

Give and Take

By Pete Clark

The United States pieced itself together through the utilization of compromise. The *Three-Fifths Compromise* at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 allowed each slave to be counted as three-fifths of a person for taxation and a state's share of seats in the House of Representatives. It also prohibited the continued legal importation of slaves beginning in 1808, although the last slave bearing ship, the *Clotilda*, arrived in American waters during 1859 or 1860. The compromise also required escaped slaves to be returned to their owners.

With the Treaty of 1818 the United States and Great Britain set the boundary between the United States and Canada at the 49th Parallel, from Minnesota to the Stoney Mountains. The land west of the Rocky Mountains, as they are now known, was called both The Oregon Country and The Department of Columbia, which was ruled by the Hudson Bay Company. The Americans flooded into Oregon, coming to outnumber the Canadians by seven to one. James Polk campaigned during the 1844 election with the slogan, *54 40 or fight* and was elected President. Polk wanted the northern border of Oregon Territory to stay at 54 degrees 40 minutes north. The compromise kept the international border at the 49th parallel and at the Salish Sea it ran south and west through that seaway to the Pacific Ocean. The United States was at war with Mexico and Polk did not want to fight two wars at the same time and refused to risk a third war Great Britain. Manifest Destiny was served just the same.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 prohibited slavery in the Louisiana Territory north of the 36 degrees 30 minutes parallel except in Missouri, which was admitted to the Union as a slave state and Maine was admitted as a free state. The Second Missouri Compromise of 1821 allowed the state to bar *free negroes and mulattoes* from entering into, or dwelling within the State of Missouri.

Much territory was taken from Mexico by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Compromise of 1850 stated that California would be admitted as a free state and New Mexico Territory would allow slavery. The territory included today's New Mexico, Arizona and part of Nevada. The compromise also banned slave trade in the District of Columbia, but not slavery.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 created those territories and allowed the residents to vote as to whether or not slavery would be permitted within their borders. This option created havoc as abolitionists and pro-slavery people moved into the territories. The violence was extreme and Bleeding Kansas was written in blood by John Brown and other fanatics on both sides. The bloodbath in Kansas continued until the end of the Civil War.

There have been many compromises that did not involve boundaries or slavery. Many situations cannot move forward without compromise. Whether the stumbling-block is large or small, compromise is almost always the best way to get past the problem and achieve success.

A little horse trading goes a long way.

