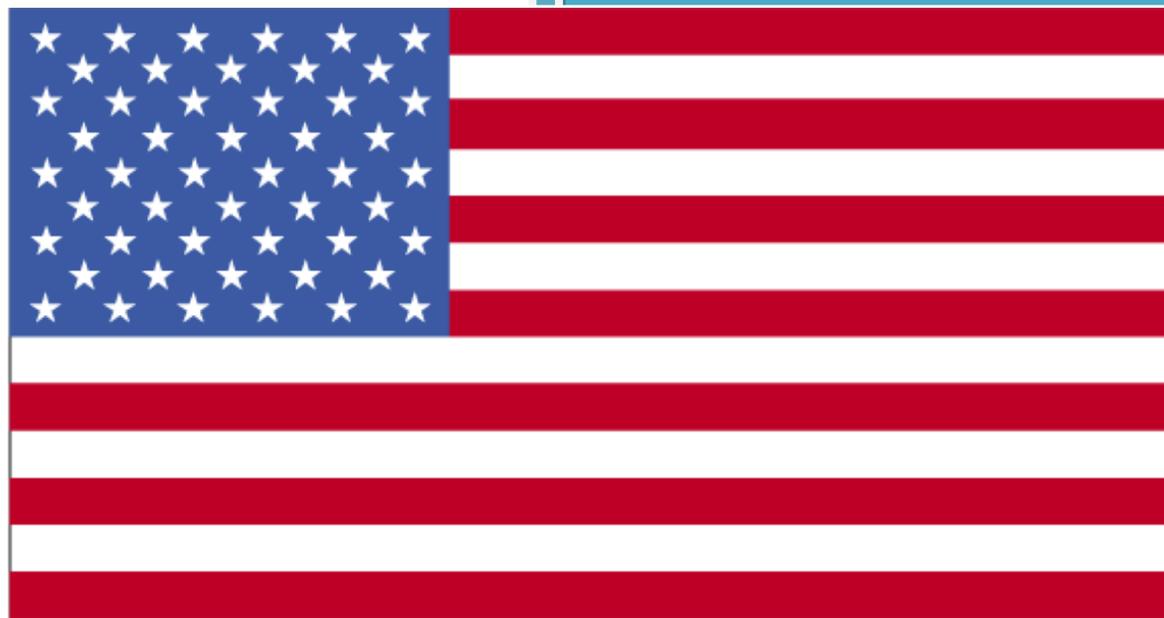


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Sectional Conflict



United States History

Workbook Series

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Workbook #6

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SECTIONAL CONFLICT:

United States History Workbook #6

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1 Two Americas

No visitor to the United States left a more enduring record of his travels and observations than the French writer and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, whose *Democracy in America*, first published in 1835, remains one of the most trenchant and insightful analyses of American social and political practices. Tocqueville was far too shrewd an observer to be uncritical about the United States, but his verdict was fundamentally positive. "The government of a democracy brings the notion of political rights to the level of the humblest citizens," he wrote, "just as the dissemination of wealth brings the notion of property within the reach of all men." Nonetheless, Tocqueville was only one in the first of a long line of thinkers to worry whether such rough equality could survive in the face of a growing factory system that threatened to create divisions between industrial workers and a new business elite.

Other travelers marveled at the growth and vitality of the country, where they could see "everywhere the most unequivocal proofs of prosperity and rapid progress in agriculture, commerce, and great public works." But such optimistic views of the American experiment were by no means universal. One skeptic was the English novelist Charles Dickens, who first visited the United States in 1841-42. "This is

not the Republic I came to see," he wrote in a letter. "This is not the Republic of my imagination. ... The more I think of its youth and strength, the poorer and more trifling in a thousand respects, it appears in my eyes. In everything of which it has made a boast - excepting its education of the people, and its care for poor children - it sinks immeasurably below the level I had placed it upon."

Dickens was not alone. America in the 19th century, as throughout its history, generated expectations and passions that often conflicted with a reality at once more mundane and more complex. The young nation's size and diversity defied easy generalization and invited contradiction: America was both a freedom-loving and slave-holding society, a nation of expansive and primitive frontiers, a society with cities built on growing commerce and industrialization.

Questions

1. Who wrote *Democracy in America* (1835)?

2. What famous English novelist was skeptical about the United States following a visit in 1841-1842?

3. Describe the contradictions present in 19th-century America.

2 Lands of Promise

By 1850 the national territory stretched over forest, plain, and mountain. Within its far-flung limits dwelt 23 million people in a Union comprising 31 states. In the East, industry boomed. In the Midwest and the South, agriculture flourished. After 1849 the gold mines of California poured their precious ore into the channels of trade.

New England and the Middle Atlantic states were the main centers of manufacturing, commerce, and finance. Principal products of

these areas were textiles, lumber, clothing, machinery, leather, and woolen goods. The maritime trade had reached the height of its prosperity; vessels flying the American flag plied the oceans, distributing wares of all nations.

The South, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River and beyond, featured an economy centered on agriculture. Tobacco was important in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina. In South Carolina, rice was an abundant crop. The climate and soil of Louisiana encouraged the cultivation of sugar. But cotton eventually became the dominant commodity and the one with which the South was identified. By 1850 the American South grew more than 80 percent of the world's cotton. Slaves cultivated all these crops.

The Midwest, with its boundless prairies and swiftly growing population, flourished. Europe and the older settled parts of America demanded its wheat and meat products. The introduction of labor-saving implements - notably the McCormick reaper (a machine to cut and harvest grain) - made possible an unparalleled increase in grain production. The nation's wheat crops swelled from some 35 million hectoliters in 1850 to nearly 61 million in 1860, more than half grown in the Midwest.

An important stimulus to the country's prosperity was the great improvement in transportation facilities; from 1850 to 1857 the

Appalachian Mountain barrier was pierced by five railway trunk lines linking the Midwest and the Northeast. These links established the economic interests that would undergird the political alliance of the Union from 1861 to 1865. The South lagged behind. It was not until the late 1850s that a continuous line ran through the mountains connecting the lower Mississippi River area with the southern Atlantic seaboard.

Questions

1. New England and the Southern states were the main centers of manufacturing, commerce, and finance in the mid-1800s.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. By 1850, what percentage of the world's cotton was grown in the American South?

3. An important transportation stimulus to the country's prosperity was the _____.
 - a. bike path
 - b. mountain trail
 - c. railroad
 - d. rest stop

3 Slavery and Sectionalism

One overriding issue exacerbated the regional and economic differences between North and South: slavery. Resenting the large profits amassed by Northern businessmen from marketing the cotton crop, many Southerners attributed the backwardness of their own section to Northern aggrandizement. Many Northerners, on the other hand, declared that slavery – the "peculiar institution" that the South regarded as essential to its economy – was largely responsible for the region's relative financial and industrial backwardness.

As far back as the Missouri Compromise in 1819, sectional lines had been steadily hardening on the slavery question. In the North, sentiment for outright abolition grew increasingly powerful. Southerners in general felt little guilt about slavery and defended it vehemently. In some seaboard areas, slavery by 1850 was well over 200 years

old; it was an integral part of the basic economy of the region.

Although the 1860 census showed that there were nearly four million slaves out of a total population of 12.3 million in the 15 slave states, only a minority of Southern whites owned slaves. There were some 385,000 slave owners out of about 1.5 million white families. Fifty percent of these slave owners owned no more than five slaves. Twelve percent owned 20 or more slaves, the number defined as turning a farmer into a planter. Three-quarters of Southern white families, including the "poor whites," those on the lowest rung of Southern society, owned no slaves.

It is easy to understand the interest of the planters in slave holding. But the yeomen and poor whites supported the institution of slavery as well. They feared that, if freed, blacks would compete with them economically and challenge their higher social status. Southern whites defended slavery not simply on the basis of economic necessity but out of a visceral dedication to white supremacy.

As they fought the weight of Northern opinion, political leaders of the South, the professional classes, and most of the clergy now no longer apologized for slavery but championed it. Southern publicists insisted, for example, that the relationship between capital and labor was more humane under the slavery

system than under the wage system of the North.

Before 1830 the old patriarchal system of plantation government, with its personal supervision of the slaves by their owners or masters, was still characteristic. Gradually, however, with the introduction of large-scale cotton production in the lower South, the master gradually ceased to exercise close personal supervision over his slaves, and employed professional overseers charged with exacting from slaves a maximum amount of work. In such circumstances, slavery could become a system of brutality and coercion in which beatings and the breakup of families through the sale of individuals were commonplace. In other settings, however, it could be much milder.

In the end, however, the most trenchant criticism of slavery was not the behavior of individual masters and overseers. Systematically treating African-American laborers as if they were domestic animals, slavery, the abolitionists pointed out, violated every human being's inalienable right to be free.

Questions

1. What overriding issue exacerbated the regional and economic differences between North and South?

2. Approximately what fraction of the fifteen slave states' total population was comprised of slaves?

3. Why did Southern yeomen and poor whites support the institution of slavery?

4. Why were so many people opposed to the institution of slavery?

4 The Abolitionists

In national politics, Southerners chiefly sought protection and enlargement of the interests represented by the cotton/slavery system. They sought territorial expansion because the wastefulness of cultivating a single crop, cotton, rapidly exhausted the soil, increasing the need for new fertile lands. Moreover, new territory would establish a basis for additional slave states to offset the admission of new free states. Antislavery Northerners saw in the Southern view a conspiracy for proslavery aggrandizement. In the 1830s their opposition became fierce.

An earlier antislavery movement, an offshoot of the American Revolution, had won its last victory in 1808 when Congress abolished the slave trade with Africa. Thereafter, opposition came largely from the Quakers, who kept up a mild but ineffectual protest. Meanwhile, the cotton gin and

westward expansion into the Mississippi delta region created an increasing demand for slaves.

The abolitionist movement that emerged in the early 1830s was combative, uncompromising, and insistent upon an immediate end to slavery. This approach found a leader in William Lloyd Garrison, a young man from Massachusetts, who combined the heroism of a martyr with the crusading zeal of a demagogue. On January 1, 1831, Garrison produced the first issue of his newspaper, *The Liberator*, which bore the announcement: "I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. ... On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. ... I am in earnest - I will not equivocate - I will not excuse - I will not retreat a single inch - **AND I WILL BE HEARD.**"

Garrison's sensational methods awakened Northerners to the evil in an institution many had long come to regard as unchangeable. He sought to hold up to public gaze the most repulsive aspects of slavery and to castigate slave holders as torturers and traffickers in human life. He recognized no rights of the masters, acknowledged no compromise, tolerated no delay. Other abolitionists, unwilling to subscribe to his law-defying tactics, held that reform should be accomplished by legal and peaceful means. Garrison was joined by another powerful voice,

that of Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave who galvanized Northern audiences. Theodore Dwight Weld and many other abolitionists crusaded against slavery in the states of the old Northwest Territory with evangelical zeal.

One activity of the movement involved helping slaves escape to safe refuges in the North or over the border into Canada. The "Underground Railroad," an elaborate network of secret routes, was firmly established in the 1830s in all parts of the North. In Ohio alone, from 1830 to 1860, as many as 40,000 fugitive slaves were helped to freedom. The number of local antislavery societies increased at such a rate that by 1838 there were about 1,350 with a membership of perhaps 250,000.

Most Northerners nonetheless either held themselves aloof from the abolitionist movement or actively opposed it. In 1837, for example, a mob attacked and killed the antislavery editor Elijah P. Lovejoy in Alton, Illinois. Still, Southern repression of free speech allowed the abolitionists to link the slavery issue with the cause of civil liberties for whites. In 1835 an angry mob destroyed abolitionist literature in the Charleston, South Carolina, post office. When the postmaster-general stated he would not enforce delivery of abolitionist material, bitter debates ensued in Congress. Abolitionists flooded Congress with petitions calling for action against slavery. In

1836 the House voted to table such petitions automatically, thus effectively killing them. Former President John Quincy Adams, elected to the House of Representatives in 1830, fought this so-called gag rule as a violation of the First Amendment, finally winning its repeal in 1844.

Questions

1. Why did Southerners seek territorial expansion?

2. Describe the abolitionist movement that emerged in the early 1830s.

3. What was the name of William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper?

4. What escaped slave galvanized Northern audiences?

5. Describe the Underground Railroad.

6. Describe the "so-called gag rule" against petitions calling for action against slavery.

5 Texas and War with Mexico

Throughout the 1820s, Americans settled in the vast territory of Texas, often with land grants from the Mexican government. However, their numbers soon alarmed the

authorities, who prohibited further immigration in 1830. In 1834 General Antonio López de Santa Anna established a dictatorship in Mexico, and the following year Texans revolted. Santa Anna defeated the American rebels at the celebrated siege of the Alamo in early 1836, but Texans under Sam Houston destroyed the Mexican Army and captured Santa Anna a month later at the Battle of San Jacinto, ensuring Texan independence.

For almost a decade, Texas remained an independent republic, largely because its annexation as a huge new slave state would disrupt the increasingly precarious balance of political power in the United States. In 1845, President James K. Polk, narrowly elected on a platform of westward expansion, brought the Republic of Texas into the Union. Polk's move was the first gambit in a larger design. Texas claimed that its border with Mexico was the Rio Grande; Mexico argued that the border stood far to the north along the Nueces River. Meanwhile, settlers were flooding into the territories of New Mexico and California. Many Americans claimed that the United States had a "manifest destiny" to expand westward to the Pacific Ocean.

U.S. attempts to purchase from Mexico the New Mexico and California territories failed. In 1846, after a clash of Mexican and U.S. troops along the Rio Grande, the United States declared war. American troops

occupied the lightly populated territory of New Mexico, then supported a revolt of settlers in California. A U.S. force under Zachary Taylor invaded Mexico, winning victories at Monterrey and Buena Vista, but failing to bring the Mexicans to the negotiating table. In March 1847, a U.S. Army commanded by Winfield Scott landed near Veracruz on Mexico's east coast, and fought its way to Mexico City. The United States dictated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in which Mexico ceded what would become the American Southwest region and California for \$15 million.

The war was a training ground for American officers who would later fight on both sides in the Civil War. It was also politically divisive. Polk, in a simultaneous facedown with Great Britain, had achieved British recognition of American sovereignty in the Pacific Northwest to the 49th parallel. Still, antislavery forces, mainly among the Whigs, attacked Polk's expansion as a proslavery plot.

With the conclusion of the Mexican War, the United States gained a vast new territory of 1.36 million square kilometers encompassing the present-day states of New Mexico, Nevada, California, Utah, most of Arizona, and portions of Colorado and Wyoming. The nation also faced a revival of the most explosive question in American politics of the time: Would the new territories be slave or free?

Questions

1. Who established a dictatorship in Mexico in 1834?

2. Who triumphed at the Alamo (1836)?

- a. Mexican Army
- b. Texan Rebels

3. Who led Texans to defeat the Mexican Army at the Battle of San Jacinto (1836)?

4. The Republic of Texas joined the United States under whose presidency?

5. Define the term “manifest destiny.”

6. Describe the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

7. Which of the following states was **not** gained by the U.S. as a result of the Mexican War?

- a. California
- b. Idaho
- c. Nevada
- d. Utah

6 The Compromise of 1850

Until 1845, it had seemed likely that slavery would be confined to the areas where it already existed. It had been given limits by the Missouri Compromise in 1820 and had no opportunity to overstep them. The new territories made renewed expansion of slavery a real likelihood.

Many Northerners believed that if not allowed to spread, slavery would ultimately decline and die. To justify their opposition to adding new slave states, they pointed to the statements of Washington and Jefferson, and

to the Ordinance of 1787, which forbade the extension of slavery into the Northwest. Texas, which already permitted slavery, naturally entered the Union as a slave state. But the California, New Mexico, and Utah territories did not have slavery. From the beginning, there were strongly conflicting opinions on whether they should.

Southerners urged that all the lands acquired from Mexico should be thrown open to slave holders. Antislavery Northerners demanded that all the new regions be closed to slavery. One group of moderates suggested that the Missouri Compromise line be extended to the Pacific with free states north of it and slave states to the south. Another group proposed that the question be left to "popular sovereignty." The government should permit settlers to enter the new territory with or without slaves as they pleased. When the time came to organize the region into states, the people themselves could decide.

Despite the vitality of the abolitionist movement, most Northerners were unwilling to challenge the existence of slavery in the South. Many, however, were against its expansion. In 1848 nearly 300,000 men voted for the candidates of a new Free Soil Party, which declared that the best policy was "to limit, localize, and discourage slavery." In the immediate aftermath of the war with Mexico,

however, popular sovereignty had considerable appeal.

In January 1848 the discovery of gold in California precipitated a headlong rush of settlers, more than 80,000 in the single year of 1849. Congress had to determine the status of this new region quickly in order to establish an organized government. The venerable Kentucky Senator Henry Clay, who twice before in times of crisis had come forward with compromise arrangements, advanced a complicated and carefully balanced plan. His old Massachusetts rival, Daniel Webster, supported it. Illinois Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the leading advocate of popular sovereignty, did much of the work in guiding it through Congress.

The Compromise of 1850 contained the following provisions: (1) California was admitted to the Union as a free state; (2) the remainder of the Mexican cession was divided into the two territories of New Mexico and Utah and organized without mention of slavery; (3) the claim of Texas to a portion of New Mexico was satisfied by a payment of \$10 million; (4) new legislation (the Fugitive Slave Act) was passed to apprehend runaway slaves and return them to their masters; and (5) the buying and selling of slaves (but not slavery) was abolished in the District of Columbia.

The country breathed a sigh of relief. For the next three years, the compromise

seemed to settle nearly all differences. The new Fugitive Slave Law, however, was an immediate source of tension. It deeply offended many Northerners, who refused to have any part in catching slaves. Some actively and violently obstructed its enforcement. The Underground Railroad became more efficient and daring than ever.

Questions

1. Describe the arguments against allowing slavery in the new Western states.

2. Define the term “popular sovereignty.”

3. What was the Free Soil Party’s stance on slavery?

4. Who crafted the Compromise of 1850?

5. Describe the Fugitive Slave Act.

congressional delegation, backed by Southerners, blocked all efforts to organize the region.

At this point, Stephen A. Douglas enraged all free-soil supporters. Douglas argued that the Compromise of 1850, having left Utah and New Mexico free to resolve the slavery issue for themselves, superseded the Missouri Compromise. His plan called for two territories, Kansas and Nebraska. It permitted settlers to carry slaves into them and eventually to determine whether they should enter the Union as free or slave states.

Douglas's opponents accused him of currying favor with the South in order to gain the presidency in 1856. The free-soil movement, which had seemed to be in decline, reemerged with greater momentum than ever. Yet in May 1854, Douglas's plan, in the form of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed Congress to be signed by President Franklin Pierce. Southern enthusiasts celebrated with cannon fire. But when Douglas subsequently visited Chicago to speak in his own defense, the ships in the harbor lowered their flags to half-mast, the church bells tolled for an hour, and a crowd of 10,000 hooted so loudly that he could not make himself heard.

The immediate results of Douglas's ill-starred measure were momentous. The Whig Party, which had straddled the question of slavery expansion, sank to its death, and in its

stead a powerful new organization arose, the Republican Party, whose primary demand was that slavery be excluded from all the territories. In 1856, it nominated John Fremont, whose expeditions into the Far West had won him renown. Fremont lost the election, but the new party swept a great part of the North. Such free-soil leaders as Salmon P. Chase and William Seward exerted greater influence than ever. Along with them appeared a tall, lanky Illinois attorney, Abraham Lincoln.

Meanwhile, the flow of both Southern slave holders and antislavery families into Kansas resulted in armed conflict. Soon the territory was being called "bleeding Kansas." The Supreme Court made things worse with its infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* decision.

Scott was a Missouri slave who, some 20 years earlier, had been taken by his master to live in Illinois and the Wisconsin Territory; in both places, slavery was banned. Returning to Missouri and becoming discontented with his life there, Scott sued for liberation on the ground of his residence on free soil. A majority of the Supreme Court – dominated by Southerners – decided that Scott lacked standing in court because he was not a citizen; that the laws of a free state (Illinois) had no effect on his status because he was the resident of a slave state (Missouri); and that slave holders had the right to take their "property" anywhere in the federal territories. Thus,

Congress could not restrict the expansion of slavery. This last assertion invalidated former compromises on slavery and made new ones impossible to craft.

The *Dred Scott* decision stirred fierce resentment throughout the North. Never before had the Court been so bitterly condemned. For Southern Democrats, the decision was a great victory, since it gave judicial sanction to their justification of slavery throughout the territories.

Questions

1. Who published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852?

2. Why did many in Missouri object to letting Kansas become a free territory?

3. Describe the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854).

4. What was the primary demand of the newly-founded Republican Party?

5. List the three reasons why the Supreme Court ruled against Scott in their infamous 1857 decision.

8 Lincoln, Douglas, and Brown

Abraham Lincoln had long regarded slavery as an evil. As early as 1854 in a widely publicized speech, he declared that all national legislation should be framed on the principle that slavery was to be restricted and eventually abolished. He contended also that the principle of popular sovereignty was false, for slavery in the western territories was the concern not only of the local inhabitants but of the United States as a whole.

In 1858 Lincoln opposed Stephen A. Douglas for election to the U.S. Senate from Illinois. In the first paragraph of his opening campaign speech, on June 17, Lincoln struck the keynote of American history for the seven years to follow:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved - I do not expect the house to fall - but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

Lincoln and Douglas engaged in a series of seven debates in the ensuing months of 1858. Senator Douglas, known as the "Little Giant," had an enviable reputation as an orator, but he met his match in Lincoln, who

eloquently challenged Douglas's concept of popular sovereignty. In the end, Douglas won the election by a small margin, but Lincoln had achieved stature as a national figure.

By then events were spinning out of control. On the night of October 16, 1859, John Brown, an antislavery fanatic who had captured and killed five proslavery settlers in Kansas three years before, led a band of followers in an attack on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry (in what is now West Virginia). Brown's goal was to use the weapons seized to lead a slave uprising. After two days of fighting, Brown and his surviving men were taken prisoner by a force of U.S. Marines commanded by Colonel Robert E. Lee.

Brown's attempt confirmed the worst fears of many Southerners. Antislavery activists, on the other hand, generally hailed Brown as a martyr to a great cause. Virginia put Brown on trial for conspiracy, treason, and murder. On December 2, 1859, he was hanged. Although most Northerners had initially condemned him, increasing numbers were coming to accept his view that he had been an instrument in the hand of God.

Questions

1. Abraham Lincoln supported slavery.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. What did John Brown do at Harper’s Ferry?

3. Imagine that you are an American living in 1859. How would you view John Brown’s actions? Explain your reaction.

Scott case to accept Douglas's popular sovereignty, split from the party and nominated Vice President John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky for president. Stephen A. Douglas was the nominee of northern Democrats. Diehard Whigs from the border states, formed into the Constitutional Union Party, nominated John C. Bell of Tennessee.

Lincoln and Douglas competed in the North, Breckenridge and Bell in the South. Lincoln won only 39 percent of the popular vote, but had a clear majority of 180 electoral votes, carrying all 18 free states. Bell won Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia; Breckenridge took the other slave states except for Missouri, which was won by Douglas. Despite his poor showing, Douglas trailed only Lincoln in the popular vote.

Questions

1. Who was the Republican Party’s presidential candidate in 1860?
 - a. Abraham Lincoln
 - b. John C. Bell
 - c. John C. Breckenridge
 - d. Stephen A. Douglas
2. Who won the 1860 presidential election with only 39% of the popular vote?

9 The 1860 Election

In 1860 the Republican Party nominated Abraham Lincoln as its candidate for president. The Republican platform declared that slavery could spread no farther, promised a tariff for the protection of industry, and pledged the enactment of a law granting free homesteads to settlers who would help in the opening of the West. Southern Democrats, unwilling in the wake of the *Dred*