

Chapter 19: Causes of the Civil War 1

1. Missouri Compromise

Free States and Slave States

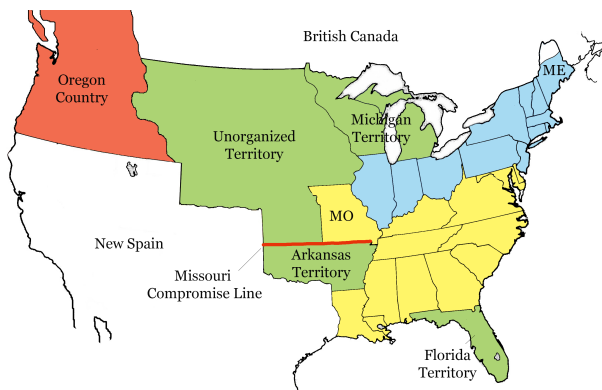
Congress made the laws in the federal government. It was divided into two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Since most people lived in the free states of the North, the North controlled the House. Frequently, the House proposed bills to stop the spread of slavery. In the Senate, each state got two votes. Since the founding of the United States, there were an equal number of free states and slave states. As long as this equality continued, the South could block in the Senate any anti-slavery bills that passed in the House.

Missouri

In 1819, the Missouri Territory wanted to enter the **Union** as a slave state. The North rejected the proposal as that would upset the balance of an equal number of free and slave states. Also, the North feared the spread of more slave states in the Louisiana Territory.

By 1820, Congress reached a **compromise**. Missouri would enter the Union as a slave state and Maine would enter the Union as a free state. This kept the balance of power in Congress. In addition, a line on the map was drawn across Louisiana Territory along the 36° 30' parallel. Congress banned slavery above the line but would permit slavery below the line.

For the time being, the compromise calmed tensions between the North and the South.



Missouri entered the Union as a slave state while Maine entered the Union as a free state. The red line divides the former Louisiana Territory into northern free territory and southern slave territory.

2. Compromise of 1850

California

California's population exploded after the gold discovery in 1848. By 1850, California asked Congress to enter the Union as a free state. The South threatened to leave the Union if this happened as it might upset the balance of power in the Senate in favor of the North. As civil war seemed possible, Senators Henry Clay and Stephen Douglas proposed a compromise:

- California became a free state
- New Mexico and Utah territories could decide the issue of slavery
- The slave trade ended in Washington D.C. although slavery could still exist
- A new fugitive slave act

Although both sides wanted more, the deal satisfied enough people that the compromise passed and avoided a **civil war**.

3. Fugitive Slave Act

Turmoil

Northern **abolitionists** had been helping enslaved people in the South escape to the North for decades. This cost slaveholders a lot of money in terms of lost labor and policing the South. Once an enslaved person reached the North, it was difficult to get them back. Slaveholders hoped the Fugitive Slave Act would change that.

Under the new **fugitive** slave law, slave catchers could go into any state and arrest a black person as an escaped slave. Any white person who refused to help slave catchers could be fined \$1,000 and/or go to prison for six months. Accused runaways were denied a jury trial and instead taken to a U.S. commissioner for judgment. A commissioner got paid more money to send arrested blacks to the South than to set them free.

People in the North rebelled against the Fugitive Slave Act. Several people, whites and blacks, broke into courtrooms and jails and freed accused runaways. Abolitionists raised money to buy back fugitives taken into the South. Many Northern states passed liberty laws that protected accused fugitives and made slave catching difficult. Yet, for thousands of blacks, the fear of being kidnapped and taken into the South was enough for them to flee to Canada for safety.

4. Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe grew up in Connecticut and attended a school for

women founded by her sister Catharine. At age 21, she found herself in Ohio where she improved her writing skills and wrote a number of short stories and articles. Contact with fugitive slaves and a visit to a Kentucky plantation made her an abolitionist.



When Harriet Beecher Stowe met with Lincoln in 1862, Lincoln supposedly joked, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!" Source: *Harriet Beecher Stowe*. c. 1880. Photo. Library of Congress.

After the Fugitive Slave Act passed in 1850, she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that appeared in parts in an antislavery newspaper the *National Era* and in 1852 as a complete book. The story painted vivid descriptions of the brutality of slavery that brought many Northerners into the abolitionist movement. While the novel received great reviews in the North, in the South, the book was banned in many states.

Stowe referred to slavery as immoral and anti-Christian. In 1862, a year after the Civil War had begun, Stowe visited President Lincoln to urge him to move faster in abolishing slavery.