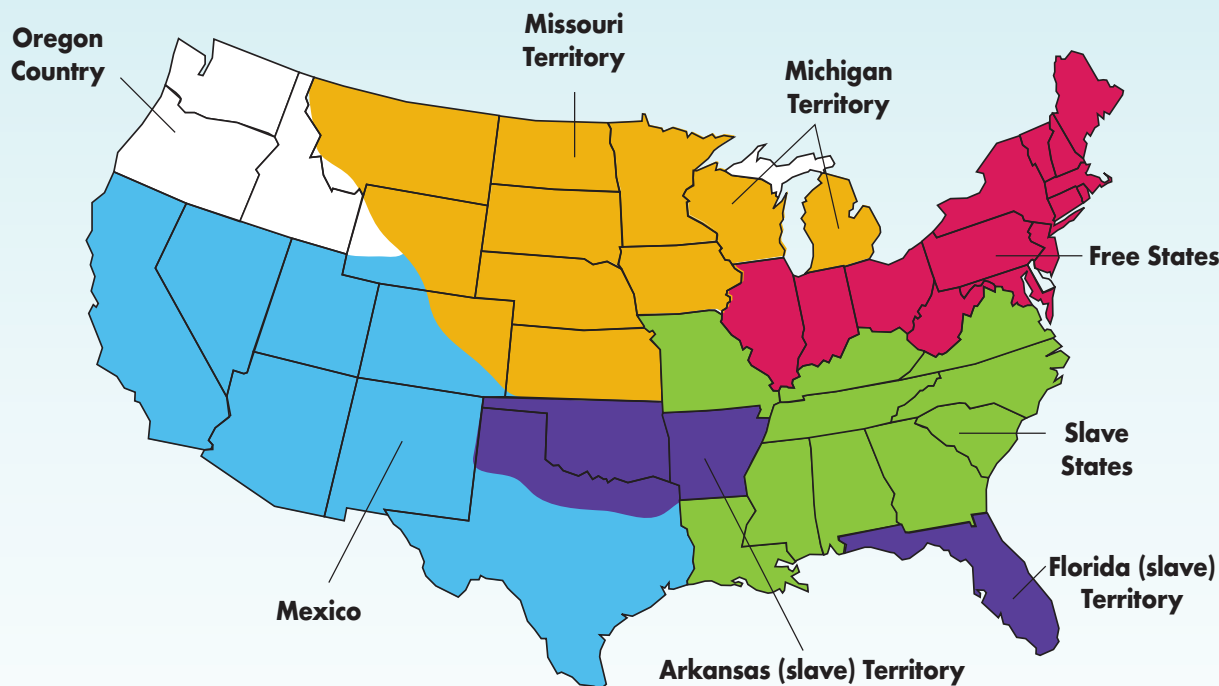


By the Kansas Historical Society

The Fight Over Slavery in the United States: A Series of Compromises

In 1820 tensions over slavery in the United States were growing. To maintain the balance of power in the U.S. Congress, a series of compromise were reached. The Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850 both had effects on Kansas becoming a state.



The United States Constitution did not address the issue of slavery in 1787. Slavery was considered a "domestic issue" and was left up to each state to decide.

In 1820 there were 22 states in the United States of America. Eleven southern states allowed slavery. Eleven northern states outlawed it. As new states wanted to join the Union, neither the North nor the South wanted to upset the balance of power. This meant the U.S. Congress had to make a series of compromises.

The Missouri Compromise

Under the Missouri Compromise of 1820 two new states entered the Union.

- Maine became a free state, prohibiting slavery.
- Missouri entered as a slave state.

This maintained the balance of power in the U.S. Congress.

The Missouri Compromise did something else that made it important.

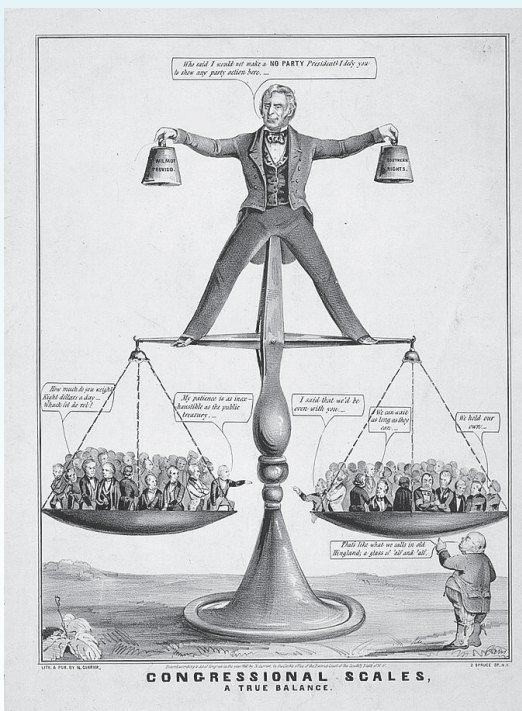
- For the first time the federal government, rather than the states, decided on the issue of slavery.
- The compromise banned slavery in the northern portion of the Louisiana Territory. This included the land that was to become Kansas.

The Compromise of 1850

The Compromise of 1850 was a series of bills that passed the U.S. Congress. The issue of slavery was threatening to tear the country apart. By putting the bills together it was hoped that the nation would stay together.



This painting shows the key people who worked out the Compromise of 1850. Can you find symbols the artist included to help tell the story?



A political cartoon of the time, this drawing shows President Zachary Taylor attempting to maintain a balance of power between the North and the South.

Everyone gained something under the Compromise of 1850. This made it very popular.

- California entered the Union as a free state.
- The Fugitive Slave Act passed. It required all Americans to return runaway slaves to their owners.
- The selling of slaves, but not slavery itself, was banned in Washington D.C.
- Texas gave up lands in Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Wyoming to the federal government. In return, they received money.
- Utah and New Mexico territories were given the right to popular sovereignty. This allowed the people of the territory to decide on the issue of slavery.