

“The Missouri Compromise”

Adapted from *The Oxford Companion to United States History* (2001)

<p>In 1817, Missouri became the second territory within the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase (after Louisiana itself) to apply for statehood. Missouri applied to enter as a slave state.</p> <p>In February 1819, Congressman James Tallmage of New York proposed that no further slaves be allowed into Missouri and that children of slaves in the state be freed at age twenty-five. His proposal, along with a similar one regarding the Arkansas Territory, sparked impassioned debate.</p> <p>When Congress returned in 1820, Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois proposed a compromise that became law in March 1820:</p> <p>Maine whose simultaneous bid for statehood had been blocked by southern senators, was admitted as a free state; Missouri came in as a slave state; and, most significantly, Missouri's southern border—the 36°30' parallel—was extended westward as the boundary north of which slavery would not be permitted within the Louisiana Purchase.</p> <p>The significance of the Missouri controversy became clear only many years later. First, it provided the context for the first full-scale debate over what in the middle decades of the century as the central issue of the sectional crisis: the territorial expansion of slavery. Second, it revealed the power of sectional loyalties to overwhelm loyalty to political parties. Third, the Missouri Compromise set the precedent for congressional authority in determining the spread of slavery into the West.</p>	<p>impassioned—filled with great emotion</p> <p>simultaneous—occurring, happening at same time</p> <p>sectional crisis—political conflict between Northern and Southern states over slavery</p> <p>sectional loyalties—loyalty to region (i.e. North or South) rather than political party</p>
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