

States' rights has long been an issue in Mississippi. Turn to Chapters 8, 14, and 15 to follow the issue after 1850.

that Mississippi was a creation of the United States and should remain part of the Union. All of Mississippi's congressmen except Foote opposed the Compromise of 1850. The Fire-Eaters, including Davis and Governor John A. Quitman, criticized Foote's position and demanded his resignation. Foote did resign, but he did so in order to bring the question to the people. He returned to Mississippi and ran for governor in 1851 against Quitman.

The 1851 Race for Governor

It was a hot summer. "Mississippi was in a blaze from east to west, and from north to south." The contest for governor in 1851 reflected the split in the Democratic Party. Those who favored secession were known as States' Rights Democrats. Their candidate was Quitman. Those who opposed secession were called Unionist Democrats; they supported Foote.

Fearing defeat, Quitman withdrew from the race, and the States' Rights Democrats nominated Jefferson Davis in his place. Davis resigned his Senate seat to return to Mississippi to campaign. Foote won, but by only 999 votes. Mississippi would remain in the Union for the present. However, as time passed, the states' rights movement gained strength.

Henry S. Foote, Unionist

Born in Virginia in 1804, Henry S. Foote attended Washington College. In 1827 he moved to Vicksburg, where he began his career in politics and earned a reputation for being the worst shot in the Southwest. An outstanding speaker, Foote was able to "move, thrill, and enthuse vast multitudes of people as could no other orator of his day."

In the 1851 gubernatorial race, he announced that "he stood where Jackson stood, in '31 and '33, with the whole Democratic party, in opposing nullification and secession." For the next ten years he fought to preserve the Union. In 1854, when it became clear that the Fire-Eaters would control Mississippi, he went to California to continue his battle for a Union undivided. Four years later he returned to Mississippi and urged his fellow Democrats to unite in support of Stephen A. Douglas in the 1860 presidential election. He felt that Douglas was the last hope for the United States to remain united. But his efforts were in vain.

During the emotional period after John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, when mob violence often ruled, Henry Foote was a champion of human rights. He was the prosecuting attorney of a white man named Hardwick who

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killed a black man by lashing him to death. Foote claimed Hardwick, "would certainly have been hanged if the victim of his atrocity had been a white man," but he was acquitted. Disappointed, Foote wrote: "When will men learn that perfect justice and humanity constitute the wisest policy of the fortunate and the powerful of this world?"

With the outbreak of the Civil War a year later, Foote could no longer choose both the South and the Union. He finally decided to support the South, his homeland. In 1861, he represented Tennessee in the Confederate House of Representatives.

When the war was over, he became a voice of optimism. The South, he believed, "will, indeed, be far better off in time to come *without slavery* than *with it.*" Although he believed that gradual emancipation would have been better than the program adopted, he was in favor of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. He died shortly after the end of Reconstruction, in 1880.

National Tensions Grow

The Compromise of 1850 had not solved the issue of slavery and its westward expansion. In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, one of the most effective pieces of antislavery literature ever written. Her story of heartbreak due to slavery sold more than 300,000 copies in its first year.

In 1854 Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, organizing the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Since both territories were above the Missouri Compromise line, slavery had been prohibited there. The author of the bill, Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, suggested that residents of the territories could decide for themselves if they wanted slavery. His proposal was called popular sovereignty. The South liked the idea, and slaveowners moved into Kansas. But so did free Northerners. A miniature civil war broke out.

By 1854 the Whig Party was dead, destroyed by arguments over slavery, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Southern Whigs abandoned the party and went over to the Southern wing of the Democratic Party. A new party, with its power in the North and West, was formed. It was called the Republican Party and had as its central objective the prevention of the spread of slavery into the territories. Some Republicans wanted to destroy slavery altogether. Although the Republican candidate for

"Bleeding Kansas."

Birth of the
Republican Party.