

Thirty-Third Congress

Dec. 5, 1853-Mar. 3, 1855

Administration of Franklin Pierce

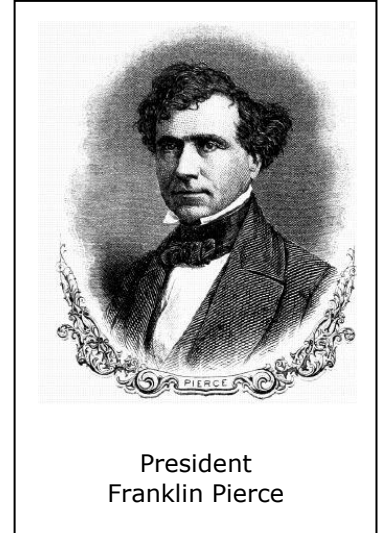
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Historical Background

At the beginning of the 33rd Congress, trade with South American countries had been disrupted by filibustering efforts by U.S. citizens and the resulting British and Spanish blockades. Similarly, trade with Europe had seen some decline due to the Crimea War and internal unrest within Europe. Therefore, seeking trade with Japan, which had not traded with western countries for centuries, President Fillmore, in late November 1852, dispatched a U.S. naval party headed by Commodore Matthew C. Perry to visit the Far East. Some fifteen months later, on March 31, 1854, the United States was able to secure a treaty of peace, friendship, and commerce with the government of Japan. Likewise, a reciprocity treaty was signed with the Canadians the following June.

Domestically, by early 1854, it was clear that the Compromise of 1850 had not ended the sectionalism debate as it began merging with discussions of development in the West and construction of railroads. As Franklin Pierce was taking office in March, the construction of the transcontinental railroad, a major technological advance, was in its planning stages. There were several routes under consideration at the time, including one favored by Southern legislators, which extended into Mexican territory. A treaty with Mexico, arranged by U.S. Minister James Gadsden on December 30, 1853, led to the acquisition of a rectangular, 29,640 square mile strip of territory in the Messilla Valley south of the Gila River (which is today lower Arizona and New Mexico) for \$10 million.

When the Gadsden Purchase was voted upon by the Senate on April 25, twelve Northerners rejected the treaty because they were opposed to the addition of a potential southern territory and/or a southern route for the projected transcontinental railroad. With this treaty, which barely gained the required two-thirds approval of the Senate in April 1854, the expansion of the United States into adjoining territories ended.

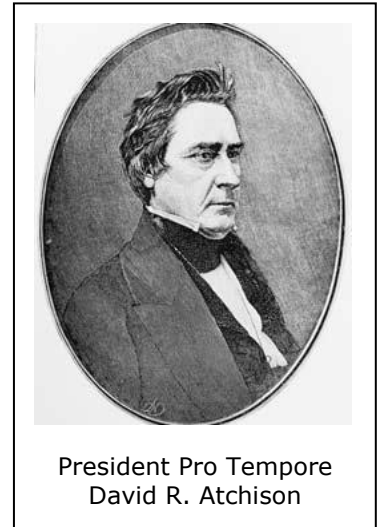


House	Senate
Majority Party: Democrat (157 seats)	Majority Party: Democrat (38 seats)
Minority Party: Whig (71 seats)	Minority Party: Whig (22 seats)
Other Parties: Free Soiler (4 seats); Independent (1 seat); Independent Democrat (1 seat)	Other Parties: Free Soiler (2 seats)
Speaker of the House: Linn Boyd	President Pro Tempore: David R. Atchison; Lewis Cass; Jesse D. Bright

Meanwhile, a far more emotional debate ensued on January 23, 1854, after Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, chairman of the Committee on Territories, introduced a bill aimed at organizing the country west of the Missouri River and north of 36° 30' into the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Under this bill, each territorial government would decide whether to permit or prohibit slavery. On May 30, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was signed by President Franklin Pierce, and realignment of national political parties began within weeks, notably with the creation of the Republican Party on an anti-slavery platform.

Sources:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#). Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005



War or Peace?

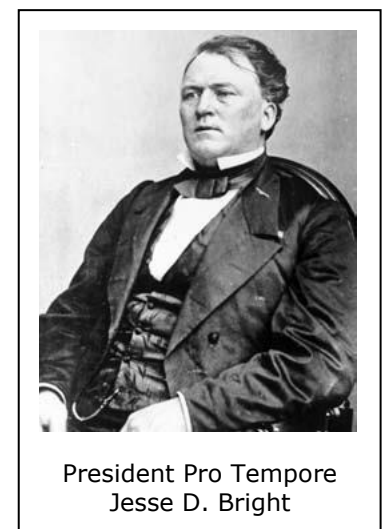
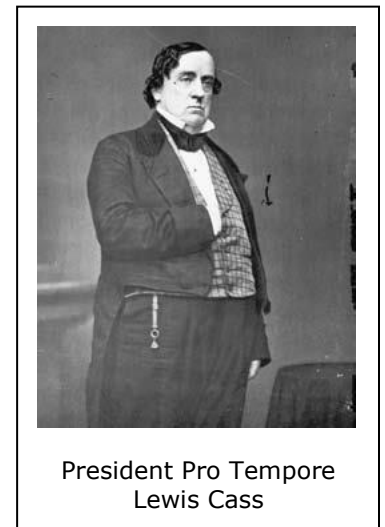
Trade with Japan and Indian Wars

While the Crimean War raged overseas, the U.S. faced strained international relations in the Americas. The continued expansion of U.S. territories to the west and the south were a source of tension on the southern border. The Mexican-American War had ended a few years previously and a treaty re-established the boundary near California, however many grievances remained between the two countries. In the North, tensions arose from British Naval involvement in Canada. Fisheries and coastal trade, which had been mainly controlled by British powers, were beginning to be relinquished to American trade and commerce. Moreover, international trade was a major issue. The U.S. remained neutral during the Crimean War but was exposed to conflicts involving Great Britain, France, Sicily, and Prussia. The Treaty of Kanagawa, facilitated by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, opened up markets in previously closed off Japan, which helped trade while most of Europe was cut off.

Conflicts also arose in the homeland, especially between the U.S. citizens pushing west and Native American tribes being forced from their lands. Attacks by both parties were common around border settlements and railroad towns. There were also skirmishes between slave-holding states and those upholding Abolition. Kansas in particular became a battleground between armed pro-slavery groups and militant abolitionists - feuds which were fueling the fire for the approaching Civil War.

Sources:

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Economic Trends and Conditions

Although Congress considered tariff reduction, there were no radical changes in the financial policy of the government during the 32nd Congress. What did change was the mass acquisition of public lands which were taken to market. The territories of the U.S. were growing in acreage, and in turn, the sale of lands. The expansion of land also made way for the construction of railways. On the subject of tax revenue, President Pierce noted in his state of the union address that taxes "levied almost insensibly to the taxpayer" had increased revenue "beyond either the interests or prospective wants of the Government." He also suggested that any surplus of revenue be used to reduce the public debt, which at the end of the fiscal year in 1854 was \$67,340,628.

Between 1853 and 1854, there were dips in exports and trade revenue, due to the Crimean War and unrest in Europe. Despite the tenuous trade market, the land market still grew. Demands for Federal land grants were made by the growing number of settlers in the Mid-West, while at the same time, increases in railway production quickened the pace of land sales and Westward Expansion. Perry's treaty with Japan, which trade opened up in East Asia, helped supplement the markets while trade in Europe was at a standstill. In June 1854, the Canadian Reciprocity Treaty opened U.S. markets to Canadian agricultural, timber and fish products. In return, the U.S. received new fishing privileges along the Canadian coast at New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

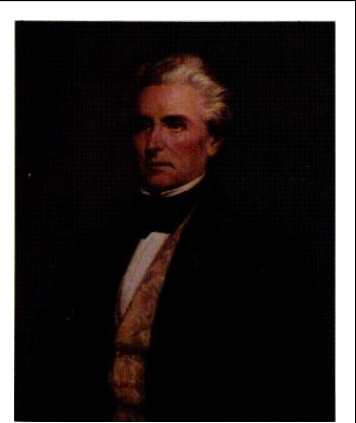
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Speaker of the House
Linn Boyd

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Major Treaties

Gadsden Purchase Treaty. Arranged for the ceding to the United States by Mexico of a strip of 29,640 square mile of desert land south of the Gila River for \$10,000,000. Concluded December 30, 1853. Approved by the Senate Apr. 25, 1854. ([18 Stat. 503](#))

Treaty of Kanagawa. Opened the Japanese ports of Simoda and Hakodade to U.S. trade, made provisions for ships and seamen of the U.S. shipwrecked in Japan, and allowed a U.S. agent to remain at Simoda. Concluded Mar. 31, 1854. Approved by the Senate July 15, 1854. ([18 Stat. 446](#))

Canadian Reciprocity Treaty. Opened the United States markets to Canadian agricultural products, timber, and fish, and in return American fishermen received new fishing privileges along the inlets of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and several adjacent small islands. Concluded June 5, 1854. Approved by the Senate Aug. 2, 1854. ([18 Stat. 329](#)) Abrogated by the United States Mar. 17, 1866.

Sources:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#), Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

1853 Events

- **Jan. 3:** Solomon Northup, author of *Twelves Years a Slave* regains his freedom after 12 years in slavery
- **Mar. 2:** [Territory of Washington organized out of Oregon Territory](#)
- **Mar. 20:** *Taiping Rebellion* - [A rebel army of around 750,000 seizes Nanjing, killing 30,000 Imperial troops in China](#)
- **Apr. 16:** Opening of first passenger railway in India, from Bombay to Thana, Maharashtra, 22 miles, 36 km
- **Apr. 18:** After taking the oath of office on foreign soil (Havana Cuba), Vice President William R. King, died of tuberculosis 45 days after taking office
- **May 6:** First major U.S. rail disaster occurs in Norwalk, Conn., killing 46 people when a train plunged off a bridge into Norwalk Harbor
- **May 12–Oct. 31:** Great Industrial Exhibition held in Dublin, Ireland
- **July 8:** [U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry arrives in Edo Bay with a request for a trade treaty](#)
- **Aug. 12:** [New Zealand acquires self-government](#)
- **Aug. 24:** [Potato chips are first prepared, by George Crum at Saratoga Springs, New York, according to popular accounts](#)

- **Oct. 4–5:** *Crimean War* - [The Ottoman Empire \(later joined by Britain, France and Sardinia\)](#) starts a war with Russia over control of access to religious site in the Holy Land
- **Nov. 3:** [Troops of William Walker capture La Paz in Baja California and declare the \(short-lived\) Republic of Lower California](#)
- **Dec. 30:** *Gadsden Purchase* - [Gadsden Purchase Treaty signed, allowing for the purchase of 29,670 square miles \(present day southern Arizona and New Mexico\) from Mexico for \\$10 million, marking the last substantial territorial acquisition in the continental U.S.](#)

1854 Events

- **Jan. 3:** Charles Dickens commences writing the novel *Hard Times*
- **Feb. 17:** The British recognize the independence of the Orange Free State (South Africa); its official independence is declared 6 days later
- **Feb. 28:** [The Republican Party \(United States\) is founded in Ripon, Wisconsin](#)
- **Mar. 4:** [The Kansas-Nebraska Act passes the Senate after being resubmitted to include the repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820](#)
- **Mar. 27:** *Crimean War* - The British Empire declares war on Russia
- **Mar. 31:** Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the United States Navy signs the Convention of Kanagawa with the Japanese government (the Tokugawa shogunate), opening the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to American trade
- **May 30:** [Kansas-Nebraska Act passed by U.S., repealing the Missouri Compromise of 1820 allowing the newly created territories of Kansas and Nebraska to determine for themselves if they would be slave-holding](#)
- **June 21:** *Crimean War* - Battle of Bomarsund in the Åland Islands off the coast of Finland. British Royal Navy seaman's mate Charles D. Lucas throws a live Russian artillery shell overboard by hand before it explodes, for which he is awarded the first Victoria Cross in 1857
- **Aug. 31–Sept. 8:** [An epidemic of cholera in London kills 10,000. Dr John Snow traces the source of one outbreak \(that killed 500\) to a single water pump, validating his theory that cholera is water-borne, and forming the starting point for epidemiology](#)
- **Sept. 20:** *Crimean War* - British and French troops defeat the Russians at the Battle of the Alma
- **Nov. 17:** In Egypt, the Suez Canal Company is formed
- **Dec. 30:** [The first U.S. oil company, Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company, incorporated](#)

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Major Acts

Kansas-Nebraska Act. Repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, so that the citizens in the newly created territories of Kansas and Nebraska would themselves determine whether they would be slave or free upon entering the Union. All cases involving slavery could now be appealed to the territorial courts and the U.S. Supreme Court. Approved May 30, 1854. ([10 Stat. 277, Chap. 59](#))

Citizenship Act of 1855. Granted right of citizenship to children of citizens born out of the limits of jurisdiction of the United States. Approved Feb. 10, 1855. ([10 Stat. 604, Chap. 71](#))

Source:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#). Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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