

President	Millard Fillmore
Chronological Order	13
Life Span	1800-1874
Home State	New York
Elected	Vice President in 1848, succeeded to the presidency in 1850.
Political Party	Whig
Vice President	None
First Lady	Abigail Powers Fillmore
Children	1 son, 1 daughter
Physical Attributes	5' 9" tall, impeccable dresser, fair hair, blue eyes
Undergraduate Education	None
Military Service	New York militia during Mexican War
Profession	Attorney
Other Political Offices	U.S. House of Representatives
Nickname	None
Family Lineage	English
Religious Affiliation	Unitarian



- Biographical Notes**
1. Millard Fillmore was a well-known four-term Congressman from New York who was chosen as Zachary Taylor's running mate in 1848 to balance the Whig ticket geographically. He succeeded to the presidency after Taylor's sudden death and proved to be a competent president.
He did what he thought was best for the country by supporting the Compromise of 1850, but this ultimately cost him a chance to be elected president himself. Specifically, he believed that since some of the terms of the compromise were favorable to the South and some were favorable to the North, both sides could live with it – at least for the time being. However, the Fugitive Slave Law, which was part of the compromise, was so harsh that it enraged many northerners. His willingness to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law and his hesitancy about running for president cost him the Whig nomination in 1852. Even if he had been nominated, he probably would not have won the general election due to a lack of support in the North.
 2. Fillmore grew up in a family with eight children on a farm located between Syracuse and Ithaca, NY. The family was very poor – the small farm could not support them – so at the age of 15 Fillmore's father apprenticed him to a cloth maker, a brutal apprenticeship that stopped just short of slavery. Fillmore taught himself to read and finally managed to borrow thirty dollars and pay off his obligation to the cloth maker. Free, he walked one hundred miles to get back home to his family.
 3. Back home, Millard resolved to get an education. He pored over any book he could get his hands on and attended school in a nearby town. His teacher was Abigail Powers, a twenty-one-year-old woman just two years older than he. She loaned him books and was the first person to encourage his ambition to become anything but a farmer or tradesman. Meanwhile, Millard's father arranged a clerkship for Millard with a local judge that would also allow him to study law.
About this time, the Fillmore family, including Millard, moved to East Aurora, near Buffalo, where he passed the bar in 1823. In 1826, he set up a law practice in East Aurora and married Abigail.
 4. In 1826, many of the era's ruling politicians were Freemasons, including Andrew Jackson. Fillmore joined the Anti-Masonic Party and served three terms in the state assembly. In 1832, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

5. In 1834, the Anti-Masonic Party merged with the Whig Party, whose central tenet was the opposition of Jackson. Fillmore was re-elected to Congress as a Whig three times, and in his last term, he was Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He ran unsuccessfully for governor of New York in 1844 and was elected comptroller of New York in 1847.

6. At the 1848 Whig National Convention, General Zachary Taylor of Louisiana won the nomination for president on the fourth ballot. When this happened, the Northern Whigs were furious that their presidential nominee was a Southerner who owned scores of slaves. For a few hours, it looked like the party would split between its "conscience" and "cotton" wings. For vice president, the party sought a Northerner who had either antislavery or moderate views to balance the ticket. Daniel Webster – an antislavery senator from Massachusetts – was offered the spot but refused, growling that Taylor was nothing but "an illiterate frontier colonel." Eventually, the convention chose Fillmore, whose views on slavery were moderate. (He believed it was protected in the states where it already existed but was not in favor of expanding it into the territory acquired from Mexico.) Fillmore was a smart choice because New York was the state with, by far, the most electoral votes. Taylor had to win New York to win the general election. The convention did not put forth a platform because it wanted to avoid addressing the question of slavery in the territories acquired from Mexico. The Whigs feared this issue might split the party.

In 1848, the Democratic Party split over the question of slavery. When the party nominated former Michigan governor Lewis Cass, he ran on the principle of popular sovereignty for slavery in the newly acquired territories in the West. Democratic Party founder Martin Van Buren strongly disagreed; he wanted no slavery in these territories. Consequently, Van Buren split from the party and ran as the candidate of the Free-Soil Party. He did not win any electoral votes, but in crucial New York (36 electoral votes), he took enough votes away from Cass to allow Taylor and Fillmore to win the state and the election, 163 to 127 electoral votes.

7. When Taylor and Fillmore took office, five significant problems were facing the country; each had something to do with slavery. The first was what to do with California, which desperately needed a civilian government. The Gold Rush, which began in 1848, led to an influx of rowdy, hard-working, often angry, and occasionally hard-drinking citizens. No territorial government had been provided, and a state of lawlessness existed that went beyond the military's ability to manage it. For example, individual mining claims, often tenuous at best, sometimes had to be defended using force. Residents demanded statehood and drew up a state constitution that banned slavery. Southerners reacted to the ban by opposing California statehood because it would upset the Senate's free state/slave state balance of power. (N.B. One reason for the California ban of slavery was that miners did not want to compete with slave labor.)

The second issue was whether to allow slavery in the non-California part of the Mexican Cession. (The land that went on to comprise most of the New Mexico and Utah Territories.) The climate (too dry) and topography (too rugged) of this region was unfavorable for growing plantation crops like cotton, sugar, or tobacco. Hence, it was unlikely that slavery would thrive there. Also, the region had been part of Mexico, which did not allow slavery, so it did not currently exist there. Nevertheless, slave-holding states still did not want slavery outlawed there in the future.

A third issue was the boundary between New Mexico and Texas. When Texas declared its independence from Mexico in 1836, it arbitrarily defined its western border to include 60 percent of present-day New Mexico. But the latter territory remained, by its own choice, under Mexican control until the arrival of U.S. troops in 1846 during the Mexican War. The Taylor administration was sympathetic to New Mexico's interpretation of the border. However, the slave-holding states sided with Texas in the hope of importing slavery into the disputed territory. This disagreement was volatile; Texas threatened to send in the state's militia to maintain its claim, and several other southern states threatened to support Texas militarily if fighting broke out.

The fourth and fifth issues both had to do with slave laws. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 permitted masters to track down their fugitive slaves and take them home after receiving a certificate of removal. But enforcement of the law had been relatively weak. Frustrated by the lack of cooperation from the northern states, the South demanded revisions that would force compliance. Northerners, in turn, insisted on the abolition of the slave trade in Washington, D.C., which at the time was the largest slave market in North America.

8. Henry Clay proposed to solve these problems with his Compromise of 1850. It had five provisions: (a) the admission of California as a free state, (b) the payment of \$10 million to Texas for giving up its claims to eastern New Mexico, (c) the remainder of the Mexican Cession area plus the land from Texas to be formed into the New Mexico and Utah Territories, with no restrictions on slavery (hence open to popular sovereignty), (d) a stringent Fugitive Slave Law, and (e) the abolition of the slave trade (but not slavery itself)

in the District of Columbia. (N.B. Texas needed the \$10 million to pay the crippling debt it had incurred while it was an independent republic.)

Taylor opposed the Compromise of 1850. He wanted California and New Mexico admitted as free states without side deals to appease the South. According to Taylor's plan, once New Mexico was admitted as a state, the U.S. Supreme Court could rule on the Texas-New Mexico boundary issue. The opposition of (a) Taylor, (b) northern antislavery senators, and (c) southern secessionist "fire-eaters" caused the Compromise of 1850 to flounder in the Senate for seven months. In contrast to Taylor, Fillmore supported the Compromise of 1850; he felt that the concessions made to the South were a price worth paying to keep the Union intact. (N.B. The term "fire-eater" refers to the incendiary rhetoric of extreme proslavery advocates.)

9. In July 1850, Zachary Taylor died unexpectedly, and Fillmore became president. Several members of Taylor's cabinet had undercut Fillmore previously, so to forestall dismissal, each member submitted his resignation the evening of Fillmore's inauguration. He accepted them all without hesitation but asked them to stay in office for a month while he reorganized the administration. They gave him only a week.

Fillmore moved quickly to surround himself with high-caliber men from different regions of the country who shared his pro-Union, pro-compromise views. In particular, he chose Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts for secretary of state and Governor John J. Crittenden of Kentucky for attorney general.

10. The Senate was still debating the Compromise of 1850 when Taylor died. The situation changed dramatically once Fillmore became president. He and his cabinet members worked with senators to get five bills based on Clay's tenets through the Senate, then worked with congressmen to get the legislation through the House.

In the meantime, Texas, supported by other slaveholding states, threatened to invade New Mexico and take by force the land it claimed to own. If the Texas militia had moved across the border into New Mexico, the Civil War might have begun right there and then.

Fillmore acted promptly and decisively. To discourage an invasion, he sent federal troops to New Mexico. Also, Fillmore sent a message to Congress that declared unequivocally that Texas enjoyed no rights in the disputed area. He stated: "If Texas militia march into any of the other States or into any Territory of the United States, there to enforce any law of Texas, they become at that moment trespassers; they are no longer under the protection of any lawful authority, and to be regarded merely as intruders." Should the laws of the United States be opposed or obstructed in any way, he said it was his duty as Commander-in-chief to employ the armed forces as they were needed. In the face of such a determined president, Texas backed down and ultimately accepted the Compromise of 1850, which paid it \$10 million for the disputed land.

11. So, in the long run, who got the better deal in the Compromise of 1850, the North or the South? The North. California, as large as some countries and with superb Pacific harbors (San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego), came in as a free state. The New Mexico and Utah Territories eventually produced five free states (New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and Colorado) and no slave states. The land Texas ceded to New Mexico was ultimately worth much more than \$10 million. The abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia offended the South. The only "win" for the South was the new Fugitive Slave Law.

12. Bill by bill, the measures of the Compromise of 1850 passed in Congress in substantially the same form that Henry Clay had proposed. Fillmore rapidly signed them all into law – all but one, where he hesitated.

The requirement that runaway slaves be returned to their masters can be found in the Constitution (Article IV, Section II, Part 3) and was critical in securing ratification of that document by the southern states in 1788. The particulars were left to Congress, which passed the first Fugitive Slave Act in 1793. Ultimately the northern states resisted its implementation, withholding the use of their police and jails, adopting "personal liberty laws," and guaranteeing jury trials for accused slaves, who were likely to be acquitted. In the eyes of southern members of Congress, a stricter fugitive slave law was an indispensable part of the Compromise of 1850. Fillmore did not like the new law, but he felt it was necessary to preserve the Union. Years later, he said:

I am and ever have been opposed to slavery, and nothing but the conviction of Constitutional obligation could have induced me to give my sanction to a law for the reduction of fugitive slaves. I knew when I signed it, I signed my political death warrant, and by its execution arranged against myself the most fanatical hostility ... but that man is not worthy of public confidence, who hesitates to perform his official duty, regardless of the consequence to himself.

13. Under the new Fugitive Slave Law, federal commissioners were appointed in northern counties to assist

slave owners by ensuring that local officials carried out the law and that abolitionists did not rescue the recaptured slaves. Typically, the slave owner sent an emissary or emissaries (i.e., a slave catcher or slave catchers) to the northern state in question with a sworn affidavit stating that the person to be detained had run away from the signatory. The commissioner was authorized to order and enforce the fugitive's return. Often the slave catchers would accompany local law enforcement officials when they went to detain the fugitive.

When the fugitive was caught, he was brought before the commissioner for a hearing. He was not given a jury trial and could not even speak on his own behalf. The commissioner would listen to the evidence and decide if the slave owner's claim was valid. If the commissioner ruled in favor of the slave owner, his fee was ten dollars. If he found that a mistake had been made and ordered the prisoner released, his fee was only five dollars.

The marshals and deputies responsible for the arrest of a fugitive could be fined \$1,000 if they refused to do their duty. They could also summon citizens to help them. Any person who obstructed a slave catcher, participated in a rescue, or abetted or concealed a fugitive, could be punished with a fine of \$1,000 and imprisoned for six months.

One of the bill's aims was to break the back of the Underground Railroad, which ferried fugitive slaves into Canada. Although slave owners credited the Underground Railroad with deeper penetration of the South than was ever achieved – it was extremely rare for a slave to escape from a Deep South state – by 1850, it had extended its reach across the northern states as far west as Iowa. It was particularly effective in the border states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

Southerners were adamant that the new Fugitive Slave Law be enforced because it was the only win they got out of the Compromise of 1850.

14. The new Fugitive Slave Law was an appalling blunder due to its extremely harsh provisions. It was the single most intrusive assertion of federal authority enacted during the entire antebellum era. Brutal recaptures shocked northern consciences. The lack of a jury trial seemed unconstitutional. And when horrified Northerners grasped that the law required them to actively cooperate with slave catchers, no matter what their feelings about slavery, it spurred civil disobedience on a massive scale. Public meetings from Maine to Wisconsin denounced the law as unjust, unconstitutional, and unchristian. Many shocked northern moderates, heretofore passive, were driven into the swelling ranks of the abolitionists by this new law.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an antislavery novel that depicted the realities of slavery, including the plight of fugitive slaves. The book had a profound effect on American attitudes towards slavery. The first year after it was published, it sold 300,000 copies in the U.S. and a million copies in Great Britain. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the second-best-selling book of the nineteenth century. Only the Bible sold more copies. The success of the book was a moral condemnation that Southerners found difficult to tolerate.

15. In October 1850, the first challenge came just weeks after the Fugitive Slave Law had passed. Attempting to hold a captured fugitive slave against a mob, a marshal in Pennsylvania tried to invoke the new law by enlisting a posse from the local citizenry. Instead, the crowd broke into the temporary jail and rescued the fugitive. Two Pennsylvania judges asked the president for a general order authorizing the use of federal troops in all such crises. Fillmore was reluctant to use troops, but he recognized that anything less might prove ineffective. He was not motivated by concern for individual slave owners; he was worried that any failure to enforce the law would strengthen Southern secessionists. He told Webster that he would "admit no right of *nullification* North or South." Crittenden and Webster were absent, but the remainder of Fillmore's cabinet agreed unanimously that he had the power and the duty to use military force to support civilian authorities trying to enforce the law. Fillmore instructed the marine commander in Philadelphia to assist any marshal or deputy if a federal judge supported him. He announced that all marshals and commissioners would have the same support when needed.

16. In October 1850, South Carolina fire-eaters felt that they had gotten the short end of the Compromise of 1850 and hatched a plan to seize the federal forts in Charleston as the first step towards secession. By way of preparation, to obstruct federal retaliation, the U.S. attorney and other important federal officers in the state suddenly resigned. Fillmore had trouble finding suitable men to fill the vacancies because there was a concerted plan to keep the posts vacant.

Fillmore was so alarmed that he brought General Winfield Scott into the cabinet meetings to prepare for the insurrection. On Scott's advice, the fortifications at Charleston were strengthened. Troops were sent into South Carolina and stationed at points in North Carolina so that they could, in the case of an outbreak, be concentrated at the point of attack. The governor of South Carolina called on Fillmore to explain this

hostile act of stationing so many troops in the vicinity of Charleston. Fillmore replied that as commander-in-chief of the American army, it was his duty to station the troops at such points as he deemed most advantageous for the public interest and that he did not have to explain himself to the governor of South Carolina.

At this point, South Carolinians would have been willing to lead secession, but they realized that it would be better if the initial move began with a state with a less radical reputation. Earlier, Georgia's legislature had declared that the admission of a "free" California would be an act of aggression requiring a drastic counteraction. The California bill had passed. "What will Georgia do?" became the inevitable question, and fire-eaters placed their hopes on the actions of the Peach State. They did not have to wait long. Almost immediately, Governor Towns issued a proclamation for a state convention to meet on December 10 to determine Georgia's course of action.

Georgian supporters of the Compromise of 1850, particularly Congressmen Alexander Stephens and Robert Toombs, made sure that the majority of the delegates to the convention supported the Compromise of 1850. And the threat of secession disappeared for the time being.

17. In February 1851, the boldest challenge yet to the Fugitive Slave Law occurred in Boston. A large crowd of black men burst into the federal courthouse and forcibly removed Shadrach Minkins, a waiter who had been seized by a slave catcher a few hours before.

The South watched and waited to see what Fillmore would do and whether the law, as secessionists had always warned, would prove a mere sham when it was tested. After a special cabinet meeting, the president condemned Minkins's rescue as a "scandalous outrage" and ordered civil and military officials of all ranks to recapture him. By this time, Minkins had already been dispatched to safety in Canada via the Underground Railroad. But if there was any single moment that can be said to have marked Fillmore's transition from a northern man with mild antislavery views into an enforcer of the Fugitive Slave law, this was it.

Six weeks after Minkins' escape, fugitive slave Thomas Sims was arrested in Boston and Secretary of State Webster made sure he did not get away. At his personal order, Sims was surrounded by a guard of three-hundred armed militia and police, and marched in the middle of the night to the harbor, where he embarked on his return to slavery in Georgia from the same wharf where the Boston Tea Party had taken place.

18. Northern resistance to the Fugitive Slave law continued to harden throughout the 1850s. More than half the northern states passed aggressive new liberty laws designed to thwart slave-catching. In Massachusetts, any official who granted a certificate permitting the removal of a fugitive from the state was to be instantly and permanently barred from holding state office. In other states, officials who violated similar statutes were punished with anywhere from a \$500 fine and six months in jail in Pennsylvania to a \$2,000 fine and ten years in prison in Vermont.

Meanwhile, the Underground Railroad grew exponentially into the most significant mass movement of civil disobedience since the American Revolution. New underground lines were opened by road, canal, sea, and railway. Safe houses were established in towns where abolitionists had been mobbed for daring to speak in public only a few years earlier. Thousands of Americans, black and white, provided the fugitives with food, clothing, and shelter. "Conductors," like the legendary Harriet Tubman, led slaves from the South to entry points. The home of Senator William H. Seward in Auburn, New York, was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

By delivering thousands of freedom seekers into northern towns that had never seen a slave before, the Underground Railroad radicalized ordinary Americans. They discovered that men and women who seemed like abstractions in faraway Mississippi or South Carolina were people much like themselves, whose hopes and dreams were shackled – even in the North – to the eternal fear of recapture. A traumatized New Yorker wrote, after watching a fugitive slave dragged by deputies bleeding down a street in Syracuse, New York, "I have witnessed a scene that has frozen my heart's blood. I have seen the perdition of slavery enacted in Syracuse, in the heart of New York. ... I have heard his frantic wail, his scream of despair. Oh, such a wail!"

19. By the time of Fillmore's presidency, Japan had been a completely isolated nation for nearly three centuries. Nevertheless, American shipping interests identified the nation as a prime location to stop and resupply their ships with coal on the way to China and Southeast Asia. Also, Japan itself was a potential new trade market. Therefore, Fillmore ordered a trade mission to Japan led by Commodore Matthew Perry. Although the mission was not completed until the succeeding administration of Franklin Pierce, the policy did open Japan for trade with the rest of the world.

20. In 1851, French President Napoleon III presented Hawaiian King Kamehameha II with a list of demands that would make the islands a French protectorate. Fillmore warned Napoleon that "the United States would not stand for any such action" and that if anyone were to annex Hawaii, it would be the United States. The

French backed off.

21. Southerners had been interested in acquiring Cuba as a possible source of new slave states for years. Zachary Taylor's predecessor, James Polk, tried to purchase the island from the Spanish for \$100,000,000, but they refused his offer. Early in the Taylor administration, a Venezuelan named Narciso Lopez had raised an army of several hundred Americans, most adventurous Southerners, and tried to invade Cuba. This "filibustering" expedition managed to land in Cuba and hoped to inspire Cubans to rebel against the Spanish, but no rebellion occurred. (N.B. The word filibuster comes from the Spanish word filibustero, which means buccaneer. Later, it would be adapted to describe U.S. senators who seized and held the floor "like pirates.")

But Narciso Lopez was not deterred and tried again while Fillmore was president. Lopez managed to recruit and arm four hundred young adventurers and acquire a small steamship. A few of his men were Cuban exiles, but most were aristocratic young American Southerners, including the nephew of Attorney General Crittenden. Fillmore was aware of these preparations, and he ordered the customs and naval officials in New Orleans to do everything possible to stop Lopez. Fillmore also issued a public proclamation that any volunteers would be violating U.S. laws and risking the wrath of the Spanish and would have no hope for U.S. protection.

The New Orleans authorities did not stop Lopez and his army from setting sail for Cuba on August 3, 1851. Eight days later, they landed about 120 miles from Havana. As before, they were disappointed when no popular uprising occurred to greet them. The main force marched inland, while others remained behind to unload and transport supplies. When the rear guard tried to join the main party, Spanish troops intercepted and defeated them in a fierce battle. Colonel Crittenden and some fifty others managed to launch some boats, but the Spanish coast guard captured them. Within three days, they were tried by a military court and executed by firing squad. A few days later, Lopez and the others were also captured. The Spanish hung Lopez in Havana's public square and took 160 others to Spain for penal servitude in the mines.

The execution of Crittenden and the other Americans shocked the American public, even in the North. If Fillmore wanted a war to obtain Cuba, he probably could have found enough support to launch it. A mob in New Orleans sacked the premises of a Spanish-language newspaper. They also broke into the offices of the Spanish consul, where they destroyed property, defaced pictures of the Spanish queen, and shredded a Spanish flag. The terrified consul fled to Havana. Secretary of State Webster apologized to the Spanish government for these "disgraceful acts" and promised proper treatment of any consul sent to New Orleans. As a result of this conciliatory action, the administration was able to persuade Spain to release the 160 Americans imprisoned in Spain. Nevertheless, Taylor and Fillmore's attempts to stop the filibustering expeditions were extremely unpopular in the South.

22. Weary from the epic compromise fight and the criticism that it had drawn toward him, Millard Fillmore showed little enthusiasm for serving another term. He did no campaigning and did not even disclose his intentions about running again. In March of 1851, using an editor allied to him, Fillmore planted a report in a newspaper that he was retiring from office. Then Daniel Webster announced his candidacy. The candidacy of his own secretary of state did not greatly trouble the President; indeed, he was honestly sympathetic towards Webster's longtime ambition for the office. Webster's announcement, however, comprised the last straw for Fillmore, and the President tried to formally withdraw from consideration until others in the cabinet talked him out of it.

In 1852, the Whig Party was fragmenting over slavery. None of the leading candidates—Fillmore, Webster, and General Winfield Scott—strongly appealed to a majority of the Whig Party members. Many Northern Whigs disliked Fillmore for enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law. Webster was aged and unwell. Southern Whigs disliked Scott, who had served as President Jackson's emissary in 1832 when Jackson threatened to use federal troops in South Carolina in a tariff and secession dispute. In addition, antislavery senator William H. Seward, who was anathema to the South, strongly supported Scott.

The Whigs opened their convention in Baltimore in mid-June of 1852. Fillmore received all but one delegate vote from the South on the first ballot, but only 18 northern votes. The tally was 133 for Fillmore, 131 for Scott, and 29 for Webster. Webster's cause was seen as hopeless, and if he had given the President his delegates, Fillmore would have won the nomination. Webster, however, stubbornly clung to his delegates, and they slowly began to defect to Winfield Scott. On the fifty-third ballot, Scott wrapped up the nomination.

The convention was the end of the Whig Party as a national force. With Southern opposition to Scott so strong, he was unelectable. Many Southern Whigs abstained, and a few threw their support behind the Democratic candidate, Franklin Pierce. The slim, moody, pro-South New Englander won the election in a landslide, 254 to 42 electoral votes.

23. Twin tragedies visited Fillmore shortly after he left the White House. After sitting outside on Pierce's

cold, wet inauguration day, his wife Abigail caught pneumonia and died less than a month later, in March 1852. Then, four months after that, his daughter Mary contracted cholera and died. Fillmore remarried in 1858.

24. The Whig Party, fractured by the disagreements over slavery in 1852, disbanded in 1854 over the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Many Northern Whigs, e.g., Abraham Lincoln, William H. Seward, and Salmon P. Chase, joined the new Republican Party, whose central tenet was that slavery should not be extended to the western land obtained from Mexico. Many in the new party, e.g., Steward and Chase, were even more antislavery. Fillmore did not become a Republican because he viewed the party as too regional and too antislavery.

In the early 1850s, there was considerable hostility towards immigrants, especially Catholics, who had recently arrived in the United States in large numbers, and several nativist organizations, including the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner, were formed in reaction. By 1854, the order had morphed into the American Party, which became known as the Know-Nothings. (N.B. Originally, members of the order were sworn to secrecy. If questioned, they were to say that they knew nothing.)

Members of Fillmore's "National Whig" faction began joining the American Party in 1854 and influenced the organization to take up causes besides nativism. Fillmore became the presidential candidate of the American Party in 1856. He warned the electorate that Republican John C. Fremont had no support in the South and would divide the Union, which could lead to Civil War. In the general election, the American Party ticket received 21 percent of the vote and won one state (Maryland). It narrowly lost in several southern states, and a change of fewer than 8,000 votes in Louisiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee would have thrown the election to the House of Representatives, where the sectional divide would have made the outcome uncertain.

After the election, Fillmore retired to Buffalo. He was active in many local causes and was one of the founders of the University of Buffalo. When the Civil War broke out, Fillmore became a staunch Unionist, helping organize enlistment and war-financing drives. He died of a stroke in March 1874.

See the next page for a list of references.

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