

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

A partnership between Portland State University, Portland Public Schools, the Tigard-Tualatin and Beaverton School Districts, funded by the U.S. Department of Education

HISTORICAL TOPIC: Free Soil & Slavery Expansion (1820-1860)

The central political issue of the mid-19th century was the future of slavery – both its future as a southern labor system and its spread across the continent. The single most troublesome issue that led Americans to civil war was whether new states would be open to slavery, an issue that led to repeated sectional compromises and their subsequent failure.

Oregon's early history mirrors the national ambiguity. It was admitted as a free state with a strong bias toward the republican virtues of small communities and small property owners, but was also hostile to African Americans and embedded anti-black clauses in its 1859 Constitution. The election of 1860 deeply divided the state, which had been settled both by New Englanders and southerners, fracturing the previously dominant Democratic Party and leading to a century of Republican ascendancy. Teachers and students can reflect on the pressures and ideas that caused the writers of Oregon's Constitution to choose a particular vision for the state on the verge of the Civil War, and on the ways in which that vision has changed over nearly 150 years.

*The Free Soil & Slavery Expansion topic contains the subtopics listed below. Each subtopic includes a narrative with highlighted text [**resources**] and notations indicating that additional support material is available for viewing and/or downloading including primary documents, maps, spreadsheet data and websites. To access the material go to the TAHPDX: Teaching American History Website and use the links available on the **TOPIC AREAS [Free Soil & Slavery]** page or the **QUICK NAVIGATION** pages.*

Search TAHPDX on the internet or access the website via the link on the Community Geography page at <http://www.pdx.edu/ims/comgeo.html>.

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 Curriculum Units developed for this topic (download using the TAHPDX website).

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- 2. African-American Exclusion: The People of Oregon v. The Oregon Constitution
- 3. Slavery and Freedom in America (1760-1890)

1. Political Crises

The Missouri Compromise of 1820:

Thomas Jefferson called the controversy over admitting Missouri as a slave state a "fire bell in the night." Indeed, the disagreement revealed deep sectional differences.

Many northerners feared that Missouri's admission as a slave state would set a precedent that other states carved out of the Louisiana Purchase would also permit slavery. Southerners feared that northern growth would cause them to lose political power in Congress if they did not succeed in making sure that at least one half of the states permitted slavery (thus preserving a balance of power in the Senate). The debate occurred in the context of the North gradually abolishing slavery while the South was expanding it.

Map Resource: *Slavery Ends in the North.* Map of Northern Free States prior to 1820 compiled by PSU Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies' Community Geography Project (from various sources).

The *Missouri Compromise of 1820* [pdf resource] maintained balance in the Senate by admitting Maine as a free state and Missouri as a slave state. It settled the status of future western states by establishing a line at latitude 36°30'N across the area of the Louisiana Purchase. States that formed north of the line would be free. States that formed south of the line could be slave. But the bitter debates of this legislation played out largely on sectional lines and boded ill for the future.

Map Resources: *Missouri Compromise of 1820 Map and Historic Map of the Mason-Dixon Line.*

Web Resource: Interactive map of the Missouri Compromise (showing population statistics)
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/neh/interactives/sectionalism/lesson1/>.

The Compromise of 1850:

Like the Louisiana Purchase, the acquisition of Northern Mexico and (to a much lesser extent) the Oregon Country in the late 1840s prompted bitter disagreements over whether new territories and states would be slave or free. In the years since the Compromise of 1820 anti-slavery (including abolitionist) sentiment had grown in the North even as slavery and celebrations of slavery had expanded in the South. Northerners resented the fact that southerners had controlled so much of the federal government, and Southerners feared that northern industrial and population expansion would translate into northern political dominance.

The political disagreements that led to the ***Compromise of 1850*** [pdf resource] (often called the Clay Compromise) began when David Wilmot, a congressman from Pennsylvania, in 1846 introduced legislation (as an attached amendment to a military appropriations bill) banning slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico. This passed the House, but stalled in the Senate, where the South had more power.

Four years later senator Henry Clay of Tennessee successfully steered compromise legislation through Congress. California was admitted as a free state, and the residents of New Mexico and Utah would, like California's voters, decide for themselves whether these territories would be free or slave (on the basis of popular sovereignty). The slave trade, but not slavery, was abolished in Washington, D.C., and slave owners got a stronger ***Fugitive Slave Law*** [pdf resource] that radically restricted the rights of African-Americans who lived in the North and who were accused of being fugitive slaves.

Map Resource: *Compromise of 1850 showing Slave and Free States.*

Map Resource (historic document): "Map Showing the Comparative Area of the Northern and Southern States" and the Mason-Dixon Line (Source: Library of Congress).

Graphic Resources: *Fugitive Slave Notice and Fugitive Slave Caution Poster.*

PDF Resources: Transcripts of historic speeches on the Compromise of 1850 debate by *Daniel Webster* and *John C. Calhoun*.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854:

Steven Douglas, an Illinois Democrat, in 1854 touched off a fire storm by proposing a bill that would allow the Kansas and Nebraska Territories to decide for themselves (again, by popular sovereignty) whether they would be slave or free. Douglas hoped that this concession to southerners would induce them to support the rapid development of these territories, and he believed that the concession was more symbolic than substantive. Since he expected them to be

settled largely by northerners, he did not anticipate that their residents would vote to allow slavery.

But Douglas miscalculated. His bill negated the Missouri Compromise, legislation that had long reassured northerners that slavery would not expand across the West. Many Northerners were enraged. The Whig Party splintered along sectional lines over the issue, and most Northern Whigs joined the emerging Republican Party, a party that had no following to speak of in the South and that opposed slavery. Meanwhile, proponents and opponents of slavery were going to Kansas to try to influence its constitution. Some even attacked and killed each other in what has been referred to as “Bleeding Kansas.” A sort of miniature version of the Civil War had already erupted. Kansas became a free territory in 1858, but not before the ***Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854*** [pdf resource] and the controversy surrounding it had created bloodshed and a great deal of ill will.

Map Resource: *Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854*. Shows Slave and Free states following the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

2. Property and States Rights vs. Free Labor and Free Men

Defending Slavery:

Many southern slave owners, including Thomas Jefferson, viewed slavery as a necessary evil around the time of the American Revolution. Many even eventually freed their slaves. But white southerners defended slavery more forcefully in the decades leading up to the Civil War as growing cotton made for higher profits and as northern criticism of slavery became more pointed.

They also argued that the new U.S. Constitution mandated slavery by stating that slaves constituted 3/5s of a person – the ***3/5 Compromise*** [pdf resource] – for the purpose of Congressional representation and by stating that the slave trade could not be interfered with for twenty years. Slave holders asserted that their slaves were property and the federal government had no right to interfere with property, particularly when slavery was the linchpin of southern prosperity.

Many defenders of slavery cited the bible and claimed that Africans labored under the curse of Ham, that God had decreed that they should serve whites. These religious arguments blended with pseudo-scientific ones claiming that dark-skinned people were a sort of separate and inferior species who should not be allowed to become part of white society and who were unfit for independence.

Apologists for slavery such as the writer ***George Fitzhugh*** [web resource] could therefore argue that slavery was good for slaves, that it offered them food and clothing and protected them from the cruelties of the open market that northerners were embracing. Indeed, Fitzhugh and others described a bucolic and paternalistic plantation society in which aged and crippled slaves were cared for – unlike northern factories, whose owners purportedly cast aside unproductive workers.

Web Resource: Information about the writings of George Fitzhugh, excerpts from “Sociology of the South” and “Cannibals All!” from Dr. Dennis Hodgson’s (Fairfield University) webpage at: <http://www.faculty.fairfield.edu/faculty/hodgson/Courses/city/fitzhugh/george.html>.

Cession and the Constitution:

Most white southerners also believed that states had a constitutional right to secede from the Union. They asserted that the states had never surrendered their sovereignty upon becoming part of the United States. Like the thirteen colonies before them, they asserted a right to leave a political union that did not suit them.

Abraham Lincoln and most other Republicans disagreed. The founders had intended the union to be perpetual, and no minority could vote to break up the nation.

Both North and South, then, saw themselves as representing the best of the Constitution in particular and the American tradition in general.

Anti-Slavery Political Parties:

New parties appeared in the North as the slavery question destroyed the Whig Party and drove many from the Democratic Party.

As its name implied, the Free-Soil Party opposed the expansion of slavery. Its proponents argued that slavery blighted the hopes of whites who did not own slaves, that owning slaves was an unfair economic advantage to the wealthy and constituted an artificial restraint against economic growth. Indeed, the Free-Soil Party also championed high protective tariffs to protect northern factories, free homesteads for western settlers, and internal improvements to be funded by the federal government. The Free-Soil Party nominated Martin Van Buren, the former Democratic President, and won about 10 percent of the popular vote in 1848 – although much more in the Northeast.

Six years later the Republican Party emerged as a much more powerful counter to the Democrats. Like the Free-Soil Party before them, the Republicans adamantly opposed expanding slavery into new territories and states and championed a powerful federal government that would aid private industry and free enterprise.

Uncle Tom's Cabin:

Most Republicans were not abolitionists. Most were more concerned about how slavery impacted whites than how it affected slaves. **Harriet Beecher Stowe** [**web resource**] helped to change this.

Web Resource: Stow, Harriet Beecher. Reprint 1982. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York: Literary Classics of the U.S., Distributed by Viking Press. More information about Harriet Beecher Stow can be found at the Harriet Beecher Stow Center (<http://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/>).

A member of a distinguished, reform-oriented family, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared first as a series of chapters then in 1852 as a book which quickly became one of the best sellers in the nation's history. Though later criticized for depicting slaves as child like, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* prompted a generation of northern whites to feel indignant over a system of labor-slavery that separated mothers from children and otherwise created massive suffering. The novel made it difficult for northern whites to ignore the cruelties of slavery.

Radical Abolitionists:

Even before the American Revolution, some citizens had criticized slavery and proposed various means for ending it. Most of these plans involved colonization – sending African-Americans back to Africa. Abolitionists, however, became more radical in the 1830s.

William Lloyd Garrison was the leading radical for many years. This self-educated son of the working class emerged in the early 1830s as the editor of *The Liberator* and the organizer and leader of the interracial New England Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison was disinterested in compromise and gradualism. He demanded the immediate emancipation of slaves and a program of nonviolence, of using moral persuasion rather than the tools of government.

Book Resources for William Lloyd Garrison and *The Liberator*:

Cain, William E. (ed). 1995. *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery: Selections from The Liberator*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press (The Bedford Series in History and Culture).

Garrison, Wendell Phillips. 1885. *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life, Told by His Children, vol. 1-4*. New York: The Century Company.

Web Resources for William Lloyd Garrison:

Information on William Lloyd Garrison, including current commentary, can be found at the "Africans in America" PBS website (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1561.html>).

A useful website discussion and classroom issues and strategies regarding Garrison can be found at Georgetown University's Heath Anthology of American Literature at: (<http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/bassr/heath/syllabuild/iguide/garrison.html>).

Frederick Douglass, who had escaped slavery and became a powerful abolitionist orator, writer, and organizer, at first worked with Garrison. But, like many abolitionists, he eventually opposed parts of Garrison's program. Many believed that the nation's founders had not – and the Constitution did not – really supported slavery. Douglass soon rejected Garrison's belief that abolitionists must use purely nonpolitical, nonviolent means.

Web Resources for Frederick Douglass:

Biography of Frederick Douglass: Library of Congress American Memory "Frederick Douglass Papers" website at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/doughtml/doughome.html> (includes biography and access to transcripts from his writings).

An easy-to-use electronic scanned copy of Douglass' autobiography is available at Documenting the American South (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglasslife/douglass.html>).

Though small in number, the abolitionists succeeded – through their speeches, newspapers, pamphlets, and petitions – in keeping slavery before the public eye and in losing no opportunity to underscore its inhumanity.

3. Diverging Economies and Societies

The Southern Economy:

The cotton boom invigorated the southern economy and the institution of slavery. Tobacco remained important in Virginia, rice in South Carolina. But the production of cotton rose from less than 400,000 bales in 1820 to nearly 5 million by 1860, when it constituted more than half of the nation's exports. The South also sent much cotton north, where it supplied the growing number of textile mills. In a short time period, the number of slaves grew from 1.5 million in 1820 to close to 4 million in 1860, with most living in the Deep South (South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana).

Cotton brought substantial prosperity to the southern economy. But only a tiny fraction of the white population (about 1 in 1,000) owned more than 100 slaves. Less than 7 percent owned more than 10, and more than three-quarters owned no slaves (Source: U.S. National Census).

The dependence on agriculture slowed other types of economic development in the South. The South lagged far behind the North in building canals, railroads, and factories. Its children – white as well as black – were much less apt than their northern counterparts to spend much time in school. The great majority of immigrants chose the industrializing North over the agrarian South.

Map Resources: U.S. Slave/Free Colored Maps were produced by compiling data from the historic U.S. National Census (1790-1860):

Slave and Free Colored as a Percent of Total Population (36"x12")

Slave/Free Colored Map with Timeline (11x17)

Data Resource: *Slave/Free Colored Data Tables* [Excel Spreadsheet] for creating the Slavery Maps from the historical U.S. Census can be downloaded in Excel format (total state population, total slave population, total free colored population 1790-1860). These tables can be used in the classroom for looking at the raw numbers used to create the maps and preparing charts and graphs showing change over time.

Historic Map Resource (primary document): 1861 Slavery Population in the Southern U.S. Map (11x17") Source: Library of Congress Map Collection.

Web Resource: Library of Congress American Memory: Voices of Slavery – transcripts and audio of interviews with former slaves (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/>).

Map Resources: *Cotton Map 1839-1924* and *Tobacco Map 1839-1919*. Agriculture Maps from the Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States (Carnegie Institute, 1932).

Southern Society and Culture:

The South remained a traditional society. Slavery was of course the most obvious and stark example of hierarchical social relations. But southern planters also dominated southern politics. Men certainly dominated women, and few women openly criticized male pastimes of drinking, fornicating, fighting, and dueling. The model woman was pure, pious, and submissive, though also expected to be a skilled manager of the household. Writings of the time and oral records of former slaves reflect this traditional Southern society. Indeed, reform organizations remained weak in the South. Powerful southerners distrusted movements like temperance that might be associated with abolitionism.

Like traditional conservative societies of other times and places, southerners emphasized the importance of honor. A good man was both kind and strong. He looked after his dependents – his wife, children, and slaves – and was hospitable and courteous to his peers. But he was also quick to avenge perceived slights and slurs, unafraid to risk his life to defend his good name.

The Northern Economy:

The Northeastern and then Midwestern United States became part of a global industrial movement in the decades before the Civil War.

Transportation keyed the transformation, as steamboats, canals, and especially railroads caused the price of moving goods to plummet. Lower transportation costs made it much easier for farmers and manufacturers alike to market their goods, and farmers expanded the acres of land they could plant, cultivate, and harvest as railroads brought them reapers and other pieces of animal-drawn farm equipment.

These products and many more were fabricated cheaply and abundantly by steam-powered factories. Clothing, shoes, firearms, reapers, and much more became readily available to the growing middle class – even as the people who produced such goods saw their wages fall and stagnate as their hours climbed and their control over the work place disappeared.

These shifts were particularly noticeable in cities, whose populations soared. Immigration increased dramatically, and immigrants were more apt than native-born citizens to live in urban areas. Railroads converged on cities, where factories, workers, and wealthy people clustered.

Map Resources: *Principal Manufacturing Cities 1859 and Railroads 1850-1869.* Agriculture and Industrial Maps from the Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States (Carnegie Institute, 1932).

Northern Society and Culture:

These economic changes prompted social and cultural changes as well. The spread of labor-saving machinery and inexpensive textiles made it possible for a growing number of middle-class families to withdraw their wives and children from productive labor. The childhoods of middle-class children lengthened, as they spent more time in school and at play. Middle-class women often turned to reform movements. They might begin by taking a more active part in

their church, support an orphanage, then perhaps advocate for temperance. Some would go on to become abolitionists or women's-rights advocates.

All of these social movements had in common an emphasis on prosperity, self restraint, and human dignity. Drinking, particularly drinking to excess, was bad because it entailed squandering money and perhaps missing work and losing control of one's actions, even to the point of becoming violent. Slavery was bad because it discouraged hard, honest work and visited cruelty upon human beings.

Book Resources for Northern and Southern Culture:

Michael Perman (ed). 1998. *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction, 2nd Edition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin (descriptions and drawings of Northern and Southern society during the Civil War and Reconstruction).

Clinton, Catherine. 1995. *Life in Civil War America*. National Parks Civil War Series, Eastern National.

Web Resources for Northern and Southern Culture:

The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War available at <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu>. The Valley Project details life in two American communities, one Northern and one Southern, from the time of John Brown's raid through the era of Reconstruction. In this digital archive you may explore thousands of original letters and diaries, newspapers and speeches, census and church records, left by men and women in Augusta County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Giving voice to hundreds of individual people, the Valley Project tells forgotten stories of life during the era of the Civil War.

4. The National Election of 1860

Polarization:

Fewer and fewer national institutions bound the nation together by 1860. The Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches had by then split along sectional lines. The Whig Party, which had included a significant proportion of the South, had been replaced by the Republican Party, which drew virtually all of its support from the North and the West. Northern Democrats were finding it increasingly difficult to get elected.

The *Dred Scott Decision of 1857* [**pdf resource**] had angered and frightened many northerners. Many years before, Dred and Harriet Scott had filed a suit in which they claimed their freedom on the grounds that their owner had taken them into territories where slavery had been outlawed by the Missouri Compromise. But the Supreme Court (led by all five of its southern judges) ruled that African Americans "had no rights which white men were bound to respect" and could not sue in federal courts and that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

This ruling suggested that slavery was the nation's default position, that it could only be stopped when a state – not a territory – voted to ban it. View *editorials* [**pdf resource**] on the Dred Scott Decision.

Web Resource: Further information on the Dred Scott Decision can be found at the Library of Congress' American Memory African-American Pamphlet Collection "From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1824-1909" The slavery question.
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaphtml/>.

Southerners, meanwhile, were scandalized by *John Brown's 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry* [**pdf resources & graphics**] and northern reaction to it. Brown, who had played an active role in attacking pro-slavery people in Kansas, had hoped that his band of twenty-two men could incite a general slave uprising in the Upper South. Federal troops quickly put down the attack, and Brown was soon hanged for treason. But southerners were stunned at the prayer meetings and rallies northerners held to commemorate a man who was bent on murder and mayhem.

PDF Resource: *Transcript of John Brown statement and speech* regarding his actions and execution.
Source: National Center for Public Policy Research.

The Election:

The best hope of avoiding Civil War in 1860 lay in the Democrats uniting behind a candidate who was determined to keep the country together. But Southern Democrats no longer trusted Stephen Douglas of Illinois, and they nominated one of their own, John Breckinridge. Former Southern Whigs joined with pro-Union border state citizens to form the Union Party. The Republicans chose Abraham Lincoln, who had gained a measure of national prominence in his unsuccessful bid to oust Douglas from his seat in the U.S. Senate two years before. Lincoln ran on the mainstream Republican platform of no expansion to slavery and also favored a protective tariff, homesteads to settlers, and federal aid for a transcontinental railroad. He believed that slavery was wrong, contrary to the founders' intentions, and destined to die. But he was adamant that he would not disturb the institution where it prevailed. View the *1860 political platforms* [**pdf resource**] of the candidates.

The North's rapid growth in population gave it a big advantage in the electoral college, and Lincoln won handily despite getting less than 40 percent of the nation's vote and virtually no support in the South.

Map Resources: 1860 Election Maps
1860 Election Map (Wikipedia)
1860 Election by County (Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States)
Presidential Election 1860-1872 (National Atlas)

Secession:

Lincoln and the rest of the Republican Party were evidently surprised when seven southern states seceded, established a constitution, and elected Jefferson Davis provisional president of the Confederate States of America before Lincoln even took office.

But Lincoln would not budge on the indissolubleness of the Union. When he sent provisions to Fort Sumter, a federal fort in Charleston, South Carolina, Jefferson Davis demanded that the fort be surrendered or shelled. On April 12, 1861, the shooting began in what would prove to be a long and bloody civil war.

5. Anti-Slavery and Racism in Oregon

Legal:

Oregon's law makers and citizens took strong measures to try to keep both slavery and African Americans out of their territory and state. The provisional government of 1844, in its ***Oregon Exclusion Laws*** [[pdf resource](#)], excluded African Americans – slave or free – from Oregon. This exclusion was reaffirmed in 1849, after Oregon became a territory, and in 1859, after it became a state. The ***1857 Oregon Constitution*** [[pdf resource](#)] reflects this general sentiment. The generous Donation Land Act of 1850 did not apply to people of African or Hawaiian descent.

The exclusion laws did not keep some African Americans from coming to the state or, in the case of slaves, from being brought here. But the law was enforced at least once, when a West Indian businessman from Oregon City, ***Jacob Vanderpool*** [[pdf resource](#)], was expelled.

Social:

The exclusionary laws, however, deterred most African Americans from coming to Oregon. Indeed, more chose to settle in Washington Territory, which was both less developed and less discriminatory. The ***1850 Oregon Territorial Census*** [[Data Spreadsheet](#)] counted less than 100 African Americans (or those of “Black” heritage) in Oregon (compared to a total population count of over 12,000 residents).

Discrimination against other people of color – from Hawaii and China – together with high death rates for Native Americans would make Oregon an overwhelmingly white state up until World War II. This was particularly true of the Willamette Valley, where the great majority of Oregon's population and prosperous farms were located. Historically, Oregon's Willamette Valley has been dominated by native-born, white farmers.

Book Resource: Additional information, maps and tables of early Oregon immigration to the Willamette Valley can be found in William A. Bowen, *The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier* (University of Washington Press, 1978).

Map Resource: Oregon Black Population 1860-1900. PDF map poster of the distribution of the “black” population in Oregon by county compiled using data from the 1860-1900 Federal Census.

PDF Resource: African-Americans in Salem (Source: Salem Library – Online History).

Political:

Racism was a key component of Jacksonian Democracy – popularized in the 1820s and 1830s during the presidency of Andrew Jackson. This was the political ideology that the majority of Oregon's voters carried with them across the plains in the 1840s and 1850s. Jacksonian Democrats embraced social and political equality among white males. They wanted easy access to cheap land and the franchise for all white men. They opposed most reforms and most government intervention in their lives, including taxes and government-backed banks.

Web Resource: *Jacksonian Democracy*. For a review of Jacksonian Democracy see Digital History's website at <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/subtitles.cfm?TitleID=92>,

A review of a map of the *Place of Birth of Oregon Residents in 1850* [[map resource](#)] reveals that most Oregon residents hailed from the border states separating the North and South. Migrants to the west would be expected to have intimate knowledge of the political controversies and debates about slavery and territorial expansion from the various political parties and constituencies occurring in these border regions at the time.

The Democratic Party, in particular, spoke to Oregon men's desires more than the Whig, Free-Soil, or Republican Parties did, and Democrats easily dominated Oregon politics in the 1840s and 1850s. *Joseph Lane* [[pdf resource](#)], an experienced soldier and the territory's first governor, was by far the most popular Oregon politician during these years.

Web Resource: Further information about Joseph Lane can be found at the Oregon Historical Society's *Oregon History* webpage (www.ohs.org) and at the University of Oregon Library's webpage (<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/speccoll/photo/flane.html>).

6. The Election of 1860 in Oregon

Strains among Oregon Democrats:

Slavery split Oregon Democrats. Oregon's voters opposed both slavery and African Americans (as evidenced in the exclusion laws). But a growing number of southern Democrats – not to mention the Supreme Court – were asserting that slavery ought to exist in all the territories; that slavery could not be excluded until a territory became a state and could then decide for itself.

That argument resonated with some Oregon Democrats, including the influential Joseph Lane. They either sympathized with southern slave holders or believed that slavery was strictly a question of property rights. Slave owners ought to be able to take their property – including human property – to Oregon if they wished.

But more Oregon Democrats than not believed that allowing slavery in Oregon was wrong and not necessarily for purely ethical reasons. They believed that slavery would harm the economic interests of the non-slave holding white majority and would allow slavery to override the clearly expressed wishes of the territory's voters. It would violate the principle of popular sovereignty.

The Dred Scott Decision of 1857 so alarmed Oregonians that they promptly decided, by a margin of three to one, to seek statehood as a free state thereby ensuring that Oregon would remain closed to slavery.

PDF Resource: *Oregon Statehood*. A brief summary of the debates and meetings leading up to Oregon Statehood.

The Election of 1860:

The national split among Democrats in 1860 also split Oregon's Democrats. Most of the party leaders sided with Douglas and the North. Lane and significant minority of Oregon Democrats sided with the Breckinridge and the South. Indeed, Lane ran as the Vice President on Breckinridge's ticket.

This split allowed Lincoln, with just 5,343 votes in Oregon, to outpoll both Douglas and Breckinridge, who divided more than 9,000 votes. View the ***Presidential Election [pdf resource]*** results for Oregon.

When the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, though, most of Lane's support in Oregon evaporated. He withdrew from political life, and because of the split in the Democratic Party, the Republican Party began its long reign over Oregon politics.

Book Resources on the 1850-1860 Politics of Oregon:

James E. Hendrickson. *Joe Lane of Oregon: Machine Politics and the Sectional Crisis*. Chapter 6: Aftermath and Finale (pp. 205-258).

Robert Walter Johannsen, *Frontier Politics and the Sectional Conflict: The Pacific Northwest on the Eve of the Civil War*. Chapter 5: The Campaign of 1860 (pp. 128-153).

Paul Bourke and Donald DeBats. *Washington County: Politics and Community in Antebellum America*. Chapter 7: The Electorate – an analysis of participation and partisanship – and Chapter 8: The Voters – a social profile (pp. 169-246).

7. Free Soil & Slavery Expansion Bibliography

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Web Resources:

The Library of Congress American Memory: *Voices from the Days of Slavery* (Former Slaves Tell Their Stories) at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/>.

The Library of Congress American Memory: *African American Odyssey* (a history of African Americans with links to LOC documents and photographs) at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohhtml/exhibit/aointro.html>.

The U.S. Constitution Online (http://www.usconstitution.net/ev_1860.html). Good source for tables and maps detailing the 1860 national election.