

L. The Founding Era (1789-1823)

1. Once the constitution was accepted by Americans, the challenge for the Founding Fathers was to guide the new country through its infancy.
2. The presidencies of George Washington and John Adams were both occupied with how to shape the new government during the dangerous period of the French Revolution (1789-99). Many Americans wished to support France in becoming a republic. Others supported reconciliation with America's mother country, Great Britain.
3. George Washington (president from 1789 to 1797) and John Adams (president from 1797 to 1801) steered a neutral course. Washington explained in his farewell address, "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is...to have with them *as little political connection as possible*..."
4. Continuing this policy, Thomas Jefferson (president from 1801-09) faced the perhaps even greater threat of the imperial genius of Napoleon, who had taken over France after its failed revolution. Napoleon had begun his conquest of Europe, and forced Spain to hand over Louisiana, thus creating a border between America and the French Empire along the Mississippi river.
5. Jefferson warned Napoleon that border disputes would lead to America allying with Britain and convinced Napoleon to sell the Louisiana territory to the United States in 1803. This *Louisiana Purchase* doubled the territory of the United States.
6. James Madison, the architect of the Constitution, served as president next, from 1809-17, and was faced with the grim necessity of going to war against Great Britain once again. American sailors were being enslaved by the British navy, which refused to recognize their American citizenship—a policy known as "pressing" men into service. This attack on the rights of Americans could not go unanswered.
7. The culmination of this period in which America so desperately needed to solidify its independence was the Monroe Doctrine of president James Monroe (president from 1817-25), which cemented America's political separation from its mother continent.
8. The Founding Fathers had fundamentally succeeded in securing the rights of Americans.

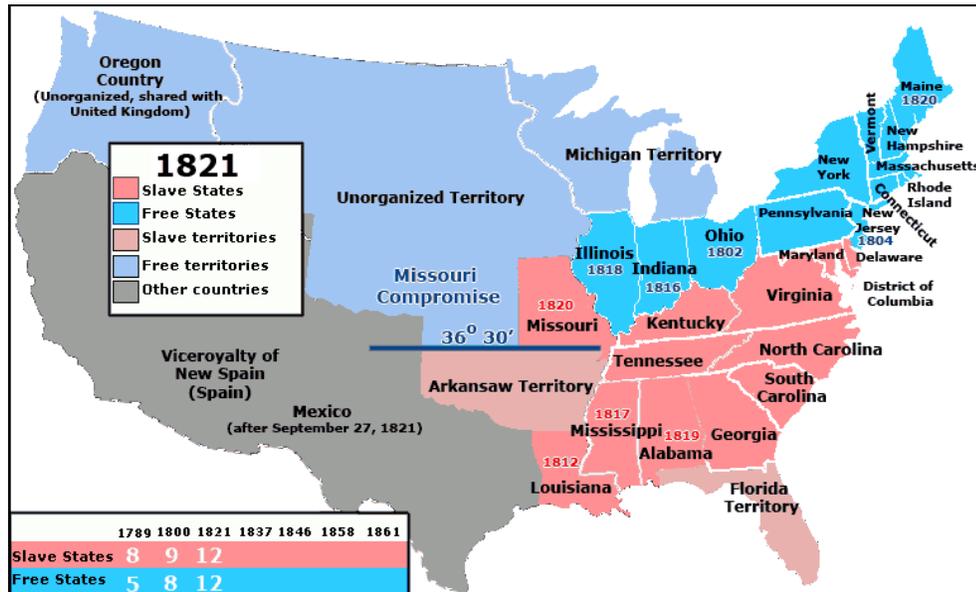


The states highlighted in bright green now occupy the territory acquired via the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which helped avoid a political entanglement with France and helped America grow into one of the largest countries in the world.

M. Abolitionism and the Growth and Decline of the Union (1820-1861)

1. The main negative aspect of the constitutional bargain that had made the United States possible—the acceptance of slavery—was not overcome by the Founders.
2. In 1808, as permitted by the constitution, with Thomas Jefferson presiding over the matter, the United States abolished the *slave trade*, begun in 1526 by the Portuguese and extended to the American colonies in 1619 by the Dutch. This was a key step forward, but it did not stop the expansion of slavery into the territories.
3. During Monroe's presidency, a new compromise was attempted to prevent the spread of slavery known as the "Missouri Compromise" of 1820.
 - a) Missouri was applying to join the Union as a slave state.

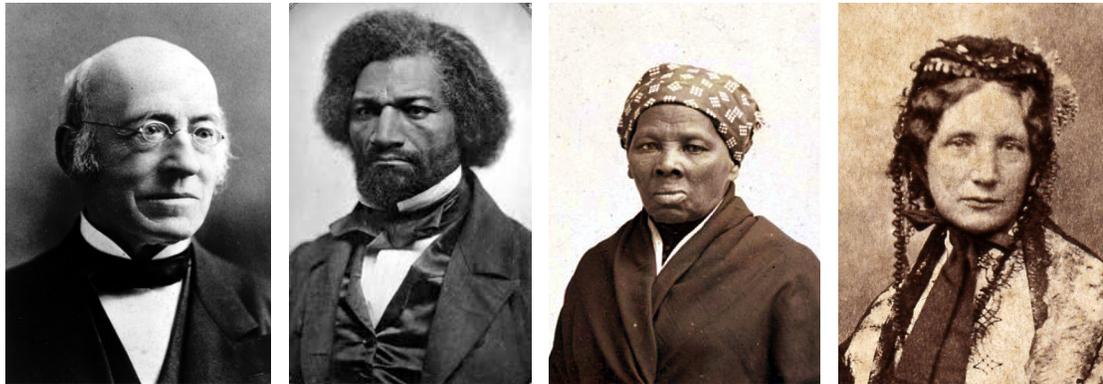
- b) Northerners resented this and insisted that a new free state, Maine, should be created by separating it from Massachusetts.
- c) In addition, the vast majority of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was designated as off limits to slavery.
- d) If the United States were to maintain the borders of 1820 the free states might have been able to outvote the slave states eventually and change the constitution to outlaw slavery.



Following the Missouri Compromise of 1820, there were 12 free states and 12 slave states. But the vast region of the Louisiana Territory (and the new Oregon Country) would be off limits to slavery because of the Missouri Compromise, which drew a line extending from the southern border of Missouri westward to limit the growth of slavery.

4. Some Americans refused to accept the continuation of slavery on moral grounds. These supporters of natural rights insisted that slavery was contrary to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and their push to abolish slavery once and for all ranks them as great heroes in American history.
 - a) William Lloyd Garrison, a New England journalist, started it all, with a newspaper called *The Liberator* in 1831.
 - b) Garrison was joined by an escaped slave, Frederick Douglass, who became a fantastic public speaker. His speech, "*What To the Slave is the 4th of July?*" uses the principles of the Founding Fathers to reject the inheritance of slavery.
 - c) Among the many heroes of this phase of history is Harriet Tubman, also an escaped slave, who became one of the organizers of the "Underground Railroad" — a network of people in the North who helped escaped slaves make their way north to Canada.
 - d) Another great contributor to the cause of abolitionism was Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which dramatized the evils of slavery.

5. Because of abolitionists, the willingness of both slave holders and advocates of freedom to compromise with one another gradually declined as the years passed and the country grew. Thus even as the union grew, it declined. (The *sentiment* of union declined.)
6. When Texas joined the Union after breaking away from Mexico, border disputes between America and Mexico led to the Mexican-American War and yet another massive expansion of territory.
7. Because of the Missouri Compromise, slavery would be allowed in most of this new area, but when California joined the union as a free state in 1850, slaveholders demanded the opening of still more territory to slavery. The *final* compromise was made: the “Compromise of 1850,” in which all territories were opened to slavery as long as settlers within any territory wished it to be so democratically. (This was known as “popular sovereignty.”)
8. A violent contest to determine the fate of Kansas was the first episode of conflict between the two great parts of American culture, which led finally to the Civil War.



From left to right, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, are four of the most illustrious abolitionists who deserve to be commemorated for their moral crusade against slavery as leaders of the abolitionist movement (1831-61).