



James Michael Newell painted this mural, *The Underground Railroad*, in the post office of Dolgeville, New York, in 1940.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Analyzing Visuals What methods does the painter use to show the danger and difficulties facing the runaway family?

A New Compromise

Concerned over growing abolitionism, Southerners wanted a strong national **fugitive** (FYOO•juh•tihv), or runaway, slave law. Such a law would require every state to return runaway slaves.

In 1849 California applied to become a state—without slavery. If California became a free state, however, slave states would be outvoted in the Senate. Even worse, antislavery groups wanted to ban slavery in Washington, D.C. Southerners talked about **seceding** (sih•SEED•ihng) from, or leaving, the Union.

In 1850 Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky suggested a compromise. California would be a free state, but other new territories would have no limits on slavery. In addition, the slave trade, but not slavery itself, would be illegal in Washington, D.C. Clay also pushed for a stronger fugitive slave law.

A heated debate took place in Congress. Senator Calhoun opposed Clay's plan. Senator Daniel Webster supported it. Then President Taylor, who was against Clay's plan, died unexpectedly. Vice President Millard Fillmore, who favored the plan, became president.

Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois solved the problem. He divided Clay's plan into parts, each to be voted on separately. Fillmore had several Whigs abstain, or not vote, on the parts they opposed. In the end, Congress passed the Compromise of 1850.

Reading **HELPS**

fugitive person who is running away from legal authority

secede to officially leave an organization

Academic Vocabulary

network interconnected system

The Fugitive Slave Act

Part of the Compromise of 1850 was the Fugitive Slave Act. Anyone who helped a fugitive could be fined or imprisoned. Some Northerners refused to obey the new law. In his 1849 essay "Civil Disobedience," Henry David Thoreau wrote that if the law "requires you to be the agent [cause] of injustice to another, then I say, break the law." Northern juries refused to convict people accused of breaking the new law. People gave money to buy freedom for enslaved people. Free African Americans and whites formed a **network**, or interconnected system, called the Underground Railroad to help runaways find their way to freedom. Democrat Franklin Pierce became president in 1853. He intended to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act.

✓ PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining Who formed the Free-Soil Party and why?

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

GUIDING QUESTION *What is the Kansas-Nebraska Act?*

In 1854 Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois introduced a bill to settle the issue of slavery in the territories. It organized the region west of Missouri and Iowa as the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Both were north of 36°30' N latitude, the line that limited slavery. Before the law they would have been free, giving the free states more votes in the Senate and angering the South.

Douglas hoped to make his plan acceptable to both the North and South. He proposed repealing the Missouri Compromise and letting the voters in each territory vote on whether to allow slavery. He called his proposal "popular sovereignty."

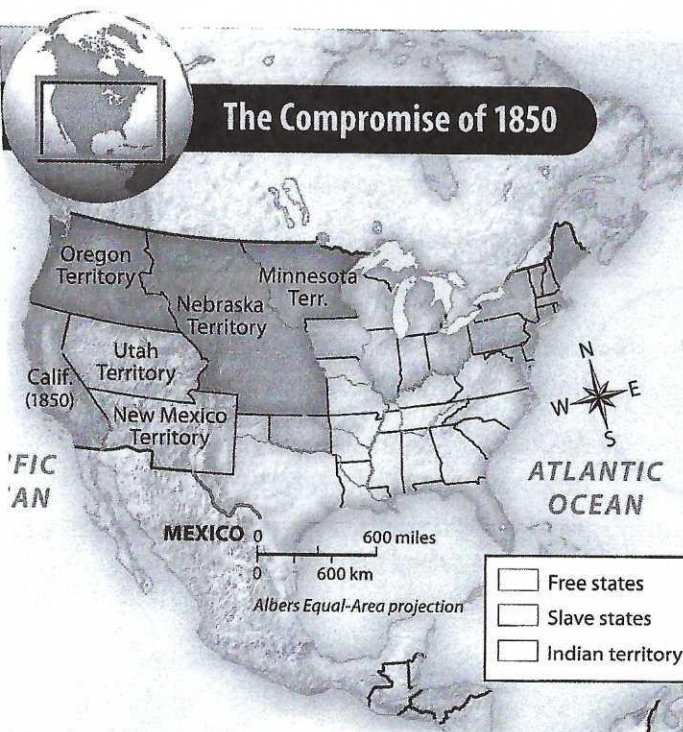
GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

As the United States grew, so did the debate over slaveholding.

1 PLACE Which territories did not allow slavery in 1854?

2 CRITICAL THINKING
Analyzing Which side in the slavery debate lost territory because of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854?

The Compromise of 1850



The Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854

