

## Chapter 201 – Pierce’s Term Gets Underway



**Dates:**  
1853-1857

**Sections:**

- Pierce Selects A Strong Cabinet
- Franklin Pierce’s Inaugural Address
- Overview Of Franklin Pierce’s Term

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### Pierce Selects A Strong Cabinet



Caleb Cushing (1800-1879)

As Pierce considers his cabinet options he is acutely aware of the fact that he was nobody’s first choice of those at the Baltimore convention. He also recognizes that while the Whigs may have collapsed for good with Scott’s defeat, the potential for rifts within his own Democrats need to be addressed. In the North, some residual animus remains in New York between the so-called “Hunkers” and the “Barnburners,” although the two Van Burens and John Dix have abandoned their temporary flight to the Free Soil Party. But the overriding fault line lies between Democrats in the North vs. the South, even after the 1850 Compromise Bill. Northerners are upset over the presence of slave catchers in their towns. Southerners feel that their constitutional rights to “property in slaves” has still not been affirmed by Congress, and that “popular sovereignty” is hardly the guarantee they desire.

The overriding fear then among Southerners is that slavery will be banned in the new Mexican Cession lands. John Calhoun and the Fire-Eaters have been warning of this all along, and now the prospect is sinking in more broadly, especially across the lower South. Pierce’s challenge will be to try to hold the moderate Democrats together and prevent an open revolt among the Southern outliers.

### Differing Factions Within The Democratic Party In 1852

<b>Southern Outliers</b>	<b>Positions</b>	<b>People</b>
Fire-Eaters	Oppose 1850 Compromise & threaten secession	Rhett, Hammond, Yancey
Unionists	Reservations about 1850, but not favoring secession	Cobb, Hunter
<b>Moderates Across Sections</b>	Pro-Compromise and party solidarity	Pierce, Buchanan, Cass, Douglas, Marcy, Davis, Benton, Houston, Johnson, Breckinridge, Guthrie, Dickinson, the Van Burens

Within this context, Pierce sees his first task as trying to choose a cabinet acceptable to all sides.

For Secretary of State he settles on William Marcy, a sixty-six year old New Yorker, who served as Senator and Governor of his state, joined Polk's cabinet as Secretary of War and then sought the presidential nomination in Baltimore, backing the 1850 Bill and party unification.

Next comes Jefferson Davis who has opposed the Compromise, but whose his military career makes him an obvious choice for the War Department. He will also link Pierce into various States Rights factions, tempered by his firm commitment to the Union.

His choice for Attorney General is his Mexican War acquaintance, Caleb Cushing, a renowned Northern Doughface, whose history includes family wealth, Harvard, many years as a Whig before being drummed out for supporting John Tyler. He has also been a Minister to China, and a foursquare supporter of the 1850 Bill.

Treasury goes to the Kentucky businessman, "hard money" banker, college president and developer of the city of Louisville, James Guthrie. He is sixty years old and frequently touted as a White House contender. After his four years in the job, many will call him the best Treasury leader since Hamilton.

After promoting Marcy for State and landing the job he wants as Ambassador to the UK, James Buchanan weighs in again with Pierce on behalf of naming a Roman Catholic, Pennsylvania Judge James Campbell as Postmaster General. This is a controversial pick aimed at locking in future votes from the growing European immigrant groups.

James Dobbins, the North Carolinian House member whose last minute praise in Baltimore led to Pierce's victory, earns his reward as Secretary of the Navy – while long-term friend of Lewis Cass and twice Governor of Michigan, Robert McClelland, gets the Interior posting.

### Franklin Pierce's Cabinet

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Home State</b>
Secretary of State	William Marcy	New York
Secretary of Treasury	James Guthrie	Kentucky
Secretary of War	Jefferson Davis	Mississippi
Attorney General	Caleb Cushing	Massachusetts
Secretary of Navy	James Dobbin	North Carolina
Postmaster General	James Campbell	Pennsylvania
Secretary of Interior	Robert McClelland	Michigan

In the end, Pierce's patchwork quilt cabinet will serve him well. All seven men complete their entire terms with effort and integrity; they come to respect their President; and two who hardly know him in 1852, Marcy and Davis, become his lifelong friends.

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Date: March 4, 1853

### Franklin Pierce's Inaugural Address



Looking Up Pennsylvania Avenue From The White House To The Capitol

Pierce's Inaugural ceremonies play out on a chilly overcast day in Washington marked by intermittent snow. After an open carriage ride up Pennsylvania Avenue to the capitol, he steps onto the east portico to deliver his remarks. The speech runs to some 3300 words, and, true to form, he delivers it all from memory.

Only two months have passed since the tragic loss of his only remaining child, and his opening lines are both touching and revealing under the circumstances:

*My Countrymen: It a relief to feel that no heart but my own can know the personal regret and bitter sorrow over which I have been borne to a position so suitable for others rather than desirable for myself... You have summoned me in my weakness; you must sustain me by your strength.*

Like many a predecessor, he begins by reflecting on the wisdom and accomplishments of the founders.

*The thoughts of the men of that day were as practical as their sentiments were patriotic. They wasted no portion of their energies upon idle and delusive speculations, but with a firm and fearless step advanced beyond the governmental landmarks which had hitherto circumscribed the limits of human freedom... The oppressed throughout the world from that day to the present have turned their eyes hitherward, not to find those lights extinguished or to fear lest they should wane, but to be constantly cheered by their steady and increasing radiance.*

His ties to the "Young America" movement and his belief in Manifest Destiny are captured in a full-throated endorsement of further geographical expansion.

*The stars upon your banner have become nearly threefold their original number; your densely populated possessions skirt the shores of the two great oceans... The policy of my Administration will not be controlled by any timid forebodings of evil from expansion. Indeed, it is not to be disguised that our attitude as a nation and our position on the globe render the acquisition of certain possessions not within our jurisdiction eminently important for our protection, (and) for the preservation of the rights of commerce and the peace of the world.*

*At the same time, he decries aggression and pledges to “cultivate kindly and fraternal relations with the rest of mankind” in his foreign policies -- while also reaffirming a commitment to the Monroe Doctrine.*

*The rights, security, and repose of this Confederacy reject the idea of interference or colonization on this side of the ocean by any foreign power beyond present jurisdiction as utterly inadmissible.* He references his time in the military, concluding that while a large standing army is unnecessary; his goal will be to strengthen the nation’s military science and officer corps.

*The opportunities of observation furnished by my brief experience as a soldier confirmed in my own mind the opinion, entertained and acted upon by others from the formation of the Government, that the maintenance of large standing armies in our country would be not only dangerous, but unnecessary.... They also illustrated the importance--I might well say the absolute necessity--of the military science and practical skill furnished...by the institution which has made your Army what it is under the discipline and instruction of officers..distinguished for their solid attainments, gallantry, and devotion to the public service...unobtrusive bearing and high moral tone.*

The administration of domestic affairs will be carried out with integrity and economy.

*In the administration of domestic affairs you expect a devoted integrity in the public service and an observance of rigid economy in all departments, so marked as never justly to be questioned.*

As he begins to wind down his remarks he turns to the threats he sees to the Union. As a pure Jeffersonian Democrat, one of these lies in concentrating too much power in the central government. This, he says, is inconsistent with the intent of the Constitution, and he promises to curb federal intrusion and respect the rights of the states – all music to the ears of his southern supporters.

*But these are not the only points to which you look for vigilant watchfulness. The dangers of a concentration of all power in the general government of a confederacy so vast as ours are too obvious to be disregarded. You have a right, therefore, to expect your agents in every department to regard strictly the limits imposed upon them by the Constitution of the United States. The great scheme of our constitutional liberty rests upon a proper distribution of power between the State and Federal authorities, and experience has shown that the harmony and happiness of our people must depend upon a just discrimination between the separate rights and responsibilities of the States and your common rights and obligations under the General Government...If the Federal Government will confine itself to the exercise of powers clearly granted by the Constitution, it can hardly happen that its action upon any question should endanger the institutions of the States or interfere with their right to manage matters strictly domestic according to the will of their own people*

Finally Pierce faces squarely into the issue of “involuntary servitude,” while insisting that his views have been clear all along.

*My own position upon this subject was clear and unequivocal, upon the record of my words and my acts, and it is only resorted to at this time because silence might perhaps be misconstrued...*

He calls upon all sides to debate the issue in a “calmly,” avoiding “sectionalism and uncharitableness,” and on behalf of the “perpetuation of the Union.”

*The field of calm and free discussion in our country is open, and will always be so, but never has been and never can be traversed for good in a spirit of sectionalism and uncharitableness... In expressing briefly my views upon an important subject which has recently agitated the nation to almost a fearful degree, I am moved by no other impulse than a most earnest desire for the perpetuation of that Union which has made us what we are...*

Having said that he asserts that the Constitution recognizes “involuntary servitude;” that the “rights of the South” in this regard demand respect; that the “compromise measures” of 1850” must be “unhesitatingly carried out;” and that, in so doing, all “fanatical excitement” over the issue should be laid “at rest.”

*I believe that involuntary servitude, as it exists in different States of this Confederacy, is recognized by the Constitution. I believe that it stands like any other admitted right, and that the States where it exists are entitled to efficient remedies to enforce the constitutional provisions. I hold that the laws of 1850, commonly called the "compromise measures," are strictly constitutional and to be unhesitatingly carried into effect.*

*I believe that the constituted authorities of this Republic are bound to regard the rights of the South in this respect as they would view any other legal and constitutional right, and that the laws to enforce them should be respected and obeyed, not with a reluctance encouraged by abstract opinions as to their propriety in a different state of society, but cheerfully and according to the decisions of the tribunal to which their exposition belongs.*

*Such have been, and are, my convictions, and upon them I shall act. I fervently hope that the question is at rest, and that no sectional or ambitious or fanatical excitement may again threaten the durability of our institutions or obscure...our prosperity*

Pierce closes traditionally, calling upon “God and His overruling providence” to keep the nation secure.

*Standing, as I do, almost within view of the green slopes of Monticello, and, as it were, within reach of the tomb of Washington, with all the cherished memories of the past gathering around me like so many eloquent voices of exhortation from heaven, I can express no better hope for my country than that the kind Providence which smiled upon our fathers may enable their children to preserve the blessings they have inherited.*

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Date: March 4, 1853 – March 4, 1857

## **Overview Of Franklin Pierce's Term**

From the moment he sets foot in the White House, Franklin Pierce is focused on holding his beloved Democratic Party together as the necessary path to preserving the Union.

For years the Whig Party has been the political foil against which the Democrats could rally. Early battles centered on Tariff rates; then came controversies over a National Bank and spending behind federal infrastructure projects; more recently the disputes over expansion, the Texas Annexation and the Mexican War. At every turn, Democrats who might have internal differences with each other were always able to see a much greater evil in the form of Henry Clay and his American System platforms.

By 1852, however, these differences have become less intense. Public attention has turned to newer issues, how best to paste together the new western Territories with the old eastern States; the sudden influx of immigrants, especially Catholics from Ireland and Germany, and their impact on the status quo privileges of the dominant WASP culture; and, of course, finality around the future course of slavery and of white-black social relations.

As a proponent of the Young America Movement, Pierce tends to rely on Stephen A. Douglas to take the lead in Congress on these emerging issues.

On economic policy, Douglas is almost Whig-like in his support of infrastructure projects aimed at upgrading railroads, roads, waterways and communication systems throughout the west. While Pierce is forever uncomfortable with the constitutionality of spending federal dollars this way, he tends to go along on projects that support commerce and bonding between the west and the east.

One such project will involve Congressional debate over the routing of a transcontinental railroad which will eventually extend over 1,912 miles and open in 1869. Four different routes will be proposed, with cities and property owners along the chosen path certain to enjoy financial windfalls.

To gain Southern support for a “central route” through Chicago that he favors (and is personally invested in), Douglas introduces his Kansas-Nebraska Act in January 1854. This Bill is generally regarded as the spark that leads inevitably to the Civil War. It does so by renegeing on the 36’30” boundary line in the Missouri Compromise which divided Free States from Slave States within the Louisiana Purchase territories. Once passed, it becomes a rallying point for politicians and citizens alike who oppose the presence of slaves – and even free blacks – in the west.

Among these opponents are the remnants of several parties in search of a new *raison d’etre*, including: the dispirited Whigs, the abolitionist and white supremacist wings of the Free Soil movement, and a new anti-immigrant group soon to be labeled the Know Nothings. By the conclusion of Pierce’s term this mixed bag will begin to coalesce under the banner of Republicans.

To further console and solidify his Southern Democrats, Pierce embraces more territorial expansion, first in the Gadsden Purchase of land along the Mexican border required for a railway route across the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel, and later in official pursuit of acquiring Cuba and in his lax response to filibustering actions by William Walker in Nicaragua.

But midway through his term comes the crisis that will convert the angry rhetoric over slavery into the violence that will eventually topple the Union.

It is focused in the new Kansas Territory and involves a battle between forces anchored in Missouri who intend to make it a Slave State and new settlers from the North equally intent on a Free State outcome.

When the Democrat’s theoretical solution – “let the voters decide” – breaks down in the face of fraudulent elections, the two sides engage in a series of vicious confrontations lasting over the next five years and forever marking the territory as “Bloody Kansas.”

The violence in Lawrence and along the Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas is soon replayed in the U.S. Senate when the outspoken abolitionist, Senator William Sumner of Massachusetts is nearly caned to death on the floor by the South Carolina man, Preston Brooks.

Franklin Pierce will run through three Territorial Governors in his attempt to solve the Kansas crisis, before handing the conflict over to his successor, Buchanan, who will only make matters worse.

The national economy continues to thrive during Pierce’s term as industry rushes west toward the gold fields of California and railroad construction booms. By 1856, however, concerns over speculation in both new land and new trains sharply dampens the growth.

#### Key Economic Overview

	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856
Total GDP (\$000)	\$3,066	3,311	3,713	3,975	4,047
% Change	+12%	+8	+12	+7	+2
Per Capita GDP	\$123	128	138	143	142

Pierce lives for over eleven years after leaving office. He tours Europe and vacations in the Bahamas, but always returns to his home in Concord, NH. In the 1860 race he backs Cushing and then Breckinridge as his Democratic Party divides. During the war his loyalty is questioned off and on, especially given his closeness to Jefferson Davis. His health deteriorates after the loss of his wife in 1863 and his friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne, in 1864. Always a heavy drinker, he finally dies of cirrhosis of the liver in 1869.

#### Key Events: Pierce’s Term

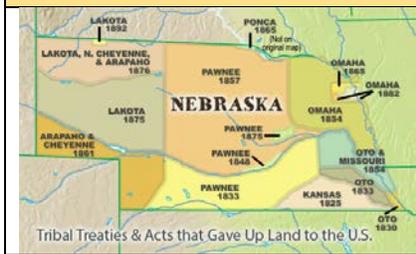
<b>1852</b>	
<b>November 2</b>	Pierce wins presidency in a landslide
<b>December</b>	The American (Nativist) Party gathers supporters
<b>1853</b>	
<b>March 2</b>	Washington territory created out of northern Oregon territory
<b>March 3</b>	Congress appropriates \$150,000 to survey routes for a transcontinental railroad
<b>March 4</b>	Franklin Pierce inaugurated
<b>April 18</b>	Vice-President William King dies and not replaced; David Atchison now next in line.
<b>May 19</b>	James Gadsden to negotiate with Mexico over land in southern NM & Arizona
<b>May 31</b>	Second Arctic exploratory expedition sets out under command of Dr. Elisha King
<b>June</b>	Expeditions begin to explore four routes for the transcontinental railroad
<b>July 8</b>	Commodore Perry arrives at Yedo Bay, Japan, and delivers Fillmore letter to the Emperor
<b>December 30 Or 6/29 app</b>	Gadsden Treaty adds 29,640 square miles in Southwest for \$10 million to Mexico

<b>Year</b>	1.2 million copies of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> sold during the year
<b>1854</b>	
<b>January 4</b>	Hoping to route the transcontinental railroad through Chicago, Douglas proposes dividing Nebraska Territory in two (Kansas & Nebraska), assuming one will be Free and one Slave, even though both lie north of the 36'30" Missouri Compromise Free-only line
<b>January 16</b>	Kentucky Senator Archibald Dixon proposes to formally repeal the Missouri Compromise
<b>January 17</b>	Senator Charles Sumner proposes an amendment to reaffirm the Compromise
<b>January 18</b>	Filibusterer William Walker declares himself President of Sonora (Mexican California)
<b>January 24</b>	Several Democratic senators led by Chase and Sumner attack Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska bill as a plot by Southern slave-owners to violate the 36'30" line
<b>March 20</b>	Meeting of anti-slavery men held at Ripon, WI to form a Republican Party
<b>March 31</b>	Commodore Perry returns to Japan and induces Japan to sign Treaty of Kanagawa which opens ports to US trading ships
<b>April 26</b>	The Emigrant Aid Society formed in Worcester, Mass. to encourage anti-slavery men to settle in Kansas as a Free State
<b>May 8</b>	Filibusterer William Walker returns to U.S. after failed incursion into Mexico
<b>May 26</b>	The Senate passes the Kansas-Nebraska Act with a clear majority & Pierce signs it into law.
	Wendell Phillips and mob storm Boston court house in failed attempt to free another runaway slave, William Burns.
<b>May 31</b>	Pierce warns against filibustering in Cuba.
<b>June 5</b>	US and Britain sign treaty on fishing rights off New Brunswick
<b>July 6-13</b>	Anti-slavery Democrats, Whigs and Free Soilers meet in Michigan to demand repeal of both the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Act. Leaders include Sumner, Chase, Julian, Bates and Browning.
<b>July 19</b>	Wisconsin Supreme Court declares Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional and frees Mr. Booth who had been arrested for helping a runaway slave
<b>July</b>	Federal land grant opened in Kansas to support settlers
<b>October 7</b>	Pierce appoints Andrew Reeder as first Territorial Governor of Kansas
<b>October 16</b>	Abraham Lincoln delivers speech in Peoria condemning the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He affirms the rights of Southern slave-owners while also supporting gradual emancipation.
<b>October 18</b>	US Minister to Spain Pierre Soule negotiates the "Ostend (Belgium) Manifesto" with European ministers supporting the annexation of Cuba by force if necessary.
<b>November 29</b>	Missouri ruffians cross Kansas border to support a pro-slavery representative to DC
<b>November</b>	The Know Nothing Party holds a convention in Cincinnati
<b>December</b>	Voting for 35 <sup>th</sup> Congress is under way
<b>Year</b>	Henry David Thoreau publishes <i>Walden</i>
<b>1855</b>	
<b>January 16</b>	Territorial legislature meets for the first time in Nebraska
<b>February 24</b>	Final report published on transcontinental railroad route surveys
<b>March 3</b>	Secretary of State Marcy rejects the "Ostend Manifesto" after negative public reactions.
<b>March 4</b>	35 <sup>th</sup> Congress convenes
<b>March 30</b>	Missouri ruffians again invade Kansas to elect a pro-slavery territorial legislature, which Governor Reeder accepts as legitimate

<b>June 5</b>	Southerners dominate Know-Nothing Party convention in Philadelphia
<b>July 2</b>	Kansas pro-slavery dominated legislature meets in Pawnee and expels anti-slavery men
<b>July 31</b>	Pierce removes Kansas Governor Reeder for opposing the pro-slavery legislature
<b>August 4</b>	Free State supporters meet at Lawrence, Kansas and call for their own legislature
<b>September 3</b>	Filibusterer William Walker assumes actual control over Nicaragua during a civil war, with the backing of the Accessory Transit Company which seeks a canal across the land.
<b>October 1</b>	Pro-slavery forces in Kansas elect J. W. Whitfield as delegate to DC congress
<b>October 9</b>	Anti-slavery men in Kansas elect ex-Governor Reeder as their delegate to DC
<b>October 13</b>	Filibusterer William Walker takes control over the nation of Nicaragua
<b>November 12</b>	Free State Kansans hold convention in Topeka and adopt a constitution that outlaws slaves and then also all blacks from residing in the state
<b>November 26</b>	War breaks out along the Wakarusa River between 1500 Border Ruffians and anti-slavery forces who also fortify the town of Lawrence
<b>December 8</b>	Pierce issues a proclamation critical of Walker's actions in Nicaragua
<b>December 15</b>	Free State Kansans approve the Topeka Constitution banning slaves and all blacks
<b>Year</b>	Roughly 400,000 immigrants arrive in New York during the year
	Frederick Douglass publishes his autobiography
	Feminist Lucy Stone marries Henry Blackwell with both promising gender equality
<b>1856</b>	
<b>January 15</b>	Free State Kansans elect their own Governor, Charles Robinson, which is called an act of rebellion by Pierce
<b>January 24</b>	Georgia Senator Robert Toombs delivers pro-slavery speech at Tremont Temple in Boston
<b>February 2</b>	Divisions in the House over the Kansas-Nebraska Act provoke a two-month stalemate in selection of a Speaker, with Know-Nothing Nathaniel Banks finally selected.
<b>February 22</b>	The Know Nothing (American) Party holds a convention in Philadelphia and select Millard Fillmore as their presidential candidate, while also attacking the "Black Republicans" in their platform.
<b>March 4</b>	Free State Kansans in Topeka apply for statehood with Republican support, but Douglas blocks the measure demanding that a new constitutional convention be held first.
<b>April 21</b>	The first railroad bridge across the Mississippi is completed between Illinois and Iowa
<b>May 21</b>	Pro-slavery Kansans attack the Free State stronghold at Lawrence and
<b>May 22</b>	Three days after a speech critical of Andrew Butler of South Carolina, Senator Charles Sumner is caned at his desk and critically wounded by Butler's nephew, Preston Brooks
<b>May 24</b>	Abolitionist John Brown leads attack killing five pro-slavery settlers at Pottawattamie Creek
<b>June 2-6</b>	The Democrats meet in Cincinnati and choose James Buchanan as their presidential nominee and John C. Breckinridge as VP on a platform that supports the 1850 Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
<b>June 15</b>	A break-away group of anti-slavery Know Nothings holds a convention in New York, choosing John C. Fremont for President behind a "Free Territory and Free Kansas" banner and a platform attacking immigrants and Roman Catholics and calling for "Americans only to govern America."
<b>June 17-19</b>	The first Republican Party convention meets in Philadelphia and also nominates Fremont for President; its platform calls for a Free Kansas and approval of a transcontinental railroad.

<b>July 3</b>	The House votes to admit Kansas as a Free State, but the Senate rejects as the session ends
<b>July 4</b>	Federal troops from Ft. Leavenworth arrive at Topeka & dispel the Free State legislature
<b>September 9</b>	Pierce appoints John W. Geary as the new Governor of the Kansas Territory
<b>September 15</b>	Geary sends Federal Troops to halt an impending attack by some 2500 Border Ruffians
<b>September 17</b>	Remaining Whigs meet in Baltimore and back the Know Nothing ticket of Fremont and Andrew Donelson, the adopted son of Andrew Jackson
<b>November 4 1857</b>	James Buchanan elected 15 <sup>th</sup> President
<b>January 15</b>	Abolitionist Garrison speaks at the Massachusetts Disunion Convention apparently showing support for their slogan “no union with slaveholders.”
<b>Jan - Feb</b>	Pro-slavery Kansans meet in LeCompton to call for a census and the election of delegates to a constitutional convention. Governor Geary vetoes the proposal.
<b>March 3</b>	Tariff Act of 1857 lowers rates to 20%.
<b>March 4</b>	Kansas Governor Geary resigns after criticism from Pierce for resisting LeCompton
	James Buchanan is inaugurated

## Chapter 202 – Douglas’ Plan To Organize The Nebraska Territory Fails Again In The Senate



**Dates:**  
December 1852-  
March 4, 1853

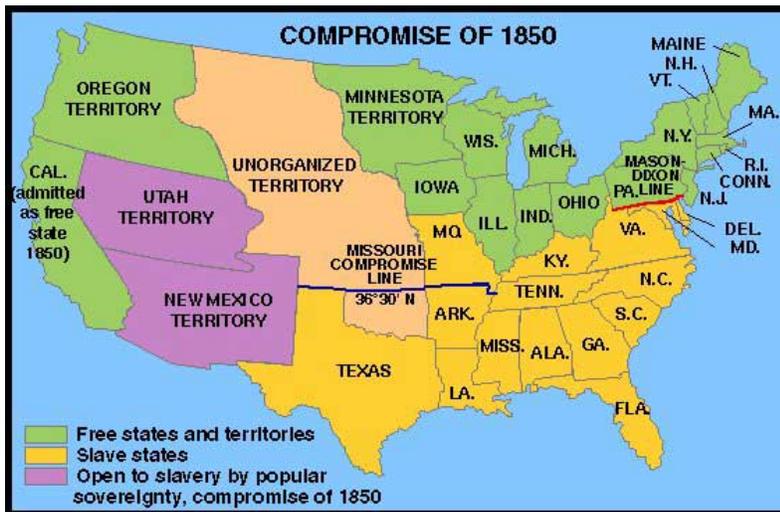
**Sections:**

- The U.S. House Passes Douglas’s Nebraska Territorial Bill
- The Nebraska Bill Is Tabled In The Senate By The South

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Date: December 1852

### The U.S. House Passes Douglas’s Nebraska Territorial Bill



Map Showing The “Unorganized Territory” (Beige) In 1850

As the 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress reconvenes for its final session in December 1852, Stephen A. Douglas prepares to again push his plans to transform the Mississippi Valley and the west, creating new wealth in the region to rival the Northeast corridor.

At forty years old, the Illinois Senator has already established himself as the combative leader of the Democratic Party in Congress, even though his run at the nomination in 1852 offends some within the party – namely, the “Old Fogies” contingent, led by James Buchanan, twenty-two years his senior and determined to be next in line after Pierce.

Through his combination of brains and willpower Douglas is the driving force behind the “Young America” movement which intends to discard the Party’s strict commitments to an agrarian economy, and its opposition to federally funded infrastructure initiatives, such as a transcontinental railroad.

To do so, however, he must first gain agreement in Congress on governance for the “Unorganized Territory” – the land to the west of Iowa and Missouri, through which the line would eventually run.

In 1852 this land is dominated by a range of Plains Tribes, mainly the Lakota's in the far west, the Pawnee in the center, and the Omaha, Oto and Kansas to the east. The name assigned the area in Washington is the Nebraska Territory from the Oto Tribe word for the Platte River meaning "flat water."



Tribal Claims In The Nebraska Territory

Time is short for Douglas, since the final session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress runs only from December 6, 1852 to March 4, 1853. Given this, his focus is on passing two bills high on his agenda – the organization of the Nebraska Territory and funding to explore routes for the transcontinental railroad.

On January 19, 1853, however, a family tragedy slows his momentum. His 28 year old wife dies after giving birth to his third child, a daughter, who is also lost within a month.

While stricken by the loss, the senator still proceeds with his congressional duties. He works on the Nebraska Bill in the House with Illinois Congressman William A. Richardson, who later becomes Governor of the Territory.

When the bill reaches the House floor, it stirs relatively little controversy. Some concerns are raised about the fate of the Indian tribes on the land, but the more controversial issue of slavery is only referenced in passing. The reason being that since the bulk of the territory falls above the 36°30' Missouri Compromise line, it will become a "Free State" by default.

Despite some conjecture about splitting the territory into two states -- the second to be called Kansas -- the House bill simply treats Nebraska as one entity. On February 10, 1853 a vote is taken and the bill passes by a 107-49 margin, with the nays coming from Southerners who protest the assumed restriction on slavery.

All that now remains for Douglas is passage in the Senate.

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Date: March 3-4, 1853

### **The Nebraska Bill Is Tabled In The Senate By The South**

Various versions of the Nebraska Bill have been before the Senate for at least eight years, and all have foundered to some extent over its likely impact on the route chosen for the transcontinental railroad.

Douglas now runs into this same resistance once again.

The measure comes up amidst a flood of other proposals right before the session ends. On March 2, approval is given to creating the Washington Territory out of what was northern Oregon. On March 3, 1853, one day before Pierce’s inauguration, Douglas’s second priority, the appropriations bill for \$150,000 to explore five rail routes to the Pacific, is approved.

With time running out, Douglas finally succeeds in again bringing his Nebraska Bill to the floor on March 4. His anger over the delay is apparent in his opening remarks:

*For two years past the Senate has refused to hear a territorial bill. For the past two weeks I have sat here hour after hour endeavoring at every suitable opportunity to obtain the floor.*

But neither these chastisements, nor his impassioned rhetoric on behalf of the measure, are sufficient to achieve the victory he wants. In fact, his remarks are delivered to a near empty chamber, eager to adjourn. They end with another disheartening defeat, as the senate refuses to “take up debate” on the bill by a margin of 23-17.

#### **Senate Vote To Debate Douglas’s Bill**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Ayes</b>	<b>Nays</b>
Southerners	2	15
Northerners	15	8
Total	17	23

Of the 17 votes cast by Southerners, the only two “ayes” belong to the senators from Missouri who, like Douglas, favor a central route for the pacific railroad.

The implications from this are clear to the senator. If the Nebraska Territory is to be settled, Douglas must find a way to sweeten the pot for the South.

For the moment, however, he is frustrated by his last second defeat and still distraught over the loss of his wife. In response, he sets sail on May 14, 1853, for what will be a five month excursion through Europe and over to Russia. He is greeted warmly from London to France, Rome (where he converts to Catholicism), Constantinople and St. Petersburg.

Douglas will return to America on October 20, 1853, refreshed and ready to resume his agenda on Nebraska.

## Chapter 203 – Early Railroads Address Problems With Other Forms Of Transportation



**Dates:**  
1830  
Forward

- Sections:**
- Existing Transportation System Across The Continent Are Deeply Flawed
  - Railroads Are Already Succeeding In The East
  - The Illinois Central Railway Becomes The Leading Line In The Midwest
  - The Two Springfield Lawyers With Deep Financial Ties To The IC Railroad

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Date: March 3, 1853

### Existing Transportation System Across The Continent Are Deeply Flawed



Passage of the March 3, 1853 appropriation to explore routes for a transcontinental railroad recognizes the economic necessity of finding a better way to transport goods and services between the east and west coasts.

The existing options are two-fold -- one by sea around Cape Horn, the other cross country by wagon train or stage coach. Both are seriously flawed.

An Early Stagecoach Stopping In Schuyler, Nebraska

The nautical route is well known and dominated by 200 foot long clipper ships, with their three squared-rigged masts reaching 115 feet into the sky. But their sleek lines cannot overcome two serious drawbacks -- the first being the 200 days required to complete the 16,000 mile route from New York and around South America to San Francisco. In addition, this journey is also fraught with peril, especially at Cape Horn, known as the "sailor's graveyard" for its unpredictable gale force winds and icy winter conditions. Merchants with large loads will still choose this shipping option, but always with trepidation.

The feasibility of moving sizable quantities of material and people by wagon trains into the west is demonstrated by the US Army during the 1846-47 Mexican War, and again by the great Mormon trek from Iowa to Salt Lake City in 1847. But here too the drawbacks include speed and risk. Thus the early

Mormon caravan of seventy-five wagons and 300 men takes upwards of six months just to travel 1,250 miles through winter weather and tribal frays, from Nauvoo, Illinois to their new home in Utah.

Transportation of people and small parcels in the 1850's is more streamlined, thanks to the Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach line, later acquired by the Wells Fargo corporation. This operation transports mail and passengers over 2,795 miles from St. Louis through Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, to San Francisco in 25 days, fulfilling its contract with the U.S. Postmaster General. This feat is accomplished by 4-6 horse teams racing at top speed between some 141 stop-over stations scattered along the route. While remarkably fast for their time, stagecoaches are unable to transport the heavy loads demanded by commerce.

When congress sets aside \$150,000 to survey the west, it is betting that a transcontinental railroad will deliver on the speed, load weight, safety and pricing required by the emerging industrial and global economy.

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Date: 1830-1860

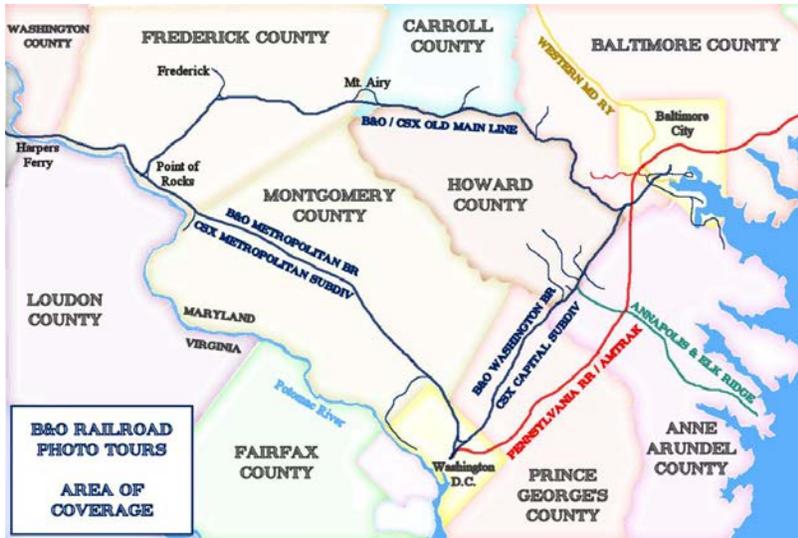
### **Railroads Are Already Succeeding In The East**



A 4-4-0 Model Train Carrying Its Load Toward the City Of Richford, Vermont

By 1853, railroads are already an established part of the landscape back east.

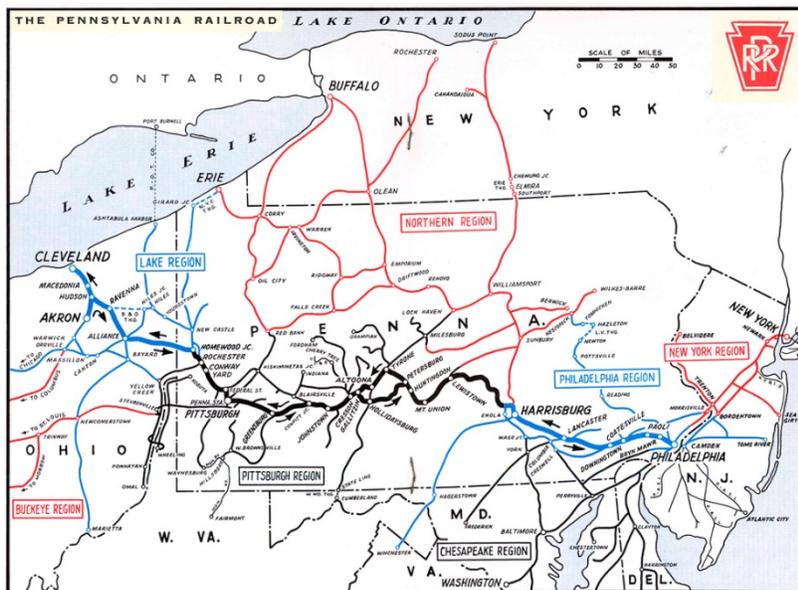
They begin to take hold in the 1830's, as the prototype B & O line moves goods from the port city of Baltimore, inland across Maryland in competition with the Erie Canal -- the 363 mile east-west colossus linking Buffalo on Lake Erie to Albany and ultimately to New York City.



The Early B&O Railroad Route West From Baltimore To Frederick County

By 1852, the B&O has pushed on to Wheeling, Virginia, before turning north toward the Ohio River at the city of Parkersburg. Five years later, a series of railroad mergers will carry the B&O all the way through Cincinnati to St. Louis and trade along the Mississippi Valley.

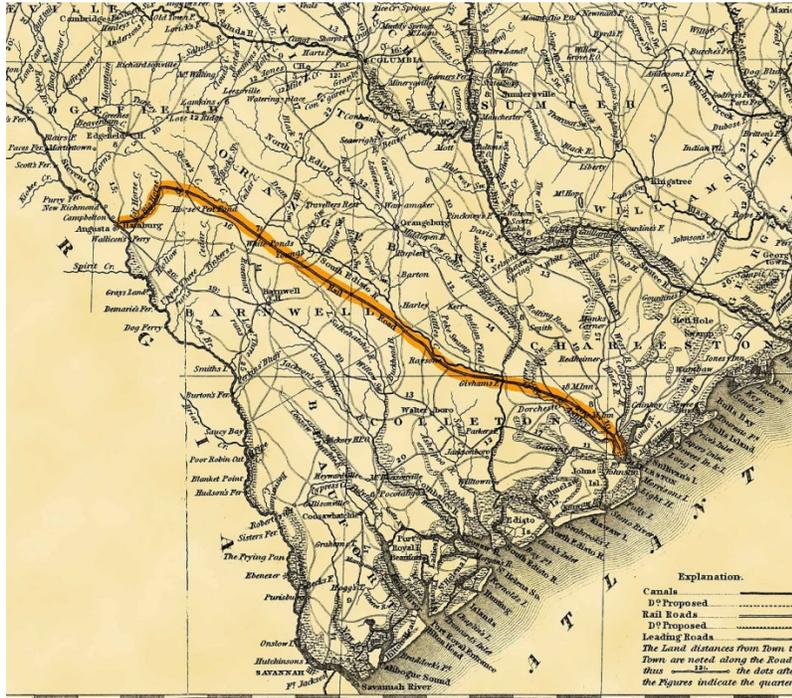
During this same period, the industrialist and civil engineer, J. Edgar Thomson, is busily extending his Penn Central Railroad toward Indiana and Chicago. His venture, founded in 1847, will become the largest corporation in the world for a time, and he will earn the title “father of the modern railroad network,”



J. Edgar Thomson’s Penn RR Stretching Initially From Philadelphia To Cleveland

The South trails well behind the North in railroad construction, but does begin to engage. In 1833, the Carolina Canal and Railroad Company, headed by William Aiken Sr., completes a 136 mile connection between Charleston and Hamburg, SC. Three years later it merges with a firm incorporated under the ambitious name of the Louisville, Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad, headed at the time by the former

South Carolina Senator, Governor and renowned “Fire-Eater,” Robert Hayne. He will be succeeded in 1840 by James Gadsden, later the leading proponent of the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel “Southern route” to the Pacific.



The South Carolina Canal And RR Route From Charleston To Hamburg, SC

While the various eastern lines are heading west, new railroads are also starting up in states along the Mississippi Valley -- their mission being to facilitate local commerce, while also contending for a major role in the inevitable drive across the continent.

Given the investment costs required to lay track, buy cars and manage daily operations, mergers become commonplace in the industry, along with sharing of facilities. Symbolic of the consolidations is the nation’s first “Union Station,” which opens on September 3, 1853 in Indianapolis, to serve multiple lines.

Between 1840 and 1860 the great American train race is under way, with a tenfold increase in the miles of tracks in operation, and seventeen of the largest twenty-five corporations in 1856 in the railroad sector.

#### Accumulated Miles Of Railroad Tracks By Region

Geography	1830	1840	1850	1860
Total U.S.	40	2,755	8,571	28,680
New England (Me,NH,Vt,Ma,RI,Ct)	30	513	2,596	3,644
Rem. North (Del,NY,NJ,MD,DC,Oh,Mi,In)	---	1,484	3,740	11,927
West (Il,IA,Wis,Minn,MO)			46	4,951
South/Border (Va,NC,SC,Ga,Fl,Al,Ms,Ky,Tn,La)	10	758	2,189	8,158

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Date: 1850-1852

### The Illinois Central Railway Becomes The Leading Line In The Midwest



Map Of The Illinois Central Railroad Line In 1855

The dominance of the B&O and Penn Central railroads in the East is matched in the midwest by the Illinois Central line, the first to take advantage of Washington's 1850 Land Grant.

The ICRR is chartered on February 10, 1851, and by 1853 it stands as the longest rail line in the entire world.

One leg of the IC runs from the lead mining town of Galena on the Mississippi down to the city of Cairo, also on the great river; a second leg is under way to connect Chicago to a junction at Centralia and from there to Cairo.

Two men influence the growth of the Illinois Central over time – one, Senator Stephen Douglas, its cheerleader in Congress, the other, attorney Abraham Lincoln, who handles most of its affairs in court.

Both regard their home state as somehow fated to play a strategic role in developing the west and linking it to the east, owing to its unique geography.

Thus Illinois lies toward the center of the country on its horizontal axis, and, being long and narrow, runs vertically nearly 400 miles down to its southern tip, nestled between the slave-holding states of Kentucky and Missouri. As such, Illinois will often be regarded as two states in one, half northern and half southern.

Also, of great importance, the state's northeast border is anchored in Chicago on Lake Michigan, which enables it to handle heavy duty commercial traffic arriving from the east by both train and water. Douglas recognizes this advantage in a January 20, 1851 letter to former Illinois Senator and colleague, Sidney Breese, in relation to building a transcontinental line:

*It is necessary that the (rail)road should connect with the lakes in order to impart nationality to the project and secure Northern and Eastern votes.*



The Geographically Central State Of Illinois

All that Illinois lacks in 1853 is a rail line heading west from Chicago, connecting the two legs of the ICRR, and then heading west all the way to California.

If Douglas can only get the senate on board behind his Nebraska Bill, and then lobby effectively for the trans-continental train route through Illinois, he will realize his grand “Young America” vision for the Mississippi Valley and the west. It will be linked back east by train tracks and telegraph lines and boast a diverse and modern economy, amenable to rural life and farming, but also marked by large urban centers, factories and associated “wage jobs.”

All with the state of Illinois and the city of Chicago becoming the central hub in this development, funneling commercial traffic throughout America, east and west, north and south.

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**Sidebar: The Two Springfield Lawyers With Deep Financial Ties To The IC Railroad**

Two Springfield attorneys, Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, will become heavily dependent upon the Illinois Central Railroad for their personal wealth.

In Douglas’ case, this traces to his extensive speculation in land around Chicago, which the ICRR will eventually need to purchase as its “right of way” to lay tracks.

By 1852 he will own 75 acres of this land along the lakefront, south of the city. He also purchases several thousand acres to the west, and additional plots on the south branch of the Chicago River and around Lake Calumet.

In 1855 he recalls paying roughly \$11,300 in total for these properties.

His return on this investment is remarkable. In 1856 his first 75 acres are already valued at \$60,400 for tax purposes, and the ICRR soon pays him \$21,300 for only a few of the acres situated on the lake. In that same year he sells 100 of his acres on the west side of the city for \$100,000, and another

16 acres along the lake for \$20,000.

Douglas's wealth is supplemented by profits from a 3,000 acre cotton plantation on the Pearl River in Mississippi that his first wife, Martha Martin, inherits as a wedding gift from her father. The plantation is valued at \$100,000 and is worked by some 140 slaves. For political reasons, Douglas is careful to keep ownership in the name of his wife, and later their children. While he makes only three personal visits to the plantation, he hires and corresponds regularly with a local manager, Richard Strickland, and enjoys a 20% share of the annual profits.

Douglas will continue to speculate in land and to lead an extravagant lifestyle. The combination leaves him land rich but cash poor in the end and results in mortgages against his Chicago area land and a trade-down to a lesser plantation in Mississippi soon before his death.

Like Douglas, Abraham Lincoln is also deeply involved in the affairs of the ICRR.

In 1853 Lincoln is busily practicing law in Springfield, punctuated by stints in politics.

But during his time in the Illinois legislature, and in his one term (1847-9) in the U.S. House, he consistently votes to fund and construct a railroad system running across his home state. As a private citizen, he also earns his living as a lawyer, with the Illinois Central line by far his leading client.

Between 1853 and 1861 Lincoln represents the ICRR on literally hundreds of cases in suits involving rights of way, property damage, trespass, taxes and freight claims. He will argue eleven of these disputes in front of the Illinois Supreme Court – earning his reputation as one of the top attorneys in the state, and also connecting him to a broad array of capitalists and political figures.

Perhaps his most famous case is *Illinois Central Railroad Company v County of McLean (IL) and George Parke, Sheriff and Collector*. The county sits in the middle of Illinois, with depots serving several scattered towns.

In 1852 the county decides to challenge the incorporation charter which says that if the IC pays a share of its revenue – 5% for the first five years and 7% for the next five – to the state, it will be exempt from all other forms of taxation.

It does so by attempting to levy a separate property tax on the line, involving a fairly modest payment of \$418. But the IC recognizes that submitting to the McLean charge will open the taxing floodgates for other localities across the state. It therefore refuses to pay, at which time the tax collector, George Parke, threatens to auction off IC land to collect the debt.

The IC responds by retaining Lincoln, for \$250, along with two other lawyers to defend the legality of the charter in court. An injunction is filed to halt Parke's planned auction, and a local trial is held in November 1853 before presiding Judge David Davis – who, seven years hence, will become one of Lincoln's floor managers at the Republican nominating convention.

When Davis finds for the railroad, McLean refuses to give up and appeals the case all the way to the Illinois Supreme Court. Lincoln argues there on behalf of the IC in February 1854 and a second time in January 1856, as the case drags on. But again the IC wins a major victory.

What follows next makes the case linger in historical lore. Lincoln submits an uncharacteristically large bill -- for \$5,000 -- to the IC, perhaps in response to some forever unknown falling out during the case. Several corporate stockholders in the IC, particularly in England, refuse to pay the amount,

commenting that the Governor of Illinois earns only \$1,000 and year, and “not even a Daniel Webster” would charge that much.

In response, Lincoln sues the IC, and wins the judgment in June 1857 when no railroad lawyers show up at the scheduled trial. Lincoln will use his windfall fee to fund his upcoming political campaigns. He will also continue his involvement with the IC after the dispute.

(Research into Lincoln’s finances by modern scholars show that his other two largest legal bills were \$500 in the 1855 Rock Island RR Bridge case and \$1,000 in the 1857 “Reaper Case.”)

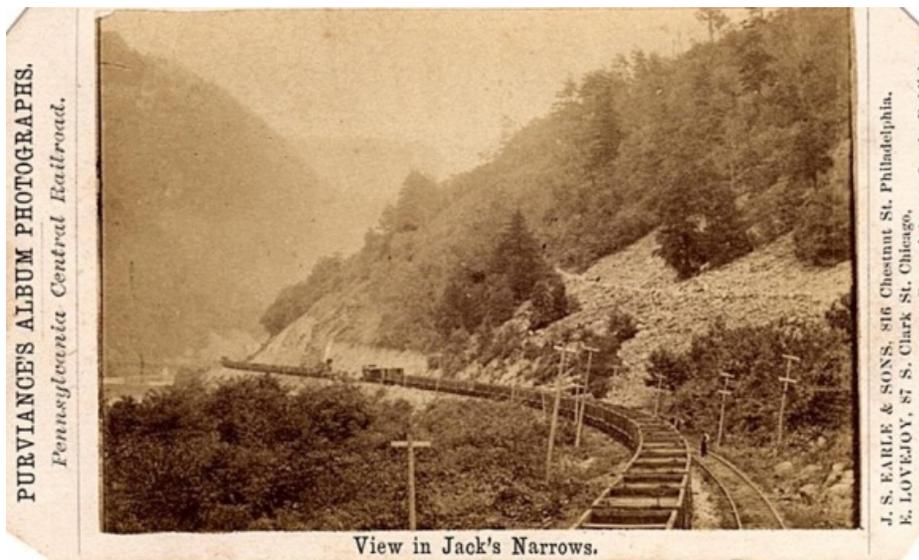
## Chapter 204 – The Potential For A Transcontinental Line Gains Momentum

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PURVIANCE'S ALBUM PHOTOGRAPHS, Pennsylvania Central Railroad.</p>  <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">J. S. EARLE &amp; SONS, 816 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, E. LOVEJOY, 87 S. Clark St., Chicago, General Agents for the Publisher.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">View in Jack's Narrows.</p>	<p><b>Dates:</b> 1849-1853</p>	<p><b>Sections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The California Gold Rush Tips The Scales In Favor Of A Transcontinental Railroad</li> <li>• High Stakes Political Maneuvering Begins Over Routing The Transcontinental Line</li> </ul>
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Date: 1849-1853

### The California Gold Rush Tips The Scales In Favor Of A Transcontinental Railroad



The Penn State Railroad Heading Through Jacks' Narrows Gorge

Musings about the transcontinental railroad begin to surface in the 1830's along with the early locomotives.

But the first serious promoter of such a venture is one Asa Whitney, a dry goods merchant, who makes a fortune trading tea and spices in China during a trip there in 1842-44. From this experience, he imagines the possibility of importing more goods from throughout Asia and then transporting them to eastern markets by rail. The route he envisions would begin in the pacific northwest at Vancouver, then swing down to the South Pass and back to St. Louis along the Oregon Trail. Whitney sums up his plan in a formal document, *A Project for a Railroad to the Pacific* and lobbies for it with Congress in 1849, before eventually giving up.

Whitney's banner is picked up in 1845 by Douglas, then a freshman in the House. His proposal enjoys support, but founders when other cities – St. Louis, Quincy, Memphis, and New Orleans – offer alternative routes.

Congress returns to the notion in 1850 when it passes the first of what will be several Land Grant Acts, this one setting aside 3.75 million acres of public property to construct a railroad from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. This land would be given free to any developer in exchange for future reduced rate shipping of government goods.

The effects of the Gold Rush, however, quickly shifts attention back to reaching California. This prompts the 1853 Appropriations Bill “To Ascertain the Most Practical and Economical Route for a Railroad From the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.”

Between 1853 and 1855, four different routes to California will be explored by the Army's Corps of Topographical Engineers. These crisscross the nation at the 49<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>st</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, and 32<sup>th</sup> parallels, from the Canadian border in the North to the Mexican border in the South.

At stake in the final choice is the opportunity to lead the commercial development of the west, and to reap the economic bonanza that will hopefully follow. Each of the contenders will rally its own set of potential investors and look to its own leading politicians to make their case in Congress – a task that will involve the cleverest forms of horse-trading.

Among the many maneuvers that follow will be one proposed by a frustrated Steven Douglas involving the Nebraska territory that will inadvertently spark the American Civil War.

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Date: 1849-1853

### High Stakes Political Maneuvering Begins Over Routing The Transcontinental Line



Isaac Stevens (1818-1862)

Political leaders have already begun to lobby for their regional interests by the time Congress officially sets aside money in 1853 to explore various pathways to the west coast.

Asa Whitney's call for a line ending at the mouth of the Columbia River is picked up by recently named Governor of Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens, a West Point grad, veteran of the Mexican War and an early supporter of Pierce in the 1852 race. Instead of Whitney's angle through the South Pass, he proposes a straight shot along the Canadian border at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. As an engineer and surveyor himself, Stevens will eventually lead the team during the actual exploratory phase.

The far Southern route along the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel is favored by Pierce's Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, and by the influential Charleston native, James Gadsden, who will serve as his Ambassador to Mexico. Gadsden is 65 years old and an ex-army man, having been aide de

camp to Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812 and then Seminole War in Florida. He joins Calhoun's Nullifier movement, runs his *Pimlico* rice plantation which boasts 235 slaves, and serves as President of the South Carolina Railroad for a decade. After proposing secession in 1850, he sponsors a bill to divide California into two states, with the southern half open to slavery and San Diego as his proposed terminal for his southern transcontinental line.

Other powerful men will argue on behalf of a central route, somewhere between the 38<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> parallel.

One is the aging Thomas Hart Benton, who represents Missouri in the Senate between 1821 and 1851, before being denied a sixth term for his growing reservations about the expansion of slavery. But Benton remains a giant in both Washington and Missouri, and he is dedicated to positioning St. Louis as the hub for the Pacific line.

In February 1849 the Senator unveils what becomes known as "Benton's National Central Highway." It proposes a line funded and owned by the U.S. government rather than by private corporations as Whitney would have it. The tracks would be laid over a strip of set-aside land – 1600 miles long and 100 miles wide – running from St. Louis to San Francisco. The route he chooses follows that taken and well documented by his "Pathfinder" son-in-law, John C. Fremont, during his 1842-45 expeditions.

Another proponent of a central line is Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, Chairman of the powerful Committee on Territories in Congress. Unlike Benton, however, Douglas is a fervent supporter of Chicago, not St. Louis, as the linchpin for the new line.

Benton and Douglas first clash over the rivalry at a National Railroad Convention which opens on October 15, 1849 in St. Louis. Benton touts St. Louis as the gateway to the west, citing its history as jumping off point for trailblazing expeditions to the coast. Douglas counters by citing Chicago's unique access to both waterways and railroads back to the Atlantic coast.

One week later, on October 23, a second railroad convention is held, this time in Memphis. Some 400 attendees show up, including delegate Asa Whitney and a brief visit by Jefferson Davis. The outcome predictably favors a southern route heading from San Diego along the Mexican border to the Mississippi River and eventually terminating in Memphis.

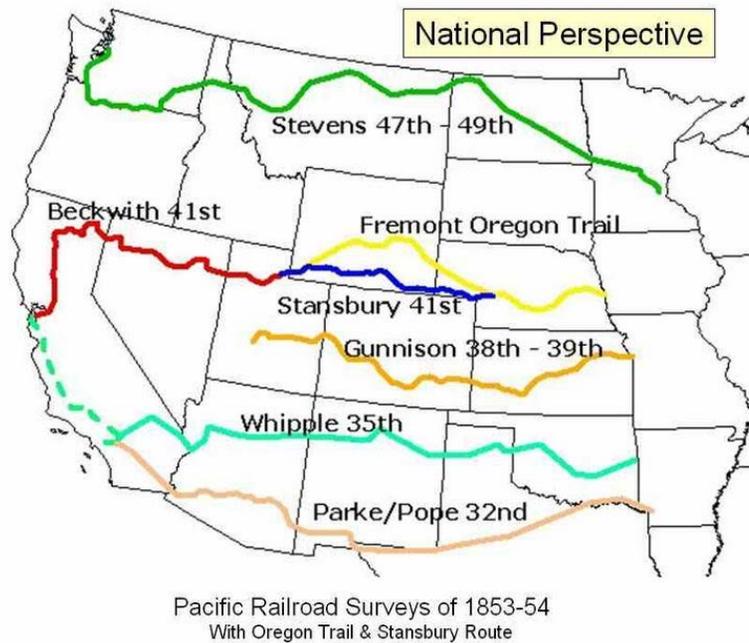
## Chapter 205 – Surveys For Transcontinental Railroad Routes Completed In 1853-54

<p style="text-align: center;">National Perspective</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pacific Railroad Surveys of 1853-54 With Oregon Trail &amp; Starsbury Route</p>	<p><b>Dates:</b> June 6, 1853 - 1856</p>	<p><b>Sections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Search For A “Northern Route” Kicks Off The Transcontinental Railroad Expeditions</li> <li>• Tragedy Strikes The “Central Route” Expedition</li> <li>• The Upper South Route At The 35<sup>th</sup> Latitude Is Completed Satisfactorily</li> <li>• Exploration Begins On The Southernmost Route At The 32<sup>nd</sup> Parallel</li> <li>• A Second Party Completes The 32<sup>nd</sup> Parallel Assessment</li> <li>• Secretary Of War Davis Issues His Final Report On The Four Expeditions</li> <li>• Construction Of The Transcontinental Railroad Delayed Until 1869</li> </ul>
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Date: June 6, 1853

### The Search For A “Northern Route” Kicks Off The Transcontinental Railroad Expeditions



Map Showing The Five Routes Explored In 1853-54 For A Transcontinental Railroad

On June 6, 1853, the first of what will prove to be five exploratory parties heads off in search of the ideal route for the pacific railroad – one marked by straight stretches of flat land, the absence of steep grades (capable of stalling an engine), access to fresh water and lumber, and friendly tribes, among other things.

This first group is dedicated to a Northern passage along the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. It is led by Isaac Stevens, Territorial Governor of Washington and his chief assistant, Captain George McClellan of the army

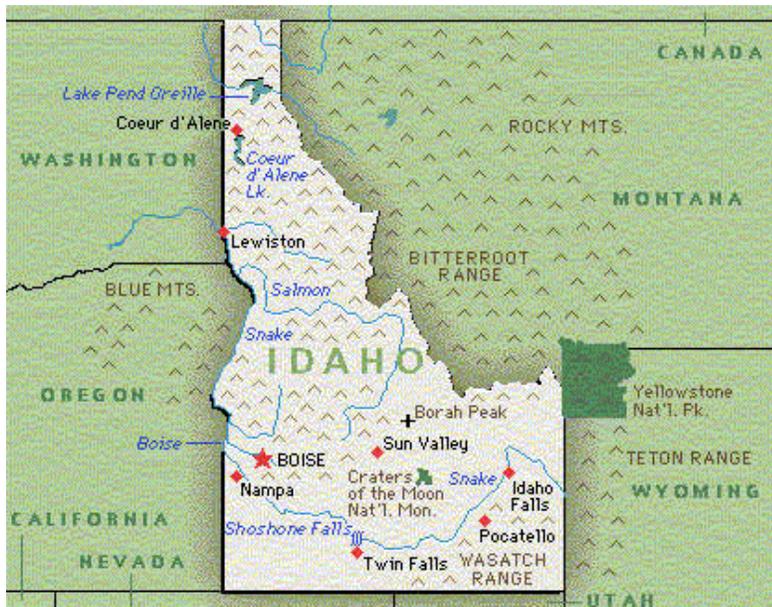
engineers. They are joined by a large support contingent including topographers, artists, astronomers, geologists, botanists, meteorologists, sappers and miners, linguists, a surgeon and a quartermaster.



By August 1, Stevens has moved from St. Paul on the Mississippi River, west to the Missouri River in what will become, in 1889, the state of North Dakota.

For the next ten weeks, the expedition proceeds across Montana and into the Rocky Mountains, with several separate contingents trying to locate a satisfactory train route.

Map Showing Steven’s Move From The Mississippi To The Missouri River



On October 18, 1853, the main party arrives at Coeur D’Alene in northern Idaho, where the Jesuits have established the Sacred Heart Mission to convert local tribes to Christianity. Among these are the Nez Pearce people who proved invaluable to Lewis & Clarke in their 1804-06 journey to the coast. Stevens’ diary records a “message from the Great Father” that he delivers at the Mission:

Map Showing The Path Through The Rockies To The Coeur D’Alene Mission

*I am glad to see you and find that you are under such good direction. I have come four times as far as you go to hunt buffalo, and have come with directions from the Great Father to see you, to talk to you, and to do all I can for your welfare. I see cultivated fields, a church, houses, cattle, and the fruits of the earth, the work of your own hands. The Great Father will be delighted to hear this, and will certainly assist you. Go on, and every family will have a house and a patch of*

*ground, and every one will be well clothed. I have had talks with the Blackfeet, who promise to make peace with all the Indian tribes. Listen to the good father and the good brothers who labor for your good.*

After departing Coeur D'Alene, the band treks across the Washington Territory, arriving at Ft. Vancouver on November 19, 1853.

The entire trip has taken five and one-half months to complete, and the information collected will be written up in fine detail and eventually handed over to the sponsor, Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, for publication in February of 1855.

Despite Steven's enthusiasm for "his route," critics are troubled by the failure to identify a solid path through the Rockies, and by concerns over the likely snowfall and challenging winter conditions associated with the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel option.

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Date: June 23, 1853

### **Tragedy Strikes The "Central Route" Expedition**

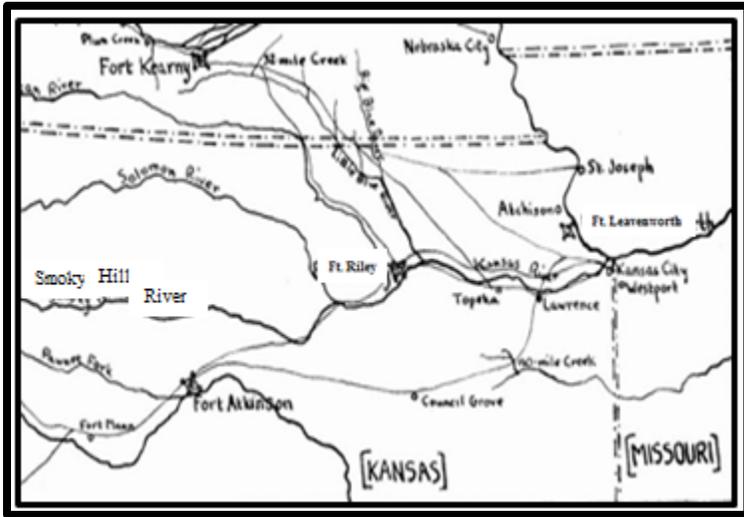


"Scouts" Lithograph By John Mix Stanley (Volume XII)

Captain John Gunnison is forty years old when he sets out along with First Lieutenant Edward Beckwith to explore a Central path, favored especially by Benton, given its jumping off point in Missouri. Their party passes through St. Louis and Ft. Leavenworth to Westport, Missouri, and departs from there on June 23, 1853, heading southwest along the old Santa Fe Trail.

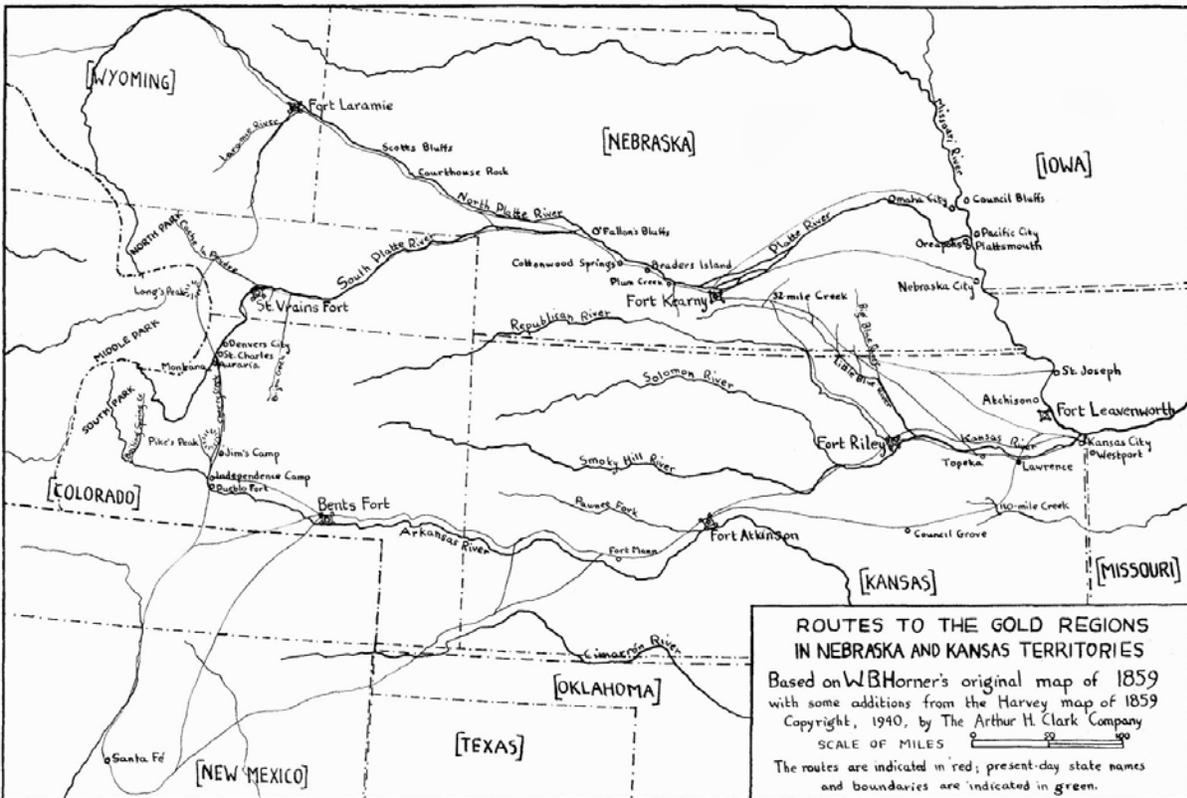
On July 4 they reach Ft. Riley, where the group splits for the first time, with Gunnison heading west over unexplored ground along the Smoky Hill River, while Beckwith drops south about thirty miles along the Santa Fe Road.

Gunnison crosses the Smoky Hill River and reunites with Beckwith at Walnut Creek, a branch of the Arkansas River, east of Ft. Atkinson. At this point, Gunnison computes that he has gone 322 miles from Westport along his river route, while Beckwith has traveled 293 miles over the Santa Fe Trail.



Map Showing Forts Leavenworth & Riley And The Smoky Hill River

They then continue west alongside the Arkansas River, past Ft. Atkinson and all the way to Bent's Fort, an abandoned military outpost, where they arrive on July 29, 1853. So far the well-known path they have followed offers no new surprises or barriers to a "Central" railway solution.

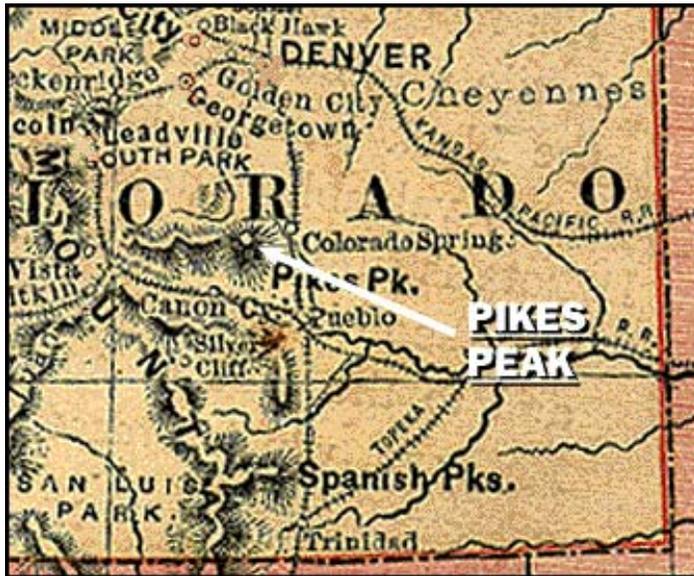


Map Showing Ft. Atkinson, Bent's Fort, And Pike's Peak

Leaving Bent's Fort they swing sharply north and, on August 6, come upon a memorable vista centered between Zebulon Pike's Peak and the Spanish Peaks in southern Colorado.

Pike's Peak to the north, the Spanish Peaks to the south, the Sierra Mojada to the west, and the plains from the Arkansas—undulating with hills along the route we have come, but sweeping up in a gentle rise.

Head due west, Gunnison explores potential sites through the Spanish Peaks while Beckwith tours the San Luis Valley. Concerns are raised here about the amount of winter snow in San Luis, and the likely need for a tunnel through the mountain range coming out of the Valley.



On August 23 they reach Ft. Massachusetts and get ready to head further into the mountains toward what will later become known as the town of Gunnison, Colorado – at the eastern edge of the Gunnison River. After traveling west along the river for some forty miles, a breathtaking site, the Black Canyon, comes into view:

A stream imbedded in (a) narrow and sinuous canyon, resembling a huge snake in motion. To look down over...the canyon below, it seems easy to construct a railroad; but immense amounts of cutting, filling and masonry would be required.

Map Showing Pike's Peak, The Spanish Peaks And The San Luis Valley



Map Showing Pike's Peak And The Future Town Of Gunnison, Colorado.

Their journey continues into Utah over the next two months, taking them down the Colorado and Green Rivers and across the Wasatch Mountains to the Sevier River, near the Utah Tribe's Manti Settlement. Gunnison decides on October 25, to break away from the main party and explore Sevier Lake. It is a fateful decision as his detachment of twelve men is attacked on the morning of October 26, purportedly by a band of Pahvant Utes, at war with local Mormon settlers. Eight men are killed including Gunnison, who is found mutilated, with fifteen arrows in his corpse. When second-in-command Beckwith learns of the battle from the survivors, he circles back to bury Gunnison and the other victims.

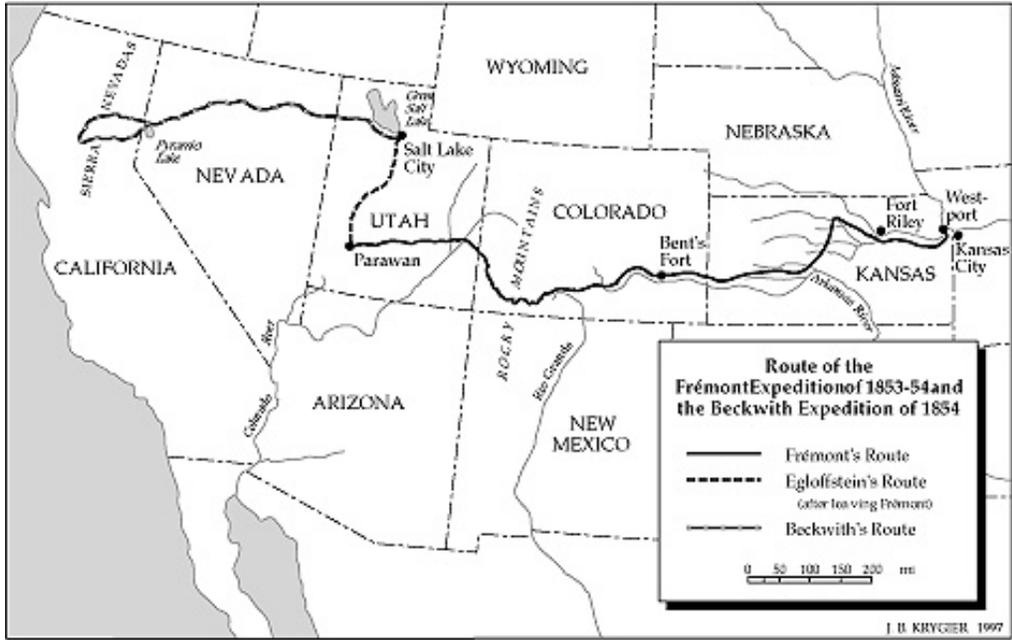


Map Showing The Green River, The Wasatch Mountains, The Sevier River, Sevier Lake & Where Gunnison Dies

The party has traveled some 1566 miles when Beckwith succeeds Gunnison. On October 31, he heads north to Salt Lake City, arriving there on November 8 and settling in for the winter. He receives orders to continue west, and sets out on April 4, 1854, heading across Nevada to the Sierra range, and reaching the Madeline Pass on June 25.

*From the summit of the pass it would be easy, for some miles, to carry a railway on the hillsides, descending at pleasure; but further down, this would become more difficult, on account of the curves which the hill ravines would require, but it is still practicable. For this purpose the northeast side is the most favorable; for although containing the largest number of ravines, they are the smallest, and it is unbroken by cañones. The western descent of the pass is heavily timbered to near our present camp, and there is a fine warm spring, in a basin of rocks, just where we ascended the high spur to avoid the creek.*

On July 12 Beckwith arrives at Ft. Redding in northern California, before ending his tour on July 15 at Sacramento.



Map Showing Beckwith's Route From Salt Lake City Through Nevada Into Northern California

The expedition's final report covers both of its phases – the Gunnison-led search along the 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> parallels through Colorado, and Beckwith's swing further north at the 41<sup>st</sup> parallel. While both routes are deemed viable in 1855, it is Beckwith's 41<sup>st</sup> parallel leg that prevails when the actual tracks are laid between 1863 and 1869.

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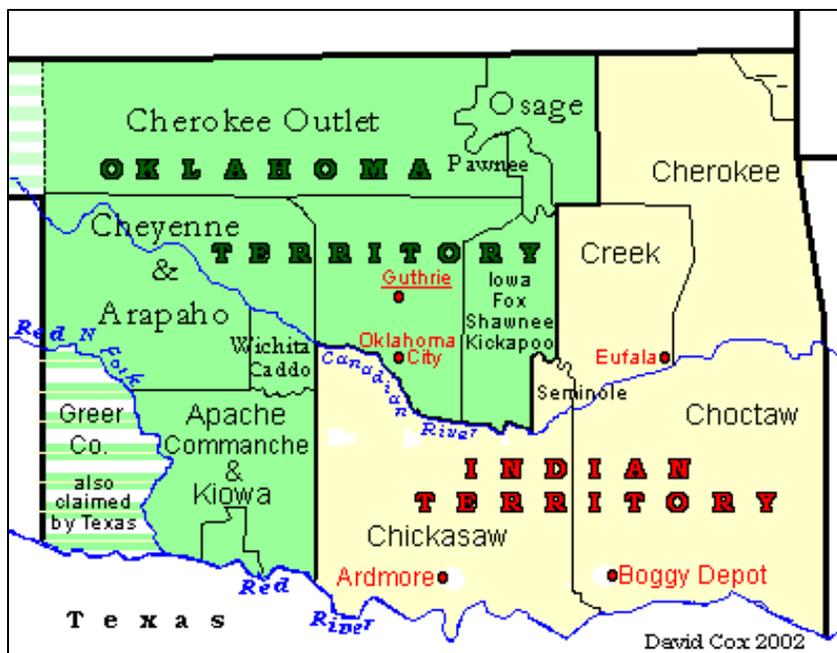
Date: July 2, 1853

**The Upper South Route At The 35<sup>th</sup> Latitude Is Completed Satisfactorily**

Lieutenant Amiel Whipple is chosen to lead the investigation of a route at the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel, from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, to Pueblo de los Angeles, California. He is 34 years old at the time, trained in astronomy, surveying and engineering, and just back from completion of work on a railroad line in Texas.

Whipple and his party depart from Ft. Smith on July 2, 1853, crossing the Arkansas border into the territory (later Oklahoma) set aside for the "five civilized tribes," forcefully driven off their lands around Georgia in 1837. Their path takes them between the Red River to their south and the Canadian River to their north, across the homes of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Comanche and Kiowa Nations. They encounter no hostility along the way.

Brigadier General Amiel Whipple – KIA Chancellorsville (1818-1863)



Map Of Whipple's Path West Between The Red & Canadian Rivers Into Tribal Lands

Proceeding west across the upper reaches of the Texas panhandle, they sweep into the New Mexico Territory at the frontier town of Anton Chico, founded in 1822 during Spanish rule. It is now “public domain land” owned by the United States, and is currently populated by some 500 settlers. Whipple arrives at Anton Chico on September 26, some two months after leaving Ft Smith.



Map Showing Path From Anton Chico To The Zuni Tribe, The Mojave Desert And Los Angeles

He drives on to Albuquerque, arriving there on October 3, 1853. He splits his party there into two wings to explore the upper Rio Grande Valley for an ideal route to the west. They re-group at the Zuni trail, an old Spanish road and move on toward the home of the Zuni Nation. The Zunis are descendants of the original “Puebloans,” and are noted for their elaborately tiered adobe buildings, advanced horticultural skills, generally industrious culture, and complex religious beliefs, symbols and practices. On November 20, 1853, the expedition records impressions of an ancient Zuni site left in ruins:

*The village was compactly built... The entrance to the dwellings was by a ladder, or rather post, cut into steps, and inclined to rest upon the roof...Fragments of pottery were strewn around...a piece of volcanic scoria was found, the first seen among the ruins; also an axe made of greenstone, nicely grooved and beautifully polished.*

Upon returning to the Zuni village, they also encounter a distressing sight:

*...a most revolting spectacle met our view. Smallpox had been making terrible ravages among the people, and we were soon surrounded by great numbers-men, women, and children-exhibiting this loathsome disease in various stages of its progress*

Whipple's band then travels some 375 miles to the north-south branch of the Colorado River, and beyond it to the edge of the Mojave Desert in southern Nevada, arriving there on January 25, 1854.

The Mojave Desert terrain runs east to west for 150 miles into southern California. It is configured in typical "range and basin" fashion – with sizable hills rising in places to 2,000 feet, graduating into rolling flatland, including Death Valley, at 285 feet below sea level. Its summer daylight heat reaches 115-120 degrees Fahrenheit, while its winter nights plunge below zero. Standing sentinels in this "high desert" landscape are its distinctive evergreen Juniper Trees. The "up and down" features and vegetation suggest a name to Whipple's crew:

*Having watered our mulada, we travelled five miles east-northeast up a dry arroyo to its head; and thence climbed a steep ridge several hundred feet high, to the lowest summit we could find...From the peculiar vegetation of this place, we propose to give it the characteristic name of Cactus Pass.*

Once across the Mojave, it is up into the San Bernardino mountains and then down into the valley leading to the final destination at Los Angeles. The party arrives there on March 17, 1854, just over nine months and 1500 miles from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, where they started.

Whipple concludes that the 35<sup>th</sup> latitude route is quite viable, albeit requiring some meandering around obstacles and numerous bridges to cross frequently encountered streams. But water and wood are mostly plentiful; the tribal populations seem sufficiently peaceful; and the winters mild enough to avoid the threats of snow and ice.

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Date: January 24, 1854

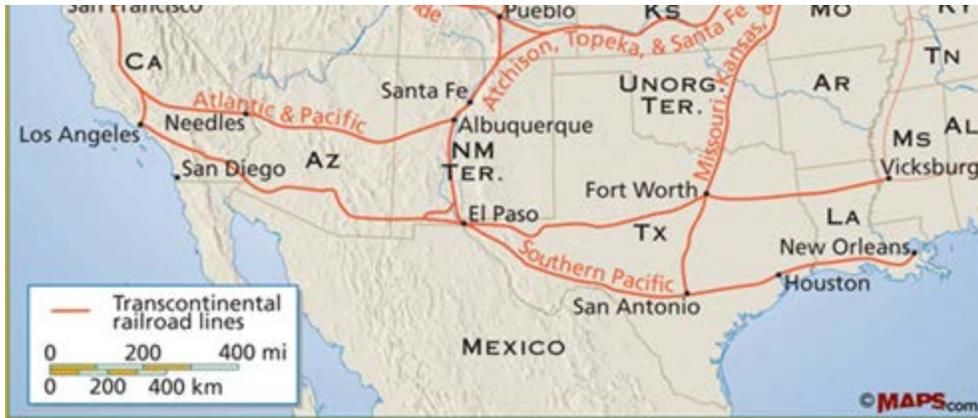
### **Exploration Begins On The Southernmost Route At The 32<sup>nd</sup> Parallel**



Major General John Parke (1827-1900)

The fourth and final search for the optimum train route – this along the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel -- involves two different teams, each starting at a westernmost point and heading back east.

The first group, under twenty-six year old Lt. John Parke moves inland from San Diego along the contested border with Mexico, and ends at the Rio Grande River, near El Paso. The second, led by thirty-one year old Captain John Pope, explores a host of different routes from the Rio Grande across Texas, to his final destination at Ft. Smith, Arkansas.



Map Showing The General Territory Covered By The Parke & Pope 32<sup>nd</sup> Latitude Expeditions

Parke's company comprises twenty-eight engineers and explorers, along with a comparable number of U.S. cavalry troops, assigned to insure their safety in case of clashes with Mexican patrols. He departs on January 24, 1854 from Ft. Yuma, on the eastern border of California, where the Gila River runs into the Colorado River. Following along the left bank of the Gila, he is soon well into the lands of the Maricopa and Pima Tribes, along a trail blazed by Captain Philip St. George Cooke during the Mexican War.



Map Of The Gila River Junction With The Colorado Near Ft. Yuma And The Territory South Belonging To The Maricopa And Pima Tribes

By February 13 the band has traveled 390 miles from San Diego over easy terrain, albeit with scarce access to forage for their animals. Parke comments on this, as well as the warm reception from various tribal elders.

*While on the Gila, the great scarcity of grass and other forage was a constant source of anxiety...but by dint of great care and attention on the part of Lieut. Stoneman...we succeeded in reaching the first of the Pimas and Maricopa's villages, with all our animals, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February... We had numerous visits from the Pimas and Maricopa's. Their chiefs and old men were all eloquent in professions of friendship for the Americans, and were equally desirous that we should read the certificates of good offices rendered various parties while passing through their country.*

Their stay is brief, and on February 16 they swing south to Tucson, arriving there only four days later, and presenting their credentials to the local Mexican commandant. Their next leg takes them further into Cochise land, past the distinctive Dos Cabezas Peaks and through the 9,000 foot Chiricahua Mountain range at the Puerto del Dado (later known as Apache Pass). They head into the Mesilla Valley and locate Ft. Webster, built to guard the Santa Rita copper mines, but recently burned, presumably by the Apaches. Parke ends his part of the Far Southern expedition on March 10, 1854, at Ft. Fillmore, on the sand hills above the Rio Grande.



Map Outlining The Territory Covered By Parke's Expedition From San Diego To El Paso

The explorers have traveled a total of 550 miles between San Diego and El Paso. The path is very direct, free of any challenging mountain barriers, and ideal for laying track. The only concern cited is a scarcity of fresh water, with only nine streams available along the way.

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Date: February 12, 1854

### A Second Party Completes The 32<sup>nd</sup> Parallel Assessment



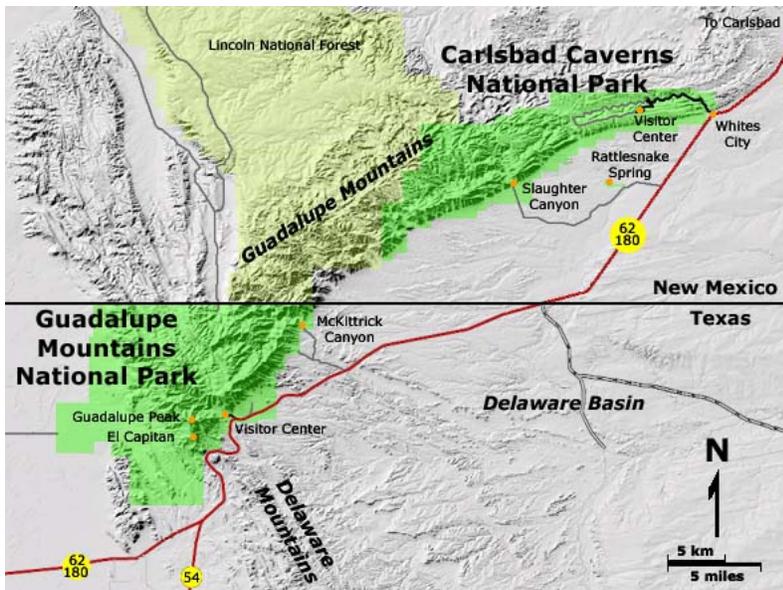
Major General John Pope (1822-1892)

On February 12, 1854, one month before Parke arrives at El Paso, Captain John Pope sets out from Los Cruces, New Mexico, to explore potential train routes across Texas. With him are some 50 expeditionary members, and a security detail of 25 U.S. troops. Pope's orders will take him eastward through El Paso, across the Guadalupe Mountains and onto the vast Llano Estacio Desert -- then northward to the Red River border with Oklahoma, above Denton.



Map Showing El Paso, the Guadalupe Range, Colorado River And Denton

After navigating the Guadalupe range, Pope sets up camp for his core team in the Delaware basin. On March 10, he sends one party back into the mountains seeking a better passage, which they fail to find. At the same time he orders his second-in-command, Captain Taplin, along with ten men, to tackle what appears to be the most dangerous part of the mission, crossing a 150 mile stretch of the Llano Dessert. While waiting to hear from Taplin, Pope has some excitement of his own, when a small band of Apaches start a prairie fire hoping to drive him off their land..



Map Showing The Guadalupe Range And The Delaware Basin

On March 13, Taplin reports that he has made it across the Llano, despite having to abandon his wagons in the sandy terrain, and suffering from a lack of water. Pope breaks camp at the Delaware, traveling east across the nearby Pecos River toward the Colorado River. He also dispatches a second party to follow Taplin's desert path while carefully recording grades and assessing the potential to drill artisan wells for water.

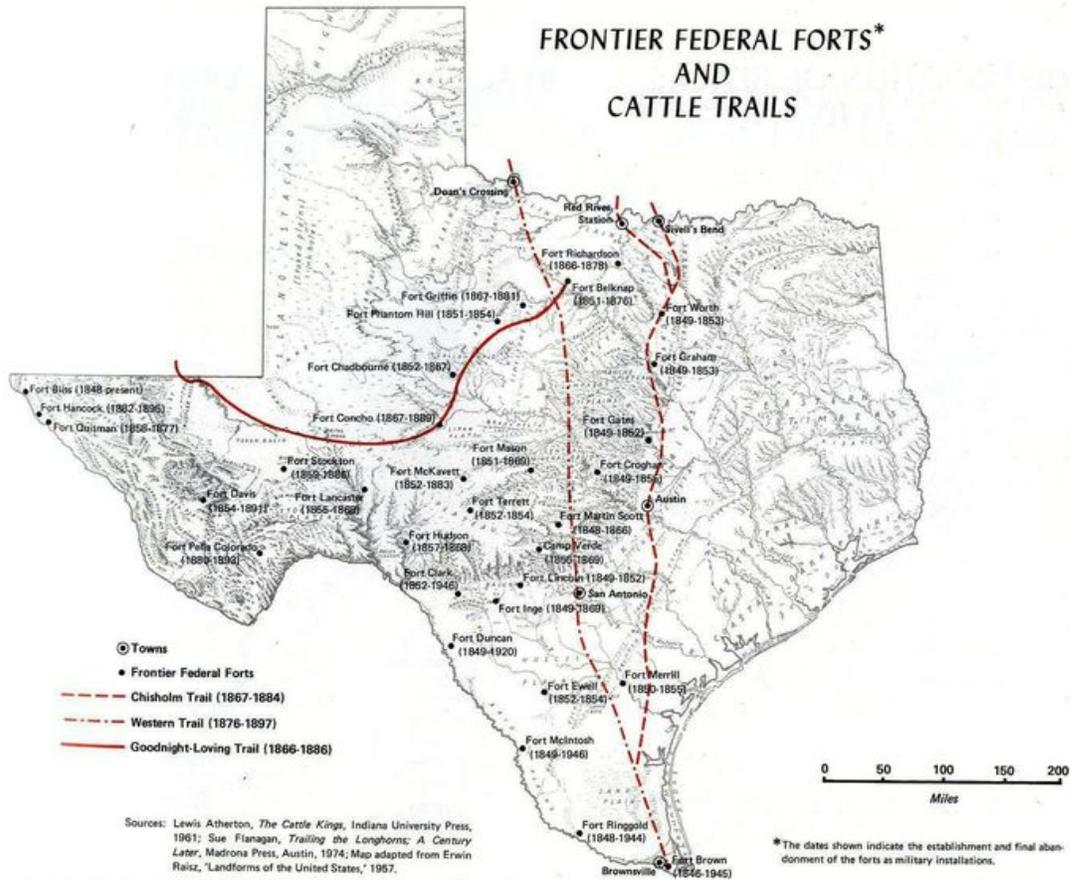
After crossing the Colorado, the main body again encounters Apaches, led by one memorable chief:

*They were led by a most outre looking figure. This was Sanchoz, one of their chiefs, dressed in an infantry captain's uniform coat, silver epaulets, red sash tied over his shoulder, non-descript pantaloons, and moccasins; add to them a military cap with an enormous red pompon, and some idea may be formed of (the) exhibition....*



Map Showing The Pecos, Colorado And Brazos Rivers Pope Crosses

Pope now swings sharply north and picks up a military trail connecting a string of recently constructed military forts. He stops at Ft. Chadbourne for supplies before continuing over the Brazos River, past Ft. Belknap and on to the Red River boundary of Texas near the town of Preston. His total journey has taken him 640 miles from El Paso over 83 days, including the 31 day stopover at Delaware Creek.



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Map Showing Ft. Chadbourne And Ft. Belknap Along The Military Trail Leading To The Red River Border Of Texas

Pope concludes that his 350 mile route would prove ideal for railroad construction. The only challenge he sees is the shortage of water experienced at the Llanos Estacio Dessert.

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Date: 1856

### Secretary Of War Davis Issues His Final Report On The Four Expeditions



Herd Of Buffalo” Lithograph By John Mix Stanley (Volume XII) Of Report

In addition to the \$150,000 set aside in 1853, Congress approves another \$190,000 to complete the expeditions.

Reports from the teams flow into Washington throughout 1854, each providing careful details about the western landscape – not only related to railroad engineering but also regarding fresh water, lumber and forage, local geology, vegetation, botany (fauna, flowers, trees, etc.), zoology (mammals, birds, fossils,) climate, barometric pressures, temperatures, astronomical locations, indigenous people, language and customs. The facts are accompanied by artist’s renderings, diaries and official records to bring the science to life.

Between 1855 and 1860 a total of twelve leather bound volumes will be printed and published on the surveys, at a further expense of \$1.3 million for some 20,000 copies. Together they chronicle the sum total of existing knowledge about the Territories. The content is widely covered in newspaper reports and referenced in ongoing debates about the railroad.

Secretary of War Jefferson Davis is charged with recommending the optimal route to Congress, and he is both serious and objective in this duty.

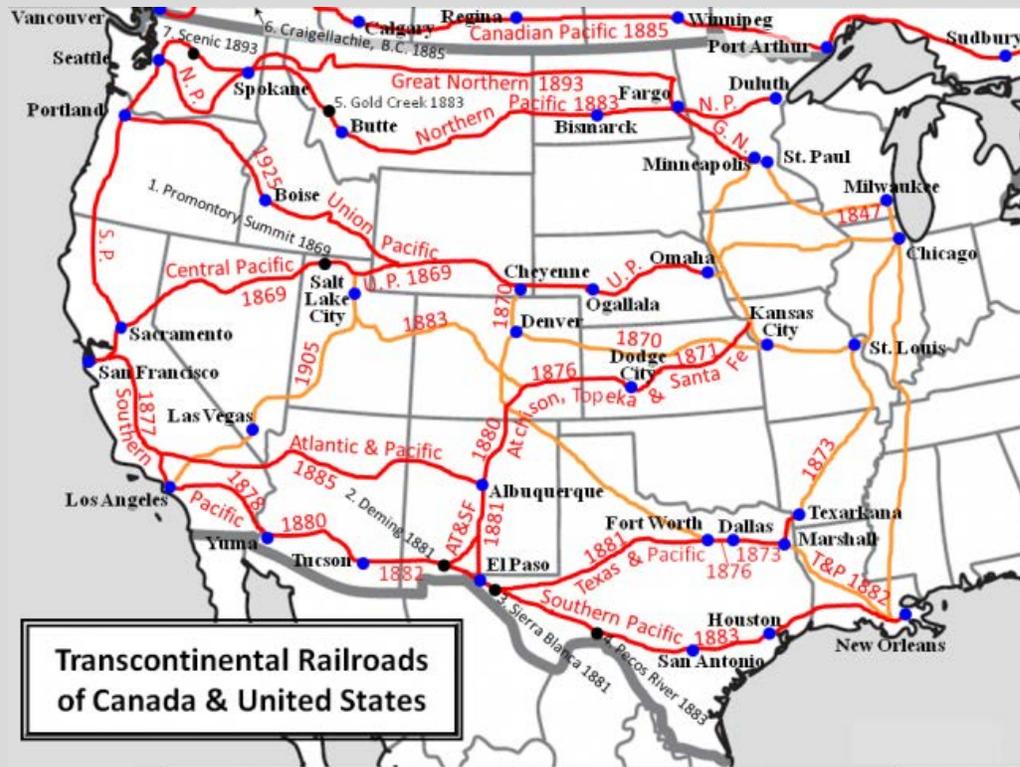
As will be demonstrated over time, he finds all options viable, albeit with different degrees of difficulty and investment.

Still, the hands-down winner is the southernmost path from New Orleans through Texas to El Paso, and on to Yuma and Los Angeles. The route is very direct, over land that has relatively few mountains, and a generally mild winter climate. Its only drawbacks are some areas where water and forage are scarce, and a strip of land west of El Paso that remains disputed with Mexico (soon to be resolved with the “Gadsden Purchase”).

Davis announces his conclusion to Congress in 1856.

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**Sidebar: Construction Of The Transcontinental Railroad Delayed Until 1869**



Map Showing The Nation's Principal Railroad Lines Up To 1890

Unfortunately the ambitious plan to begin construction on the railroad is postponed due to sectional animosity that intensifies in the 1850's over the future of slavery in the west.

Action materializes only after the South secedes from the Union and the Civil War is under way. On July 1, 1862, then President Lincoln signs the Pacific Railway Act incenting two corporations to construct tracks along a central route at the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel, from Council Bluffs, Iowa to San Francisco, California.

Ironically this is the path terminating in Chicago favored by Senator Stephen Douglas since 1845 and ignored during the 1853-55 surveys. The Little Giant, however, never lives to enjoy his success -- dying suddenly on July 3, 1861, of typhoid fever, at only forty-eight years old.

**The Two Corporations Who Build The First Transcontinental Line By 1869**

Corporations	Line Runs	Key Owners	Details
The Union Pacific	Council Bluffs, Iowa Omaha, Nebraska Cheyenne, Wyoming Ogden, Utah Promontory Point, Utah	Dr. Thomas Durant In 1880, Jay Gould	Construction head is J.D. "Pete" Criley, backed by largely Irish vets of the Civil War working for a handsome \$2 a day.

The Central Pacific (later the Southern Pacific line)	Promontory Point, Utah Sacramento, California San Francisco, California	“The Big Four” Leland Stanford Collis Huntington Charles Crocker Mark Hopkins	Begun in 1863 with Crocker as construction head and 15,000 laborers, 80% Chinese immigrants
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This deal struck by the ex-Whig Lincoln is right out of the Henry Clay playbook for developing needed infrastructure through a combined public and private partnership – with each side sharing in the risks and the rewards.

The underlying assumption is that “demand” for the new railroad will be sufficiently great to off-set what are certain to be staggering construction costs. For this to be the case, the new trains must transport both goods and passengers at a much faster rate and with less risk than the existing option – ships sailing around South America’s Cape Horn.

The 1862 bill gives each corporation “rights of way” land grants to lay their tracks, surrounded by 200 feet on each side of the rails. In total, some 175 million acres -- equaling the size of Texas – are handed over by 1871.

The capital required for construction is raised through government backed bonds issued to investors with a guaranteed 6% per year rate of interest. The target amount assumes roughly \$16,000 per mile of track laid on flatter land, and from \$32,000 to \$48,000 per mile between the Rocky and Sierra Mountain ranges. This money is temporarily loaned to the corporations to cover their costs for building the lines – to be repaid in full once the trains are running and producing revenue for the private owners.

After some six years of hard labor by largely Chinese and Irish work crews, the two lines – spanning 1,928 miles -- are joined at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869. By November of that year, commercial traffic is up and running, including passenger travel from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to San Francisco, for a one-way fare of \$65.

The costs to construct the first line are less than originally thought, albeit still immense -- at \$36-52 million for the Central Pacific portion in the west, and another \$60 million for the much longer, but “easier” Union Pacific branch.

Once shaken down and running smoothly, the hoped-for advantages of the transcontinental train for both commercial shippers and passengers are readily apparent – in greater speed and reliability.

**Time From New York To San Francisco -- 1876**

	Number Of Days
Transatlantic Railroad	4-10 Days
Sailing Ships	100
Wagon Train	150

What follows is a financial boom for the railroad corporations that mirrors the gold rush, and tycoon status for the lead investors, who are soon known as “Robber Barons” for their ruthless business practices.

### The Early “Robber Barons” Of Railroading

Mark Hopkins (1813-1878)	Leland Stanford (1824-1893)
Henry Plant (1819-1899)	Henry Flagler (1830-1913)
Collis Huntington (1821-1900)	Jay Gould (1836-1892)
Charles Crocker (1822-1888)	E. H. Harriman (1848-1909)

The rapid financial success of the Central line spurs other corporate entrepreneurs to follow suit.

On January 12, 1883 the Southern Pacific completes its construction along the 32<sup>nd</sup> Parallel route explored by Parke and Pope in 1854. It connects New Orleans with Los Angeles.

Eight months later, on September 8, 1883, the Northern Pacific celebrates its Completion Ceremony in western Montana, with then President Ulysses Grant in attendance. It traces the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel line favored by Isaac Stevens in 1853, and links St. Paul, Minnesota to Portland, Oregon.

### Two More Transcontinental Lines Are Completed In 1883

Corporations	Line Runs	Key Owners
Southern Pacific	New Orleans, Louisiana San Antonio, Texas Sierra Blanco, New Mexico El Paso, Texas Tucson, Arizona Yuma, Arizona Los Angeles, California	Timothy Phelps 1865 Sold in 1868 to the “Big Four”
Northern Pacific	Chicago, Illinois Minneapolis, Minnesota Fargo, North Dakota Bismarck, North Dakota Bozeman, Montana Butte, Montana Portland, Oregon	Chartered in 1864 Early tycoons are J. Gregory Smith followed by Jay Cooke

Finally there are the “connector lines” that are crucial to making the entire system efficient. Some, like the Atchison, Topeka & The Santa Fe provide north-south arteries that complement the east-west drift of the transatlantics. Others, like the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, act as the central hub linking the west and east coasts.

### Major “Connecting Lines” To Transatlantic Railroads

Corporations	Line Runs	Key Owners
Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe	Hannibal, Missouri St Joseph, Missouri Atchison, Missouri	Cyrus Holliday, first president 1860-63
Links Missouri to Southern Pacific RR	Topeka, Kansas Pueblo, Colorado Santa Fe, New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico El Paso	

Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific	Chicago, Illinois Rock Island, Illinois Iowa City, Iowa Omaha, Nebraska	Incorporated in 1847 by civic leaders in Rock Island
Missouri Pacific	St. Louis, Missouri Kansas City, Missouri Topeka, Kansas	Starts in 1851 then Jay Gould takes over 1871
Kansas Pacific	Topeka, Kansas Denver, Colorado	Began in 1855; later a part of the UP line.
Denver Pacific	Denver, Colorado Cheyenne, Wyoming	1867 start; later ties to KP and UP routes
Atlantic & Pacific	Albuquerque, New Mexico "Needles," Arizona Tehachapi Pass, California San Francisco, California	Opens in 1849 tying St. Louis to Kansas City. Fremont and Charles Fisk involved over time

The development of these great railroad line has a transformative effect on the U.S. economy, with GDP growth jumping up almost 7% per year between 1869 and 1879.

## Chapter 206 – The “Gadsden Purchase” Supports A Southern Route For The Pacific Railroad

 <p><b>THE GADSDEN PURCHASE, 1853</b></p> <p>The map shows the Gadsden Purchase territory in southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. Key locations include Los Angeles, Tucson, El Paso, and Houston. The route of the Southern Pacific Railroad is shown as a dashed line connecting these points. The Colorado River and Gila River are also labeled. A scale bar indicates 300 Miles and 300 Kilometers.</p>	<p><b>Dates:</b> May – December 1853</p>	<p><b>Sections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pierce Focuses His Expansionist Sights On Mexico</li> <li>• Mexican President Santa Ana Rejects Gadsden’s Initial Proposals</li> <li>• The “Gadsden Purchase” Is Concluded</li> </ul>
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Date: May 18, 1853

### Pierce Focuses His Expansionist Sights On Mexico

Throughout his term, Franklin Pierce will demonstrate that he is an aggressive expansionist at heart.

His attention in this regard is directed first toward Mexico, then Central America and Cuba.

Support for his quests will come from two sources. First are corporations and financial speculators, eager to build new transportation systems and exploit commercial trade from the east to the west coast and Asia. They are joined by plantation owners who feel the prospects dimming for further expansion of slavery in the existing U.S., and are now seeking new territory to the south.

One target for Pierce, like his predecessors, is the 125 mile wide Isthmus of Tehuantepec laying between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, a natural site for a canal or a railroad or both. The South is especially drawn to this site as a “back-up,” should politics route the transcontinental line to the North. But as of 1853, little progress has been made here despite Mexico having already sold the “rights of way” to US firms.



Map Of The Isthmus Of Tehuantepec To The South Of Veracruz, Mexico

The President's thus turns toward the Mexican provinces along the border laid out in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Since the end of the war, disputes over land ownership have continued unabated.

A dispute that is particularly heated centers in the Mesilla Valley, just west of El Paso.



Map Of "Disputed Land" From The Mesilla Valley (West Of El Paso) To Yuma, Arizona

Although a survey for the 1848 Treaty clearly designates the valley as Mexican land, the second Territorial Governor of New Mexico, William Lane, suddenly lays claim to it on May 18, 1853. This results in a show of force by Mexican troops and Pierce's dismissal of Lane to quell the tensions.

But both the President and his Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, have had their eyes on the Mesilla Valley, together with a 550 mile strip of land extending west to Yuma, Arizona. The terrain is both open and flat, an apparently ideal route for a transcontinental railroad across the south.

In early 1853, Pierce names the South Carolinian railroader, James Gadsden, as his Ambassador to Mexico, and sends him there to settle the border disputes and try to purchase additional land.

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Date: August 4, 1853

## Mexican President Santa Ana Rejects Gadsden's Initial Proposals



Map Of Mexican Province Including The Topmost Four That The U.S. Tries To Buy

The President of Mexico at the time is the peg-legged fifty-eight year old General, Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, infamous in America for his massacres at The Alamo and Goliad during the 1836 Texas Annexation period, and revenged upon by Generals Jackson and Scott in the 1846-47 War.

Since then, Santa Ana's nation has been in a state of perpetual turmoil, with liberal Catholic clerics battling military-backed conservatives for control of the government. In 1853 the old guard regains power, and on April 20 they invite the General, living in exile in Columbia, to return for his eleventh and final stint as president.

In characteristic fashion, Santa Ana declares himself "Dictator for Life" with the official title of "Hero of the Nation, General of Division, Grand Master of the National and Distinguished Order of Guadalupe, Grand Cross of the Royal and Distinguished Spanish Order of Carlos III, and President of the Mexican Republic."

His term – which will last for 28 months before he is again ousted and exiled – is marked by financial stress for the country, exacerbated by personal corruption of those in power, himself included.

Santa Ana is back as President for only sixteen weeks when Ambassador James Gadsden shows up in Mexico City on August 4, 1853, waving much needed cash in his face for the purchase of land.

While the General needs the money, he regards America with the same level of fear that France was accorded during the age of Napoleon. Rumors of U.S. troops gathering north of La Mesilla abound, and Santa Ana fully anticipates that, in the end, America will have the land by force if not by negotiation.

Santa Ana’s deepest concerns are realized when Gadsden makes his opening proposal – proposing to purchase vast chunks of Mexican territory involving its four northernmost provinces. Four options are identified:

- \$50 million to buy the provinces of Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baha California
- \$35 million for the first three, excluding Baha
- \$30 million for all land above 31°47” including Baja
- \$20 million for the above, excluding Baja

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December 30, 1853

### The “Gadsden Purchase” Is Concluded



Map Showing The 550 Mile Strip Along The New Mexico And Arizona Border Acquired In The Gadsden Purchase

For all his many failings, Santa Ana is first and foremost a nationalist – and he cannot stomach the notion of surrendering full provinces to his long-term enemy in America.

He rejects all four of Gadsden’s offers, dismisses him for the time being, and begins to search for ways out of his dilemma. One radical move involves negotiating a power-sharing alliance with Great Britain, and feelers are sent out on this before being quickly rebuffed.

Gadsden returns to Mexico City four months later, on December 10, with a new offer in hand.

It proposes a payment of \$10 million for the potential railroad site, running from the Mesilla Valley all the way to Yuma, Arizona and encompassing just under 30,000 square miles of land. After twenty more days of bargaining, the two parties reach an agreement.

This deal, known in Mexico as the La Mesilla Treaty and the U.S. as the “Gadsden Purchase,” completes the nearly 70 years westward march known as “Manifest Destiny.”

**Expansion Of America’s Land Mass**

Year	Land Gained	From	Via	Square Miles	% US
1784	13 colonies to Miss R	Britain	War	888,811	29%
1803	Louisiana Territory	France	Buy	827,192	27
1819	Florida	Spain	Buy	72,003	2
1845	Texas Territories	Mexico	Annex	390,144	13
1846	Oregon Territories	Britain	Buy	285,580	10
1848	Mexico Cession	Mexico	War	529,017	18
1853	Gadsden Purchase	Mexico	Buy	29,640	1
	Total (48 states)			3,022,387	100%

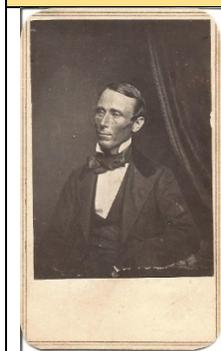
After Mexico receives the \$10 million, rumor has it that Santa Ana pockets \$600,000 for himself to cover his personal losses associated with the American war.

Over three decades will pass before the impetus behind the “Gadsden Purchase” is realized, in the opening of the Southern Pacific Railroad, in 1886. By that time, the South Carolina railroader and diplomat, James Gadsden is long gone, having died in 1858 at age seventy.



Map Showing The Eventual Route Of The Southern Pacific RR Across The Gadsden Purchase Land

## Chapter 207 – Filibusterer William Walker Attempts To Create A Republic Of Lower California



**Dates:**  
October 1853 – May  
1854

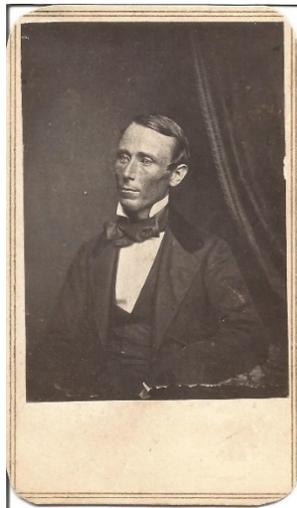
**Sections:**

- Filibustering Campaigns Seek To Expand America’s Borders
- A Profile Of Filibusterer William Walker
- William Walker’s Attempt To Annex Lower California Ends In Failure

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Date: 1845-1860

### Filibustering Campaigns Seek To Expand America’s Borders



While U.S. diplomats are attempting to complete the “Gadsden Purchase” by peaceful means, a hostile take-over of additional Mexican land is under way, led by the notorious adventurer, William Walker.

The template for intrusion unto foreign soil is set by the founding of the Republic of Texas in 1845. This involves a relatively small band of adventurers who achieve “squatter sovereignty” over a poorly defended territory in Mexico, and then attract a sufficient number of additional recruits to fight off all attempts to dislodge them by force. With that accomplished, admission to the United States was sought and eventually granted.

From the Texas success, the notion of heroic foreign conquest enters the imagination of others, driven by the wish for personal fame and wealth, and, perhaps, the chance to “add another star” to the American flag.

William Walker (1824-1860)

In the lexicon of the time, these individuals become known as “filibusterers,” from the Dutch word “freebooters.”

The Venezuelan born Narciso Lopez earns this title in 1845 when he attempts to conquer Cuba, with support from U.S. Senator John Quitman of Mississippi, an early member of the pro-slavery Southern “fire-eaters.” President Zachary Taylor opposes Lopez’s efforts, and they end when he is garroted to death in Havana.

But the most infamous of all filibusterers is one William Walker, whose exploits between 1853 and 1860 reflect the extent to which “manifest destiny” is embedded in America’s consciousness at the time.

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#### **Sidebar: A Profile Of Filibusterer William Walker**

William Walker is a precocious youth who graduates at fourteen from the University of Nashville before traveling to Europe to study medicine in Scotland and Germany. He returns to finish his medical degree at nineteen from the University of Pennsylvania, then practices briefly before moving to New Orleans, where he passes the bar and also takes up journalism, as editor of a newspaper, the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*.

After his purported fiancé dies during a yellow fever outbreak, Walker departs for California during the gold rush, but not before assaulting a fellow writer for articles he finds personally offensive.

In 1849, while working at the *San Francisco Herald*, he earns local fame by criticizing an unpopular district judge for his court record on crime, then serving successfully as his own attorney after the judge throws him in jail.

His naturally combative personality also resurfaces in a series of three duels. Included here is one with the noted lawyer and gunslinger, William Hicks Graham, who calls him out on behalf of a friend and wounds him severely in the thigh before Walker even gets off a shot.

But Walker is undeterred by this or any other setbacks. In 1851 he is only twenty-seven years old and has tested himself across a remarkable string of careers and events. The time has come for him to tackle another new adventure, to fulfill his destiny on a larger stage. By happenstance he is presented with a chance to create his own personal empire in a foreign land.

Many who see Walker from afar are unimpressed by his frail, almost feminine appearance and his quiet manner. Others who are closer up recall his “grey, cold eyes” and a personal magnetism that peg him as “no ordinary person.”

*His appearance was anything else than a military chieftain. Below the medium height, and very slim, I should hardly imagine him to weigh over a hundred pounds. His hair light and towy, while his almost white eyebrows and lashes concealed a seemingly pupilless, grey, cold eyes, and his face was a mass of yellow freckles, the whole expression very heavy. His dress was scarcely less remarkable than his person. An insignificant-looking specimen.*

*But anyone who estimated Mr. Walker by his personal appearance made a great mistake. Extremely taciturn, he would sit for an hour in company without opening his lips; but once interested he arrested your attention with the first word he uttered, and as he proceeded, you felt convinced that he was no ordinary person.*

Walker remains forever a serious man, intent on accomplishing his ambitious goals, not simply a wild-eyed buccaneer. One observer offers this profile:

*Throughout the many vicissitudes of his career Walker always remained quiet and imperturbable. Success never turned his head; failure never caused him to despair. He was as calm under fire as ever he was in the sanctum of the editor or the office of the advocate. His manner was always characterized by extreme simplicity... In spite of his lack of affectation Walker was a great stickler for the dignity of his office... He won no man's affection, but every man's respect.*

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Date: October 1853 – May 1854

### William Walker's Attempt To Annex Lower California Ends In Failure



Map Showing Cabo San Lucas, La Paz, Ensenada & The Province of Sonora

The happenstance that brings William Walker into the filibustering arena in 1852 is a visit with travelers just back from the port city of Guaymas, in the Mexican province of Sonora. The picture they paint is of territory ripe for silver prospectors, beset by tribal raids, and largely absent any basic civic authority.

Walker processes this information and decides to approach the provincial Mexican governor in June 1853 with a proposition to establish a settlement there in return for acting as a police force to suppress future tribal uprisings. Despite support from the American ambassador, the Mexicans are fearful of the proposal and quickly send him home.

But Walker exits with a conviction that even a small contingent of armed Americans could easily march into Sonora and grab whatever territory they chose to conquer. With this in mind, he begins to recruit his own army, set to invade in the summer of 1853.

He is described as “insanely confident of success” when his small band of 45 troops depart from San Francisco aboard the brig *Caroline* on October 16, 1853. Given their limited strength, Walker has decided to enter Lower California before moving onward to his main goal, the province of Sonora. The voyage takes him some 1500 miles to the southern tip of the Baha at Cabo San Lucas. From there he marches overland for 100 miles to the provincial capital of La Paz, where he arrests the local Governor, hauls down the Mexican flag and declares his control over the new “Republic of Lower California.”

A series of proclamations follow, including one that his Civil Code will conform to that in place in the U.S. state of Louisiana – which includes the practice of slavery, banned in 1828 by the Mexican government.

But Walker’s hold on his new “empire” is fragile. On November 9, 1853, gunfire is exchanged for the first time with hostile forces, and he abandons La Paz for a brief return to Cabo San Lucas before a 1,000

mile exodus to Ensenada, near the California border. Once there he is able to arrange for another 230 American recruits, although they arrive without military gear, and are unable to participate in a minor skirmish with Mexican troops on December 29, 1853.

Favorable publicity about his exploits in California papers translates into prospects for even more volunteers. This further emboldens Walker, and on January 18, 1854 – without moving beyond his current garrison -- he declares himself titular head not only of Baja, but also Sonora.

What follows, however, is profoundly disappointing to Walker. His plans to actually govern the new Republic are captured on paper, but he never has the capacity to execute them in practice. His supporters are fighters, not administrators, and their staying power is soon tested. As inaction replaces adventure and basic supplies, even food, begin to run out, signs of mutiny materialize. Walker responds by asking all to swear an oath of loyalty, and those who refuse are told to depart. Soon his total force dwindles to some 130 men, hardly enough to withstand a serious assault, much less govern a territory.

In January 1854, a Mexican warship blocks the port of Ensenada, further threatening his resources -- and a visit from the *USS Portsmouth*, offers Walker no encouragement about aid. Still he perseveres. He moves 50 miles south to San Vicente, arriving there on February 17. He shoots two deserters before setting out on March 20 with his dwindling forces to finally enter the Sonora province he has already claimed. But this journey proves disastrous, with Walker spending three days there before retreating to San Vicente, where he finds his garrison wiped out by the Mexicans.

With no options left, the filibuster comes to an end. Walker and thirty-three remaining stragglers head north to the border and are taken into custody by U.S. authorities at Tia Juana on May 8. They are charged with violating the 1794 Neutrality Act and paroled to San Francisco.

There, after a complicated trial in Federal Court -- with Walker again participating as a defense attorney -- a jury amazingly acquits him of all charges, reportedly after only eight minutes of deliberation.

Instead of ending up in prison, William Walker leaves the court a free man and a folk hero. His first attempt at filibustering has failed, but before long he will be back to try it again.

## Chapter 208 – Congress Passes The Controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act



**Dates:**  
January – May 1854

**Sections:**

- Pierce Sends His First Annual Message To Congress
- Douglas Offers His First Bill To Organize The Nebraska Territory
- The Strategy Douglas Will Adopt To Secure Southern Support
- Questions About The 1820 Missouri Compromise Enter The Debate
- Douglas Convinces A Shaken Pierce To Go Along With The Bill
- Douglas Shocks His Colleagues With A New “Kansas-Nebraska Act”
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act Finally Becomes Law
- Implications Of The Kansas-Nebraska Act

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Date: December 6, 1853

### Pierce Sends His First Annual Message To Congress

With Gadsden primed for a successful visit to Mexico City, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress convenes for its initial session on December 5, 1853. The next day, President Pierce’s first annual message is read into the record.

It begins on a somber note, remembering those recently dead (some 8,000 in New Orleans alone) from the mosquito borne viral infection known as yellow fever, and invoking his “abiding sense of dependence upon Him who holds in His hands the destiny of men and of nations.”

While he states that foreign affairs have “undergone no essential changes,” he calls out several noteworthy issues and events:

- Agreements with Britain over fishing rights in the northeast and boundaries in the northwest.
- Concerns over “unauthorized expeditions” against Cuba and Porto Rico.
- The “justifiable conduct” releasing citizen-to-be Martin Koszta from illegal seizure by Austria.
- Commodore Perry’s return to Japan in search of opening trade.
- Attempts currently under way to resolve border disputes between the U.S. and Mexico.
- A full litany of initiatives to open relations and trade across Central and South America.

Likewise on the domestic front, comes a very long and detailed accounting:

- The nation’s finances are in good shape, with revenues exceeding the needs of government.
- A plan is forthcoming to reduce tariff rates on many items.
- Surveying has now been completed on almost 10 million acres of new public land.
- Some 335,000 acres of land have been sold recently for a total of \$625,000.
- Both the Navy and the Army “require augmentation.”
- The judicial system needs to be modified and enlarged.
- DC will enjoy an improved water supply, a new insane asylum, the Smithsonian Institution
- The Post Office is facing “enormous rates” from railroads to carry mail.

A high priority within his domestic agenda is progress toward a transcontinental railroad. It will provide “the means of communication by which the different parts of our country are to be placed in closer connection for purposes of both defense and commercial intercourse.” Work is already under way to:

*Ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the river Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean.*

While oversight on this transcontinental railroad belongs with the government, Pierce assures Congress that the actual construction work and costs will be borne by private corporations and their investors.

*The General Government to undertake to administer the affairs of a railroad, a canal, or other similar construction, (but) its connection with a work of this character should be incidental rather than primary.*

Taken together, the bulk of Pierce’s address paints the picture of an America that is sailing along smoothly in January, 1853, under the leadership of a still new president who has quickly mastered his role and is proceeding with confidence.

But scattered throughout the speech are snippets that suggest a different reality – one filled with “anxious apprehension” and “disturbing questions.” Pierce scrupulously avoids the word “slavery” here, but those in his congressional audience and in the press can easily fill in the blanks.

*The year 1850 will be referred to as a period filled with anxious apprehension. A successful war had just terminated. Peace brought with it a vast augmentation of territory. Disturbing questions arose bearing upon the domestic institutions of one portion of the Confederacy and involving the constitutional rights of the States.*

Beyond that, comes nothing but “wishful thinking” on his part.

Even though he knows full well that the 1850 Compromise has not resolved the “disturbing questions,” he asserts that “the controversies are passing away” and that a “new league of amity and mutual confidence” has dawned which will result in “domestic peace.”

*The controversies which have agitated the country heretofore are passing away with the causes which produced them and the passions which they had awakened; or, if any trace of them remains, it may be reasonably hoped that it will only be perceived in the zealous rivalry of all good citizens to testify their respect for the rights of the States, their devotion to the Union, and their common determination that each one of the States, its institutions, its welfare, and its domestic peace, shall be held alike secure under the sacred aegis of the Constitution.*

*This new league of amity and of mutual confidence and support into which the people of the Republic have entered happily affords inducement and opportunity for the adoption of a more comprehensive and unembarrassed line of policy and action as to the great material interests of the country, whether regarded in themselves or in connection with the powers of the civilized world.*

The outlook, he says, is for a “restored sense of repose and security for the public mind.”

*But notwithstanding differences of opinion and sentiment which then existed in relation to details and specific provisions, the acquiescence of distinguished citizens, whose devotion to the Union*

*can never be doubted, has given renewed vigor to our institutions and restored a sense of repose and security to the public mind throughout the Confederacy.*

And that “this repose will suffer no shock” during his term in office.

*That this repose is to suffer no shock during my official term, if I have power to avert it, those who placed me here may be assured.*

Events, however, will soon prove that his assurances are misplaced.

Pierce’s speech ends as it begins, announcing another national loss, the passing of his Vice-President, William King of Alabama, who succumbs to tuberculosis at sixty-seven, only six weeks after being sworn in. He will not be replaced, which means that the President Pro-Tempore of the Senate would succeed Pierce if need be.

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Date: January 10, 1854

### **Douglas Offers His First Bill To Organize The Nebraska Territory**



Stephen Douglas (1813-1861)

Now back from his five month long European tour, Stephen Douglas returns to the Senate eager to resume his crusade on behalf of opening the Nebraska Territory.

He finds that the power structure in Congress, like the population, is drifting toward the west. David Atchison of Missouri is chosen as President Pro Tem in the Senate and Kentucky’s Lin Boyd succeeds Howell Cobb as Speaker of the House. The important Committee on Territories in the upper chamber is expanded to six men, still headed by Douglas. He is joined by John Bell of Tennessee, the Texan, Sam Houston, Robert Johnson of Arkansas, Iowa’s George Jones, and the lone easterner and Whig, former Secretary of State, Edward Everett, of Massachusetts. This group will differ from start to finish in regard to the Nebraska Bill.

All six agree, however, that something must be done about the final “Unorganized Territory” remaining from the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. Settlers are moving onto the land; a host of Indian tribes are already there; and the wish for a transcontinental railroad adds to the need to convert the Territory into a State.

Iowa Senator Augustus Dodge takes the lead here by announcing his intent to re-introduce the Nebraska Bill, which was tabled by a vote of 23-17 nine months ago on the final day of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress.

This Bill, like its predecessor, is crafted by Douglas; in fact he claims to have written it all by himself:

*It was written by myself at my own house with no man present.*

Since 1845, during the Texas Annexation debate, Douglas has witnessed his Bill go down to defeat time after time, and he vows to drive it through in 1854 by his personal force of will – and by “adjustments” aimed at gaining the Southern support he needs.

What continues to trouble the South is the prospect that Nebraska will become the “next California” – one more addition to the Free State majority in the Senate that can threaten the institution of slavery at any moment.

The Free State designation is “assumed” since the entire Nebraska Territory falls above the 36’30” boundary line on slavery, agreed to in the 1820 Missouri Compromise and applicable ever since to all land from the Louisiana Purchase.

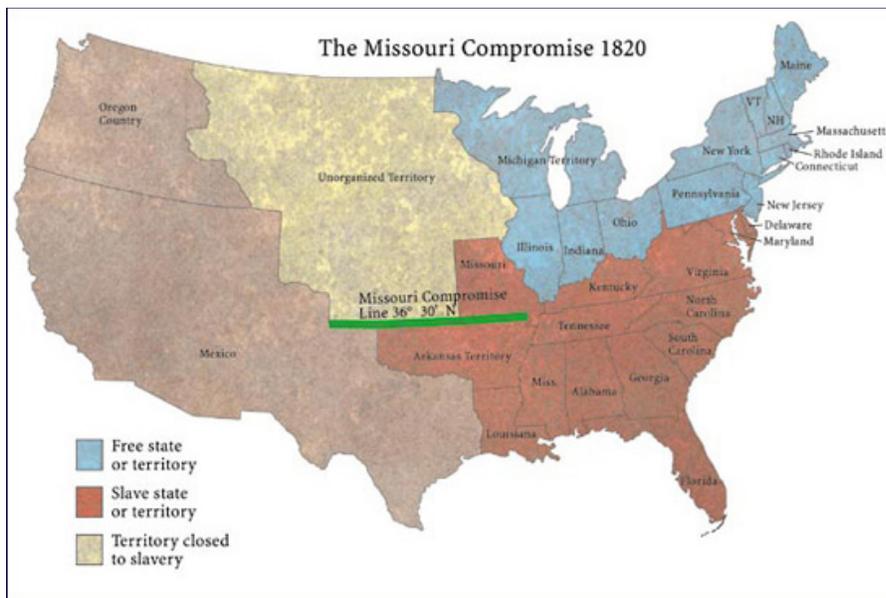
In practical terms, Douglas finds this Free State vs. Slave State controversy to be nonsense when it comes to the Nebraska Territory – given his conviction that its winter climate is inconsistent with operating cotton plantations.

But in political terms he understands its symbolic importance to Southerners, especially since the 36’30” precedent was ignored in declaring all of California—not just that part north of the line -- to be Free.

To gain the support he needs from the South – roughly half of all Senators -- Douglas now knows that the Nebraska outcome must not appear to be another California-like capitulation to those opposing slavery in the west.

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### The Strategy Douglas Will Adopt To Secure Southern Support



Map Showing That The Entire “Unorganized/Nebraska Territory” Falls Above The 36’30 Line

To achieve his ends, Douglas touts the core principle of democracy – “let the people decide.” As he says:

*If there is any one principle dearer and more sacred than all others in free governments, it is that which asserts the exclusive right of a free people to form and adopt their own fundamental law, and to manage and regulate their own internal affairs and domestic institutions.*

A corollary of this view is that a federally imposed and arbitrary line of demarcation on slavery, like the 36'30" precedent, is simply inconsistent with self-government.

*I never did like the system of legislation on our part to which a geographical line...should be run to establish institutions for a people...Now, a great new principle of self-government has been substituted for it, (and) I choose to cling to that principle.*

The principle of a popular sovereignty solution originates with Lewis Cass during the 1848 campaign and is embedded in the 1850 Compromise Bill. It says that all issues related to slavery in the new Territories will be decided in a State Constitution, voted on before applying for admission to the Union.

Any Territories favoring a Slave State designation shall have it; and likewise for those on the Free State side.

There is, however, a fatal flaw with Douglas' plan! While the 1850 Compromise laws apply to the Mexican Cession Territories, they do not apply to Nebraska – a Louisiana Purchase acquisition – which is required to comply with the 36'30" line from the 1820 Missouri Compromise.

Between January 10 and March 4, 1854, the Little Giant will search for non-inflammatory ways to substitute his popular sovereignty principle for the 1820 Missouri Compromise within Nebraska.

He will also hold in his pocket one more card that will add further hope for the South – the creation of a second Territory called Kansas, adjacent to the Slave State of Missouri, and perhaps prone to follow suit in a popular vote on the issue.

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Date: January 16, 1854

### **Questions About The 1820 Missouri Compromise Enter The Debate**

Douglas's initial Bill – calling for just the one total Nebraska Territory – is published on January 10, 1854, with an attempt (Section 21) to simply assert that the 1850 Compromise principle of popular sovereignty will be used to settle on Free vs. Slave status.

*Section 21: so far as the question of slavery is concerned (the bill will) carry into practical operation...the propositions and principles established by the Compromise of 1850.*

This wording draws immediate response from both sides.

The pro-slavery Kentucky Whig, Archibald Dixon, offers an Amendment on January 16, saying that the 1820 Missouri Compromise...

*...shall not be construed as to apply to the Territory (in) this act, or to any other Territory of the United States; but that the citizens of the...several Territories shall be at liberty to take and hold their slaves within any of the Territories of the United States...*



Robert Winthrop (1809-1894)

The Abolitionist Charles Sumner quickly counters with his own Amendment, denying Dixon’s assertion, and stating that nothing in the bill “shall be construed to abrogate or in any way contravene” the Missouri Compromise.

Taken together, these two Amendments place Douglas in the exact box he was hoping to avoid – the need to openly declare that his Bill overturns the 1820 Missouri Compromise agreement for a Territory within the Louisiana Purchase.

They are also a direct challenge to those Northern Democrats who were drawn in 1848 to the Wilmot Proviso and the Free Soil movement prohibiting slavery in the west. Whig Senator Robert Winthrop recognizes this immediately, observing that the bill will “re-inflate Free Soilism and Abolition, which have collapsed all over the country.”

Winthrop’s observation is seconded by other powerful opponents of the bill – Seward, Sumner, Wade, Chase and Giddings – all eager to sow North-South disunity among the Democrats, while finding a new political rallying cry for their floundering Whig Party.

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Date: January 21, 1854

### **Douglas Convinces A Shaken Pierce To Go Along With The Bill**

The proposed amendments to Douglas’s original bill also cause hesitation among Pierce, his cabinet, and other Democratic Party leaders.

The President, Secretary of State Marcy and even Lewis Cass, the author of popular sovereignty, all fear the potential political backlash in the North from a repeal of the 1820 Missouri Compromise.

Douglas recognizes their resistance and appeals to Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, to convene a meeting on January 21, 1854 at the White House to discuss the bill.

The pressure here is all on Franklin Pierce to stand by the 1850 Compromise and the principle of popular sovereignty, while holding his Southern wing in place by offering up Nebraska to an eventual vote on slavery rather than just declaring it a Free State based on the 36’30” line.

To soften concerns about “repealing” the Missouri Compromise, Douglas proposes language that says it is simply being “superseded” by the more recent legislation of 1850. To support this finesse, he also points out that Congress has already rejected extending the 36’30’ line to the west coast, thus demonstrating that it has become an outdated alternative in the west.

It remains unknown as to what extent he shares his other “sweetener” to the South – the possibly forming a Slave State in Kansas – at this critical meeting.

But after much vacillation, the January 21 session ends with Pierce now on board behind the Douglas Bill.

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Date: January 23-30, 1854

### **Douglas Shocks His Colleagues With A New “Kansas-Nebraska Act”**

On January 23, a determined Douglas startles the Senate with a new bill he now titles The Kansas-Nebraska Act.

In it he plays his two key cards in search of Southern support:

- A definitive statement saying that the 1850 Compromise “supersedes” the 1820 Missouri Compromise, hence replacing the automatic 36°30’ Free State declaration with the outcome of a popular vote; and
- The creation of a second Territory, Kansas, directly west of the Slave State of Missouri, and potentially acting as an “offset” to a Free Nebraska.

But Douglas commits a tactical error in granting a delay to open debate on the bill, and immediately lives to regret it.

It gives his opponents a chance to pounce, and they do so the following day, when several newspapers, including the abolitionist *National Era*, publish a counterattack, *The Appeal of the Independent Democrats In Congress to the People of the United States*.

Contrary to the title, the authors are not members of the Democratic Party – but rather its arch opponents. Ohio Senator Salmon Chase takes the lead, supported by Senator Charles Sumner, Congressman Joshua Giddings and the anti-slavery philanthropist, Gerritt Smith.

The article is cast as a “duty and a public warning:”

*It is our duty to warn our constituents, whenever imminent danger menaces the freedom of our institutions or the permanency of the Union.*

The Bill is a “gross violation of a sacred pledge” to Freedom, defined in the Constitution and reinforced in the Missouri Compromise. It represents:

*An atrocious plot...that will open up all the unorganized Territories to the ingress of slavery (and) exclude... immigrants from the old world and free laborers from our own states, and convert (them) into a dreary region of despotism, inhabited by masters and slaves....Such a plot against humanity and democracy is monstrous and dangerous....*

Chase’s *Appeal* is cleverly written to address all who might oppose the Douglas Bill:

- First the same odd combination he tapped into with his 1848 Free Soil Party – those hoping to abolish slavery on moral grounds and those wishing to cleanse the west of all blacks and plantation owners to keep the land to themselves.

- Second, the growing number of recent white immigrants from Europe who regard the slaves as direct competitors for the laboring jobs they need to survive.

The screed goes on to characterize Douglas as a plantation owner himself and a shill for the South, eager to please the Slave Power in exchange for its support in future presidential elections.

Needless to say, Douglas is outraged by Chase’s accusations, and he replies on January 30, in a speech laced with his usual obscenities and epithets. He denies flat out that he is the voice of the slaveholders:

*I am not pro-slavery. I think it is a curse beyond computation to both white and black....(but) the integrity of this political Union is worth more to humanity than the whole black race.*

And the “integrity of the Union” resides for Douglas in the simple admonishment: “let the people decide.”

He dismisses those who oppose the Kansas-Nebraska Act as “abolition confederates...plotting against the cause of free government.”

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Date: May 30, 1854

### The Kansas-Nebraska Act Finally Becomes Law



The Two-State Solution Of The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act

Douglas’s tirade on January 30 is by no means enough to silence the debate in the Senate, which continues throughout February.

Opponents hope to delay a vote, generate a public outcry against the measure and continue to vilify the Slave Power for “pulling Douglas with a string,” as the Democrat-turned-Free Soiler, Francis Preston Blair, puts it.

Secretary of State Marcy remains concerned by the political effects in New York of repealing the Missouri Compromise; John Bell and Sam Houston press on about the impact on the fate of the tribes; others begin to challenge the details and implications of popular sovereignty.

Georgia Senator Robert Toombs demands reassurance that slaves will be allowed into the new Territories during the time before a State Constitution is written and a popular vote taken – the notion being that once planted, the practice would be much harder to dislodge.

Ever the legal scholar, Chase questions whether the U.S. Constitution grants new Territories the right to decide “on their own” about slavery. After all, the original contract was the product of all the states acting together, not independently.

As times passes, the level of sectional acrimony intensifies. Along with Chase, Henry Seward becomes the target of Southern barbs, and later observes that:

*It was a painful and disgraceful scene. Southern men were imperious, and Northern men abetted them. Personalities disgraced the advocates of the bill. There is no longer any dignity or honor in serving our country in the Senate of the United States.*

On March 3, 1854, Douglas schedules a vote on the bill – to be preceded by one last round of debate. This begins inauspiciously around noon, when Democrat John Bell stands in opposition. Others follow, and it is not until 11:30pm that the Little Giant rises in front of a packed gallery. He speaks for three straight hours, reiterating the merits of a popular sovereignty solution, while mixing in personal invective aimed at Chase, Seward and Sumner in particular.

At 5am, after seventeen hours on the floor, the Bill passes by a margin of 37-14, with all Democrats – except Bell and Sam Houston – voting aye, while the Whigs divide along North (nay) vs. South (aye) lines. Seward recognizes the implications for his party immediately: “we no longer have any bond to Southern Whigs.”

**Senate Vote On 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill**

<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Ayes</b>	<b>Nays</b>	<b>Total</b>
North	14	0	14
South	15	2	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Whigs</b>			
North	0	12	12
South	8	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>51</b>

Still Douglas is not yet all the way certain of victory – since the House, unlike the Senate is heavily skewed (130 to 75) toward the North.

To shepherd the measure, he again turns to his Illinois colleague, William A. Richardson, who was able to secure a 107-49 win for his earlier bill in February, 1853. With help from ex-Whig, now Unionist, Alexander Stephens, Richardson succeeds again in the House.

On May 22, the Kansas-Nebraska Act passes by a 113-93 margin.

**House Vote On 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill**

<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Ayes</b>	<b>Nays</b>	<b>Total</b>
North	44	42	86
South	57	2	59
Total	101	44	145
<b>Whigs</b>			
North	0	42	42
South	12	7	19
Total	12	49	61
<b>Grand Total</b>	113	93	206

Pierce signs on May 30 and the bill becomes the law of the land.

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### **Implications Of The Kansas-Nebraska Act**

To Douglas and his supporters, the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act appears to offer a rational compromise on the future of slavery, and one that is based on the essence of democracy itself, namely, a popular vote.

As such they hope that it will resolve the kind of North-South antagonism evident in the 1789 Northwest Ordinance debates (drawing the Ohio River boundary), the “fire-bell” alert with the 1820 Missouri Compromise (the 36’30’ demarcation), and the contentious 1850 Compromise.

But this is not to be the case.

One reason being that the absolute legal certainty of a line drawn on a map has now been replaced by the open-ended uncertainty associated with a popular vote.

As a shrewd student of human behavior, Douglas fears this uncertainty all along. But he is left with no choice once the original proposal to extend the 36’30” line to the west coast is rejected, and all of California, even that below the line, is declared Free. His next best option then becomes popular sovereignty.

More surprising to Douglas is the sharply heightened level of intensity -- for and against the extension of slavery -- that has developed in the North versus the South.

For the powerful Southern planters, expansion has become an economic imperative, the only path to sustained sales growth of their two precious commodities – white cotton and black slaves. If the requisite territory cannot be found by driving further into Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean Islands, then the popular votes from Kansas and the remainder of the west must go in favor of the Slave State outcome.

On the other hand, those in the North are dead set against giving in to this Southern demand, and they now enjoy enough political and economic power to assert their resistance. Their motivations for opposing the expansion of slavery are diverse and often in conflict with each other.

Relatively few Northerners are outright abolitionists, eager to free all slaves and integrate them into American society. But the combined effects of the local Anti-Slavery Societies, the sight of bounty hunters chasing runaways in their streets, popular novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and some amount of contact with assimilated "free blacks" has given rise to a generally increased level of empathy.

Still the majority view in the North and West is much more self-serving. It is typically racist in character, with the conviction that blacks are a different species and certainly inferior to whites. Their harsh treatment as slaves also makes them prone to violent revenge, as evident in the well-publicized uprisings. Furthermore, their presence on plantations in the new Territories represents an economic threat to white settlers competing for land and crop sales -- not to mention the "personal humiliation" of honest labor being depreciated by slave labor.

Regardless of these differing motivations, most Northerners tend to agree on one thing – there should be no room in the new Territories for slaves.

Out of these directly opposite North-South convictions will come the collapse of the Union.

## Chapter 209 – Northerners Again Resist The Fugitive Slave Act



**Dates:**  
May 24,  
1854  
Forward

**Sections:**

- The Capture Of Runaway Slave Anthony Burns Prompts More Anti-Slavery Violence In Boston
- The Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules Against The Fugitive Slave Act In The Sherman Booth Case

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Date: May 24 to June 6, 1854

### **The Capture Of Runaway Slave Anthony Burns Prompts More Anti-Slavery Violence In Boston**

On May 24, 1854, open resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act again materializes in the city of Boston.

It is touched off by the arrest of a nineteen year old slave, Anthony Burns, who escapes on March 24 from his owner, Colonel Charles F. Suttle, of Alexandria, Virginia. Burns is the youngest of thirteen children, several of whom have been sold off previously to cover debts. He is semi-literate, and employed at the time of his capture by one Coffin Pitt, who runs a clothing shop.



Thomas Higginson (1823-1911)

Once word of the arrest circulates, the Boston Vigilance Committee rallies to Burn's defense. He is immediately represented in court by Richard Dana, Jr. and the black lawyer, Robert Morris, both of whom defended Shadrach Minkins in 1851, before an angry mob engineered his escape.

After U.S. Commissioner and Judge Edward Loring grants a delay in Burn's trial, two abolitionist groups agree to meet on Friday, May 26, to discuss strategies to gain his release. A crowd estimated at 2,000 people are together at Faneuil Hall when word reaches them that the other contingent has left Tremont Temple and is already marching on the city jail. It is led by the black merchant, Lewis Hayden, who helped William and Ellen Craft flee in 1850, and joined by a thirty year-old white Unitarian minister, Thomas Higginson, ready to embrace violence in the name of freeing the slaves.

But this time the authorities, under Mayor Jerome V. C. Smith, are ready to withstand the mob, and they do so after a pitched battle. Deputy U.S. Marshal James Batchelder is stabbed to death in the action, while several others are wounded. The police arrest thirteen attackers, among them Wendell Phillips, son of the first Mayor of Boston and a member of Lloyd Garrison's inner circle.

With tensions rising, Judge Loring opens the trial of Anthony Burns on Saturday, May 27. It ends six days later when the worn-down runaway acknowledges that he has in fact escaped from Colonel Suttle. Familiar pleas from Dana and Morris that the Fugitive Slave Law is unconstitutional follow the admission, but to no avail. Judge Loring orders that Burns be handed over to Suttle.

To insure that the order is carried out, Mayor Smith enlists two companies of the Massachusetts Militia and calls upon the President to add U.S. troops. Pierce complies immediately, sending a total of twenty-two companies of cavalry, infantry and artillerymen to show the world that the Fugitive Slave Act is being upheld.

The presence of these troops – some 1,000 strong – further incites the Boston public, and many thousands turn out on Saturday, June 3, 1854, to protest as Burns is paraded from the jail to the Long Wharf. Storefronts along the way are draped in black crepe; the U.S. flag is flown upside down; a coffin with the word “Liberty” appears and shouts of “Kidnapers” ring out. Still the overwhelming display of military force is sufficient to avoid physical attacks, and Burns is soon put aboard a ship taking him back to Alexandria.

The story does not, however, end there. Newspaper coverage spreads Burn’s fate across the nation, and anti-slavery rallies follow on. The most dramatic belongs to Lloyd Garrison who, at a Fourth of Celebration in the town of Framingham, burns copies of Loring’s decision, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and, finally, the U.S. Constitution itself – calling the latter “a covenant with death and an agreement with hell.”

The publicity is sufficient to raise some \$1200 from anti-slavery supporters to secure Burn’s release, but Suttle refuses the offer. After several months, he sells Burns to a planter named David McDaniel for \$905, and then McDaniel turns a fast profit by accepting the offer made by Boston’s black Baptist minister, Leonard Grimes.

A free man, Anthony Burns uses proceeds from a book on his exploits to attend Oberlin College for two years before heading to Upper Canada as a preacher in a Zion Baptist Church. While there he contracts tuberculosis and dies at only twenty-eight years of age.

His death marks the end of the famous runaway slave incidents that have marked Boston as the center of America’s abolitionist movement.

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Date: July 19, 1854

### **The Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules Against The Fugitive Slave Act In The Sherman Booth Case**

Far to the west of Boston, in the state of Wisconsin, another challenge to the Fugitive Slave Act is playing out.

Once again the impetus is the intrusive arrest of a runaway, one Joshua Glover of St. Louis, Missouri, who is seized at his dwelling in Racine, Wisconsin on March 10, 1854. The captors include his owner, Bennami Garland, a U.S. Marshall and several associates. Glover is tossed into a wagon and transported to a jail cell in Milwaukee.

Word of Glover's plight reaches the abolitionist, Sherman Booth, who vows to resist the capture.

The forty-two year old Booth is a native of western New York State, where he is exposed as a youth to the religious revival movements of the 1830's. He is soon an abolitionist, offering his support to the Africans jailed in the 1839 Amistad affair, and helping to organize the Liberty Party, even before graduating from Yale University in 1841.

Booth is a newspaperman by trade and a political strategist, in the tradition of Thurlow Weed. His first abolitionist publication, the *Christian Freeman* morphs into the *Wisconsin Freeman*, after he moves to the state in 1848, soon after its admittance to the Union. What follows is an intense search for a political party that corresponds with his beliefs. He momentarily renames his paper the *Wisconsin Free Democrat*, then joins the Free Soil movement before settling on his own platform, which eventually influences the founding the Wisconsin Republican Party.

But in March 1854, his focus is on freeing Joshua Glover. To do so, he calls upon opponents of slavery to gather at 2PM on March 11 and march together to the courthouse in Milwaukee. Several thousand turn out, and they proceed to ignore Booth's admonition to protest peacefully and not break any laws. The result is mob action reminiscent of the Boston riots, with Glover quickly seized and spirited away to freedom, first in Waukesha and then on to Canada. He lives there until age eighty-one, working as a carpenter, marrying twice and owning his own land and cabin.

Booth himself does not participate in the jailbreak, but does praise it in his newspaper editorials, saying that the action puts an end to enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act in Wisconsin.

Along with his actions on March 11, his brazen reportage makes him the target of federal efforts to uphold the law. When he is arrested on charges of obstruction of justice, it marks the beginning of some nineteen separate trials that will find him in and out of court and jail over a six year period.

One early turning point in his legal battles comes on July 19, 1854.

After a release on bail, Booth voluntarily returns to prison to secure a writ of habeas corpus, a legal maneuver that brings him before a judge and forces his captor to "make their case" against him. The hearing occurs before the Wisconsin Supreme Court – which rules in Booth's favor. The decision, written by Associate Justice Abram D. Smith, takes on national importance by declaring the Fugitive Slave Law unconstitutional and labeling it "a wicked and cruel enactment."

This pronouncement, of course, cannot be left to stand with President Pierce and the South – and, two days later, Booth is re-arrested by federal marshals and returned to jail.

In January 1855 he is tried and convicted in a U.S. District Court. On February 3, the Wisconsin Supreme Court again sets him free. In turn, the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear the case in May, but action is stalled by lack of cooperation from the Wisconsin judiciary. In July 1855, Booth loses a lawsuit brought by the slave-owner Garland, and is forced to pay a \$1,000 fine.

This back and forth theater continues until March 1860, when the U.S. Supreme Court under Justice Taney finally rules in *Abelman v Booth*. The decision is unanimous and no surprise to constitutional lawyers. It simply reaffirms the principle that federal law trumps state law – and that the Wisconsin Supreme Court had no authority to invoke habeas corpus in a U.S. court action.

A bankrupt Booth is now forced to sell his newspaper and is returned to prison in Milwaukee.



Senator James Rood Doolittle (1815-1897)

But Booth's supporters across Wisconsin remain intent on opposing both his sentence and the legitimacy of the Fugitive Slave Act. In Congress, their junior Senator, James Doolittle, tells his colleagues that "an unconstitutional law is no law" and that it was the duty of local judges "to protect the rights and liberties of citizens of the state."

On July 4, 1860, a crowd gathers outside Booth's second story cell in the Customs House to hear the prisoner deliver an address where he casts himself as a martyr to a just cause and urges the crowd to support Lincoln and the Republicans in the November election. Three weeks later, on August 1, an armed rescue party enters the facility and frees Booth. According to newspaper reports, he walks to his brother-in-law's house where he is applauded by a crowd before being escorted to a train taking him to Waupun.

His freedom lasts for two months before he is arrested on October 8. This time remains in jail under heavy guard for seventeen months, until President James Buchanan finally decides to release him two days before he leaves office. Booth lives another forty-three years, working as a journalist and supporting his political and reform causes to the end.

## Chapter 210 – The Race Is On To Decide The “Slavery Question” In Kansas



**Dates:**  
Summer 1854

**Sections:**

- Anti-Slavery Emigres From Massachusetts Arrive In Kansas
- Southern Associations Form Up To Promote Slavery
- Senator David Atchison Rallies Southern Forces Against Prospective Free Soil Settlers

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Date: Summer 1854

### Anti-Slavery Emigres From Massachusetts Arrive In Kansas



Eli Thayer (1819-1899)

As soon as it appears that Kansas will become a state, one Eli Thayer of Worcester, Massachusetts, formulates a plan to transport settlers there in order to open new towns, built on the virtues of free labor and capitalism.

Thayer’s roots are humble, but he makes his way through the Manual Labor School in Worcester and then Brown University, before opening the Oread Institute, a school for young women in 1848.

He is thirty-five years old in 1854 when he conjures his vision for developing Kansas, despite never visiting until some 23 years later. At first he sees the venture as a path to profiting on land speculation, and sets up a joint-stock corporation, with capital provided by businessmen like Alexander Bullock. But others who offer support – especially the wealthy anti-slavery philanthropist, Amos A. Lawrence and Unitarian minister, Edward Everett Hale – frown on the profit motive and convince Thayer to recast the venture as a “benevolent” work, under the name of the New England Emigrant Aid Society.

Thayer works tirelessly on the project, making some 700 appearances across the east, touting the society, signing up prospective travelers and raising money. He also publicizes it via advertisements in Greeley’s *New York Tribune* and William Cullen Bryant’s *New York Evening Post*.

His slogan becomes “Sawmills and Liberty,” based on the promise of providing settlers not only with temporary housing, but also with steam-powered equipment they will need to run their own mills and secure their economic independence. Several of Thayer’s supporters fear that he is too optimistic in his advocacy, but he is undeterred.

Prospects for the settlers are aided by federal land grants offered in July 1854, after treaties are negotiated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs with tribes who agree to sell their land and move south into Oklahoma. The largest transfer involves the Shawnees, who sell 6.1 million acres on May 10, 1854. Others who also reach agreements include the Otoes and Missouri (March 15), the Delaware (May 6), the Iowa (May 17), and the Kickapoo (May 18).

The first contingent of “New England Emigrants” – twenty-nine strong -- arrives on August 1, 1854 in what will become Lawrence, Kansas -- named after Thayer’s supporter, Amos Lawrence.

The subsequent flow of settlers is, however, disappointing – with estimates running between 900 and 2,000 in total. As of the 1860 Census only 4% of Kansans have emigrated from New England.

Despite this, the symbolic impact of the early arrivals is important. Lawrence will become the center for the Free State forces over time, and its newspaper, the *Herald of Freedom*, will help rally their efforts. The Society will also play a role in starting up the towns of Manhattan, Osawatomie, Topeka, and Burlington.

Word of the anti-slavery easterner’s presence will soon provoke a response from pro-slavery rivals in Missouri.

As for Eli Thayer, the recognition he gains from his efforts in Kansas are rewarded in his election to the U.S. House in 1857-1861, running both times as a Republican.

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Date: Summer 1854

### **Southern Associations Form Up To Promote Slavery**

Once Northern opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill gains traction, the South responds with various pro-slavery “associations” of its own.

One is the “Order of the Knights of the Golden Circle” comprising those who hope to open new slave territory in Mexico, Central America and Cuba, in addition to the American west. The Order is founded on July 4, 1854 in Lexington, Kentucky by one “General” George W. Bickley and four of his friends. Bickley himself is a genuine character, born in Indiana before moving to Virginia, where he practices medicine despite dubious credentials, and then relocating to Cincinnati, promoting various filibustering campaigns which fail to materialize. He soon vanishes, but his society and its local “castles” or meeting lodges live on throughout the Civil War.

These associations are typically secret and mirror the kinds of practices and rituals familiar to the Freemasons. Their names vary by locale, from the “Golden Circle” to the “Friends of the South,” the “Social Band” and the “Dark Lantern Society.”

The Missouri branch is known as the “Platte County Self-Defense Association.”

It is founded on July 20, 1854 to insure that neighboring Kansas be admitted to the Union as a Slave State.

Its Secretary is Benjamin F. Stringfellow, raised among wealth in Virginia before moving west to Missouri in 1839, where he practices law and, along with his doctor brother, John, publishes the *Squatter Sovereign* newspaper. He is elected to the Missouri legislature as an “anti-Benton” man, serves as Attorney General from 1845 to 1849, and becomes a General in the Missouri State Militia.

In 1854 he fears that if Kansas becomes a Free State, run-away slaves will flock across the Missouri River to safety. His answer lies in setting up “Blue Lodges” across both states to combat the abolitionists.

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Date: Summer 1854

### Senator David Atchison Rallies Southern Forces Against Prospective Free Soil Settlers



Early Map Of The Kansas Territory Showing Towns Huddled Along the Missouri Border

Stringfellow’s partner in establishing the Blue Lodges is none other than David Rice Atchison of Missouri, sitting President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate!

Atchison grows up on a plantation near Lexington, Kentucky, before graduating from Transylvania University and moving to Liberty, Missouri in 1830. He opens a legal practice there with his friend and law partner, Alexander Doniphan, and both men join a state militia unit known as the Liberty Blues. Atchison is elected to the Missouri House in 1834, where he helps secure what becomes Platte County, in the northwest corner of the state, through purchase treaties with local Indian tribes.

When the Mormon War breaks out in 1838, Atchison is named Major-General in the state militia, which restores peace and protects the prophet, Joseph Smith, and his followers from further harm.

Both his law and political careers flourish. In 1841 he is a circuit court judge and a member of Masonic Lodge #56. Two years later, Governor Thomas Reynolds appoints him to the U.S. Senate after Dr. Lewis Lynn dies in office. While only thirty-six at the time, his new colleagues appreciate both his competence and outgoing manner, and, in 1845, elect him President Pro Tempore, a post which gives him the gavel should the Vice-President not be present in the chamber.

In 1854, Atchison is back in that role, made even more influential after Pierce's Vice-President, William King, dies in April 1853 and is not replaced. This puts Atchison next in line to become President should Pierce die in office.

But Atchison's agenda in the Senate is eclipsed in the summer of 1854 by absolute determination to see that Kansas enters the Union as a Slave State. As he writes at the time:

*The prosperity or the ruin of the whole South rests on the Kansas struggle.*

The notion of Northern interlopers trying to ban slavery directly west of Missouri is enough to resurrect the violent side of his character, not seen since his earlier days in the militia.

He vows in July 1854 that The Platte County Self-Defense Association will attack all Free Soilers in Kansas.

He christens his supporters the "border ruffians" and promises to "kill every god-damned abolitionist coming into the district."

## Chapter 211 – A New Political Party Called The “Republicans” Makes Its First Appearance



**Dates:**  
Summer 1854

**Sections:**

- Backlash Against The Kansas-Nebraska Bill Begins To Shake Up The Political Landscape
- Opponents Of The Slave Power Organize The Republican Party

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Date: Summer 1854

### Backlash Against The Kansas-Nebraska Bill Begins To Shake Up The Political Landscape

The effects of Douglas’ controversial 1854 bill are felt not only in the Kansas Territory, but also at the national level – as the politicians prepare for upcoming mid-term elections, which run from August 1854 to November 1855.

The Democrats are coming off a decisive victory in 1852, picking up twenty-eight seats in the House and two in the Senate, to go with Pierce’s resounding defeat of Winfield Scott in the presidential race.

**Democrat Party Gains In 1852 Elections**

House	1850	1852	Change
Democrats	130	158	+32
Whigs	86	71	(15)
Free Soil	4	4	NC
Unionist	10	0	(10)
Others	3	0	(3)
<b>Senate</b>			
Democrats	36	38	+2
Whigs	23	22	(1)
Free Soil	3	2	(1)

This collapse for the Whigs sends its members in search of new issues that can support their political viability.

Ironically the best option comes from the Democrat, Douglas, in the form of his 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

Public antipathy toward the bill is immediate and strong across both the North and the West. First because it reneges on the 1820 Missouri Compromise and re-opens the threat of *nationalizing* slavery. Second because, like the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, it appears to be another capitulation by the Democrats to bullying demands made by the southern planter elites.

The initial political response lies in the formation of various coalitions which march behind the banner of repealing the 1854 bill.

One such coalition simply calls itself the “Opposition Party” and consists of two Whig factions. One are the anti-slavery men, ranging from moderates like Henry Seward, Edward Bates and Abraham Lincoln, to outright abolitionists such as Charles Sumner, Salmon Chase and Cassius Clay. The other are the Whig Unionists who fear that the turmoil brewing in Kansas will end in civil war. Included in this latter group are both northerners (Edward Everett, Robert Winthrop) and some southerners, notably John J. Crittenden (Kentucky), John Bell (Tennessee), and William Graham (North Carolina).

The other coalition, known as the “Anti-Nebraska Party,” will include Northern Democrats who favored the Wilmot Proviso banning the expansion of slavery and bolted to the Free Soil Party in 1848 to back Van Buren over Cass. Among this group are formidable politicians such as Gideon Welles of Connecticut and Hannibal Hamlin of Maine.

The normally astute Stephen Douglas is both surprised and alarmed by these negative reactions.

In his mind, the notion of applying the principle of popular sovereignty, rather than a fixed line, in Kansas, seems like a small concession to the South in exchange for opening the Territory and supporting his route for the transcontinental railroad through Chicago.

By the summer of 1854, however, the true cost of the bargain begins to dawn on him, and on Franklin Pierce.

For Douglas, the bill is the end of his presidential aspiration; for Pierce, it is the realization of his greatest fear, a possible North-South schism within his own party.

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Date: Summer 1854

### **Opponents Of The “Slave Power” Organize The Republican Party**



Grass Roots Men With Their American Flag

Another group opposing the spread of slavery is more grass roots in character and calls itself the Republican Party.

The first officially recorded gathering here takes place in Ripon, Wisconsin, on March 30, 1854, with some 30 locals in attendance at what becomes known as The Little White Schoolhouse. The meeting is called by a lawyer, one Alvan Bovay, recently arrived in Ripon from New York City. According to tradition, the men “walked in as Whigs and Free-Soilers and left as Republicans.”

Other independent meetings follow, one in Bangor, Maine, then in Friendship, New York, and Washington, DC.

A more sizable and organized convention follows, this time in Jackson, Michigan from July 6-13, 1854.

The prime mover here is Charles V. DeLand, editor of Jackson's *American Citizen* paper, who invites all who oppose the "slave power" to attend:

*In view, therefore, of the recent action of Congress upon this subject (the violation of the Missouri Compromise) and the evident designs of the slave power to attempt still further aggressions upon freedom, we invite our fellow citizens without reference to former political associations, who think that the time has arrived for a union at the North to protect liberty from being overthrown and duntrodden, to assemble in mass convention on Thursday, the 6th day of July, next, at 1 o'clock p.m. at Jackson, there to take such measures as shall be thought best to concentrate the popular sentiment of this state against the encroachment of slave power.*

When some 3,000 people show up, the convention is forced outside to a 40 acre grove, where the proceedings are completed "under the oaks." The primary task lies in hammering out a tentative platform. Ten of the thirteen planks signal opposition to "the Slave Power's still further aggressions upon freedom." While not embracing abolition, the delegates are unequivocal in condemning slavery on moral grounds.

*We believe that slavery is a violation of the rights of man – as a man – we vow at whatever expense...to oppose...by all means...all attempts, direct and indirect, to extend slavery in the country...or to allow new slave states into the union.*

Ironically this position mirrors that taken by Thomas Jefferson in his original draft of the Land Ordinance of 1784.

*After the year 1800 there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any (future state).*

Claims to giving the new party its name are widespread. Most trace the idea back to Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party which dominated the political scene during his time. But the acknowledged popularizer of the "Republican Party" moniker is Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, and soon to be a prominent member of the movement on the national stage.

New energy is pumped into the movement some three months after the Jackson convention adjourns. Its source is a retired Whig from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln who returns to politics to protest the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

## Chapter 212 – Abraham Lincoln Re-Enters The Political Scene To Oppose The Kansas-Nebraska Bill



**Dates:**  
October 3-16, 1854

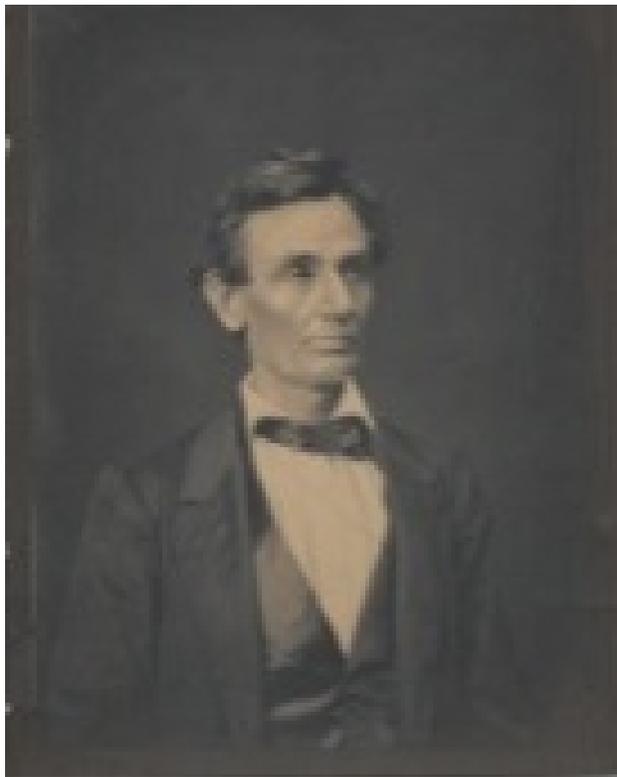
**Sections:**

- The Kansas-Nebraska Bill Draws Lincoln Back Into Politics
- Lincoln's "Peoria Speech" Thrusts Him Into The Political Spotlight

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Date: October 3, 1854

### The Kansas-Nebraska Bill Draws Lincoln Back Into Politics



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Since exiting his single term in the U.S. House in March 1849 – convinced that his political career is over --Abraham Lincoln has returned to his home in Springfield, Illinois, to resume his law practice, and help raise his growing family, which, by 1854 includes his three surviving sons: Robert, Tad and Willie.

In April 1854, he is again off “riding the circuit” for ten solid weeks, arguing cases in seven towns covering a route of some 400 miles.

Only this time his routine is disrupted by news of uprisings across the state aimed at his old rival, Stephen A. Douglas, for passage in May of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

The lawyer in Lincoln sees the act as an egregious violation of the 1820 Missouri Compromise, prohibiting slavery above the 36°30' line in all Louisiana Purchase territory. Beyond that, the humanitarian in Lincoln regards any further spread of slavery as a moral stain on the nation. As he says repeatedly in his life:

*If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.*

At first his response is cautious, and targeted at politics in his home state. His loyalty remains to what's left of the Whig Party, and his first stump speech in August is on behalf of re-electing Richard Yates to a second House term in a district that leans pro-slavery. Reluctantly he himself agrees to run for another term in the state congress from Sangamon County, but with an eye to replacing his Democratic rival, Senator James Shields, in the upcoming election.

Lincoln is already campaigning across the state in the Fall, when Stephen Douglas initiates his own speaking tour in Illinois to try to deflect mounting Northern opposition to his Nebraska legislation.

Lincoln has known Douglas since their first meeting in Springfield in 1834, and they have been opponents ever since. In 1838 Lincoln stumps for his law partner, John Stuart, in his race against Douglas for a U.S. House seat. They share a platform in the 1840 presidential race, with Lincoln backing the Whig, Harrison, and Douglas, the Democrat, Van Buren. Rumors also have it that Douglas has been a rival for the hand of Mary Todd in 1842 before she marries Lincoln.

Furthermore, Lincoln does not like Douglas. He refers to him as “the least man I ever saw” – a man who “will tell a lie to ten thousand people one day, even though he knows he may have to deny it to five thousand the next.”

Also a note of envy seems at play here, with Lincoln having watched Douglas ascend to national prominence in Washington, while his own destiny seems confined to legal success within the state of Illinois.

But controversy over the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act now gives Lincoln another shot at Douglas after he agrees to deliver three public speeches back in Illinois in September and October, sensing that his home state is quite divided on his bill.

The result is a head-on debate between the two men on October 3, 1854 in Springfield -- with the lanky, six foot three inch Lincoln speaking for three hours, and the stocky Douglas, a foot shorter, offering a two hour rebuttal.

Lincoln’s address is noted for his contention that no amount of pleading on behalf of popular sovereignty could possibly justify an outcome where “the monstrous injustice of slavery” was affirmed. The issue was one of moral right and wrong, not one of political process.

Several of the Springfield attendees are impressed by Lincoln’s arguments, and his name is mentioned by those seeking to form an official Republican Party in Illinois. Among them is Owen Lovejoy, brother of the abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy, whose murder in Alton, Illinois in 1837, engages both Lincoln and John Brown in the issues surrounding slavery.

Opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill immediately encourage Lincoln to follow his rival’s itinerary and continue the exchanges. While he agrees, Douglas decides that he has had enough for the moment, after telling friends that Lincoln is the “most difficult and dangerous challenger that I have ever met.”

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Date: October 16, 1854

### **Lincoln's "Peoria Speech" Thrusts Him Into The Political Spotlight**

With Douglas declining any further debates, Lincoln goes on to deliver a three hour speech in Peoria, Illinois, that will alter his destiny.

In it he reprises the history of slavery in America, and, with precise lawyerly logic, lays out the case against the repeal of the 1820 Missouri Compromise. It begins:

*The repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the propriety of its restoration constitute the subject of what I am about to say. It was a law passed on the sixth day of March, 1820, providing that Missouri might come into the Union with slavery, but that in all the remaining part of the territory purchased from France, slavery should never be permitted.*

This 1820 law reflected the wishes of the founding fathers, like Jefferson.

*The policy of prohibiting slavery in the new territory originated with Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence.*

And as recently as 1849, Douglas publicly applauded it.

*In 1849, our distinguished Senator, in a public address, held that: The Missouri Compromise has been in practical operation for a quarter of a century, and has received the approbation of men of all parties in every section of the Union.*

Then came the acquisition of new territory from Mexico, and the nation crafted the 1850 Compromise to establish rules governing slavery in the far west.

*The Union, as in 1820, was thought to be in danger; and devotion to the Union rightfully inclined men to yield somewhat in points where nothing else could have so inclined them.*

*Preceding the Presidential election of 1852, each of the great political parties met in convention and adopted resolutions endorsing the compromise of 1850; as a finality – a final settlement of all slavery agitation. And the legislature in Illinois's endorsed it.*

Douglas offered his original Nebraska bill, but then altered it to argue that the 1850 rules set for the far western land should also apply to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase land.

*About a month after the introduction of the 1854 Nebraska bill, it is modified to make two territories instead of one; to declare the Missouri Compromise inoperative and void; to allow people who settle establish slavery or exclude it as they may see fit.*

In effect, this revised 1854 Kansas-Nebraska law says that the settled law in the 1820 Missouri Compromise was all a great mistake.

*But now congress declares this ought never to have been; and the like of it must never be again. The sacred right of self-government is grossly violated by it.*

Lincoln disagrees, the great mistake would be to allow the monstrous injustice of slavery to spread any further.

*I can not but hate letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska – and allowing it to spread to every other part of the wide world where men can take it.*

*I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world – enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites --and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty – criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.*

He makes it clear that his cause is not to outlaw slavery in the old South, but to oppose its extension to the west.

*And as this subject is part of the larger question of domestic slavery, I wish to make and keep the distinction between the **existing** institution, and the **extension** of it, so clear that no honest man can misunderstand me.*

Slavery is a national problem, and should not be blamed on the southern people.

*Let me say I think I have no prejudice against the southern people. When they tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery than we; I acknowledge the fact. If slavery did not now exist amongst them, they would not introduce it.*

If he could, he would ship the slaves back to their homeland, but this is not feasible.

*When it is said that the institution is very is very difficult to get rid of in any satisfactory way, I understand the saying. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves and then send them to Liberia – to their own native land.*

Nor does he believe that the nation is ready for the abolitionist's solution, freeing all the slaves overnight and assimilating them into white society.

*What next? Free them, and make them politically and socially our equals? My own feelings will not admit this; and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of white people will not.*

Lincoln admits to the difficulty of finding a solution, other than gradual emancipation.

*If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution. It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted; but for their tardiness in this, I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the south.*

And the facts are that many former slaves have been gradually emancipated, at great economic sacrifice by their former owners, and on the simple principle that, in their hearts, men know that a slave is not the equivalent of a horse or a cow.

*And yet again, there are in the United States 433,643 free blacks. At \$500 per head they are worth over two hundred million dollars. How comes this vast amount of property to be running about without owners? We do not see free horses or free cattle running free. How is this? Something has operated on their white owners, inducing them, at vast pecuniary sacrifices, to liberate them. What is this something? Is there any mistaking it? In all cases it is your sense of justice, and human sympathy, telling you, that he poor negro has some natural right to himself – that those who deny it, and make merchandise of him, deserve kickings, contempt and death.*

Despite the obvious injustice of slavery, he asks is Douglas isn't right in arguing that people in the Kansas and Nebraska should have the right to decide for themselves whether to accept or reject it? Only, he says, if one believes that the negro is not a man but a beast.

*But one great argument in support of repeal of the Missouri Compromise is still to come. That argument is “the sacred right of self-government.” The doctrine of self-government is right – absolutely and eternally right – but it has no just application as here attempted. It depends on whether a negro is or is not a man. If the negro is a man, is it not a total destruction of self-government to say that he shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself, and also governs another man, that is more that self-government – that is despotism.*

*If the negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that “all men are created equal;” and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man making a slave of another.*

So, can it be shown that the negro a man? Here Lincoln refers to the Constitution, where southerners themselves have argued that slaves are persons, who should be counted as 3/5<sup>th</sup> of a white man.

*In the control of the government, each State has a number of Representatives in proportion to its number of people, and for this purpose five slaves are counted as being equal to three whites.*

Lincoln next addresses what he calls a “lullaby” argument from Douglas, one saying that the weather in the new territory will never allow cotton plantations.

*As to climate, a glance at the map shows there are five slave states – Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri – and also the District of Columbia, all north of the Missouri compromise line.*

He attacks the bill's gross lack of clarity about “when and how” the slavery question will be resolved.

*The people are to decide the question for themselves; but when are they to decide; or how they are to decide; or whether the question is to be the subject to an indefinite succession of new trials, the law does not say. Is it to be settled by the first dozen settlers who arrive there, or is it to wait the arrival of a hundred? Is it to be decided by a vote of the people or a vote of the legislature? To these questions, the law gives no answer.*

And he properly foresees an outcome whereby a minority of settlers bring slaves into the territory and, once there, a subsequent majority in opposition cannot dislodge them.

*The bill enables the first few to deprive the succeeding many. The first few may get slavery in, and the subsequent many cannot easily get it out. How common is the remark now in the slave states – “if we were only clear of our slaves, how much better it would be for us.*

The outcome in Nebraska is important to everyone in the Union.

*The whole nation is interested that the best use shall be made of these territories. We want them for the homes of free white people. This they cannot be, to any considerable extent, if slavery shall be implanted within them.*

As he nears the end, Lincoln reiterates his plea – to resist the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and, in so doing, to restore “the noblest political system the world ever saw.”

*Fellow countrymen – Americans south as well as north, shall we make no effort to arrest this? In our greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware, lest we cancel and tear to pieces even the white man’s charter of freedom.*

*Our republican robe is soiled. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of moral right. Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it. Let us readopt the Declaration of Independence. Let north and south, let all Americans, let all lovers of liberty everywhere join in the great and good work*

*If we do this, we shall not only have save the Union, but we shall have so saved it, as to make and to keep it forever worthy of the saving.*

Political observers recognize in this Peoria speech Lincoln’s absolute mastery of the facts surrounding the national controversy stirred by the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

He emerges as a clear opponent of slavery – but one who recognizes the complexities of the issues, who seeks moderate, not abolitionist, solutions that do not diminish the accepted superior status of white men, and who seeks compromises with the South to hold the Union together.

Finally, and importantly, Lincoln emerges as a western man who can stand toe to toe with Douglas, the powerhouse of the Democratic Party.

A man who someday just might be presidential timber.

## Chapter 213– Kansas Experiences Its First Fraudulent Election

**Dates:**

October 7 –  
November 29, 1854

**Sections:**

- Andrew Reeder Becomes The First Governor Of The Kansas Territory
- Reeder Arrives In Kansas To Begin His Term
- Atchison’s “Missouri Ruffians” Steal A Kansas Election For A Congressional Seat

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Date: October 7, 1854

### **Andrew Reeder Becomes The First Governor Of The Kansas Territory**

To hopefully quell the rising tensions over slavery in Kansas, Franklin Pierce appoints Andrew Reeder as the first Territorial Governor.

According to the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, his term is to last for three years during which time he must reside in the territory, oversee all governmental activities, appoint magistrates, and serve as commander-in-chief of the militia.

He is to be supported by a Secretary, charged with maintaining official records, three judges to man the territorial courts, and other administrative assistants as needed.

One of his most important duties is to establish a fairly elected territorial legislature, and to support the activities required to gain admission to the federal union. The guidelines for this are as follows:

- Once the population reaches 5,000 free male inhabitants, they would elect a territorial legislature.
- All representatives must have lived in the U.S. for at least three years and own 200+ acres of local land.
- Their term of office would run for two years.
- One representative would be elected for every 500 residents, up to a total of 25.
- As the population expanded over time, the legislature would decide on a new target above 25.

With the state legislature in place, it would choose a “non-voting representative” to send to the U.S. Congress.

When the total population reached 60,000 residents, the legislature would write a State Constitution, which would be sent to Washington for its approval to join the Union.

All this sounds straight-forward on paper, except that the 1787 Northwest Ordinance applies only to territories east of the Mississippi River and north of the Ohio River. Not to Kansas!

Under the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the path to admission will rest on popular sovereignty, a vote by residents on a constitution which includes a Free State vs. Slave State declaration.

What Andrew Reeder is about to realize as Governor is that the exact steps associated with “pop-sov” are poorly defined, and that he will be responsible for clarifying and executing them as he goes along. In effect then, Kansas represents a “test case” for popular sovereignty in practice.

The stakes are particularly high, since the outcome will set a precedent for whether or not slavery is likely to expand in the west. As the settlers in Kansas struggle with this issue, the whole nation will soon be watching.

What they will witness over the next four year is an experiment in territorial governance that is forever known as “Bleeding Kansas.”

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Date: October 7, 1854

### **Reeder Arrives In Kansas To Begin His Term**

On the face of it, Governor Andrew Reeder seems like a safe choice for the job. He is a loyal Democrat from Pennsylvania and one, like Pierce, who is sympathetic toward the South, as well as a vigorous advocate of popular sovereignty. If the people of Kansas vote to declare it a Slave State, then Reeder will back their decision.

He is also an aggressive land speculator, having acquired some 1200 acres along the Kansas River at 90 cents apiece.

Reeder arrives by boat at Ft. Leavenworth on the Missouri River on October 7, 1854, accompanied by public officials who will oversee the orderly formation of the government. Among them are three Illinois men, Israel Donalson acting as U.S. Marshal, John Calhoun as Surveyor General, and Thomas Cramer as Treasurer. Legal affairs will rest with Chief Justice, Samuel Lecompte of Maryland and U.S Attorney Andrew Isacks of Louisiana. The position of Secretary belongs with Daniel Woodson, a Virginian by birth.

The party is greeted warmly by a reception at the fort, with Reeder offering a few remarks, including a reference to the mounting tension between pro and anti-slavery factions and a vow to put down any attempts to resolve it through violence. His words here will prove prophetic regarding his own fate:

*I pledge you that I will crush it out or sacrifice myself in the effort.*

Reeder’s ultimate charge lies in preparing Kansas to enter the Union as a new state.

Instead of beginning here with the election of a territorial legislature as outlined in the Northwest Ordinance, he decides to first elect someone to represent Kansas in the U.S. House, as a non-voting member.

To prepare for this, he tours the territory, divides it into some 30 counties, and arranges voting precincts within each. With that done, he sets November 29, 1854 as the election date.

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Date: November 29, 1854

### Atchison's "Missouri Ruffians" Steal A Kansas Election For A Congressional Seat



Border Ruffian Ready For A Fight

Among those intending to vote in the Kansas elections are the "New England Emigrants" – a mere twenty-nine in total – who arrive on August 1, 1854 in what becomes the town of Lawrence. Rumors spread that another 20,000 such abolitionists will soon follow them.

This fires up U.S Senator David Atchison, Benjamin Stringfellow and members of the Platte County Self-Defensive Association who intend to do whatever it takes to make sure that the first Kansas representative to appear in the U.S. House is pro-slavery.

Three candidates vie for the congressional seat.

The first is thirty-six year old John Wilkins "J.W." Whitfield, who serves in the Mexican War before moving to Independence, Missouri as agent to the Pottawattamie tribe. Whitfield, who later becomes a General in the Confederate Army, is the stoutly pro-slavery candidate.

Then there is John Wakefield, the only actual resident of Kansas in the race, and an opponent of slavery, and Robert Flenneken, who is said to also favor Free State status.

As the election nears, Governor Reeder re-asserts the first principle of popular sovereignty – that qualified voters must all be current residents of Kansas.

But Atchison, Stringfellow and their pro-slavery Missouri allies pay no heed to his mandate. On November 29, 1854 they flood across the river into Kansas and stuff the ballot boxes in favor of their candidate, J.W. Whitfield, who wins with a 79% majority.

#### **Rigged Vote For Kansas Congressional Representative (11/29/54)**

Candidates	Slavery Call	# Votes	% Total
John W. Whitfield	Pro	2,258	79%
Robert Flenneken	Anti	305	11
John Wakefield	Anti	248	9
Others		22	1
Total		2,833	100

Reeder is aware of the invasion from Missouri, and a subsequent congressional inquiry will show that upwards of 60% of the votes are fraudulently cast. But after some hesitation he goes ahead and confirms the results, hoping to avoid controversy.

Thus the first attempt at delivering on the promise of popular sovereignty proves a charade, and it will soon be followed by a repeat performance when the time comes to elect a legislature.

## Chapter 214– An Anti-Immigration Party Re-emerges

	<b>Dates:</b> 1844 to 1853	<b>Sections:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-Immigrant Fervor Mounts Initially In 1844</li><li>• The “Know Nothing Party” Picks Up Momentum</li></ul>
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Date: Summer 1844

### Anti-Immigrant Fervor Mounts Initially In 1844



A Stereotypical Put-Down Of An Irishman

Amidst the growing turmoil over slavery in Kansas, President Pierce is now visited by the resurgence of another political party dedicated to attacking “Others” – in this case Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany, the majority of whom have become Democrats.

This party originates in Philadelphia in 1844, the brainchild of the Jewish-turned-Methodist preacher Lewis Levin who is convinced that a conspiracy is under way to threaten the nation’s values and government. The purported villains here are the Catholics emigres whom he casts as the moral equivalent of the blacks – uneducated, impoverished, lazy by nature, prone to disruptive behaviors including criminality. Worse yet, he asserts they owe their loyalty to the papacy rather than the government in Washington.

Levin’s answer at the time is the Native American Party which calls upon U.S.-born, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, loyal patriots to take back the country from these interlopers. The result is a series of street clashes in Philadelphia reminiscent of the European violence between Protestant and Catholics, with churches left in flames and many fatalities on both sides.

While these are finally put down by military force, the seeds of ethnic and religious discord have taken root at both the local and national level.

Lewis Levin is able to turn his cause into the election of himself and five other Native American Party members to the U.S House in 1844. He carries his passion to Washington, haranguing the lower chamber with his vision of the threat posed by the immigrants:

*We are menaced by the accession of eight millions of foreigners, not only entirely ignorant of our institutions, but ignorant of everything, uncultivated in mind, brutal in manners*

But his voice is soon drowned out by the overriding focus on the Texas Annexation and the Mexican War. In turn, his overbearing personal manner finally drives even his early admirers away, and he loses his re-election bid. From there Levin spirals downward, occasionally delivering his fiery political attacks until suffering a mental collapse in 1856 and dying four years later in the Philadelphia Hospital for the Insane at fifty-one years old.

But the anti-immigrant flame he has ignited will live on well after his time.

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Date: 1849-53

### **The “Know Nothing Party” Picks Up Momentum**

In 1849 another nativist party appears, the “Order of the Star-Spangled Banner,” formed in New York City by one Charles Allen to help elect American-born Protestants to public office. Its impact is trivial, but it survives long enough to attract interest from a dry goods merchant named James W. Barker, whose organizational skills have been honed within his own “Order of United Americans.”

At first, Barker’s group is more social than political in character, albeit dedicated to celebrating the “true American” stereotype, native born Protestants. The society is structured, ironically, along the lines of the heretofore “suspicious” Freemasons. Members are carefully screened; local lodges established to hold meetings; graduated “degrees” and titles earned by achievement and tenure; and a series of rituals – handshakes, passwords, other codes -- to distinguish its initiates.

Patriotism is an assumed virtue, and a favored slogan is George Washington’s famous wartime mandate: “put only Americans on guard tonight.”

Another is the rote response to all outsider questions about the Order’s practices – “I know nothing.”

The ongoing spike in Catholic immigrants entering New York City year after year transforms the organization from social advancement into the political arena. While officially designated The American Party by 1852, it is quickly labeled The Know-Nothing Party by Horace Greeley and his fellow New York newsmen.

Its initial foray into campaigning comes in the election of 1852 when a party convention nominates Daniel Webster, only to have him die nine days before the voting. But the victory recorded by Franklin Pierce – backed especially by the Irish Catholic immigrants – yields a surge in membership for the “Know Nothings.”

The first sign that the “Know Nothings” are to be taken seriously as a political power comes in Lewis Levin’s home base of Philadelphia. On June 13, 1854, Robert T. Conrad, a lawyer, judge, newspaperman and politician is elected Mayor of the city on the American Party ballot. One of Conrad’s early acts is to hire hundreds of new policemen, all “native born,” to clamp down on activities in the Irish Catholic neighborhoods.

The movement continues to gain momentum, with membership climbing over the one million mark during the year. Many of the early Lodges, known as “wigwags,” are located in large cities in the Northeast, but they soon materialize across all regions of the country, including the South and West coast.

Their presence is about to shake up the political landscape in the election of 1854.

## Chapter 215 – The Democrats Suffer Major Losses In The 1854 Mid-Term Elections



**Dates:**  
Summer 1854 to Fall 1855

**Sections:**

- Anger Mounts Toward The Democrats
- The Know-Nothing Party Records its Greatest Victory
- The Outlines Of The Republican Party Coalition Are Evident In The 1854 Results

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Date: Summer/Fall of 1854

### Anger Mounts Toward The Democrats

The mid-term election of 1854-55 signals the end of the Whigs, the mounting threat facing the Democrats, and the first glimpse of a third party coalition capable of competing successfully on a national scale.

After Winfield Scott's lopsided loss to Pierce in the 1852 race, the old Whig party disbands, with its adherents scrambling to find a new home. Meanwhile the Democrats are left riding high, picking up thirty-two House seats that year, in addition to controlling the Senate and the White House.

Only the political calculus then comes unhinged, especially across the North, where growing public conviction is that the Democrats have forged two alarming alliances in order to stay in power.

The first is with the "Slave Power" in the South, the final straw being Douglas's May 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill reneging on the "sacred" Missouri Compromise.

The second is with the Roman Catholic immigrants, especially the Irish, who are successfully courted by the Democrats as the "party of the common man."

Those most troubled by these outcomes regard them as betrayals of basic American values going back to the founding fathers. In passing the Nebraska Bill, the Democrats prioritized the will of the Southern slave owners over the majority wishes of those in the North. In embracing the Catholic immigrants, it diminished the standing of the "true Americans" (i.e. Anglo-Saxon Protestants) and opened citizenship up to foreigners whose allegiance lies with the Roman Pope.

Retribution against these perceived betrayals will rain down on the Democrats in the mid-term election.

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Date: August 1854 To November 1855

### The Know-Nothing Party Records its Greatest Victory



Henry Wilson (1812-1875)

Voting for the 34<sup>th</sup> Congress drags on from August 1854 all the way through November 1855, with a mind-boggling array of new party options appearing on the ballot, state by state. The contest comes down to traditional Democrats pitted against three main opponents -- the ex-Whig based "Opposition Party," the Anti-Nebraska Party and the recently arriving anti-immigrant "Know Nothings."

When the votes are all in, the first signs of a roller-coaster political realignment are evident.

For Franklin Pierce, the results realize his worst fears about a schism within his own party -- as the Democrats surrender seventy-five seats in the U.S. House. Their losses occur across the North, with the main defections coming from voters who opposed the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill and believe the party has been co-opted by the "Slave Power."

The biggest surprise in the results goes to the 51 seats taken by the Know-Nothings, signaling that many Americans are as opposed to the presence of Catholic immigrants as they are to the Africans.

#### Voting Trends For The US House

House	1848	1850	1852	1854
Democrats	113	130	158	83
Whigs	108	86	71	---
"Opposition Party	---	---	---	54
American/Know Nothing	1	0	0	51
Free Soil/Anti-Nebraska	9	4	4	37
Constitutional Union		10		
Other		3		9
Total		233	233	234

A careful state-level analysis is required to untangle the shifts occurring in the returns.

The vast majority of the Democrats losses occur in eight Northern states, which exhibit direct voter migration to the "Opposition Party," consisting mainly of anti-slavery Whigs.

**Democratic House Losses To The “Opposition Party” (1854)**

<b>States</b>	<b>Democrats Lose</b>	<b>“Opposition” Gains</b>
New York	16	13
Ohio	12	12
Pennsylvania	9	8
Indiana	8	8
New Jersey	3	3
Michigan	3	2
Maine	2	2
Wisconsin	2	2
	55	50

Other more modest defections are evident in four other states, this time from Democrats to the Know-Nothings.

**Democratic House Losses To The “Know Nothings” (1854)**

<b>States</b>	<b>Democrats Lose</b>	<b>Know Nothings Gain</b>
Connecticut	4	4
New Hampshire	3	3
Rhode Island	2	2
Pennsylvania	1	1
	7	7

Support for the Know Nothings also appears in other geographical pockets, apparently sourced from Whig fall-outs more upset by immigration than slavery.

**Whig Losses To The “Know Nothings” (1854)**

<b>States</b>	<b>Whigs Lose</b>	<b>Know Nothing Gain</b>
Massachusetts	12	12
Kentucky	5	6
Tennessee	5	5
North Carolina	3	3
Delaware	1	1
	26	27

The most startling and abrupt Know-Nothing victory occurs in Massachusetts, where all twelve House seats go to the Nativists, along with the governorship, won for the first of three times by the ex-Whig, Henry Gardner. Conjecture has it that the anti-immigrant backlash in the state traces to its deeply Protestant Puritan roots and fear that the Irish will undercut laborers currently employed in factory jobs.

Several Slave states, most notably Kentucky and Tennessee, also swing into the Know Nothing column in the House, and other local races exhibit their sudden rise.

Robert Conrad’s success in Philadelphia is matched by mayoral wins by Know Nothing candidates John Towers in Washington, DC, Levi Boone in Chicago and Stephen Webb in San Francisco. California elects J. Neeley Johnson as its Governor, and two soon-to-be powerful Republicans enter the 34<sup>th</sup> Congress wrapped cynically under the Nativist banner. One is the strident abolitionist, Henry Wilson, who wins a Senate seat in Massachusetts as a Know Nothing; the other, Schuyler Colfax, also anti-slavery, who enters the House.

In the end, the Know Nothing Party phenomenon will burn brightly in 1854 and then, much like the Anti-Masonic Party of 1828, be overtaken by the nation's more urgent sectional conflict over slavery.

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Date: August 1854 To November 1855

### **The Outlines Of The Republican Party Coalition Are Evident In The 1854 Results**

While Republicans per se do not run in the 1854 mid-terms, the outcome provides an early glimpse of the awkward three-part coalition that will make them a contending force by 1856.

First in the mix are those politicians who genuinely oppose slavery on moral grounds. These are mostly Northern remnants of the Whig Party, joined of course by the small band of outright Abolitionists.

Second are the Know-Nothings, seeking to protect “true native-born Americans” from the perceived threats of the Roman Catholic immigrants and the Pope in Rome.

Finally, and somewhat later, come the revived Free Soilers, renegade Northern Democrats, intent on preserving the new west for free white men and protecting the “dignity” of free white labor.

In the 1854 election, it is mainly the anti-slavery and anti-immigrant elements that steal House seats from the Democrats – with the majority of the winners combining anti-slavery and anti-immigrant (nativist) sentiments.

#### **Positions Favored By House Winners In 1854**

<b>Regarded As:</b>	<b># Members</b>
Anti-slavery + nativist	92
Anti-slavery, but not nativist	23
Nativist, but not anti-slavery	29
All others	7
	151

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Despite the various shadings between the Anti-Slavery, Know-Nothing and Free Soil supporters, most share a common conviction – the notion that the land to the west should be cleansed of foreign elements (e.g. Africans and Catholics) for the good of the nation, and for their own self-interests.

Over the next six years, this political coalition will expand and harden -- as the Democratic Party progressively appears to be caving into outsider demands, especially those of the Southern “Slave Power.”

## Chapter 216 – The “Ostend Manifesto” Embarrasses Pierce’s Administration



**Dates:**  
October 15,  
1854 to March  
3, 1855

**Sections:**

- Southern Pressure To Acquire Cuba Again Mounts
- The “Ostend Manifesto” Posits The Use Of Force To Seize The Island
- Northerners In Congress Resist The Manifesto As Work Of The “Slave Power”

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Date: October 15, 1854

### Southern Pressure To Acquire Cuba Again Mounts



From the moment Pierce is sworn in, he feels pressure from the southern wing of his party to satisfy their economic needs by expanding slavery into new geographical boundaries.

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill opens this possibility within existing U.S. territory, but this is hardly a certainty. Hence the administration’s gaze turns to acquiring new land, with the island of Cuba once again front and center.

America’s fixation on the lucrative sugar plantations of Cuba traces back to Jefferson, who declares it “the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States.”

Pierre Soule (1801-1870)

By the 1840’s the island nation has become the world’s leading producer of sugar, supplying some 30% of total global demand. Polk’s \$100 million offer to buy it is rejected by Spain in 1848, and filibustering efforts of Narciso Lopez end with his public execution in Havana in 1851.

The drumbeats resume in February of 1854 after an over-eager Spanish harbor impounds the cargo on the *Black Warrior*, a ship making its traditional run between Cuba and New York city. This act is seized upon by Pierre Soule, the Louisiana man serving as Pierce’s Minister to Spain, to rattle retaliatory sabers in the halls of Congress.

In turn, Secretary of State William Marcy tasks his three key European ambassadors with proposing a plan to deal with Cuba and Spain. Soule is joined in this effort by James Buchanan, serving in the UK,

and John Mason, stationed in France. They meet for three days in Ostend, Belgium, a coastal town fronting the Mediterranean in Flanders.

Their discussions lead to a dispatch sent from Aix-la-Chapelle to Washington on October 15, 1854 which becomes known as the “Ostend Manifesto.”

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Date: October 15, 1854

### **The “Ostend Manifesto” Posits The Use Of Force To Seize The Island**

The manifesto sent to Pierce begins by recommending the purchase of Cuba, for the good of Spain and the U.S.

*Sir: The undersigned... have arrived at the conclusion, and are thoroughly convinced, that an immediate and earnest effort ought to be made by the government of the United States to purchase Cuba from Spain at any price for which it can be obtained, not exceeding the sum of \$ (unstated)...(This) transaction will prove equally honorable to both nations.*

This is followed by various rationales, ranging from the self-serving to the downright cynical. The first argues that Cuba “belongs naturally” to America by dint of its geographical proximity:

*Its geographical position...(makes) Cuba as necessary to the North American republic as any of its present members...it belongs naturally to that great family of states of which the Union is the providential nursery.*

Next comes sheer hypocrisy, with Mason – who drafted the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act – being joined by Soule and Buchanan in decrying the on-going African slave trading present on the island:

*As long as (the current) system endures, humanity may in vain demand the suppression of the African slave-trade in the island. This is rendered impossible whilst that infamous traffic remains an irresistible temptation and a source of immense profit to needy and avaricious officials, who...scruple not to trample the most sacred principles under foot.*

Left alone, Cuba may become “exceedingly dangerous” – since a black insurrection there could encourage slave uprisings in America.

*Considerations exist which render delay in the acquisition of the island exceedingly dangerous to the United States. The system of immigration...and the tyranny and oppression which characterize its immediate rulers, threaten an insurrection at every moment which may result in direful consequences to the American people.*

Should another black leader like Toussaint Louverture arise, Spain would lose not only their island, but also the money America is willing to pay for it.

*It is not improbable, therefore, that Cuba may be wrested from Spain by a successful revolution; and, in that event, she will lose both the island and the price we are willing now to pay for it-a price far beyond what was ever paid by one people to another for any province.*

The three statesmen then ask what America should do if Spain refuses to sell.

*After we shall have offered Spain a price for Cuba far beyond its present value, and this shall have been refused, it will then be time to consider the question; does Cuba, in the possession of Spain, seriously endanger our internal peace and the existence of our cherished Union?*

Their answer, stated boldly, is to “wrest it from Spain” by force!

*Should this question be answered in the affirmative, then, by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power; and this upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home.*

To do any less, they say, would be to expose the white race to “horrors,” and “commit base treason...endangering the fair fabric of our Union.”

*We should, however, be recreant to our duty, be unworthy of our gallant forefathers, and commit base treason against our posterity, should we permit Cuba to be Africanized and become a second St. Domingo, with all its attendant horrors to the white race, and suffer the flames to extend to our own neighboring shores, seriously endanger(ing)...the fair fabric of our Union. We fear that the course and current of events are rapidly tending toward such a catastrophe. We, however, hope for the best, though we ought certainly to be prepared for the worst.*

On top of the threat posed by an “Africanized Cuba,” the recent “flagrant outrage” committed in Cuba by Spanish officials (i.e. the *Black Warrior* cargo seizure) “would justify a resort to measures of war in vindication of national honor.”

*A long series of injuries to our people have been committed in Cuba by Spanish officials, and are unredressed. But recently a most flagrant outrage on the rights of American citizens and on the flag of the United States was perpetrated in the harbor of Havana under circumstances which, without immediate redress, would have justified a resort to measures of war in vindication of national honor. That outrage is not only unatoned, but the Spanish government has deliberately sanctioned the acts of its subordinates and assumed the responsibility attaching to them.*

In the end, the only sensible course of action lies in “the cession of Cuba to the United States.”

*This course cannot, with due regard to their own dignity as an independent nation, continue; and our recommendations, now submitted, are dictated by the firm belief that the cession of Cuba to the United States, with stipulations as beneficial to Spain as those suggested, is the only effective mode of settling all past differences, and of the securing the two countries against future collisions. We have already witnessed the happy results for both countries which followed a similar arrangement in regard to Florida.*

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Date: March 3, 1855

### Northerners In Congress Resist The Manifesto As Work Of The “Slave Power”



Horace Greeley (1811-1872)

The Ostend Manifesto lands on Pierce’s desk in November 1854 amidst the early Northern resistance to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill passed six months earlier, and initial warning signs that the Democrats might be in danger of experiencing sizable losses in upcoming elections.

The President fears that any hint of a U.S. plan to take Cuba by force will be judged as one more capitulation on his part to the whims of the “Slave Power.” His efforts to keep the dispatch secret include failing to mention it in his annual December address to Congress.

But the contents soon appear in public, with a near perfect reprise in the powerful *New York Herald*, run by its pro-Know Nothing publisher, James Gordon Bennett.

Contributing to the leaks is none other than Pierce’s own Spanish Ambassador, Pierre Soule, who openly touts the policy in search of garnering support.

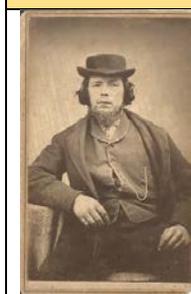
Angry Northern Congressman demand disclosure of the full document, and this occurs on March 3, 1855.

The abolitionist editor of *The New York Tribune*, *Horace Greeley*, labels it the “Manifesto of Brigands,” the work of Southern planters and their lackey “doughface” Northern politicians to steal more land for slavery.

The criticism plays out from there. Foreign ministers in Madrid, Paris and London denounce the threat of force, and an embarrassed Pierce instructs Soule to end his negotiations, which leads to his immediate resignation.

The Ostend Manifesto will prove to be no more than an historical footnote, but at the time is amplifies the rift between the South and the North, including within the Democratic Party, and further erodes any possibility of a second term for Franklin Pierce.

## Chapter 217 – The Pro-Slavery Forces In Kansas Steal Another Election



**Dates:**  
March to July, 1855

- Sections:**
- A Second Fraudulent Election Ends With A “Bogus Legislature” For Kansas
  - The Pro-Slavery Legislature Meets And Reeder Is Assaulted For Opposing It
  - Free State Supporters Begin To Get Organized
  - Abraham Lincoln’s Reactions To The Early Turmoil In Kansas

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Date: March 30, 1855

### A Second Fraudulent Election Ends With A “Bogus Legislature” For Kansas



A Determined Looking Guy

In addition to the Ostend Manifesto debacle, President Pierce is also plagued by further events in the Kansas Territory during the spring and summer of 1855.

Word has already gotten out that the first test of popular sovereignty in the territory was a fiasco, with the Missouri Border Ruffians usurping the process to elect their pro-slavery candidate for the U.S. House. The fear among Pierce, Douglas and other Democrats is that ex-Senator David Atchison and his Platte County Self-Defense Association will repeat the fraud in the election of a territorial legislature, scheduled for March 30, 1854.

The group’s two leaders – Atchison and Benjamin Stringfellow – have already started a campaign encourage Southerners to bring their slaves into Kansas as a precedent-setting tactic. The response, however, is tepid, and a census in January 1855 shows only 192 slaves present out of a total population of 8,000.

As the election date nears, their attention shifts to repeating the strategy which worked the first time – namely, importing residents of Missouri to stuff the ballot box in favor of pro-slavery candidates.

The Blue Lodge men issue *Stringfellow’s Exposition*, claiming the legality of all citizens who show up, regardless of their residence. Between March 28 and 30 they run ferryboats across the Missouri River carrying some 800 voters per day. When the polls open, they show up en masse, often armed with Bowie knives, and identified by badges made from hemp, one of Missouri’s leading cash crops.

Once again this form of intimidation pays off.

The Pro-Slavery ticket records 5,427 votes – some 90% of the total cast, and roughly 2500 more than are actually eligible to participate.

Even David Atchison, who resigns his seat in the U.S. Senate in December 1854, expresses some doubt about the means taken to deliver the end he demanded.

*I did not vote...but I was on hand. I know that it was a matter of doubtful policy to go into the territory on the day of the vote, but...it was great encouragement to the boys (to) carry everything in the territory.*

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Date: April 6 – July 2, 1855

### **The Pro-Slavery Legislature Meets And Reeder Is Assaulted For Opposing It**

This time, however, Governor Reeder refuses to go along with the results. After interviewing various election judges, he decides on April 6, 1855 to throw out the ballots in six districts – a move that provokes threats to his personal safety among pro-slavery supporters.

Reeder is sufficiently upset by the fraud that he travels to Washington to inform Pierce of the problems in Kansas and to try to gain his agreement to hold a “do-over” election. On his way there, he stops in his old home town of Easton, Pennsylvania and delivers a speech which describes the violations of the Border Ruffians, and calls out both Stringfellow and Atchison by name.

After meeting with the President, Reeder returns to Kansas in June thinking he has approval to hold a second election, this time overseen by military force to insure compliance on voter residency.

The call for a second, fair election is also heard from Free-State men who assemble in an organized fashion in the town of Lawrence on June 8, 1855. They condemn what they call the “Bogus Legislature” and demand that Reeder shut it down before it begins to act.

This doesn’t happen, and on July 2 the Pro-Slavery legislators gather in the frontier town of Pawnee, some 100 miles west of the Missouri border, near Fort Riley. Banners wave, signaling their aims: “Kansas for the South, now and forever; Negro Slavery For Kansas; Hemp For Negro-Stealers; The South And Her Institutions.” They officially declare Kansas a Slave State, and pass a law stating that the publication or circulation of all anti-slavery material will be punishable by two years of hard labor. A local ditty recognizes this act of censorship:

*If any Yankee in this territory shall circulate an Abolitionist note...brave Stringfellow or Atchison...may cut his accursed anti-slavery throat!*

To further intimidate dissenters, shouted out voice votes are used to pass legislation, and all attempts by the minority to call for new elections are beaten down. In turn, the handful of anti-slavery representatives resign, saying that the current body is “derogatory to the respectability of popular government.”

Reeder responds by vetoing some of the acts, including their decision to move the capital from Pawnee to Shawnee Mission, nearer the Governor’s headquarters. He also begins to speak out against the bullying tactics of the Pro-Slavery supporters, which leads to a violent confrontation at his office at the Shawnee Methodist Mission. On July 2, 1855 Stringfield and several of his backers burst in to ask Reeder if he is the source of disparaging comments about them appearing in the press. When Reeder says yes, Stringfield reportedly knocks him to the ground, kicks him, and attempts to draw a pistol before being restrained by rescuers, including U.S. Attorney Andrew Isacks.

After the attack Reeder writes to his wife saying that she may never see him again.

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Date: July 4, 1855

### **Free State Supporters Begin To Get Organized**

Pressure on the Governor mounts on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1855, when a large turnout of Free State advocates appear on the village green in their home base of Lawrence, Kansas, to declare their new “Declaration of Independence.” The principal spokesman at this event is Charles Robinson, who henceforth plays a key role in opposing the Missouri take-over.

Robinson is raised in Massachusetts by abolitionist parents and becomes a practicing physician before being bitten by the gold rush craze in 1849 and heading cross country to California to try his hand at mining. He also starts up a newspaper dedicated to protecting the land claims of the prospectors. One such dispute ends with Robinson shot in the chest and arrested for murder, after he kills his assailant with an iron bar. He is ultimately exonerated, enters politics, and serves in the California state legislature as an anti-slavery proponent.

In 1854 Robinson is back in Massachusetts as an agent for Eli Thayer’s New England Emigrant Aid Company. In this role he actually leads the first contingent of settlers to Kansas, arriving at Lawrence on August 1, 1854.

In his remarks to the crowd on the Fourth, he asserts that the actions of the Missouri ruffians have turned the true Kansans into “white slaves” by violating their rights to elect a government of their own choosing.

*The doctrine of self-government is to be trampled under foot here...the question of negro slavery is to sink into insignificance, and the greater portentous issue is to loom up in its stead, whether or not we shall be the slaves, and fanatics who disgrace the honorable and chivalric men of the south shall be our masters to rule at their pleasure.*

Robinson’s message resonates with his Lawrence audience, and they agree to convene a follow-up meeting on August 14 to work toward overturning the “bogus legislature.”

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### **SIDEBAR: Abraham Lincoln's Reactions To The Early Turmoil In Kansas**

On August 24, 1855 Abraham Lincoln sends a letter to his closest lifelong friend, Joshua Speed, summarizing his current opinions about the events in Kansas. Speed is raised on a hemp plantation in Louisville, Kentucky, before moving to Springfield as a merchant, and then rooming with Lincoln as he begins his legal career. The letter itself follows the second fraudulent election in Kansas, with the Pro-Slavery forces in control of the legislature – and before any organized response from the Free Staters.

It expresses Lincoln's belief that Kansas will become a Slave State, while also announcing that he will oppose such an outcome and seek to restore the 1820 Missouri Compromise boundary line. But a loss in Kansas would be no reason, he says, to abandon the Union -- rather a signal to take greater care to protect its bonds.

Lincoln also gently chides Speed for opposing the tactics of the Border Ruffians and wishing for a Free State Kansas, while being unwilling as a Southerner to vote for anyone who would voice those positions in the political arena.

*Dear Speed:*

*...You know I dislike slavery; and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say that sooner than yield your legal right to the slave -- especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that any one is bidding you to yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself.*

*I do oppose the extension of slavery, because my judgment and feelings so prompt me; and I am under no obligation to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must. You say if you were President, you would send an army and hang the leaders of the Missouri outrages upon the Kansas elections; still, if Kansas fairly votes herself a slave state, she must be admitted, or the Union must be dissolved.*

*That Kansas will form a Slave Constitution, and, with it, will ask to be admitted into the Union, I take to be an already settled question.*

*In my humble sphere, I shall advocate the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, so long as Kansas remains a territory; and when, by all these foul means, it seeks to come into the Union as a Slave-state, I shall oppose it.*

*In my opposition to the admission of Kansas I shall have some company; but we may be beaten. If we are, I shall not, on that account, attempt to dissolve the Union. On the contrary, if we succeed, there will be enough of us to take care of the Union. I think it probable, however, we shall be beaten.*

*You say if Kansas fairly votes herself a free state, as a Christian you will rather rejoice at it. All decent slaveholders talk that way; and I do not doubt their candor. But they never vote that way.*

*Although in a private letter, or conversation, you will express your preference that Kansas*

*shall be free, you would vote for no man for Congress who would say the same thing publicly. No such man could be elected from any district in a slave-state. You think Stringfellow & Co. ought to be hung; and yet, at the next presidential election you will vote for the exact type and representative of Stringfellow. The slave-breeders and slave-traders, are a small, odious and detested class, among you; and yet in politics, they dictate the course of all of you, and are as completely your masters, as you are the master of your own negroes.*

## Chapter 218 – Know Nothings And Catholics Battle On “Bloody Monday” In Louisville



**Dates:**  
1850

**Sections:**

- Anti-Catholic Friction Accompanies The Western Spread Of Immigrants
- Election Day Violence Pits Nativists Against Catholic Immigrants

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Date: 1850 Forward

### Anti-Catholic Friction Accompanies The Western Spread Of Immigrants



While some Americans are focused on “cleansing” the west of all slaves (and blacks), others are exhibiting their displeasure with the immigrants showing up in their towns and villages.

By 1850, the number of foreign born residents reaches 2.24 million or 9.7% of the total population – up from only 4.6% a decade earlier.

Most of the immigrants end up in major cities in the North, and often inland from the east coast. Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis and Cincinnati all have foreign born representation in the 50% plus range as of 1850.

A Catholic Priest

**Presence Of Foreign-Born Residents In Some U.S. Cities: 1850 Census (000)**

	<b>Native Born</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Foreign Born</b>
Milwaukee	7.2	12.8	20.0	64%
Chicago	13.7	15.7	29.4	53
St. Louis	36.5	38.4	74.9	51
New Orleans	50.5	48.6	99.1	49
Cincinnati	60.6	54.5	115.1	47
New York	277.8	235.7	513.5	46
Albany	31.2	16.6	47.8	35
Boston	88.9	46.7	135.6	34
Louisville	25.1	12.5	37.6	33
Newark	26.6	12.3	38.9	32
Philadelphia	286.3	121.7	408.0	30
Providence	31.8	9.7	41.5	23
Baltimore	130.5	35.5	166.0	21
Charleston	17.8	4.6	22.4	20
Richmond	15.5	2.1	17.6	12
Washington	33.5	4.3	37.8	11

Most of the foreign born arrive in America with the usual set of challenges facing immigrants to a new land. They typically arrive in relative poverty, with only the possessions they can carry on their long ocean voyage, and many speak no English. But above and beyond those drawbacks, the vast majority have an additional stigma, their membership in the Roman Catholic Church.

It is one thing for many Americans to accommodate freedom of religion across a wide range of Protestant sects, but quite another to overlook three hundred years of old-world hostilities against the Church of Rome.

In large part, this anti-Catholic heritage fuels the growth of the Know-Nothing movement and the kind of mob violence that flares up, beginning in 1844 in the Philadelphia riots.

In the summer of 1855, it again explodes in Louisville, Kentucky, pitting the nativists against the city's Catholic population, in this case, mainly Germans by birth.

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Date: August 6, 1855

## Election Day Violence Pits Nativists Against Catholic Immigrants



Charles Morehead (1802-1868)

The Catholic Diocese of Louisville encompasses the entire state of Kentucky and is extensive in scope, with some fifty-six churches, eighty-six chapels and the clergymen required to support them.

Public antagonism toward the Catholics is endemic, but it intensifies when they lobby for controversial reforms, especially related to use of the King James Bible in public schools, oath taking, and other civic and governmental ceremonies.

Many opponents are also convinced that the Catholics are not loyal citizens, that their allegiance to the Pope outweighs their commitment to the United States. This idea is put forth by George Prentice, editor of the influential *Louisville Daily Journal*, who tells his readers in July 1855 that:

*It is necessary for salvation that everyone be subject to the Roman Pontiff.*

The Know Nothing resistance springs into public view in Louisville around mid-year in 1854, with members sporting a metallic eagle insignia pinned to their left breast on their way to secret meetings.

In response to the rise of these Know Nothing lodges, a German group known as the “Sag Nichts” (say nothing) is formed. It rejects all forms of nativism and attempts to reduce the period required for naturalization.

The first signs of physical violence between the two camps appear when fistfights break out at polling places during city and county elections held in August, 1854. Some, however, attribute these to traditional politics, the old line Louisville Whigs battling their Democratic foes, the party of the Catholics.

A year later, on Monday, August 6, 1855, the race for Governor of Kentucky matches the Know-Nothing candidate, plantation owner and ex-Whig, Charles Morehead, against the Democrat, Beverley Clarke.

Initial confrontations between Know Nothings and Sag Nichts bands materialize through-out the week leading up to the election. On the day of the polling, Prentice’s *Louisville Daily Journal* fires up nativist supporters in its editorial:

*Fellow citizens: shall the shouts of triumph that echo through our streets tonight, be raised by American voices or shall they resound in the harsh tones of Germanv and Ireland?*

The *Daily Democrat* volleys back with accusations that the nativists plan to steal the election through violence.

The dam bursts on “Bloody Monday” as the two sides go to war in the streets of Louisville.

Strong-arm methods at polling sites by Know-Nothings are countered by Catholics, and both sides are soon shooting at each other. Even a bolstered police force is unable to halt the battles. Houses are burned and shops are looted. Former Congressman William Thommason is beaten and Father Karl Boeswald is fatally injured by thrown stones. In all, hundreds are injured and the death toll ranges upwards from twenty-two on the day.

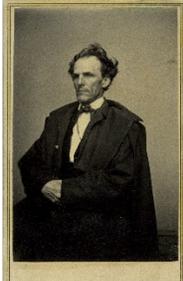
As in the Philadelphia riots, attempts are made to destroy Catholic churches. Fierce fighting occurs around St. Martin of Tours and the Cathedral of the Assumption before the Know-Nothing Mayor of Louisville, John Barbee, steps forth to quell the mobs.

A German diarist captures the ferocity of the day:

*Reckless youths, who had been active in these things, spoke of their deeds in terms of levity that were shocking. They said that they did not know how many they had killed but that they had popped down every Irishman they saw. Half-grown boys, rendered perfectly devilish with ungoverned passion and whiskey, filled the streets with yells and violence. Christian men and women alike, becoming demons, urged on the young men. Most painful sights were witnessed. Poor women were fleeing with their children and little mementos of home that were brought from the Fatherland. The most painful of all sights was the stars and stripes waved at the head of the sacrilegious mobites.*

Almost forgotten in the chaos is the election itself, which goes to the Know-Nothing, Moreland by a narrow statewide margin of 69,816 to 65,413. In Louisville, none of the rioters on either side are ever prosecuted.

## Chapter 219 – Pierce Fires Governor Reeder Who Joins The Free State Party In Kansas



**Dates:**  
August-September, 1855

**Sections:**

- Pierce Bows To Criticism From The Pro-Slavery Forces
- The Free Staters Band Together At Big Springs

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Date: August 15, 1855

### **Pierce Bows To Criticism From The Pro-Slavery Forces**

As the summer wears on complaints about Andrew Reeder's actions as Territorial Governor of Kansas descend on Pierce from Atchison and the Pro-Slavery legislature, meeting since August 8 in Lecompton, in defiance of orders to remain at Pawnee.

The President gives in to the pressure and demands that Reeder resign, effective August 15.

His stated rationale cites a conflict of interest related to Reeder's ownership of land at Pawnee – the charge being that, as Governor, he ordered that the capital be located there to make a profit on his speculative purchases. True or false, the appearance of a conflict is sufficient to back the dismissal.

Reeder's response proves surprising. Instead of fleeing from the territory in disgrace, he chooses to sign on with the "Free State Party" side, joins their first convention, and become a leader in their battle against the Pro-Slavers.

His replacement is ex-Ohio Governor, Wilson Shannon, another "doughface" politician, who has recently completed a term in the U.S House. Sworn in on September 7, 1855, he will be gone in eleven months, after failing to stifle the Free State movement.

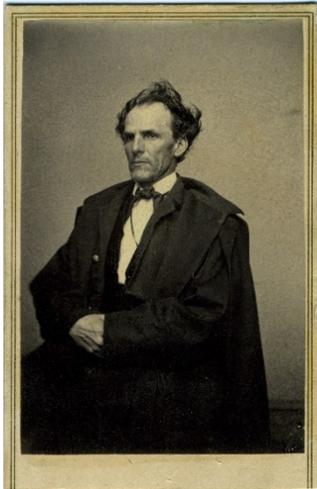
### Key Events In Kansas During Edward Reeder's Term As Governor

1854	Milestone
July 7	Pierce names Reeder as first Territorial Governor in Kansas
July 20	The Platte County Self-Defense Association founded by David Atchison
November 29	Border Ruffians fraudulently elect pro-slavery JW Whitworth to the U.S. House Reeder reluctantly confirms the voting results
1855	
March 30	A second fraudulent vote results in a "Bogus Legislature" of pro-slavery men
April 6	Reeder de-certifies illegal votes from six districts
June	Reeder travels to DC to seek Pierce's support for a fair do-over election
July 2	The Bogus Legislature convenes in Pawnee for their opening session Benjamin Stringfellow assaults Reeder for making unfavorable public remarks
August 4	Free-Staters meet in Lawrence to plot a resistance strategy
August 14-15	The Free State Party is founded in a convention at Big Springs Commitment made to write a constitution and submit for admission to Union
August 17	Reeder is fired and Daniel Woodson becomes Acting Governor
September 7	Wilson Shannon begins his service as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Governor
October 1	Pro-Slavers re-elect JW Whitworth as Representative to the U.S. House
October 8	Free-Staters elect ex-Governor Reeder as their U.S. House representative

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Date: August 14 – September 7, 1855

#### The Free Staters Band Together At Big Springs



James Henry Lane (1814-1866)

Back in Kansas, the rallying cry delivered by Charles Robinson on Independence Day leads to a gathering on August 14-15, 1855, in Lawrence aimed at consolidating all opponents of the "bogus" Pro-Slavery legislature. Agreement is reached to hold a convention in three weeks to elect their own state legislature and write a Free State Constitution.

Roughly one hundred delegates, along with other spectators, gather on September 5 at Big Springs, 15 miles west of Lawrence on the old California Trail. Charles Robinson is there, along with now ex-Governor Reeder, and a new voice in the mix, one James Henry Lane, an Indiana native who serves in the Mexican War and then in the U.S. House before coming to Kansas to establish a Democratic Party.

Lane's men arrive at the Big Springs Convention armed with Sharps Rifles and ready for combat. They fail to share Robinson's moral opposition to slavery, and want to ban all blacks from crossing into Kansas. As one observer says:

*Their hatred to slavery was not as strong as their hatred to Negroes.*

Despite some differences, a Free State Party is born at the convention. It is dedicated to forming a government chosen by residents of Kansas and not Missouri. Instead of merely opposing the Pro-Slavery legislature in place, it takes the bold step of electing its own legislature from those present, and then chooses none other than Andrew Reeder as it proposed representative to the U.S. House.

The ex-Governor's closing resolution is ominous. It calls upon supporters to procure arms, train up volunteer companies, and prepare for a bloody resistance should peaceful remedies fail.

*That we will endure and submit to these laws (the bogus laws) no longer than the best interests of the Territory required, as the least of two evils, and will resist them to a bloody issue as soon as we ascertain that peaceful remedies shall fail, and forcible resistance shall furnish any reasonable prospect of success; and that in the meantime we recommend to our friends throughout the Territory the organization and discipline of volunteer companies, and the procurement and preparation of arms.*

Henceforth Andrew Reeder becomes an active leader in the Free State movement.

## Chapter 220 – Filibusterer William Walker Seizes The Nation of Nicaragua



**Dates:**  
Winter 1855 to  
Spring 1856

- Sections:**
- Walker Organizes Another Filibustering Expedition
  - Walker Invades And Wins A Strategic Victory At The City Of Grenada
  - President Pierce Wavers Throughout In His Reactions To Walker’s Filibuster

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Date: Fall – Winter 1855

### Walker Organizes Another Filibustering Expedition



Map of Nicaragua Where Walker Executes His Filibuster

Some 2,800 miles south of Kansas events during the Fall of 1855 are playing out in the country of Nicaragua that further testify to Pierce’s inaugural promise to avoid “timid forebodings” about geographical expansion.

*The stars upon your banner have become nearly threefold their original number...(and) the policy of my Administration will not be controlled by any timid forebodings of evil from expansion. Indeed, it is not to be disguised that our attitude as a nation and our position on the globe render the acquisition of certain possessions not within our jurisdiction eminently important for our protection, (and) for the preservation of the rights of commerce and the peace of the world.*

Once again it is the filibusterer William Walker who picks up the banner of “manifest destiny,” despite his failed attempt to create the Republic of Lower California in May 1854. This time his target is the Central American nation of Nicaragua.

As with Mexico, the U.S. has long had its acquisitive eye on Nicaragua, given the potential to build a canal across its southern border connecting the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, hence New York City to San Francisco. In 1849 the shipping tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt finalizes a deal with the government whereby his “Accessory Transit Company” is given an exclusive “right of way” charter for the canal. While exploration begins, Vanderbilt creates a thriving overland-steamboat route between San Juan del Norte on the east coast and San Juan del Sur on the west.



The country is small, with a population of only 260,000, dominated by those of mixed Indian-Spanish blood, along with a smattering of whites and blacks. Since winning its independence from Spain in 1824, it is plagued by civil wars pitting the “white ribbon” *Legitimists*, the aristocratic party based in Granada, against the “red ribbon” Democrats, headquartered seventy miles west in Leon.

After suffering a string of defeats, the Democrats approach Byron Cole, an American journalist and friend of William Walker, with an offer to enlist up to 300 mercenaries to fight on their behalf, in exchange for military pay and subsequent land grants.

On December 29, 1854, Walker signs a contract with the Democrats. For the next four months he seeks, and gets, approval to proceed from U.S. commanding General John Wool, then goes about lining up funds (with help from Pierre Soule of “Ostend” fame), arms (aided by the financier, George Law), a transport ship, and initial recruits. Along the way he fights the fourth duel of his life, receiving a wound in the foot.

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Date: May 3 – October 22, 1855

### Walker Invades And Wins A Strategic Victory At The City Of Grenada



To address some of the flaws in his failed Mexican venture, Walker signs on several experienced mercenaries, including Prussian cavalryman, Bruno Von Natzmer, and Charles Frederick Henningsen, a veteran of combat in Spain, Hungary and Russia. Henningsen will serve as Major General and chief artilleryman in Walker's Nicaraguan army.

The lead contingent of sixty troopers depart from San Francisco on May 3, 1855, travel some 3500 miles by sea, and land on June 16 at the port of Realejo. They are joined by 110 local fighters and head to Leon, where Democrat President Francisco Castellon greets them, confers citizenship, and encourages immediate action. Another voyage takes them just north of San Juan del Sur, where Walker plants himself at the western end of Vanderbilt's "Transit Company" route, a strategic asset that will supply him with American volunteers over time.

Charles Henningsen (1815-1877)

His army is known as the Falanginos (Phalanx) and its first encounter with the *Legitimistas* occurs at noon on June 29, 1855 at the town of Rivas. As soon as shots are fired, Walker's local recruits flee, leaving him outnumbered ten to one. Still the American troops perform well before being forced to retreat, with losses of five killed and twelve wounded. Walker blisters Castellon for the cowardice of the Democrat troops and pauses to plan his next steps.

Castellon wants him to conquer the *Legitimista* capital at Grenada, but Walker prioritizes completing his seizure of the "Transit Company" route between San Juan del Sur and Virgen Bay. He marches east to the Bay, but is then attacked from behind by the enemy on September 2, 1855. With backs up against Lake Nicaragua, his troops win their first important victory at La Virgen, an outcome that boosts his future recruiting and his financial support, especially from Vanderbilt's firm.

This leads to Walker's greatest military triumph, a clandestine night voyage with some 250 men up Lake Nicaragua, followed by a successful attack on the *Legitimista's* undermanned garrison in Grenada. The date is October 13, and it marks the beginning of Walker's control over the country of Nicaragua.

On October 22, 1855, he executes the top *Legitimista* official in Grenada to establish his authority, then gathers the two warring factions together to form a coalition government. He chooses Patricio Rivas as puppet-president, with himself as de facto ruler, heading the Army.

Henceforth his press persona becomes that of "Colonel Walker, the grey-eyed man of destiny."

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Date: 1853- May 15, 1856

### **President Pierce Wavers Throughout In His Reactions To Walker's Filibuster**

Franklin Pierce responds to Walker's activity in Nicaragua with typical equivocation.

After Walker takes Grenada in October, he issues a message condemning the action on December 8, 1855.

But Walker perseveres, sending a series of potential "Ambassadors" to Washington in search of official recognition for his government. The first is the notorious confidence man and gunslinger, Parker French, who is rebuffed in January and then again in February, 1856. Secretary of State William Marcy is particularly outspoken at the time, saying that neither French nor Walker represent the will of the Nicaraguan public.

Walker counters by claiming that his patriotic efforts to expand America's borders is being hampered by the rejection of his chosen minister. This increases the political heat on Pierce as does the glowing praise showered on Walker by former Democratic presidential nominee, Lewis Cass:

*The difficulties which General Walker has encountered and overcome will place his name high on the roll of the distinguished men of his age. . . . Our countrymen will plant there the seeds of our institutions, and God grant that they may grow up into an abundant harvest of industry, enterprise, and prosperity. A new day, I hope, is opening upon the States of Central America.*

Walker's next move tells of his own political acumen. He proposes none other than the Curate of Grenada, Father Augustin Vijil, as his designated envoy to Washington – and Pierce agrees to accept him on May 14, 1856.

The next day the President sends his rationale to Congress, saying that the best interests of the nation require him to recognize some government in Nicaragua, and Walker's Father Vijil is the only option he has.

After his reception, Ambassador Vijils is largely shunned in Washington, and resigns after two months, on June 23, to return to his church duties at home. But he has served Walker's purpose and forced Pierce to exhibit some official support for the regime.

Once again the President's popularity suffers in response to this action. Southerners see his support for expansion into Nicaragua as lukewarm; Northerners and abolitionists see him eventually pandering to the "Slave Power;" Know-Nothings fear another source of Catholic immigrants arriving this time from Central America.