

A Brief History of the United States

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Units Four & Five

A period of religious revival was taking place known as the Second Great Awakening. This movement gave rise to a great many Social Reform Movements.

Women began to find their collective voice and pushed for changes. The women's rights movement got its start during this time, though it would be put off during the civil war and would not reach fruition until the early 20th century. Most notable was the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments (1848), which mirrored the Declaration of Independence (except it was expressly for women). The two leading women of the movement were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

Women were also influential in the temperance movement. During this time the average American consumed five gallons of hard liquor per year. This had a devastating affect on families. The temperance movement preached reducing, but not eliminating consumption. This movement would also not achieve tangible results until the 20th century.

People also began trying to change the harsh conditions in prisons. Prisoners were kept in silence for many hours a day and were beaten. Dorothea Dix advocated that the mentally insane should not be chained to the walls for life, and instead should be treated more humanely. Horace Mann, the father of universal education, believed that all children would benefit from a mandatory education. Some people decided that society wasn't worth reforming. They decided to set up ideal, Utopian Societies. Most notable among these were: the Shakers(Lee), Oneida (Noyes), New Harmony, Brook Farm, and the Mormons (Joseph Smith & Brigham Young). Americans became more culturally creative and began to paint America landscapes in a movement known as the Hudson River School. And the transcendental school of literature featuring romanticism and writing such as: Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, & Emerson.

In 1831 a slave preacher named Nat Turner, led an unsuccessful rebellion against the planters in Virginia. As a result, the south passed more restrictive laws known as the Slave Codes. Although a minority movement, Abolition gained momentum behind leaders such as Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and William Lloyd Garrison.

Texas fought a war with Mexico and became an independent republic. The question over annexation would lead America into another war and set the stage for the most climactic struggle in American history.

1840-1860 Manifest Destiny – Secession

Americans were caught up in Manifest Destiny in the 1840's and desired to get as much land as possible. The Mexican American War was fought to add land to the United States. Once the land was acquired the major issue became whether slavery should be allowed into the new territory. The acrimonious, bloody decade of the 1850's foreshadowed the Civil War of the next decade.

The question over whether to annex Texas or not was over the divisive issue of slavery. Texas was finally annexed in 1845, the same year that Florida became a state.

By this time a strong movement called Manifest Destiny had begun to sweep the land. The belief that we should expand from coast to coast first appeared in Oregon. We eventually reached a peaceful settlement with Britain over possession of the land. California wouldn't be as placid of an acquisition. But it included: Texas, Oregon, Utah, & California as the sites and environments of national expansion for a variety of reasons—land, gold, mining, religious freedom, ranging from ranching, and individualism—especially on the part of Native Americans.

The Mexican American War from 1846-1848 was divisive as the Whig Party perceived the war to be a greedy land grab. We thoroughly dominated the Mexican army and, under the terms of the Treaty of

Guadeloupe Hidalgo, we reached a settlement for California, and the **Mexican Cession** (parts of the 7 southwestern states). We also agreed to pay an indemnity of 15 million. The last piece in the continental United States outline was bought for a southern railroad; this was called the **Gadsden Purchase**. Immediately after the war gold was discovered in **California** sparking the **Gold Rush of 1849**. This led to the quick population and request for statehood of California. This became a thorny question, as it would tip the balance of free and slave states. The other issues of slavery in the territories and of runaway slaves were equally contentious. Two senators, **Daniel Webster** and **Henry Clay (The Great Pacificator or The Great Compromiser)**, pulled together one last time to save the Union with compromise. Although not everyone was pleased as Senator **John Calhoun** argued vehemently for **state rights**. Eventually, congress, led by the Great Compromiser Henry Clay, passed the **Compromise of 1850**. The terms of which were: California was admitted as a free state, a strong **fugitive slave law** was passed, and slavery in the territories were opened up to a vote, or **popular sovereignty**, and the slave trade (but not slavery) was outlawed in Washington DC.

The **Republican Party** was founded to oppose slavery, especially its spread into the territories. **Abraham Lincoln** ran for senator from Illinois, as a republican, against **Stephen Douglas** and between them provided the famous **Lincoln-Douglas Debates**. Although he lost, he gained national recognition and he set himself up for a presidential bid in 1860.

The **Kansas-Nebraska act** was passed in 1854. This opened up slavery in both of those territories by **popular sovereignty**. It led to portions from the pro-slavery and antislavery camps to attack each other ferociously. This became known as **Bleeding Kansas**. It even spilled onto the floor of congress. Southern **Congressman Preston Brooks** savagely beat Northern **Senator Charles Sumner**. Florida approved of the action and named a town in honor of Brooks (Brooksville), and southerners sent Brooks new canes. This event illustrates how the United States was becoming polarized over the issue of slavery.

The **Underground Railroad** was operating quite effectively and inspired **Harriet Beacher Stowe** to write **Uncle Tom's Cabin**. This book allowed readers to empathize with slaves. The book was warmly received in the North, but despised and burned in the South.

In the case of **Dred Scott vs. Sanford (1857)**, the Supreme Court determined that slaveowners cannot be deprived of their property (slaves) just because they cross into a free state, and in fact Congress cannot outlaw slavery in any territory, and therefore the **Missouri Compromise** is unconstitutional.

In 1859, a white **radical abolitionist**, northerner named **John Brown** decided to take over a federal arsenal and give guns to the slaves. He was executed, but had caused a deep rift of mistrust in the south towards the north, as they feared more radical attempts, and the north treated Brown as a **martyr**.

By the time of the Presidential election of 1860 the political situation had worsened. **Abraham Lincoln**, who wasn't even on a single southern state's ballot, won the **election of 1860**. The southern states threatened to **secede** from the Union. One last effort at compromise occurred as the **Crittenden Compromise** promised to protect slavery in the South, but it did not pass the House or the Senate because it was seen as making too many concessions to the South. The impotent President Buchanan did nothing to prevent the secession of southern states, as Lincoln prepared to take office.

