Section I: America’s Blue Light Special: Texas, the Mexican Cession, and Oregon 1845-1848

1. The Republic of Texas and Mexico: Vide, Vinci, Vici (ask a Latin person)

Sometimes things aren’t always as one might desire, or even as cut and dried as they might seem. Such was the situation with Texas in the years following her successful revolution in 1836. After his defeat at San Jacinto, Mexican dictator, generalissimo, and resident egomaniac[1] Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna traded Texas to Sam Houston in exchange for his life; however, somewhere along the road back to México City the Good General changed his mind and reneged on the deal.[2] This new turn of events, however, did not immediately affect Texans living in the Republic of Texas (1836-1845), as they were just trying to get by until some numbskull in Washington decided that it was pretty stupid to have the Republic floppin’ around down there all by itself.[3] As the United States stepped up efforts to annex the infant republic, so did the cacophony of protests from Mexico City, which by 1845 declared the Texas Revolution an illegal act of piracy and consequently null and void. However, to avoid overly-antagonizing the United States, Santa Anna only claimed a portion of Texas that formed Mexico’s northern border. Now, hopefully by now I have rendered you cynical enough to predict the outcome of this mess. Take a look at the principals involved and you tell me how this is going to turn out:

**goobero el supremo** Santa Anna trying to reclaim his honor and reputation by hurling insults at the United States versus a virtual tsunami of slavery-infested, Manifest Destiny-driven annexation fever. In addition, and just to spice up this gumbo of diplomatic tomfoolery, in 1845 US President **John Tyler**, mindful of the slim chances a traditional treaty of annexation (which would require a solid two-thirds majority for passage) would fare in the Senate issued a request for a **joint resolution** (which required a simple majority of both houses) and consequently secured Texas as the twenty-eighth state. The result of this outstanding example of prescient statesmanship was predictable: a border dispute erupted between the United States and its southern neighbor. As the rhetoric flew between Washington and Mexico City, Santa Anna officially severed diplomatic relations with the United States, never a good sign of warm and fuzzy feelings for the future and a sure way to kiss that Christmas in Cabo adios.

Now, to be honest, under normal circumstances this entire episode would have been a non-issue due to the actual territory involved. The cause of all the fuss was a wonderful place to live if your primary pursuit in life revolved raising rattlesnakes and/or scorpions. It was NOT, however, well-suited for such pursuits such as, say uh, cotton farming or its prerequisite, human survival. However, these aren’t normal times of which we speak, and something far stronger than practical reasoning kept dripping gasoline on this fire: **Manifest Destiny.** Hmmm . . . I suppose if you ruminate on the fate of the world from a PETA-flavored perspective perhaps scorpions and snakes DO need the advantages of living under the umbrella of superior white-Anglo society as mandated by the Lord and John O'Sullivan. Halleluiah! Can I get an amen from the cheap seats?

Back in DC, President James K. Polk decided to take action (FINALLY!) First, he ordered American troops under General Zachary Taylor to proceed to the Mexican border and defend the portion of the disputed territory that was claimed by the United States (the area between the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers). Secondly, in a somewhat transparent attempt to avoid war Polk sent an independent emissary, John Slidell of Louisiana, to Mexico City with an offer to compeñate (pun intended) Mexico for the disputed territory, as well as portions of the New Mexico and California territories.[4] This only angered Santa Anna (not the most emotionally stable goober in the world to begin with); not only did he refuse to sell, he altered his territorial claim to now include ALL of Texas. In response to Polk’s obvious refusal to give Texas back to Mexico, Santa Anna sent troops to the disputed area to defend the area claimed by Mexico, and, well, it doesn’t take a genius to figure out what happens when Army A and Army B arrive in a disputed territory in such close proximity.

How the fighting started has always been subject to conjecture, but this one is my favorite, because it is so . . . well, TEXAN! The story, which is just stupid enough to be true, goes that one dark night some idiot Mexican sentry walking his post (we’ll call him Pedro) decided to violate “lights-out” orders by lighting up a cigarette. Across “no-man’s land” equally-stupid Joe Bob American
decided to break the boredom by taking a pot shot at the glowing red dot in the distance . . . which turned out to be the Mexican sentry’s cigarette. Well, Joe Bob was a really good shot and killed the Mexican really dead (jeez, Colonel, who’d a figured that he’d have it in his MOUTH!), and with the coming dawn came a Mexican attack on the American position. Polk, upon hearing of this lunacy, knew an opportunity to start a war when he saw one, but also knew that he faced a Congress divided along sectional lines whose northern faction was decidedly anti-war. As a result, in his war message to Congress he stated that Mexico had initiated hostilities by first killing an American soldier and then attacking unprovoked. The only way in which America’s honor could be resurrected was by an immediate declaration of war, the successful completion of which would gain America honor, respect, and a virtual cotton-farming paradise. War Polk wanted, and war he got.

The Boundary Dispute Between Mexico and the United States
(Site of “Joe Bob, Pedro, and the Cigarette-o-Death”)

2. The Mexican War (1845-1848)
The Mexican War was the first in which the United States was neither fighting for nor defending its freedom. Because it was first and foremost a territorial conflict it was fueled by the expansionist debate over slavery, and hence divisive and unpopular. Due to this unpopularity and political motive to further Manifest Destiny at Mexico’s expense, it actually had more in common with the 20th century Vietnam War than any previous 18th or 19th century conflict. Domestic opposition to the war quickly arose, particularly among growing abolitionist factions and transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau, and this, along with politically-ambitious and marginally talented Whig military leaders, hampered Polk’s conduct of the war. It is due to these political and social difficulties that this war is often referred to as America’s first war of imperialism.
The war was, as might be expected, immensely popular throughout the expansionist strongholds of the South and Mississippi Valley; likewise in New York, where Herman Melville noted that people were “in a state of expansion delirium.” However, in the traditional hotbed of opposition, New England, The American Anti-Slavery Society stated that the war was the work of “Land and Slave Jobbers,” John Quincy Adams remarked that the war was “most unrighteous,” the Massachusetts legislature labeled the war a “war of conquest,” and, once again, a secession a movement gained strength. (Jeez, people, after 1798 and that Hartford business, this is getting old: either stay or leave, but stop cryin’ wolf. Nobody cares anymore)

The traditional view of the Mexican War is one of weak, inferior Mexico beaten soundly by vastly superior American forces which had every advantage; however, this assumption is seriously flawed. Mexico possessed several advantages which show that not only did they mean business, but in a prolonged war quite dangerous. Besides the veteran status of the Mexican Army and superiority of its cavalry, Mexico could count on aid from Britain and France, who sought to check American expansion. Mexican soldiers would be fighting a defensive war to defend their country and therefore be less susceptible to logistic dilemmas. Finally, the Mexicans fully planned to solicit the aid of Native Americans and slaves in Texas to help drive the Americans from their soil, and the threat of a servile insurrection spilling into Louisiana and beyond was horrific to southern American planters.

However, as far as the actual fighting was concern, well, Mexico served as her own worst enemy by virtue of internal dissention. Mexican commanders quarreled with the government in Mexico City, and consequently could not counter an American army advancing on multiple fronts. Although outnumbered, American military forces masterfully executed their strategy a compliment to their officer corps. The Americans were vastly better led and deployed at the junior levels by virtue of superior leadership from the West Point class of 1846. As such, the outcome was never really in doubt. In the American three-pronged strategy: (1) General Zachary Taylor occupied all of northern Mexico; (2) Colonel Stephen Kearny teamed with Captains John C Fremont and Archibald (Gillespie (can you believe that??)) to seize California and aid American settlers there establish their own Texas-style republic (The Bear Flag Republic); and (3) General Winfield Scott traced Cortez’ footsteps by landing in Vera Cruz, marching west, and attacking Mexico City. Scott’s forces faced the most ferocious fighting of the war, particularly at the Battle of Chapultapec, which would always be remembered by the United States Marines as “the halls of Montezuma.” As the fighting at Chapultapec reached its climax, Santa Ana fled the battlefield, and in the process experiencing the distinct horror one feels when one’s left leg is blown away from the rest of the body. Suddenly a paraplegic and dying, Santa Anna realized that he was beaten once and for all, a prospect which surely made the Mexican commander “hopping mad” . . . GET IT?? Oh hush, you’ve heard worse from me!

The Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo 1848

The treaty ending this nonsense was signed by Mexican authorities (Santa Anna had, predictably, cut and run away, eventually living leg-less in exile in Cuba) and American peace commissioner Nicholas Trist. The terms were:

1. Mexico agreed to accept the Rio Grande as the international border between the United States and Mexico.
2. Mexico agreed to cede the Upper California and New Mexico territories to the United States, an area known as the Mexican Cession.
3. The United States agreed to pay Mexico $15 million (also known as “I’m sorry money”) and assume all Texan claims against Mexico.
The United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

It doesn’t end here. American expansionists were none too thrilled about the treaty, and even the anti-war faction saw an advantage to occupying ALL of Mexico.[10] Polk, who knew that the occupation of Mexico would thrill his slaveholding constituents back home, nevertheless supported the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo by virtue of his realization that the Mexican army would fight to the death to defend their homeland, as opposed to fighting for a snake-infested strip of land south of Houston. Polk was no dummy; he knew that a war of attrition meant a long, drawn out affair that would drain American manpower, supplies, and most importantly, patience, eventualities to which Congress would never consent.[11] With this in mind, Polk quickly signed and submitted the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to the Senate, where it quickly passed before opposition could gather momentum. America’s first war of conquest came to an end; its success guaranteed that it would NOT be the last.

By the way . . . sometimes you just live right, ya know? In 1848, not long after the cessation of hostilities and onset of peace, some Yosemite Sam-looking doofus found a miniscule yellow rock in the stream fronting Sutter’s Mill near Sacramento, California, and the future of the now American West changed forever. Why was this guy a moron? Because he didn’t have enough sense to keep his pie-hole shut when he discovered GOLD at Sutter’s Mill. Jeez, did he think everyone would just stay away? As far as Polk was concerned, the discovery of gold in California just weeks after American won the Mexican War was further proof that Manifest Destiny was indeed a mandate from God.

3. They’re BAAAAACK!!!!!!! Oregon, Polk, and the British . . . again.

Yep, here they come again. Remember in 1803 when Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to explore the extent of the Louisiana Purchase? And remember that the Purchase did NOT extend all the way to the Pacific Ocean, but the pair ventured out there anyway because, well, because they were American? Well, the intrepid explorers claimed all of the Oregon Territory for the United States (Hey! There were no signs or anything that indicated otherwise), a claim further buttressed when the United States bargained for Spain’s Oregon
Relations between the United States and Britain began well in the early 1840s as Secretary of State Daniel Webster and British minister Lord Ashburn signed the Webster-Ashburn Treaty, which settled the disputed border between British Canada and Maine. In addition, the disputed border running thorough the Great Lakes was resolved peacefully, leading to broad expectations for the peaceful solutions of further diplomatic problems. However, the Webster-Ashburn Treaty did NOT address the most troublesome of British-American border disputes: the one in the Pacific Northwest.

By 1848 thousands of Americans had migrated to the Oregon Territory by way of several paths, which were “roads” in name only. The most popular of the by-ways was the Oregon Trail, which brought Americans from points east to the abundant natural resources, rich farmlands, trapping grounds, and Starbucks of the Great American Northwest. Now, you know how Americans are when there’s a buck to be made, and after discovering the economic potential of this wonderful new country it didn’t matter for squat who actually owned it. All that really mattered was that WE owned it, or at least WE wanted to own it; WE just didn’t know how WE were going to pull it off just yet.

The problem centered on the extent of the territory. Americans wanted a northern boundary to the Oregon territory set at 54°40´, or roughly the southern border of Russian Alaska. Polk, who had been elected in 1848 to deliver upon his promise of wholesale American expansion and an adherence to Manifest Destiny as the national religion had asserted in his inaugural address America’s “unquestionable claim to all of Oregon,” despite the obvious British presence in Canada. Polk’s belligerency stoked fires under western expansionists, who clamored for war to rid Oregon (and Canada by association) of British influence. The British, by virtue of two defeats at the hands of the Americans, could hardly afford to back away from such a fight for fear of a loss of world-wide prestige, not to mention the economic windfall of their western Canadian possession. As such they countered Polk’s claim with a boundary demand set at 42°, or the northern border of California. Obviously, both cannot have their way, and the weather did not appear favorable for compromise.

Polk, with expansionist congressional backing,[12] issued an ultimatum to the British giving them one year to pack up and clear out of the area claimed by the US; expansionist adrenaline ran to the point that Polk’s ultimatum was titled “54°40´ or Fight!” At the end of the one-year period, Britain had the choice of negotiation or war; either way the British had to get out. The American public clamored for the Oregon Territory; journalist John O’Sullivan struck a phrase that was to define American expansion for decades to come when he wrote that the Oregon claim “is by the right of our MANIFEST DESTINY to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.” The fires were thus stoked.

Britain, who had recently elected a new government and was experiencing problems both at home as well as throughout the empire, decided the best course was that of negotiation. As a result, both countries agreed to a compromise placing the boundary at 49° for the border between American Oregon and British Canada. The British, who originally signed the agreement under protest, dropped their opposition when they were able to retain the deep water seaport of Vancouver Island.
Polk? Of course he was unhappy; heck, the man wanted a war, or two, or three. However, timing was not kind to the President, for at the same time the controversy over Oregon was entering its final stages that American goober in Texas shot that Mexican goober who just had to have a stinkin’ cigarette (we keep telling you guys that those things will kill ya!) Polk knew that, Congressionally-speaking, fighting two wars simultaneously was absolutely out of the question, so he hedged his bets by settling with Britain so he could fight with Mexico.
Section II: Bubble, Bubble, Toil and Trouble: An Evil Mix of Land, Greed, and, oh yeah, Slavery

1. The Mexican Cession: Now that you’ve got it, what do you do with it?

No one in Congress was naïve enough to ignore the implications of the newly-gained Mexican Cession (see map page 4); indeed everyone realized that the slavery issue would dominate the new territory’s disposition. And just as obvious no one had any idea s to how to solve the controversy looming on the horizon. President Polk, for his part, extended the Missouri Compromise line (36°30’) to the Pacific, but this was a temporary measure. Everyone knew that a major fight was inevitable, and to no one’s surprise the opening round came from a freshman senator from Pennsylvania named David Wilmot . . . just what one might expect from a freshman.

In late 1846 Wilmot issued his Wilmot Proviso, which stated flatly that slavery would be prohibited in the new territories created by the Mexican Cession. While Wilmot did allow that Texas would be a slave state, he referred back to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 as precedence for disallowing slavery in any new territory created by Congress. When voted upon in Congress, the outcome was predictable: The House of Representatives, with its population-based northern majority, passed it, while the southern-controlled Senate failed to produce a majority and subsequently rejected it. This was a momentous occasion in the slavery debate, for the Wilmot Proviso finally politicized the issue on a national, congressional scale. Never again would the tandem of new territory and slavery be relegated to the legislative back burner, it was here to stay.[13]

Ya know, you have to love predictable people. They leave no room for guessing, and in a perverse sort of way are the most honest due to their predictable nature. One of these lovable curmudgeons (I’ve been looking for an opportunity to use that word) was our pal, ol’ “Joe Bob States’ Rights” himself, South Carolina’s John C. Calhoun. Yep, ol’ Nullification Boy Calhoun’s reaction to Wilmot’s Proviso was predictable. In 1847 he issued the Calhoun Resolutions, in which Calhoun cited the Constitution to point out that, until they achieved statehood, the unorganized territories were the property of the states, therefore because Congress had no authority over private property (we’re talkin’ slaves here) in the states, they likewise had no authority in the territories. Feel the chill of strict
interpretation blowing through all of this? Of course, this solved the entire issue, right? Uh huh, sure thing; ride THAT horse and see how far across the bayou it takes you. All Calhoun’s resolution accomplished was to further polarize the slavery factions in Congress; it is well that you recall that at this point few people really give a rat’s patoot about the moral aspect of slavery. POWER! POWER IN CONGRESS! That and free Ipods with every purchase.

My friends (and even those of you who blanch at the idea of a teacher as anything other than an adversary) all of these folks are American politicians at their best. They all love to bicker and whine, and all consider themselves experts at everything while actually knowing little about anything at all. However, there is always someone who can see through this self-righteous haze and employ the greatest of American political tools: the compromise. Even as Wilmot and Calhoun traded shots, calmer (albeit not necessarily smarter) minds were at work. Senators Lewis Cass (D-Michigan) and Stephen Douglas (D-Illinois) came up with a solution they were sure would (a) offer a solution readily acceptable to all, (b) slow the rampant polarization over the slavery issue, (c) ultimately save the Union, all the while (d) taking the monkey of responsibility off of Congress’ back. This wonderful “new” idea was popular sovereignty. This solution would simply relegate the slavery issue from the federal government to the states by virtue of that purest of American political ideals: popular democracy through the polls. Consequently the new states formed from the Mexican Cession would vote to decide whether to allow or disallow slavery within their borders. What about Oregon, you say? Easy; we’ll follow Polk’s lead and permanently extend the Missouri Compromise line. Heck, Oregon lies so far north of the line that no one will argue its disposition anyway. No prob-lema, right? Uh huh . . .

2. The Compromise of 1850

Turns out that the ultimate solution to the problem of slavery in the new territories came from the “Great Compromiser” himself, Henry Clay. Within Clay’s initial proposal for what will later be known as the Compromise of 1850 lie the greatest Congressional debate in American history. By virtue of its magnitude, its outcome would undoubtedly shape the future of the country. As you will see, it unfortunately did just that.

Clay’s proposal was complicated in its simplicity. First of all, California would be admitted as a free state. Secondly, the New Mexico and Utah Territories would be allowed to organize; no mention of slavery was necessary here due to the popular belief that the “peculiar institution” had reached its geographical (hence it’s economical) limits and wouldn’t spread into the arid, barren desert lands of New Mexico and Utah. Third, the slave trade (NOT slavery itself) would be abolished in Washington DC. [14] To appease suspicious Southerners, a tougher Fugitive Slave Act would be enacted at the federal level. In other words, something for everyone; a Burger King “Have it Your Way” compromise, right?

C’mon, now, you KNEW this was far too simple, didn’t you? There are other concerns at work here, and one included a new political party known as the Free Soil Party. These bozos were a strange conglomeration of various political entities, including anti-slavery former Whigs, conservative (ie Northern) Democrats, and moderate remnants of the abolitionist Liberty Party. [15] The Free Soilers wanted nothing more than the enactment of the Wilmot Proviso based on their platform of “Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Speech, and Free (uh, white) Men.” In short, they wanted slavery restricted to the South so they would neither have to live with nor compete against blacks for labor. In short, they wanted free soil in the new territories, albeit free for whites only; unwelcome blacks would remain enslaved in the South and thus a non-issue. This declaration: “Free Soil for Free Whites Only!” became the guiding philosophy as well as a rallying cry for the new party. Due to the prevalence of the slavery issue in national politics, they found no shortage of willing co-conspirators; in the 1848 presidential election they ran the old Jacksonian Martin Van Buren.

In addition to the Free Soilers, Clay’s Compromise of 1850 was attacked by:

a) John C Calhoun (D-SC). You knew the poster boy of states rights couldn’t keep quiet. Calhoun outright refused to entertain any part of Clay’s compromise, and demanded that the North yield on all points. It was obvious that there was only one solution, according to Calhoun, who issued his response to Clay’s compromise with (you guessed it) The Calhoun Compromise. Calhoun proposed that the nation be divided into two autonomous regions, each with their own government and president. These presidents would govern concurrently and possess veto power over each other (yeah,
that’s gonna work well). See, in Calhoun’s mind this was the only way to preserve the southern way of life and protect it form all those damned abolitionist Yankees lurking in the shadows, all of whom were dead set on the destruction of Southern culture. Calhoun was in panic mode, and as is common in such a condition fell captive to his own worse-case scenario paranoia.

b) William Seward (W-NY). Seward was the first of the radical openly-abolitionist politicians and consequently would not budge on any legislation short of absolute, complete, and immediate emancipation. He promised that, should Clay’s compromise pass through Congress, the North would openly and vehemently oppose the compromise’s Fugitive Slave Law, primarily by refusing to follow it.

OK, let’s evaluate this: two of the most influential senators in Congress propose that the country either separate into two banana republics or embark upon a Congressionally-encouraged mass breaking of a federal law. Yep, Clay’s idea has a wonderful future. [16]
In the log run Clay, who all of a sudden appears quiet moderate and hence somewhat sane, did win out. In 1850 Congress finally passed the **Compromise of 1850** by the narrowest of margins. Its final terms were:

1. California would enter the Union as a free state.
2. New Mexico and Utah would continue to organize themselves as territories; their futures with regards to slavery would be decided by virtue of popular sovereignty.
3. The slave trade (again, NOT slavery itself) would be abolished in DC
4. A stringent new Fugitive Slave Law would be enacted.

As you might expect, Congress was quite full of itself for “solving” the age old problem of the spread of slavery into the new territories. But you know, back in 1820 Thomas Jefferson recoiled in horror at the Missouri Compromise, calling it a “**firebell in the night**.” Whether he was speaking out of his own guilt or his recognizance of the unstoppable momentum of slavery, he knew that any solution, if any indeed were possible, would not be that easy. [17] Guess what, troopers? He was right; more firebells to come. Stay tuned.
The Compromise of 1850

Section III: The US and the World: An Exercise in Creative Geography

Who said that Manifest Destiny had to be just East and West?
Well, obviously the decade of the 1850s is shaping up to be one of the most memorable (not to mention maddening) in American history. In fact, there is so much fun going on that it would be downright selfish and un-neighborly to contain it to the continental US. With that somewhat weak introduction in mind, let us venture, young padoins, beyond our shores and see what’s out there.

1. Cuba and Central America
Ah, the first in a long line of attempts to get the little island nation to come to the party as our date. By 1854, southerners were becoming convinced that this slavery business, as being directed by those meddling Yankee politicians from that rat’s nest of iniquity known as DC, would lead to no good end for the South. In response to the obvious paranoia which fed fear into this assumption, southern “adventurers” decided to venture forth in an attempt to conquer new lands to the south, all, of course, with the ultimate aim of introducing the southern plantation culture to each of them.[18] In other words, the heck with the West; we’ll go south. Can’t argue with that logic; beaches are much nicer and the sailing more invigorating in the Caribbean than in Arizona.

These courageous, misguided souls . . . ok, so they were more like total morons, carried the collective name of filibusters. The gist of these ventures went something like this: Interested knuckleheads would form paramilitary groups and embark upon armed filibuster expeditions to the Caribbean and Latin America with the intent of initiating internal revelations and coups.[19] Now, any military operation run by a boat load of goobers that foreshadowed Larry the Cable Guy tells you right off the bat that most of these were unsuccessful; however there was one guy whose name has become synonymous with the filibuster movement, and is even regarded as
the father of the modern mercenary. He will set the standard for all those who follow in his footsteps in the art of Third-World Government Overthrowing. His name is (drum roll): **William Walker, the Grey Eyed Man of Destiny** (accusations that he was the lost son of Andrew Jackson are purely conjecture).


Between the years 1853 and 1860 Walker led a succession of filibuster expeditions into Central America, all of which enjoyed moderate success. Walker, however, noticed that although his missions were successful they ultimately failed due to the tendency of his American southern financial and military backers to back out once they received no return on their investment. Walker was no dummy; he realized that the future of filibusterism hinged not upon his ability to capture a country and turn it over to others but to capture and rule his own country. As such, in 1858 Walker engineered the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government and installed himself as *el presidente*, big cheese *numerouno*you know, the head guy. Walker instituted slavery in his new kingdom, sold off parcels of choice Nicaraguan land to southern investors, and actually approached the United States seeking diplomatic recognition with the ultimate goal of Nicaraguan statehood, you, statehood by the Texas plan.

Marker in Nashville, Tennessee, commemorating the life of William Walker, filibuster extraordinaire
Well, Walker’s Nicaraguan venture proved so successful that he could not resist the temptation to try his system somewhere else. In 1859 Walker began infiltrating the government of neighboring Honduras, and, well, greed can be a fickle partner. Britain, who was courting Honduras for permission to dig a future trans-isthmusian canal, did not regard Walker in friendly terms, and consequently arrested him and handed him over to Honduran authorities. Upon discovering the extent of Walker’s intrigues the Hondurans lined him up against a wall, and used him to test ballistics. In other words, William Walker, the Grey Eyed Man of Destiny met a bloody expiration, thus ultimately becoming the Blood-Stained Idiot of Doom. To quote that great American statesman Bugs Bunny, “What an ultra maroon!”

Now, don’t get me wrong, not all of these ventures were as foolhardy as Walker’s. In 1854, the governor of Mississippi, secretly backed by the Franklin Pierce administration, organized a filibuster to seize Cuba. As do most secrets in DC (now THERE’S an oxymoron: secrets in DC) news of this venture leaked out and President Pierce had to abandon the idea . . . or did he? To try and salvage the dream of a Cuban slave republic, not to mention retain the political support of his southern backers, Pierce sent American ambassadors to Ostend, Belgium, to negotiate the purchase of Cuba from Spain. Spain, as you might imagine, refused, so the insulted American ministers drew up a little jewel known as the Ostend Manifesto. This shining example of American diplomacy stated that, should the US ever feel threatened by the Spanish presence in Cuba the United States reserved the right to acquire the island by any means, including force. This right was based, of course, on the dictates of the Monroe Doctrine. Because the Manifesto was a foreign policy document, it died a quick, somewhat quiet death in the Senate; however, it did reveal to northerners how deadly serious southerners were about maintaining and spreading their peculiar institution. In short, the stakes are being raised.

The Pacific
Hey, just because we ain’t talked about it don’t mean it ain’t out there. Yes, Americans did realize that there was entire world out there just ripe for the picking. As a result, in 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry and an American naval expedition sailed into Tokyo Bay, the first attempt by a western power to Japan to trade. Perry’s motives were overtly masked by saki-fueled smiles, giggles; however his true intentions became quite apparent when he pulled up in twenty American warships, dropped anchor, and “suggested” that the Japanese discuss trade treaties. Hey, when you depend upon paper warships appropriately referred to as “junks” for you defense, you listen, and you listen well. The result of these “bilateral” discussions was the 1854 Treaty of Kanagawa, which created an American consulate in Japan and opened several Japanese ports for repair and maintenance stops by American merchant vessels. Later, in 1858, the two countries signed the Harris Convention, which issued to Japan trade concessions as well as opening five Japanese ports to American trade. It probably would have helped matters if someone somewhere along the line would have asked the Japanese whether they minded this intrusion into their secluded society; we now know that they do hold grudges. Big grudges.

Well, you can’t go on an Asian cruise without dropping the hook (“anchor” to you terrestrial types) in China. In 1844 the US Navy concluded the Treaty of Wangshia, which opened Shanghai to American trade. In 1858, the United States signed the Treaty of Tientsen, which granted Americans the right to travel and trade within China. Trust me, guys, this is important. You’ll be seeing these later.

Section IV: Presidential Politics 1844-1852: Growing Problems and Shrinking Men

Elections 1844-1852: Better grab some Tylenol

1. 1844: James K. Polk. In 1844 a dark horse candidate named James K. Polk (Democrat) appeared out of nowhere to defeat Henry Clay (Whig) and win the presidency. Remember back in 1840, the Log Cabin and Hard Cider campaign, when ol’ William Henry Harrison gave that stupid inaugural address in a pouring rain (Tippecanoe and Umbrellas, too!) that killed him one month later? Well, vice president John Tyler assumed the presidency, and because no one really liked Tyler (he was mistrusted and despised by both parties, and the only support he had came from Andrew Jackson, who delighted in pulling the strings of his puppets from the Hermitage), Tyler knew he could not win in 1844. Therefore he and the rest of the Jacksonians began to push for Tennessee’s Polk to run, primarily because they knew would continue the Jacksonian impulse, especially with regard to the annexation of Texas and other expansionist polices.

During the campaign Polk was a relative unknown. Because presidential politics were greatly affected by the SOS issue (Spread Of Slavery), and this issue was manifest in the debate of whether or not to annex the Republic of Texas, the major parties had difficulty finding candidates acceptable to both sections of the country. For example, both Democrats Martin Van Buren (who opposed Texas annexation) and John C Calhoun (who favored it) wrangled for their party’s nomination; however their differentiation over the Texas annexation split the Democratic vote, resulting in the nomination falling to dark horse Polk. On the Whig side of this mess, Henry Clay (the first in a long line of old coots who JUST WILL NOT GO AWAY!!!!!) could not make up his mind whether he opposed or supported Texas annexation; of course such fence-riding is deadly in such an emotionally-charged election. Because the specter of Jackson continue to loom large over the country, Clay’s only hope lie with the full support of the Whigs (uh huh, that’s going to happen, Mr. Fence Rider) as well as a relatively unknown third party, the Liberty Party, the first solely abolitionist party. Clay’s inability to make up his stinkin’ mind forced abolitionist Whigs to bolt their party in disgust for the Liberty Party (we know this today as the Brett Favre Agenda), who decided to support neither party. This defection costs the Whigs the election, and delivered the presidency to Polk.

You know enough of Polk by now to get a grip on this guy. He was pure 100% Jacksonian, and under his tenure the United States would become notorious for aggressively acquiring new land (Texas, the Mexican Cession, Oregon). Now, it MUST be
emphasized that Polk was personally driven more by Manifest Destiny than an allegiance to the spread of slavery, which, like his mentor Jackson, he considered ultimately destructive to the Union. However, and in an example of politics making strange bedfellows, Polk did enjoy the support of southern slaveholders. In any event, despite his intentions Polk’s aggressive policies worried northerners who saw his cozy relationship with southern slaveholders as the true reason for the acquisition of new territory. As a result of this mistrust, Polk, who had earlier promised only to serve one term, unwittingly laid the groundwork for the next president to be a Whig.

2. 1848: Zachary Taylor (proof that a good man is tough to find, especially when you need him the most.)
With the increasing battles over disposition of the Mexican Cession and the Wilmot Proviso looming ahead, in 1848 American needed a strong, decisive leader to prevent the growing sectional schism from becoming fatal. In 1848, American got just the opposite. The Democrats nominated the supposedly-moderate Lewis Cass of Michigan (co-author of the Popular Sovereignty Doctrine) and, as a platform, protested Congressional meddling in the slavery controversy; remember that the Democrats are Jackson’s party, and hence the party of states’ rights.[28] The Whigs returned to the old war hero genre that worked for Harrison and nominated Mexican War hero Zachary Taylor, a transplanted Virginian-turned-Louisiana plantation owner (ie slave holder) who had absolutely non political experience whatsoever. Now, typically party heavy-hitters who for whatever reason cannot get elected on their own (ie Hamilton and Clay) LOVE these no-experience buffoons due to their propensity to shut up and do what they are told. Because of this, the Whigs, fearing the damage Taylor could do if he opened his mouth, actually ran with no platform. To add to this mess were the first major appearance of the Free Soilers (see page 7) as a legitimate party.

Needless to say the election was a disaster. First of all, the Whigs split along sectional lines into two sectional factions: the New England, anti-Mexican War, abolitionist “Conscience Whigs” and the pro-slavery, southern, and (surprisingly) northern pro-business “Cotton Whigs.”[29] Well, the Conscience Whigs disavowed Taylor, which had the harmful effect of splitting the Whig vote; however it is important to remember that, at this point, the abolitionist movement is relatively small and seen as a radical fringe, therefore this effect, while damaging, wasn’t ultimately destructive. As such, the Whig division was nothing compared to the effect of the Free Soilers on the Democratic vote. The force of Free Soil opposition to Cass thundered across the Mason-Dixon Line, and delivered the crucial state of New York to the Whigs and Zachary Taylor by a margin of 163 to 127 electoral votes.

(It is important to note the comparative effects of the slavery-related division upon the two parties. While the Whigs did stumble about and barely survive, they remained somewhat functional. On the other hand, the division among Democrats was deeply destructive, and should have served to warn Democrats that such an effect will not be eliminated easily. It will be decisive in the Election of 1860, which will solve this mess, albeit tragically, once and for all.)

3. 1852: PLEASE SOMEBODY MAKE IT STOP!!!!!!!!!
Damage Control Time. One of the most important factors to any endeavor is the contingency plan, or the set of criteria to adopt lest something go amiss. By 1852, the Democrats had gone amiss in a mighty way due to their experience in the sectional politics of 1848, and were desperately implementing damage control to control the bleeding . . . but alas, they had no contingency. As a result they freaked, decided to compromise, and nominated a political novice from New Hampshire, Franklin Pierce. This should not sound right to you . . . . “Hey Scalia, you mean to tell me that a New Hampshire Yankee from that hotbed of abolitionism, New England, is going to run for president under the auspices of the southern party of states’ rights, and hence in support of slavery? Are you MAD, sir?” Hold on, now . . . senile maybe, but not wholly mad. Pierce, who claimed to be a Jacksonian, expressed sympathy for the “plight of the South,” and attempted to co-join himself with past Democratic heroes such as Polk. In fact, the Democratic campaign slogan (you gotta love this!) was “We Polked you in ’44; we’ll Pierce you in ’52!”

Now, back on Earth folks were asking how to reconcile a northern man, a New Englander no less, espousing southern principles . . . how in the world can people buy this? Well, sometimes insanity is relative, and the alternative often explains everything. The Whigs once again looked to the Army for a candidate (hey, sure it sounds transparent, but every time they had tried the strategy it worked. Can’t argue with success) and turned to another Mexican War vet, the aging Winfield Scott. Scott, who was an
excellent general who commanded American troops at the Battle of Chapultapec, was an ambitious political rookie with a big mouth. Scott had talked his way into a reputation of being anti-slavery (good for the Whigs) as well as pro-nativist (bad for the Whigs).[30] See, Scott’s vocal opposition to all foreigners especially alienated northern Irish, who supported the Whigs. The Whigs received this support due to their acceptance of the Free Soil philosophy of free labor (see page 7), which helped alleviate the Irish fear of potential competition with slavery for jobs in new territories. Scott’s big mouth destroyed this base, and Pierce, the very nature of whose philosophy was basically unsound, won.

**The results of this mess?** As the nation’s sectionalism reached a fevered and dangerous pitch, America screamed out for someone—anyone—who could step in, stem the rising tide of disunion, and for God’s sake BE A LEADER!!!! The critical decade of the 1840s and the decisive decade of the 1850s begged for enlightened leadership, and neither were rewarded with anything remotely approaching that. This lack of leadership, this slide into shallow partisan politics at a time when the country was becoming unraveled at the seams, this ignorance of the big picture; all of these laid the foundation for a situation that, by the end of the decade, was beyond repair. And these bozos claimed they never saw it coming? Give me a break; even freshmen know ISS is the prelude to Long Term.

**Section V: Flies in the Ointment 1854-1860:**

**Kansas Bleeds, Dred Scott Loses, and America Reaches the Point of No Return**

1. **An Overview: The Growth of the Abolitionists**

   The year is 1852, and America is shuddering under the growing weight of sectional disunion, a prospect with which the Constitution is apparently ill-equipped to deal. In the north, radical abolitionist factions, albeit a relatively small minority due to their status as an extremist political liability, were nonetheless a vocal faction whose message of the immorality of slavery was gaining momentum across the North. Abolitionist leaders began taking their message out of the northeast: former slave Frederick Douglass began publishing his anti-slavery pamphlet *The North Star*, while Massachusetts militant minister William Lloyd Garrison started publication of the most influential and successful of the abolitionist emancipation journals, *The Liberator*. These and other publicity
efforts had the resultant effect of prompting many previously ambivalent citizens to at least form an opinion regarding the moral aspects of the “peculiar institution.” In 1852 they received a huge boost in publicity with the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which ultimately became the most influential propaganda tool the abolitionists possessed. Stowe’s book played upon the romantic and sympathetic aspects of slavery by creating distinct characters that were good or evil—no grey area here. Stowe’s readers began to see slavery as represented by a collection of victims who had feelings rather than simply a cold faceless institution; never mind the fact the Mrs. Stowe had never ventured into the South nor had ever seen a slave . . . that was beside the point. What WAS the point was dual in nature: first, Stowe and her abolitionist allies realized that nothing stirs the American psyche like the stench of injustice, real or imagined, and second, the runaway success of the book raised beaucoup cash for the abolitionist cause. They were prescient in their assumptions, as the book was amazingly successful and helped accomplish both of these goals . . . and without the shining social conscience and guidance of a literary agent (yep that’s cynicism and not a little sarcasm).

2. Funny How Such Noble Notions Can Go Astray . . .

Ever hear of the railroads? Well, by the mid 1800s this form of transportation had completely taken America by storm. The “iron horse” was cheaper, more efficient, and consequently more economical than turnpikes, canals, or steamboats; as such the future of the railroads was absolutely luminescent . . .something you’ll see in a BIG way a bit later. In 1852, enterprising business and political leaders (that combination should make you suspicious right there) began to discuss a rail route that would connect the manufacturing north and east with LaLa Land, I mean California. This Transcontinental Railroad would span the deserts and mountains and connect the two coasts, resulting in a plethora of business opportunities, ie money. Because of the economic potential, any areas that lie along this route would enjoy unprecedented economic windfall. This was what was on the mind of Senator Stephen Douglas (D-I11) when he envisioned that the new rail line should originate from his constituent base in Chicago. Time was also on his mind, for politicians interested in a southern route, which would originate in New Orleans and travel through the southern reaches of the Mexican Cession, had facilitated the purchase of a mountain and desert-free stretch of land known as the Gadsden Purchase. Consequently, Douglas knew that action, and timely action, was necessary. The good which he envisioned would erupt into a bloodbath the like of which have seldom been seen in America. Good Senator Douglas, with his attempts to get the railroad laid in Illinois, set in motion the conflagration that would culminate in the American Civil War. The spark that ignited this mess was a patch of prairie and sand known as Kansas.

3. The Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854

Douglas knew that the most practical route for his purposes lie in the lands west of Illinois and Missouri, the land known by its Indian name, Nebraska (Nebraska was, for all practical purposes, the last remaining vestige of the Louisiana Purchase). To facilitate his needs, Douglas proposed adding two new states from the Nebraska territory: the northern tract would remain Nebraska and the southern portion Kansas. Douglas was well aware of the political fallout that this would cause, and he also knew the danger of playing the slave state-free state game. Remember, Douglas had been involved in the Compromise of 1850, and at that time had been the leading proponent of Lewis Cass’ doctrine of popular sovereignty. As a result, in 1854 Douglas offered to Congress the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

1. The issue of slavery in the new territories would be determined by popular sovereignty.
2. Because it conflicted with stipulations of the old Missouri Compromise, the Missouri Compromise Line (36°30´) would be repealed.
3. The act would form two territories—Kansas and Nebraska—that would organize along the conditions laid forth in the Land Ordinance of 1785 for statehood (see map)
Amidst much controversy, and with President Pierce’s approval, the Act passed. Now the fun really starts.

First among Douglas’ many miscalculations was his lack of appreciation for the deep rooted emotional aspects of the slavery controversy. Douglas felt that the arid climate would preclude slavery, and that alone would solve the issue (you’d think that a Senator, of all people, would know better than this). By 1854, no one was going to sit idly by and let two potential free or slave states enter the Union.

For their part, Northern congressman argued that if the Missouri Compromise, a federal law mind you, was not binding, then the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was likewise nonbinding. The result was widespread rioting throughout the North as slave hunters tracked down and attempted to apprehend slaves and send them back to the south.[31]

4. Whigs: It Was Good To Know Ya

The uproar over Kansas-Nebraska act was the final nail in the coffin of the weakening Whig party. Southern Whigs, angered at what they perceived as violations of the terms of the Compromise of 1850 through the North’s avoidance of the Fugitive Slave Law, refused to support northern Whig candidates. Northern Whigs split into two somewhat extremist parties. The first of the was the final organization into a true political party of the formerly secret Order of the Star Spangled Banner, now known as the nativist American Party, otherwise known as the Know-Nothings (after their response to anyone who asked about their business; “I know nothing.” Yeah, like you’re telling us something new.) The Know Nothings were simply anti-everything that wasn’t white, native-born, and most importantly, Protestant. The second group was far less radical, and was compromised of Free Soilers, conservative Democrats, and the remaining northern Whigs. They invoked the name of Jefferson and named their new party the Republican Party. The Republicans submitted that they simply opposed the spread of slavery and had no intention to abolish it, however, due to the mix of supporters, they were at various times anti-spread and abolitionists at the same time. By 1854, political parties are becoming unabashedly sectional in their politics.

5. The Border War: “Bleeding Kansas”

The Kansas Nebraska Act went into effect, and all parties involved agreed that Nebraska should be free. These poor saps were operating on the assumption that another Missouri Compromise would develop—you know, one free, one slave. However, people in—and out of—Kansas had other ideas.
Due to the realization that Kansas’ slave fate would depend upon popular vote, both pro- and anti-slavery groups began to pour into the Kansas territory. In Massachusetts, abolitionists formed the New England Immigrant Aid Company, whose purpose was too—you guessed it—send abolitionist settlers to Kansas in order to vote on the slavery issue. Puritan minister and ardent abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher (Harriet Beecher Stowe’s father) commented that it would probably take rifles more than bibles to convert the poor misguided souls to Kansas; therefore the immigrants were issued “Beecher Bibles” - everyone else called them Sharps carbines. However, once these abolitionists arrived in Kansas they were surprised to see that they had arrived into an already-armed camp. What must be remembered is that the guiding force of the Free Soil Movement was for Kansas to be free soil for free white people only, and consequently wanted no part of abolition. In any case, the anti-slavery factions within Kansas were known as “Jayhawkers; “their adversaries were a bird of a different feather altogether.

Pro-slavery advocates were in no way, shape, form, or fashion going to sit idly by allow the anti-slavery forces to wrest Kansas away from them. As a result the tide of pro-slavery immigrants began to pour across the border from Missouri to either vote the pro-slavery ticket or just make life miserable for the jayhawkers, sort of a “death by welcome wagon” mentality. These friendly souls were known as “Border Ruffians” and were described by one Jayhawker as the “most vile [sic] example of demon ever created.” To supplement the Ruffians, pro-slavery reinforcements began to arrive from as far away as Alabama; all of these lovely souls were collectively called “bushwhackers” due to their tendency to ambush and mutilate first, and ask questions later. By virtue of the proximity of Jayhawkers, Border Ruffians, and Bushwhackers, by 1855, Kansas had erupted into total civil war which was anything but civil.

Remember that the Kansas-Nebraska Act called for the two territories to set up governments and apply for statehood? Well, by 1856, there was so much chaos in Kansas that not one, but two separate governments emerged from the warring factions. The Pro-slavery government was located in Lecompton, Kansas, and was governed by the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution. The anti-slavery faction set its government up in Lawrence, and applied for statehood in 1855. The establishment of rival governments, both of which wanted to direct Kansas’ admission a state, escalated the violence. In 1856, a group of bushwhackers rode into the anti-slavery town of Lawrence (its sympathies were hard to hide; the town was named after the founder of the New England Immigrant Aid Company) and ransacked the town, destroying several buildings and leaving one dead in what became known as the Sack of Lawrence. Retaliation for this injustice was swift and brutal, and embodied in one man and his holy mission.
John Brown was a homicidal lunatic (sorry, Zinn, its true). Brown, like Nat Turner before him, claimed that God himself had empowered him” to wash the stain of slavery from America by any means necessary,” which usually means killing a bunch of people. After the Sack of Lawrence, Brown and his five sons rode into a bushwhacker encampment on Pottawatomie Creek and massacred the five inhabitants there. Brown believed in making a statement; he hacked his victims to death with broadswords in front of their wives and children, then cut off their ears. These he boxed up and sent the Lecompton government, a warning of things to come. This set off renewed fighting: by the end of 1856 200 lie dead with over $200 million in damages. For his part, Brown was ordered arrested and fled Kansas. He will be back . . . soon.

Preston Brooks Opens Up A Can of Whoop-A_ _ on Charles Sumner

6. The Crisis Reaches the Hallowed Halls of Justice

It is one of the deepest feelings of security that we Americans can always depend upon our lawmakers to act with dignity and honor to solve our myriad problems . . . OK, stop laughing. In 1856, this was exemplified by Republican senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Democrat Preston Brooks of South Carolina.

No one ever accused Sumner of having tons of common sense. A virulent abolitionists, Sumner loved to hear himself talk, and talk he did, often with no-holds-barred. In an 1856 debate over the Kansas situation, Sumner gave fiery speech which, among other things, made personal attacks upon aging senator Albert Butler of South Carolina. Butler was so feeble that he was unable to defend himself, a fact Sumner, no bastion of fairness, undoubtedly knew; why else would he attack him unless the poor soul couldn’t defend himself? Sumner declared that the South’s “lust” for Kansas was that of a “rapist determining to violate the virgin Kansas” and called Butler a liar who kept a slave mistress. After tempers began to rise, Sumner took notice that the feeble Butler suffered from uncontrollable drooling and made a derogatory remark about Butler’s “expectoration in anticipation of violating either the virgin Kansas or perhaps another poor slave on his plantation.” This affront to Butler was no joke to southern senators, especially Butler’s nephew, Preston Brooks. To defend his uncle’s honor, Brooks demanded Sumner recant his accusations, which, of course, Sumner refused,
then challenged Sumner to a duel, which again Sumner refused. The following day, 22 May, Brooks strode into the Senate and found Sumner writing at his desk. Brooks produced a hickory walking cane (purposely hickory in reference to Old Hickory, Andrew Jackson), and beat Sumner senseless. Sumner suffered a coma and was unable to return to the Senate for three years. Brooks was hailed as a conquering hero throughout the South; the splinters of his cane were coveted as religious relics. Yep, methinks we have gone a touch beyond reality here. In any event, the Caning of Sumner was yet another polarizing agent in the Congressional sectional dichotomy.

7. What a Time for an Election!
You’d think that people would welcome something—anything—that would settle emotions a bit. 1856 was a critical; year, and yes, once again Americans elected a goober. For the first time the major political parties could no longer ignore the specter of slavery; it must be faced head-on.

The new Republican Party continued the old Whig tradition of nominating a military figure, Mexican War semi-hero John C. Fremont. The Republicans presented their platform as supporting the Transcontinental Railroad, federal funding for internal improvements, condemnation for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and expansion with an insistence on “free soil, free speech, yada yada yada.” In any case the Republican Party was the first political party to take a public stand on the slavery issue and make it campaign issue.

The Democrats, seemingly oblivious of the impending disaster awaiting their party, told Pierce to take a hike, and distanced themselves from Stephen Douglas because of the mess his Kansas-Nebraska Act had caused (jeez, all the poor guy wanted was a stinkin’ railroad!) They instead nominated another goober named James Buchanan, who has little more than a political tool. The Democratic platform: (a) supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act, (b) courted the immigrant vote by condemning the Nativists and endorsing religious toleration (ie for Catholicism), (c) embraced the Free Soil agenda by supporting the “peculiar institution” where it currently existed and protested congressional attempts to interfere with it (again interpreting the Constitution strictly . . . this is the party of Jefferson and Jackson, remember?)

During the election itself, southern resentment for the abolitionist extremity of the Republican Party led to the party becoming known derisively as the Black Republicans, a title which falsely tagged the entire Republican Party as the party of abolition. This caused a philosophical split within the Party and consequently cost Fremont dearly, and he lost the electoral vote to the southern-supported Buchanan 174 to 144.[32]

Dred Scott was a Missouri slave who had been taken into the free state of Minnesota by his master (dude named Sandford) to buy some horses. Sandford died while they were in Minnesota, and rather than be sent back to Missouri and bondage Scott claimed that his presence and subsequent residency (by virtue of his master dying) in a free state made him a free man at the time of his master’s death. The state of Minnesota assessed Scott as a fugitive slave that refused to return to his master’s wife in Missouri, and invoked the Fugitive Slave Law to send him back. Anti-slavery groups heard of his plight and sued the Minnesota state government for his freedom; when the state courts ruled against Scott abolitionist groups appealed to the Supreme Court in the landmark case of *Scott v. Sandford*.

Chief Justice Roger Taney (a southern sympathizer who had been named to the bench to replace John Marshall by Andrew Jackson and was a spry eighty years old at the time) delivered the majority opinion, known as the *Dred Scott Decision*. Taney stated that:

1. Scott had no legal recourse because, due to his status as a slave, he was not a citizen of the United States.
2. By virtue of their status, slaves had no legal protection under the Constitution because they had “no rights a white man was bound to respect.”
3. Scott’s residence did not matter, only the state in which he served his servitude did, and only that state could grant Scott his freedom (a direct referral to states’ rights)
4. Because the Missouri Compromise restricted the intercourse of people and their property (ie slaves) merely because they lived above 36°30’ it violated the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment and consequently was
unconstitutional. (This was the first time since Marbury v Madison that the Supreme Court had used judicial review to rule a congressional law unconstitutional).

WOW. This is a biggy, the first time the Court had made itself heard on the issue. The repercussions were enormous.

1. The ruling in effect challenged the concept of popular sovereignty in that since Congress could not exclude slavery, neither could a territorial government created by Congress.

2. It also rendered the Republican Party’s platform unconstitutional.

3. It raised claims that the Supreme Court was little more than a southern conspiracy.

4. Foreseeing the radical response of the abolitionists, southern states began referring the controversial Fugitive Law as the Southern Orthodox Doctrine, which was necessary for the preservation of the Union. At last, some said that which was already being whispered: if slavery became threatened, the South would consider secession.

9. And You Thought Things Had Settled Down In Kansas: The Lecompton Constitution Debate—PAY ATTENTION!!!!

By 1858, Kansas was ready to submit its constitution to Congress for approval, the final step in admission state. The problem was: which constitution---the pro-slavery Lecompton or the anti-slavery Lawrence? Kansas’ territorial governor was named by pro-South Buchanan, so you can see which constitution has the lead here. This lame brain governor tried to calm free-state (or Jayhawk) fears in Kansas by offering a compromise: the Lecompton Constitution in exchange for a majority Jayhawk state legislature in Kansas. The only problem was that theJayhawk legislature would have to vote for the Lecompton Constitution. Yeah, this is going to happen, right? The legislature voted down the constitution, which actually didn’t matter because President Buchanan stepped in, seized the constitution, and tried to force it through Congress. Amazingly, the Lecompton Constitution passed through the Senate...with one reservation. Congressional revulsion over the obviously bogus state passage of the Lecompton Constitution (this became known as the Crime Against Kansas) was such that Congress mandated that, in order for the constitution to go into effect, Kansas would have to re-vote on the constitution in a supervised (as in, legal and fair) election. This, of course resulted in the Lecompton Constitution failing. With the ultimate failure of the Lecompton Constitution, Kansas was firmly in the grasps of anti-slavery forces and its role in the sectional crisis once and for all ended.

10. As if Things Couldn’t Get Worse …. MURPHY LIVES!!!!!

Man, with all of the garbage going on by 1858, what is the absolute worse thing that could happen? Yep, its time for another PANIC!!!! In 1857, the failure of a northern brokerage house (a bank that exists for specific businesses, this one for manufacturing in Ohio) resulted in northern manufacturing outgrowing its domestic (home) market. The result was too much supply and not enough demand, a trend that makes manufactured items much cheaper and money less valuable. Northerners refused to blame bad banking practices (which was exactly what happened) and extortion of the Ohio brokerage houses’ funds (again, exactly what happened) and instead blamed it on the low tariff rates demanded by the southern states in the Tariff of 1857, which they accused (wrongly) for flooding the American market with cheap foreign goods (remember: the south loves a low tariff north depends on a high tariff for protection from foreign goods). Why did this heighten sectional fears? No, NOT because damned near everything heightened sectional fears (although you can make a case for that)… NO, wait a minute!! You are the student…you tell ME why!

Jeez, Louise, I’m going grey(er) trying to wait you out. Ok, here it is. What do you think was the ONE economic venture that did not suffer from this business contraction? What did not depend upon northern consumer trends? What could care less if American money was worth more or less?

COTTON!!
The Panic of 1857 had the ultimate effects of:

1.) Proving to southerners that their economic system—-and culture ---was vastly superior to that of the North

2.) Showing to the world the importance of “King Cotton”

3.) Causing the South to be less accommodating and more obstinate in its defense of cotton and slavery

4.) Verifying that God had blessed the South with cotton, and it was the South’s holy duty to protect the Cotton Culture at any costs and by any means necessary (there’s that scary statement again)

Oh I wish I were in the Land of Cotton ….

11. To the Fore front: the Lincoln- Douglas Debates

In 1858, the Senate seat from Illinois was up for re-election. The incumbent was Senator Stephen Douglas, he of Kansas-Nebraska and popular sovereignty fame. Douglas only intended to serve the two year term in preparation for a run at the presidency in 1860. His opponent was a goofy-looking backwoods rail-splitter/lawyer who solicited giggles everywhere he went. This is the kind of guy that no one tales seriously, especially a seasoned political like Stephen Douglas, otherwise known as the” Little Giant.” (Picture Boss Hogg from the Dukes of Hazzard) This gangly goofball was named Abraham Lincoln

The two candidates embarked upon a series of debates which have become the greatest example of politics in the immediate Civil War-era. They offer a glimpse inside the national controversy from two diverse views, and reveal what an absolute genius of politician Lincoln truly was. At the first, or Freeport Debate, Lincoln asked Douglas how he could support the doctrine of popular sovereignty when the Dred Scott Decision says that citizens can carry slaves into free states unimpeded. Douglas answered by stating the Freeport Doctrine, which stated that slavery could not exist anywhere unless supported by local laws and regulations, an obvious attempt to remove the national government from the equation. Lincoln responded that the issue of slavery was ultimately divisive” A house divided against it self cannot stand. It must be all of one thing or all of another. It cannot be both.”[33] On other issues:

1) Abolition: Douglass wrapped himself in the Black Republican paranoia and accused Lincoln of being a close abolitionist---something that could prove politically devastating to Lincoln. Lincoln claimed that Douglass was hiding his true intentions, that the Little Giant was 100% pro-slavery. In truth, neither was correct.

2) Equality for Blacks: Douglas accepted and championed the idea of black inferiority. Lincoln accepted the notion, but with the reservation that blacks should have equal rights as whites. Big mistake; in an Americas and tired of blacks and slavery, this proved fatal to Lincoln in the Senate race.

3) The spread of slavery into new territories: Lincoln claimed that he favored containing slavery where it existed, and that the peculiar institution would ultimately become extinct. Douglas once again championed popular sovereignty as the only true democratic method, and that morals had nothing to do with the controversy…only the will and rule of the majority matters.

In the long run, Douglas won the debate, but Lincoln became a familiar political figure, Lincoln’s avoidance of specific stands on controversial issues brought back memories of Jackson, and as a result Lincoln became an attractive moderate Republican personality.

. . you know, just in case the need for such a moderate may arise.
Lincoln-Douglas: It Ain’t Exactly Mixed Martial Arts, But It’s All They Had

12. HE’S BAAAACK!!!!!!!

John Brown couldn’t stay away from the fray for long. He fled Kansas only to reappear in the Appalachian Mountains near Harper’s Ferry, Virginia (today West Virginia). Brown had, has his intention, to instigate the most fearsome of all nightmares for southern whites: a slave insurrection. Brown intended to use the Appalachian Mountains as a staging point for a series of slave rebellions that would scour the Shenandoah Valley, allowing Brown to establish a separate slave state in the mountains (told you he was nuts). On the early morning of 16 October 1859, Brown and 20 men slipped into Harper’s Ferry and seized the federal arsenal there with the intent to take the weapons to distribute to rebellious slaves. Brown believed that, upon hearing of this action, the substantial slave population of Harper’s Ferry would rally to his cause and his servile War for Emancipation would be underway.

Trust me on this one: Covertly slipping into an area is one thing. Getting out is an entirely different matter. By the time Brown discovered that no slaves had rebelled and were flocking to his aid, the US Army had indeed begun to flock with every intentions of aiding John Brown in his obvious desire to exit this world. US troops, under the command of LT. Col. Robert E Lee, stormed the
arsenal, killing fifteen of the intruders and capturing Brown. The four who escaped were apprehended and hung on the spot; as for Brown, well, he would finally be able to speak to God about operational and tactical matters in person; he was hung on 2 December. Nothing is cut and dried here. There are several results of Brown’s raid and death:

1) Brown, due to the efforts of people like Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau, ultimately became a martyr for abolitionists everywhere. William Lloyd Garrison remarked that “I wish every slave insurrection throughout the South success.” Yep, this is the way to endear yourselves to people.

2) Brown’s plan and the reaction of idiots like Garrison set off a wave of panic throughout the South; many southerners recalled the carnage associated with Nat Turner’s rebellion; rumors swept the South of a Republican-sponsored slave insurrection.

3) Southerners now see no difference between John Brown and Black Republicans. This will serve to sectionalize the next election.

4) By the dozens, Northerners were expelled from the South: “We regard every man in our midst an enemy to…. The South who does not believe slavery to be a social, moral, and political blessing.”

There is an old Louisiana saying: “Some days you eat the bear, some days the bear eats you.” By now it is 1859, and the days of eating the bear are darned near over. The bear is hungry, and ready to feast. This bad when the bear is insatiable.
Section VI: The End: The Election of 1860

As I have said in more than one occasion, this was inevitable. It had to happen. If you have taken notice of the events in these reading supplements, hopefully you can see that there was simply no way out. All that remains is for that single straw to break the camel’s back. The Election of 1860 is the final straw.

1. The Democrats

The Democrats suffered the most due to sectional division. They could not die out peacefully like their old antagonists, the Whigs. They fought to the bitter end. The Democrats, committing the ultimate political sin, split into three separate factions, all along sectional lines.

It was apparent at the Democratic Convention in Charleston (the worst place to go for the Democrats) that nomination front-runner Stephen Douglas would have tons of trouble getting nominated. Douglas’ supporters wanted a platform that reaffirmed the party’s stand in 1856, in other words, a commitment to congressional non-interference with slavery. This worked fine four years ago, but not now. Southern radicals, also known as fire-eaters, now demanded constitutional protection for slavery though a federal slave code and constitutional amendment. This was unacceptable to Douglas and his supporters, and in protest to Douglas inflexibility, the Deep South states of Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas defiantly walked out of the convention. Douglas and the remnants of the party reconvened in Baltimore; it was only a formality to nominate Douglas as the Northern Democrat’s choice to run in 1860.

The fire-eaters adopted theater federal slave code and constitutional amendment and selected current vice-president John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky as the candidate of Southern Democrats.

2. The Republicans

Thrilled with what they considered the Democrat’s political suicide (they were right on target here), the Republicans hedged their bets with a “safe” nominee, moderate Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. The Republications fed off of Lincoln’s non-committal manner, and proposed the stop of slavery into new territories while neglecting to mention what to do about it where it already was.

3. The “They Don’t Matter” Third Party

JUST GO AWAY!!!!! That’s what people were saying to the third party, a coalition of old diehard Whigs called the Constitutional Union Party. These bozos nominated John Bell of Tennessee under the platform to do anything necessary to save the Union. How incredibly naïve; where have they been since 1848? Uh, by the way, they lost.

4. The Results are In!

As you may have gathered, the Democrats skewered themselves by splitting, and the Republicans won the election. Lincoln gathered ONLY 39% of the popular vote, but he also carried every northern state; that is, the section of the country with the greatest population and subsequently the most electoral votes. Let’s look at some numbers:

**1. Popular Vote**
- Lincoln 1,865,593 39.8%
- Douglas 1,382,713 29.5%
- Breckinridge 848,356 18.1%
- Bell 592,906 12.6%

**1. Electoral Vote**
- Lincoln 180
- Douglas 12
- Breckinridge 72
- Bell 39
Ok, math whizzes, tell me: if you add the popular votes of the three losers and give them to, say, Douglas, who wins the popular vote?

Are yafeelin’ a sense of déjà vu, circa Election 1824? When considering the popular vote, the Democrats threw away the election due to the sectional aspect of the election. All in all, Lincoln carried ALL of the more-populous North; Breckinridge the vast majority of the less-populous South, with Bell and Douglas getting no particular majorities. However, none of this mattered because Lincoln won the electoral vote, something the less-populated South would never be able to do. Remember the South’s original fears regarding the North, population, and political power? If you are a Southerner, are these fears justified? Most ominously, if you are the South, and these fears are realized…what do you do next?
5. Secession

Abraham Lincoln’s election set off a fury of protests throughout the South. Paranoid and mistrustful Southerners could never separate, whether rightly or wrongly, Abraham Lincoln from the “Black Republicans,” even though Lincoln promised not to interfere with slavery where it already existed. As a result, immediately upon hearing the election returns, South Carolina convened a secession convention, and on 20 December 1860, South Carolina finished what the Nullification Crisis merely postponed: South Carolina removed itself from the United States of America. By 1 February 1861, six more Deep South states—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, Georgia and Florida—followed suit. The irony here is that main-stream southerners were actually lukewarm about secession; less than 1% of southerners owned more than ten slaves and less than 3% owned any slaves at all. In reality the inertia for secession was driven by the fire-eaters, fueled through raw emotion, and given its momentum by virtue of a mob mentality.

The North, furious at this “treasonous” act, demanded the Army be utilized to punish the renegade states. Lame-duck president Buchanan, however, claimed that while he disagreed with secession, the Constitution gave him no power to prevent. In other words, he was gutless.
The seven states without a home convened in Montgomery, Alabama, wrote a constitution reminiscent of the old Articles of Confederation, and declared themselves the Confederate States of America. Mississippi senator Jefferson Davis was named the Confederacy’s president, Montgomery its capitol. Davis’ immediate concern was the presence of Federal troops which were in garrison on Confederate soil, primarily at Fort Pickens, Florida and Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Until these troops were removed, the south could never be fully secure. In February 1861 Davis requested that President Buchanan (Lincoln had yet to take office) relieve the forts of their garrisons. Buchanan, who, as we have seen, was not worth the paper upon which to write his name, played a waiting game designed to stall decisive action until Lincoln had taken office in March, and responded by re-supplying Sumter.

During the early weeks of March 1861, Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky made one final appeal to sanity with his proposal; for peace, the Crittenden Compromise. Crittenden proposed to recognize slavery south of the 36° 30’ Missouri Compromise line and to guarantee recognition of slavery where it already existed. This compromise made its way to the new president, who introduced it at a Peace Conference Proposal attended by representatives of the United and Confederate States. Lincoln, while he would not back away from the “stop the spread” issue, nevertheless supported an amendment to protect slavery where it already existed, and sent the measure to Congress. Congress, however, was caught up in the emotion and furor of secession, and refused to pass this amendment. In a supreme irony, had this amendment passed that guaranteed constitutional protections of slavery, it would have become the 13th Amendment of the Constitution… the very amendment that later would forever abolish slavery in the United States.

So, the die is cast, the table set, the Rubicon crossed. America had never before----nor would ever again----witness as much carnage and destruction as she would in the next four years. As you can hopefully see, this did not come about overnight and not without substantial trial and error. In short, the entire slavery issue----the economic, political, moral, social aspects----ultimately did what the British could never do. They brought the United States to its knees.

NOTES
simply to acquire Cuba. We decided to save that for the Kennedy’s in 1960.

In late 1836, realizing that Andrew Jackson was unwilling to risk disunion and attempt the annexation of Texas as a state due to the debate over slavery, Great Britain initiated diplomatic negotiations with the Republic for a defensive treaty which would guarantee British protection in the event that Santa Anna might attempt to reacquire Texas. This threat of a British presence on America’s western frontier undoubtedly prompted Americans in DC to get up off of their butts speed up the annexation process.

OK, clarification time: Polk, a died-in-the-wool Jacksonian was just going through the motions with his version of “Dollar Diplomacy.” In no shape, form, or fashion did he desire to buy something that he knew he could take from someone he knew he could defeat in a war. Besides, he had God on his side, remember?

In the ensuing House debate over the war declaration representative Abraham Lincoln (W-ILL) introduced a resolution (The infamous “Spot Resolution”) demanding that a Congressional committee be shown the exact “spot” on which American blood was first spilled, knowing that his request was impossible. Because of this travesty he was known for years as “Spot” Lincoln.

Thoreau, who refused to pay his taxes because he felt they would only aid the war effort, wrote of his opposition in a essay entitled Civil Disobedience, a work that would later influence social activists such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Got generals? Robert E Lee, Ulysses S Grant, Thomas (later Stonewall) Jackson, George Pickett, Jeb Stuart, George McClellan, Jefferson Davis, PGT Beauregard, among others. In this respect, the Mexican War foreshadowed the great American catastrophe of 1860-1865.

This guy was a real piece of work. Santa Anna would never admit to the Mexican people that he had been defeated, and instead claimed that the fact that he survived the war and was able to retain Mexico proved that (a) he really won the war, and (b) that he was indeed a deity. As such, he provided his people with a relic by having his severed leg encased and displayed on the steeple of the national cathedral as an icon to his sacrifice and greatness. Bad news if you live downwind from the church, huh?

In one of the continuing silly legacies of this war, as late as 1989 the Mexican government formally declared the Treaty of Guadeloupe illegal and appealed to the United States to return Texas to Mexico. Being from Louisiana, I, in jest and obviously a moment of temporary insanity, made the equally silly mistake of remarking to my wife (a Texan) that perhaps this wasn’t the worst idea in the world . . . jeez I won’t make that mistake again . . . not and live.

Anti-war leaders such as Thoreau and Emerson agreed that even if the acquisition of Mexico was morally indefensible, it would be far better to infuse Mexico with American ideals of liberty and government than to leave it to foreign intrusion attempting to revive their western hemispheric empires.

You should sense an overpowering sense of déjà vu here with regard to Vietnam.

Oddly enough, Congress did not respond to this overt aggressive policy like they did with Mexico. The primary reason is the assumption that Oregon was unsuitable for cotton farming, and would therefore require no slaves. Therefore, Oregon simply didn’t matter.

Between 1846 and 1849, the Wilmot Proviso was voted upon 40 times, all with the same result.

Does this sound strange? It should; didn’t the Constitution forbid the slave trade after 1808? What does the necessity of yet another federal law abolishing something that was already prohibited by the Constitution tell you about the complexity of the slavery issue?

Small and factionist in nature the Liberty Party was the first solely abolitionist political party.

You don’t have to be a genius to see the polarity of these views, and obviously they represent radical options. However, it is important to note the severity of these views; sometimes the madness of radical dichotomy reflects truisms of society we often choose to ignore. In other words, just how nutty were these two?

Jefferson and the Founders knew darned well that they had done the nation a disservice by not formulating a definitive solution to the slavery issue during the years of the early republic. However, to do so would have rendered any national solidarity impossible, and in their minds, a complete nation with slavery is preferable to a divided one at war because of its abolition.

Do ya SEE the irony here . . . I mean do ya just SEE that irony here?????? Where the heck did western hemispheric African slavery start? In the islands, and now, here it comes again. Jeez, kinda explains how Fidel had little opposition to kicking our butts out of Cuba in 1960.

Any resemblance to the modus operandi of the 20th century CIA is purely coincidental.

The Senate has the constitutional responsibility for the ratification of treaties and other foreign affairs issues.

MORE IRONY!!!!! In one of the few splits in Southern solidarity the one southern state vehemently opposed to the Ostend Manifesto, as well as ALL of the Caribbean filibusters, was my home state of Louisiana. Folks from back home immediately saw the threat of competition from Latin American sugar, and because sugar and sugar cane were as nearly as profitable in Louisiana (and south Texas, for that matter) as cotton, there was little chance Louisiana sugar growers were going to cut their own economic throats simply to acquire Cuba. We decided to save that for the Kennedy’s in 1960.

Japan remained under the feudal shogunate system until the Emperor Meiji’s restoration to the imperial Japanese throne in 1863.

Interesting note here: During the Civil War one reason that the Union Navy had trouble capturing Confederate commerce raiders at sea was a series of small wars that the Navy fought in Japan. An international coalition, including the United States, fought it out with several stubborn shoguns in order to enforce the stipulations of the Treaty of Kanagawa; these battles culminated in the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1865.

A dark horse is a candidate who is relatively unknown and comes out of nowhere to win.
Because of his nontraditional path to the White House Tyler was jokingly referred to “His Ascendancy” and, my favorite, “His Accidency.”

Polk was a life-long Jacksonian who owed his political career to the General. In fact, he was known informally as “Young Hickory.”

Don’t laugh at this practical application of *The Constitution for Dummies*, the same thing happened in 1992 when uber-rich Texan H. Ross Perot gleaned enough Republicans votes away from George Bush Sr. to throw the election to the Democrats and Bill Clinton.

A party’s platform is their base of political philosophy upon which their agenda is built.

Why would northern manufacturers, like the Lowell mills, support the Cotton Whigs? Well, they were lukewarm on the slavery issue, but desperately needed happy southern campers to supply their mills with cotton. Economics versus morality? Ponder that for awhile; it’s a major theme.

Nativists were a group of Americans opposed to anybody who wasn’t 100% American; they were the original anti-immigration folks in a BIG way . . . you might say they were rather “Klanish . . .“ (pun intended). Anyway, more on them later.

The most notorious of these riots was the Boston riot over the apprehension of runaway slave Anthony Burns. Too merely aboard the ship bound for Charleston, federal troops were brought out to escort him, and some of these troops refused to comply with their orders or moral grounds.

This war reaches into the 21st century. The annual University of Kansas-University of Missouri football game is known as the Border War.

This is a common occurrence in presidential elections. Anytime a party’s votes are split due to factionalism within the party the opposition always comes out ahead. Solidarity has its rewards.

This very famous Lincoln-ism was not original; it had been around for years.

The remaining six states –Virginia, New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Arkansas-- would secede after the firing on Fort Sumter. After the secession of Virginia, the capital of the Confederacy was moved to Richmond.