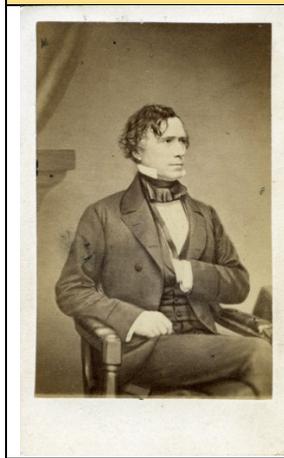


Chapter 200 – Franklin Pierce Becomes The Thirteenth President



Dates:
November 2, 1852

Sections:
• Pierce Wins In A Landslide

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Pierce Wins In A Landslide



Franklin Pierce (1804-1869)

As the 1852 race plays out, the Democrats readily coalesce around Pierce, while the Whigs remain divided and generally unenthusiastic about Scott.

All four of Pierce's opponents at the raucous Baltimore convention – Cass, Buchanan, Douglas and Marcy – quickly endorse him. Southerners are reassured by his firm commitment to the 1850 Compromise and to enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act, while Northerners see him as one of their own. On the campaign trail, he is blessed by a handsome appearance and a remarkable memory for faces and names and for speeches, which he routinely memorizes and delivers with what appears to be off the cuff ease and sincerity. Those in the Young America movement point to his youth (at forty eight) and vigor, vis a vis the aging (at sixty-six) Scott, symbol of “a generation passing away.”

The Whigs go after Pierce's limited experience (“an obscure individual”), and his record in the Mexican War, including unfair insinuations about his lack of battlefield courage. The Northern press also insists that he is a religious bigot, based on New Hampshire laws banning Catholics from public office, and a total pawn of the South, a doughface who will bow to their every demand. Scott also makes a futile attempt to lure Catholic voters by citing that his favorite daughter, Virginia, has entered a Georgetown nunnery (albeit being totally dismayed by the outcome).

While the Whigs vigorously attack Pierce, they are never able to accomplish real unity and fervor behind Scott. His military exploits are every bit as impressive as those of the two former Whigs Presidents Harrison and Taylor, but his reputation as “Old Fuss ‘n Feathers” seems to signal devotion to protocol rather than conjuring up personal heroism. Southern Whigs who felt betrayed by Taylor’s opposition to expanding slavery to the west, are even more suspicious of Scott, who remains silent about the 1850 Compromise throughout the race. Conversely many Northern Whigs defect in response to the platform’s ringing endorsement of the Fugitive Slave Act.

In the end, Scott suffers the kind of political rout that he never experienced in warfare.

He carries only four states – Tennessee, Kentucky, Vermont and Massachusetts – worth 42 electoral votes against 254 for Pierce. Newspapers characterize the result as “a Waterloo defeat” and, indeed, it signals the death knell for the entire Whig Party.

Results Of The 1852 Presidential Race

1852	Party	Pop Vote	Elect Tot	South	Border	North	West
Pierce	Democrat	1,607,510	254	76	20	92	66
Scott	Whig	1,386,942	42	12	12	18	0
Hale	Free Soil	155,210	0	0	0	0	0
Webster	Union	6,994					
Troup	So Rights	2,331					
		3,161,830					

The turn-around from Taylor’s victory in 1848 is particularly evident in the North, where five states swing from the Whig to the Democrat column. The entire South and West, with the exception of Tennessee, are swept by Pierce and the Democrats.

Party Power By State

States	Votes	1848	1852	Pick-Ups
Virginia	15	Democrat	Democrat	
North Carolina	10	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
South Carolina	8	Democrat	Democrat	
Georgia	10	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Alabama	9	Democrat	Democrat	
Mississippi	7	Democrat	Democrat	
Louisiana	6	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Tennessee	12	Whig	Whig	
Arkansas	4	Democrat	Democrat	
Texas	4	Democrat	Democrat	
Florida	3		Democrat	Democrat
South	88			
Delaware	3	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Maryland	8	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Kentucky	12	Whig	Whig	

Missouri	9	Democrat	Democrat	
Border	32			
New Hampshire	5	Democrat	Democrat	
Vermont	5	Whig	Whig	
Massachusetts	13	Whig	Whig	
Rhode Island	4	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Connecticut	6	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
New York	35	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
New Jersey	7	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Pennsylvania	27	Whig	Democrat	Democrat
Maine	8	Democrat	Democrat	
North	110			
Ohio	23	Democrat	Democrat	
Indiana	13	Democrat	Democrat	
Illinois	11	Democrat	Democrat	
Iowa	4	Democrat	Democrat	
Michigan	6	Democrat	Democrat	
Wisconsin	5	Democrat	Democrat	
California	4		Democrat	Democrat
West	66			
Total	296			

The crushing defeat also carries over to Congress. In the House, the Democrats pick up 28 seats and restore the kind of decisive margin they held back in 1844.

Election Trends In The U.S. House

Party	1844	1846	1848	1850	1852
Democrats	142	112	113	130	158
Whigs	79	116	108	86	71
American	6	1	1	0	
Free Soil			9	4	4
Constitutional Union				10	
States' Rights				3	
Upcoming Congress	29 th	30 th	31 st	32 nd	32 nd
President	Tyler	Polk	Polk	Fillmore	Fillmore

The Democrats also add three seats in the Senate, boosting their advantage from 35-24 to 38-22.

Election Trends In The U.S. Senate

Party	1844	1846	1848	1850	1852
Democrats	31	36	35	35	38
Whigs	25	21	25	24	22
Free Soil			2	3	1
Other		1			1
Vacant					
Upcoming Congress	29 th	30 th	31 st	32 nd	32 nd
President	Tyler	Polk	Polk	Fillmore	Fillmore

Once the results are in, the search begins again to create a new opposition party capable of challenging the Democrats at the national level.

During Pierce’s term the outline for such a party, known as the Republicans, will be visible in the convergence of four often wildly different political interests:

- Northern Whigs looking for a new home for their American System principles;
- Liberty Party members and others who oppose slavery on moral grounds and aim to end it;
- Certain Free Soilers who back Wilmot’s call for “whites-only” territory and land grants in the west; and
- A resurgent anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant party calling themselves the “Know Nothings.”