



Building a Nation: Westward Expansion in the Early Nineteenth Century

An Online Professional Development Seminar

Elliott West

Alumni Distinguished Professor of History
University of Arkansas

AMERICA *in* CLASS®

from the National Humanities Center



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GOALS

- To deepen your understanding of the pre-Civil War westward migration
- To explore connections between westward expansion and the coming of the Civil War
- To provide fresh material to strengthen your teaching



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FROM THE FORUM

Challenges, Issues, Questions

What role did President Polk play in Manifest Destiny?

With limited time to teach about the West, is there a document, image or event that captures what we want students to understand?

Was Manifest Destiny inevitable, what factors within the American culture, spirit, character, or whatever you want to call it contributed to this drive for dominance of the North American continent?



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Elliott West



Alumni Distinguished Professor of History
University of Arkansas

Research focuses on the American West
and the American Indian

The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story (2009)

The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado (1994)

[Winner of five awards including the Francis Parkman Prize and PEN Center Award]

The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains (1995)
[Winner of the Western Heritage Award]

Growing Up With the Country: Childhood on the Far-Western Frontier (1989)



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ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING

In the middle years of the nineteenth century two great events transformed the United States: the Civil War and the acquisition of 1.2 million square miles of western territory between 1845 and 1848.

The Civil War and expansion to the Pacific together created what was essentially a new nation.

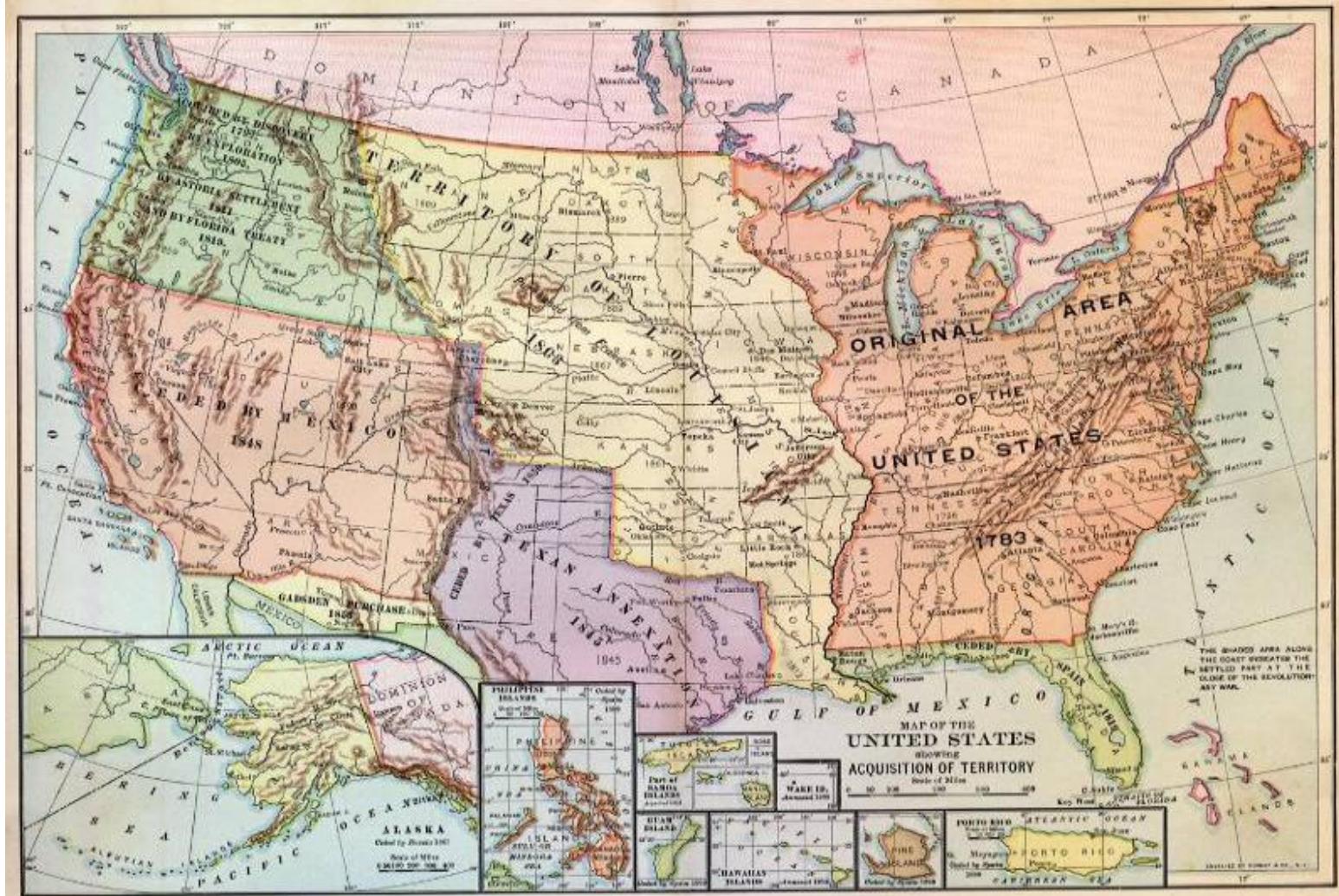
Acquiring the far West aggravated old tensions between North and South and raised new, especially difficult issues concerning the institution of slavery. Those tensions and questions contributed greatly to the gathering political crisis that erupted finally in the secession crisis of 1860-61. It is not too much to say that the expansion of the 1840s lit the fuse of the Civil War.

It could be argued that the Civil War began in the West--in Kansas in the 1850s, when Americans first killed Americans over the issue of slavery.



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John L. O'Sullivan on Manifest Destiny, 1839

All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen . . .



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American Progress, John Gast,
1872



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The Mexican War: Two Views

“America knows how to crush, as well as how to expand!”

- Walt Whitman, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 11, 1846

“Our nation seems resolved to rush on in her wicked career, though the road be ditched with human blood, and paved with human skulls.”

- Frederick Douglass, *The North Star*, January 21, 1848



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The Wilmot Proviso

Provided that, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the Executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.

[Passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, 1846 and 1847, never passed by the U.S. Senate]



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John C. Calhoun, Senator from South Carolina, before the U.S. Senate, March 4, 1850

The North is making the most strenuous efforts to appropriate the whole [of the territory acquired from Mexico] to herself, by excluding the South from every foot of it....The United States, since they declared their independence, have acquired 2,373,046 square miles of territory, from which the North will have excluded the South, if she should succeed in monopolizing the newly-acquired Territories, about three-fourths of the whole, leaving to the South but about one-fourth....



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William Seward: “Freedom in the New Territories,” Speech to the United States Senate Opposing the Compromise of 1850 (March 11, 1850)

But there is a higher law than the Constitution, which regulates our authority over the domain, and devotes it to the same noble purposes. The territory is a part, no inconsiderable part, of the common heritage of mankind, bestowed upon them by the Creator if the universe. We are his stewards, and must so discharge our trust as to secure in the highest attainable degree their happiness. . . .



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The Wilmot Proviso

“I have no squeamish sensitiveness upon the subject of slavery, no morbid sympathy for the slave....I plead the cause and rights of white freemen.... I would preserve for the free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of my own race and own color, can live without disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor.”

David Wilmot in speech before House of Representatives, 1848



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A BILL TO PREVENT NEGROES AND MULATTOES FROM COMING TO, OR RESIDING IN OREGON

(Enacted by the Oregon Territorial Legislature, 1849)

Sect. 1 Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oregon that it shall not be lawful for any negro or mulatto to enter into, or reside within the limits of this Territory. Providing that nothing in this act shallapply to any negro or mulatto now resident in this Territory, nor shall it apply to the offspring of any such as are residents....



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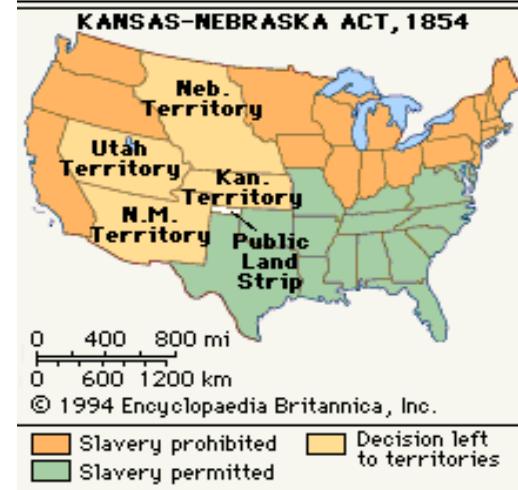
The Missouri Compromise



The Compromise of 1850



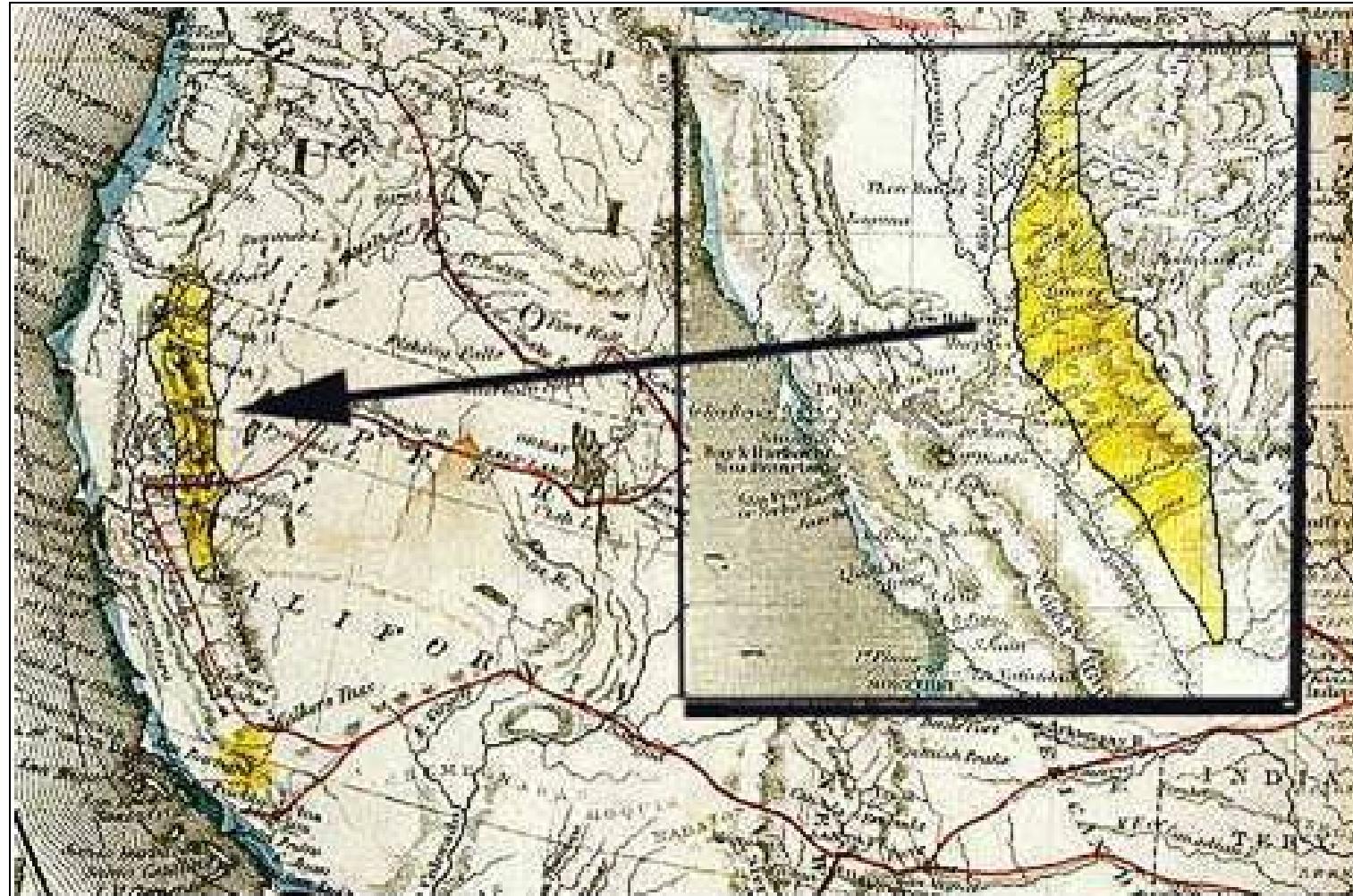
The Kansas-Nebraska Act





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Mother Lode region of California



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Headquarters Tenth Military Department
Monterey, California, August 17, 1848

Sir:

... I have no hesitation in saying that there is more gold in the country drained by the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers than will pay the cost of the present war with Mexico a hundred times over.

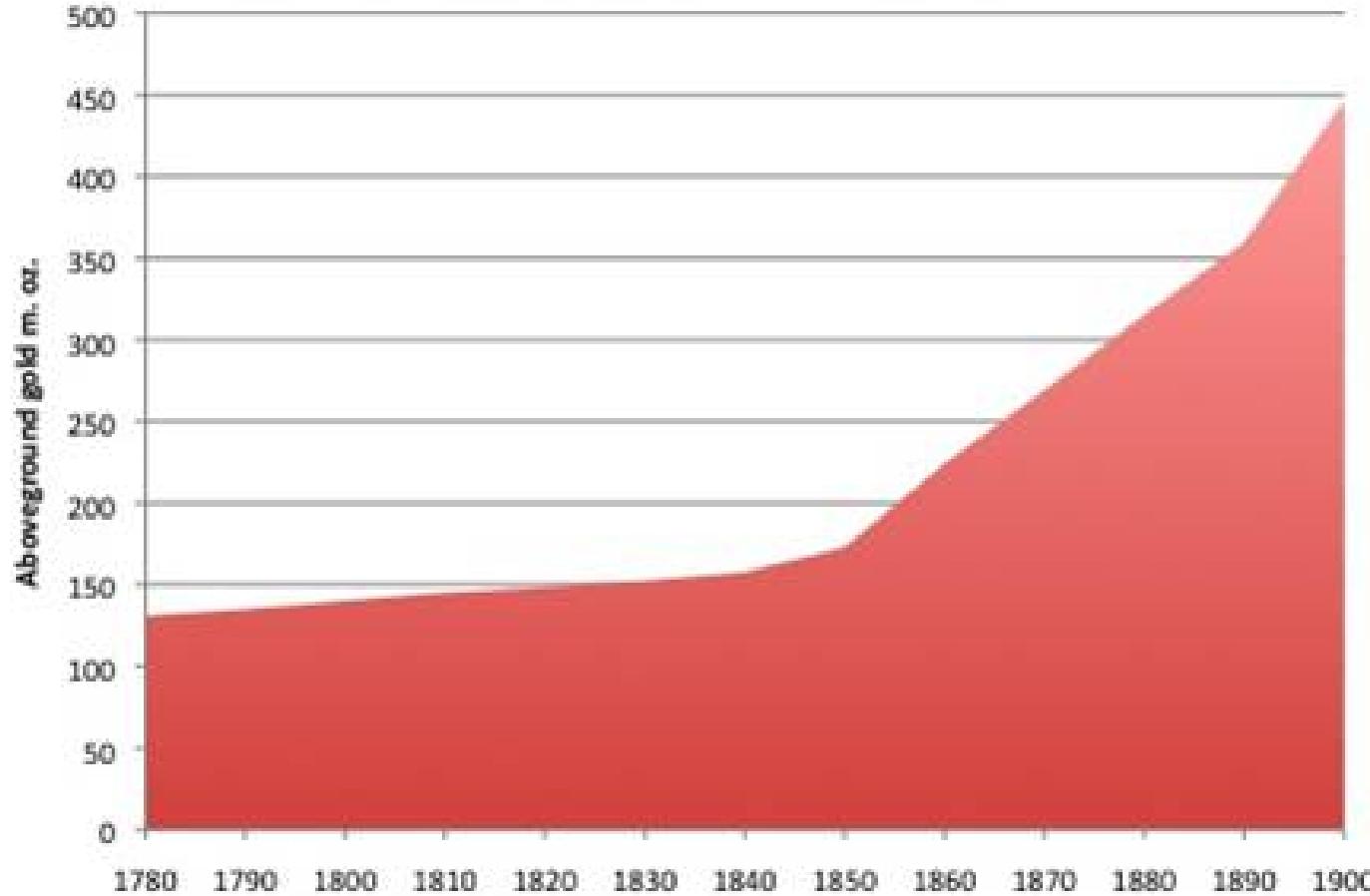
Col. Richard Barnes Mason
Military Governor of California



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All the Gold in the World, 1780-1900





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OVERLAND EMIGRATION TO OREGON, CALIFORNIA, UTAH, 1840–48

Year	Oregon	California	Cumulative		Utah	Cumulative Grand Total
			Yearly Coast	West Coast Total		
1840	13	—	13	13	—	13
1841	24	34	58	71	—	71
1842	125	—	125	196	—	196
1843	875	38	913	1,109	—	1,109
1844	1,475	53	1,528	2,637	—	2,637
1845	2,500	260	2,760	5,397	—	5,397
1846	1,200	1,500	2,700	8,097	—	8,097
1847	4,000	450	4,450	12,547	2,200	14,747
1848	1,300	400	1,700	14,247	2,400	18,847
Pre-gold rush						
subtotals	11,512	2,735	14,247	14,247	4,600	18,847



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OVERLAND EMIGRATION TO OREGON, CALIFORNIA, UTAH, 1849–60

Year	Oregon	California	Cumulative			
			Yearly Coast	West Total	West Coast Total	Utah
1849	450	25,000	25,450	39,697	1,500	45,797
1850	6,000	44,000	50,000	89,697	2,500	98,297
1851	3,600	1,100	4,700	94,397	1,500	104,497
1852	10,000	50,000	60,000	154,397	10,000	174,497
1853	7,500	20,000	27,500	181,897	8,000	209,997
1854	6,000	12,000	18,000	199,897	3,167	231,164
1855	500	1,500	2,000	201,897	4,684	237,848
1856	1,000	8,000	9,000	210,897	2,400	249,248
1857	1,500	4,000	5,500	216,397	1,300	256,048
1858	1,500	6,000	7,500	223,897	150	263,698
1859	2,000	17,000	19,000	242,897	1,431	284,129
1860	1,500	9,000	10,500	253,397	1,630	296,259
Grand totals,						
1840–60	53,062	200,335	253,397	253,397	42,862	296,259



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ESTIMATED OVERLAND EMIGRANTS KILLED BY INDIANS, AND INDIANS KILLED BY OVERLAND EMIGRANTS, 1840–60

Year	Emigrants	Indians	Year	Emigrants	Indians
1840	0	0	1851	60	70
1841	0	1	1852	45	70
1842	0	0	1853	7	9
1843	0	0	1854	35	40
1844	0	0	1855	6	10
1845	4	1	1856	20	15
1846	4	20	1857	17 (8) ^a	30
1847	24	2	1858	?	?
1848	2	2	1859	32 (13) ^a	10
1849	33	60	1860	25	10
1850	48	76	Totals	362	426

^aEmigrants presumably killed by “white Indians”; these twenty-one deaths are not included in the yearly totals.



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Map for routes of Pacific railroad

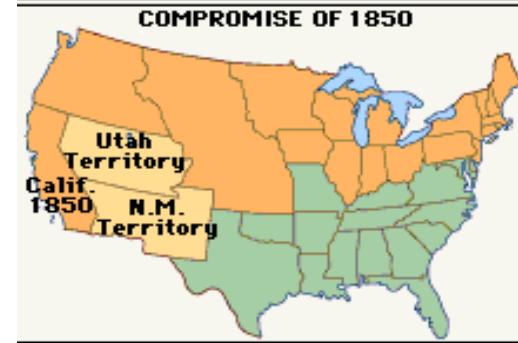


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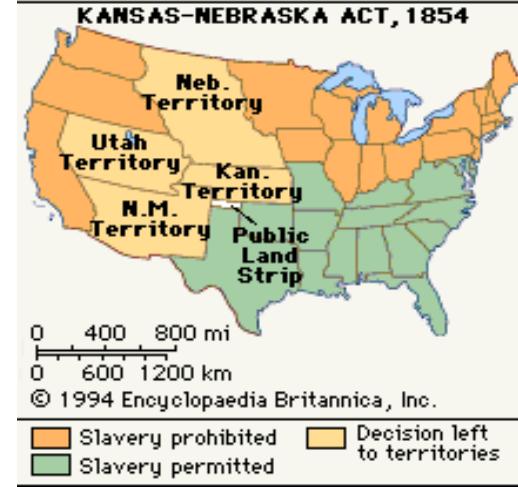
The Missouri Compromise



The Compromise of 1850



The Kansas-Nebraska Act



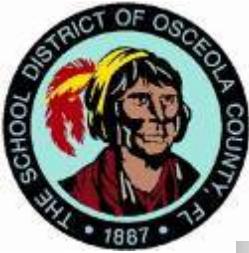


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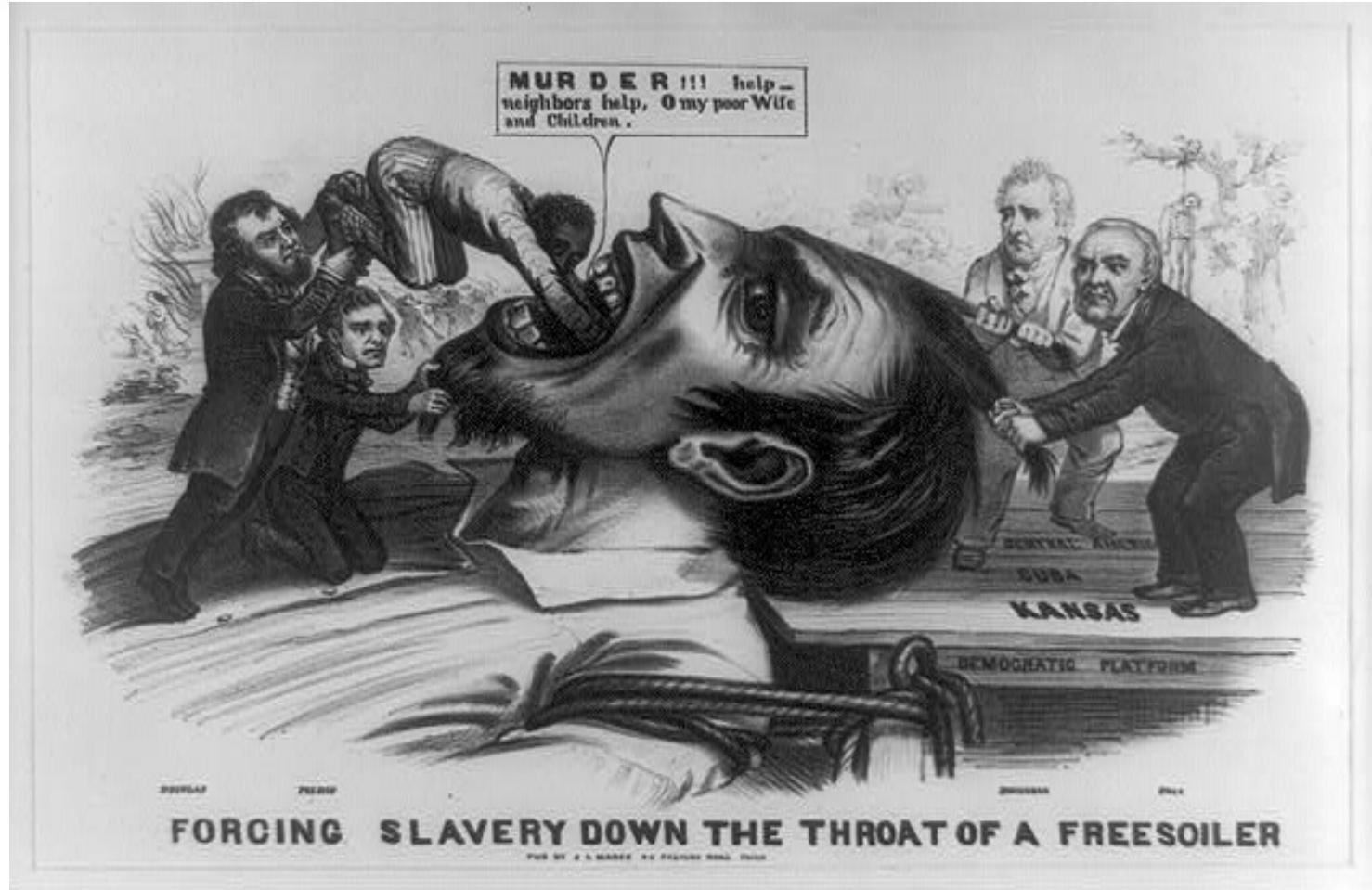
Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts before the U.S. Senate, May 19, 1856

Sir, the Nebraska Bill was in every respect a swindle. It was a swindle by the South of the North. It was, on the part of those who had already completely enjoyed their share of the Missouri Compromise, a swindle of those whose share was yet absolutely untouched. . . . Slavery has been forcibly introduced into Kansas, and placed under the formal safeguards of pretended law.



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“Murder!!! Help—neighbors help, O my poor Wife and Children.”



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Testimony of N. W. Spicer, Lawrence, Kansas Territory, December 6, 1856

“I am determined however to stay in Kansas & fulfill the object of my coming—which is to assist and & if possible make Kansas a free state.”



**Final slide.
Thank You**