

**Volume 16**

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**A House Divided: Manifest Destiny II**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Manifest destiny was the idea that it was the birthright of the United States to stretch unimpeded from coast to coast. Abolitionists, those opposed to slavery, were generally supported of this expansion, but also had nagging doubts that the whole enterprise was a conspiracy to expand slavery and continue the South's**

**domination over the Federal Union it had maintained since the Revolution. And they had a point. Through the 1840s expansion had tended to benefit the slave interest. In the years following 1800 many more slave states had entered the Union than free ones. Future expansion, because it would come largely in the southwest, would simply confirm this trend.**

**Southerners dismissed this as unsubstantiated fear, but perhaps they were protesting a tad too much. Referring to New Mexico and California, Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky wrote, “no sensible man would carry his slaves there if he could.” Nevertheless, Northerners worried. Cotton was being grown in**

**the river bottoms of New Mexico and slaves had been driven as mineworkers for centuries. These fears were not assuaged by the Georgia editorialist who wrote that manifest destiny would, “secure to the south the balance of power..., and for all coming time,... give to her the control in the operations of the government.” Like all the major issues that faced the United States prior to the Civil War, slavery, how it could be repressed or secured, intruded into debate and policy making. Those who sought to expand the nation, to realize its manifest destiny, could not be allowed anything approaching neutrality on that universal subject.**

**From Richmond Virginia, this is  
Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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