

# The Missouri Compromise: Character Profiles



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

### **David Wilmot: Northern Congressman**

“Free soil, free speech, free labor and free men.”

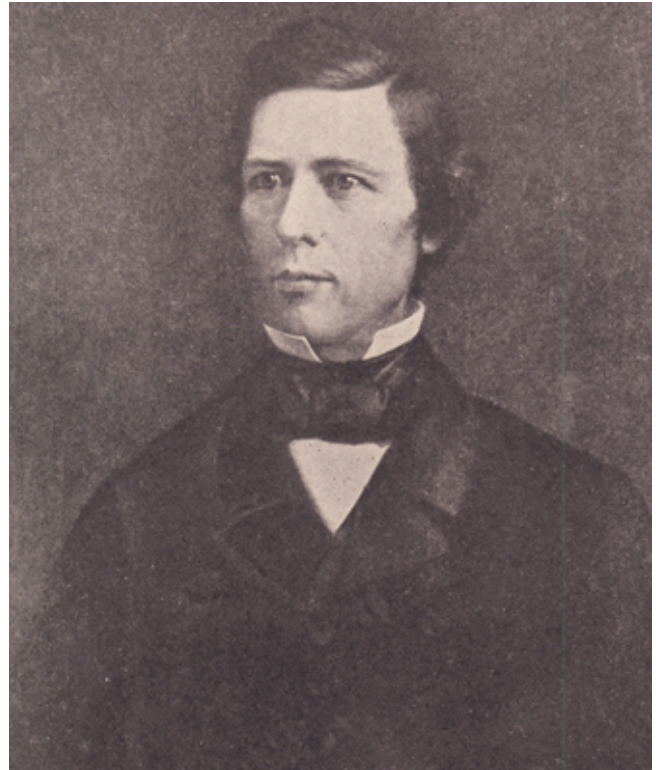
You were born in Bethany, Pennsylvania to Daniel and Mary Grant Wilmot. Your father was a well to do merchant, and your early life was a comfortable one. You were educated at elite private schools where you studied law. In 1844 you were elected Representative from the 12<sup>th</sup> District of Pennsylvania as a Democrat.

By 1848 you have aligned yourself with the Free Soil political party. You detest both slavery as a labor system *and* the black people who are enslaved. You believe that the negroes could never be intellectual, political or social equals of white Americans. And yet, you strongly oppose allowing southern slaveholders to take their slaves into the Western Territories. You believe in a system of free labor where free men and women can work to earn a living and improve their lives. If southern slave owners manage to gain a foothold for their unfree labor in the western plains, in the Rocky mountains, or on the Pacific Coast, then the future of free white laborers will be severely restricted if not destroyed.

In a speech to the House of Representatives, you declared, “I plead the cause and the rights of white freemen [and] I would preserve to free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of my own race and own color, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor.” Moreover, you understand that the South’s political power rests in slavery.

Due to the 3/5 Clause all slaves were counted as three-fifths of a person, thus inflating Southern States’ representation in Congress. As a Northern congressman you reason that the 3/5 Clause gives southern states an unfair political advantage as the slaves who are counted cannot even vote. By limiting the expansion of slavery you hope to curb the South’s political power. Furthermore, by restricting slavery you believe that it will eventually expire of its own accord.

“Keep it within given limits...and in time it will wear itself out. Its existence can only be perpetuated by constant expansion...Slavery has within itself the seeds of its own destruction.” You envision a country of “Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men.”



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**What is your social status?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What happens to you if slavery expands?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What happens to you if slavery is abolished?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What should be done if Missouri enters the US?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What should be done about Westward expansion in general?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How will this affect you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Thomas Elliott: Southern Plantation Owner**

You are the owner of a large cotton plantation in South Carolina. You lead a very comfortable existence – you live in a large, old fashioned house surrounded by an extensive grove of fine forest trees, and have more than enough money to support your wife and three children involving fine food, fine clothes, and frequent trips to the city to see the latest shows in the theatre. You consider yourself socially superior not only to Blacks, but also to the many poorer whites that live in South Carolina. Over 500 slaves live and work on your plantation, primarily in your fields picking cotton that makes you wealthy, but also as house servants.



In 1822, you were terrified to learn of a planned slave insurrection by Denmark Vesey. Vesey had planned to slay white owners and seize the nearby city of Charleston, South Carolina. The plot was discovered and suppressed, but you were sure to support the 9:15 pm curfew for slaves in Charleston that was passed following the insurrection. In fact, you generally supported strict slave codes, especially given the large population of slaves living in your state – 40 – 60% of the population in some counties.



Recently, ever since the soil seemed to be yielding [producing] less cotton than usual, many of your friends have been leaving the state for plantations with newer soil in the lower south. You, and other plantation owners remaining in South Carolina were especially hard hit when world wide cotton markets turned down in 1826 – 32 and again in 1837 – 49. Nonetheless, you cannot imagine a different profession.

Cotton is your source of income and your lifestyle.

However, you and other plantation owners are becoming more and more nervous that the Northern abolitionists in Congress may move to ban slavery. You have been hearing the word “**secession**” (meaning the act of one state separating itself from the rest of the union) frequently from your friends and representatives in Congress. You aren’t convinced that leaving the United States is the best solution – but you are terrified and angry to think about what would happen to you and your wealthy friends if slavery was abolished.

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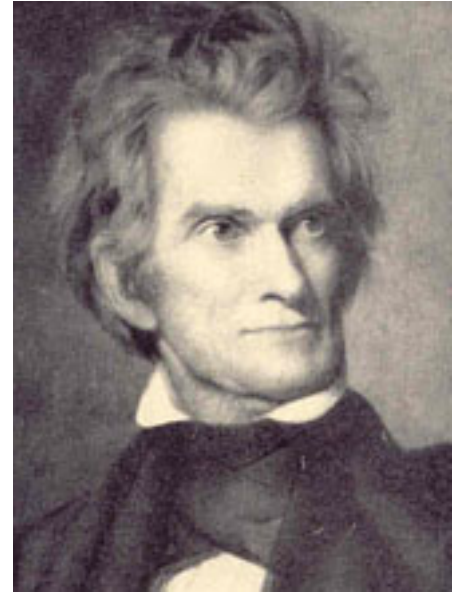
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### **John C. Calhoun: Southern Politician**

You are a leading United States Southern politician from South Carolina. He was the second man to serve as Vice President under two administrations, (Mar. 4, 1825 – Dec. 28, 1832 under Presidents Adams and Jackson), the first Vice President born as a US citizen (his predecessors were born before the revolution) and also the first Vice President to resign from office.

After a short stint in the South Carolina legislature where he wrote legislation making South Carolina the first state to adopt universal suffrage for white men (the right to vote).

You were born in March 18, 1782, the fourth child of Patrick Calhoun and his wife Martha. Your father was an Irish immigrant to the thirteen colonies where he met Martha, herself the daughter of a Protestant Irish immigrant father. When your father became ill, at the age of 17 you quit school to continue the family farm. With your brothers' financial support, you later returned to your studies, earning a degree from Yale College in 1804. After studying law at the Tapping Reeve Law School in Litchfield, Connecticut, you were admitted to the South Carolina bar in 1807.



You are extremely pro-Southern in your political beliefs. You are a strong advocate of slavery, states' rights, and a small central government. You even encouraged your state, South Carolina, to break free of the United States throughout the 1850s in order to maintain control over slavery and other issues. In fact, you are convinced that slavery is crucial to your state's prosperity. You often expressed your sentiments through the *Charleston Mercury*, a pro-slavery newspaper. You consider slavery a "positive good" that benefitted both races and resulted in a society vastly superior to that of the North. You believe that all societies are ruled by an elite group (whites) which enjoys the fruits of the labor of a less-privileged and inferior groups (blacks). Of slave masters' kindness towards their slaves you once said:

"I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer [slave], and so little exacted from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age. Compare his condition with the tenants if the poor houses in the more civilized portions of Europe – look at the sick, and the old and infirm slave, on one hand, in the midst of his family and friends, under the, under the kind superintending care of his master and mistress, and compare it with the forlorn and wretched condition of the pauper in the poorhouse."

You challenged the doctrine of congressional authority to regulate or prohibit slavery in the territories. In 1847 you claimed that citizens from every state had the right to take their "property" to any territory. Congress, you asserted, had no authority to place restrictions on slavery in the territories. If the Northern majority continued to ride roughshod over the rights of the Southern minority, the Southern states would have little option but to **secede** – to break away from the United States.

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