

A Second Crisis & a Final Compromise

After the enactment of the Missouri Compromise, the legislative chambers signed off on the statehood enabling bill. The Territory of Missouri then called a constitutional convention. Delegates met at the Mansion House Hotel in St. Louis on June 12, 1820. The convention completed its task in 38 days. The draft drew on the constitutions of Alabama, Illinois, Kentucky and Georgia. The territory adopted its constitution on July 19, 1820.

Two provisions about slavery in the Missouri constitution prompted another crisis over statehood. The first prohibited the state legislature from emancipating the enslaved without their owners consent and required paying the full value of the slave. The second required the legislature to pass “such laws necessary” to prevent free Blacks from coming to and settling in the state. Upon review by Congress, some members of the U.S. House of Representatives argued the state’s constitution violated the rights of free Blacks who the U.S. recognized as citizens in some northern free states.

Henry Clay once again helped settle the conflict. He pushed through a resolution that the U.S. admit Missouri to the Union by presidential proclamation once its legislature agreed through a “solemn public act” never to implement the controversial constitutional clauses. The Missouri legislature passed the “solemn public act” in June of 1821. President James Monroe signed the proclamation on August 10, 1821. Missouri became the 24th state.

Missouri’s unique path to statehood marked a turning point in U.S. history ushering in an era of chaos and civil war. In the 200 years since, the nation has added 26 more states. Few were as controversial as Missouri.

The stories of early Missouri and statehood are only the preface of Missouri’s long history. In the following chapters, we discuss the trailblazers that have come both before and after Missouri’s statehood, and have left a mark on the place we call home.



When President James Monroe made Missouri’s statehood official in 1821, Missouri became the northern and western most state in the U.S. to allow slavery. Missouri later became a mirror image of a divided nation during the Civil War. The state split over its decision to remain or secede from the United States.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress. “McConnell’s Historical Maps of the United States,” circa 1919, (above).



Image courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery. “Fifth President James Monroe,” by John Vanderlyn, circa 1817-1825.