not really jealous of the South's plantations since they had huge factories. The only reason Northerners hated the South was that it prevented the South from industrializing. Northerners who had no jobs in the crowded Northern factories could not look to the South for jobs because all the slaves took them. Abolitionists spread news about how all the slaves took jobs from white men and how immoral slavery was. They aroused a very strong feeling against slavery in the North. Webster commented on the abolitionists works during his speech in the Senate, March 7, 1850, "...

they created great agitation in the North against Southern slavery. " Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin created a bad impression about slavery and attacked the Fugitive Slave Act. The abolitionists and anti-slavery American writers certainly made it impossible for the North to compromise with the South on the slavery issue for it affects everybody, not just the wealthy ones. (Doc. E) Compromising was and still is essential for the United States to stay as a whole. Stephen Douglas made a remark about compromise in his speech in Alton, Illinois, "... Our fathers knew, when they made the government, that the laws and institutions which were well adapted to the green mountains of Vermont, were unsuited to the rice plantations of South Carolina. " In order for those laws of Vermont to be suite to South Carolina, Vermont has to give up something and South Carolina has to give something back, like obeying those laws for instant. The government was built upon compromise. Before the Civil War and in Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, Lincoln repeatedly said, " I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so..." Lincoln was being persuasive in getting the South states to stay in the Union. He knew that slavery will be abolished soon but it was not the time yet. Lincoln went about winning the Congressmen seat by figuratively trapping Douglas; he cornered him with questions during the Lincoln-Douglas Debates on slavery. Lincoln thought it was wrong but wanted to leave it alone, but Douglas had been tied to the Kansas-Nebraska Act which almost allowed slavery in an anti-slavery North but didn't thanks to popular sovereignty, which is a decision that is decided by its people. Lincoln claimed he was going against the North by

letting slaves in the Northern Territories, Lincoln (Republican) went on to lose the Congress seat to Douglas but later beat him for the Presidency of 1860. Again, in an attempt to save the Union, this time by Lincoln, failed because the South knew Lincoln would abolish slavery one way or another. They knew he would do so because of his speech given at the Republican state convention in Springfield, Illinois. He said, "...I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free...It will become all one thing, or all the other...will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States..." (Doc. F, I, B) These times caused many shifts, splits, and rivalries among every one. One major outcome was the Republican Party. It was formed by the Free-Soilers and the Free-Laborers after the Whigs dissembled. The Republicans had many strong Northern views but also took some of the Southern views into affect. They were strongly anti-slavery but also against free blacks, in a way you could call them the racist abolitionist. They were against the Black people in general, free or slave. (Doc. I, H) Compromise was the way to go in a complex world of politicians. However, when compromise does not work, one side has to win to get what it wants. The United States was built upon compromises. Those compromises succeeded because both sides usually had one common enemy or one common goal. The first politics of the United States knew that slavery would stay or cease of exist, one way or another. But they still came together and created compromises, hoping to keep things the way they are and to avoid larger conflicts. They knew that the free soilers or the proslavery would have at least one more state than the other one day. Land is limited so they would not be able to add territories into the Union by two. The Union broke

up, not because of the Constitution but because of extremism, sectional differences, slavery and economic differences. The North and the South were to very different places, with very different logic and thinking styles, so how they went about doing something was different from one another. They were already different in the economy, slavery, and how they thought and now they add extremism to things, causing the Union to split off into the North and the South, causing Civil War. In conclusion, the 1850's were a time when compromise was no longer possible, but the politicians pathetically tried to compromise to avoid bigger catastrophes but led to the biggest catastrophe possible of the time period, Civil War.