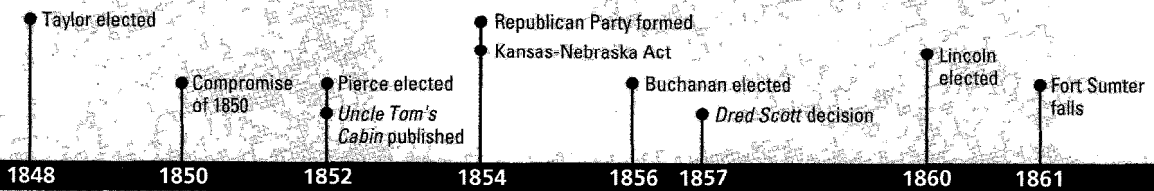
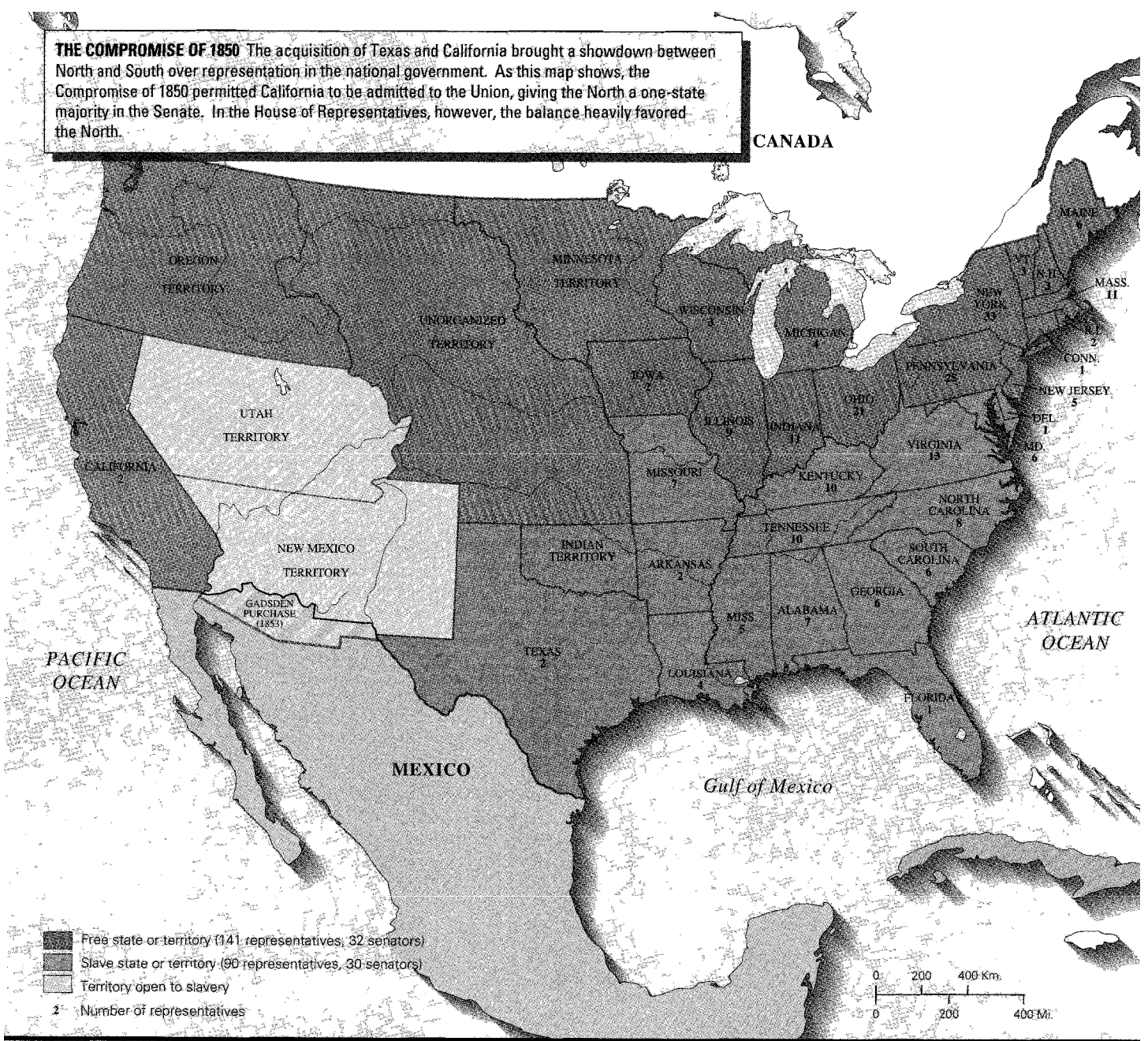


THE COMPROMISE OF 1850 The acquisition of Texas and California brought a showdown between North and South over representation in the national government. As this map shows, the Compromise of 1850 permitted California to be admitted to the Union, giving the North a one-state majority in the Senate. In the House of Representatives, however, the balance heavily favored the North.



Chapter 13

Sectional Conflict and

Shattered Union, 1850-1861

New Political Choices

- What constraints convinced voters to make new political choices during the 1850s?
- What was the outcome for the political party system?

Toward a House Divided

- What did Stephen A. Douglas expect when he proposed to organize the Nebraska Territory?
- What choices and constraints influenced the outcome of this proposal?

The Divided Nation

- What did northerners and southerners expect to happen in the presidential election of 1860?
- What choices did they make as a result, and what was the outcome?

The Nation Dissolved

- What choices were available to Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis in March 1861?
 - What political factors constrained their choices?
-

(INTRODUCTION)

The United States entered a period of major growth and transition during the 1850s. Wealth and population grew dramatically as technology and industry continued to advance rapidly. After the successful military adventure against Mexico, the future seemed to hold infinite promise. Many Americans *expected* that their nation's growing wealth and vitality would open great opportunities for them. The nation simply needed to chart a correct course to claim its destiny.

But achieving the national destiny meant *choosing* particular goals and specific methods. Sharp disagreements *constrained* Americans seeking the correct national course. Most agreed that railroad development was good, but not everyone agreed on where the rail lines should run, how development should be funded, or what should be carried on the rails. Technological advances and industrial development brought new *constraints*, altering the nation's social structure and adding to disagreement. Social disruption occurred as unskilled immigrant factory laborers displaced native-born artisans. Disruption also occurred as commercial cotton growing and slave labor expanded farther into the American continent.

These problems quickly became the subject of political debate. Old-line northeastern and southern political interests continued to clash over traditional matters like tariffs and currency control. But rising immigration and westward migration brought new voters and new interests into play, particularly regarding the expansion of slavery. Reformers continued their efforts to restore order and virtue, and to fight for moral reform. All of these voter groups had extremely diverse *expectations* about the correct course for the nation.

The *outcome* of these diverse *expectations* was a changing political environment. Both the Whigs and the Democrats attempted to direct and exploit the events of the 1850s. But both faced new *constraints* in the changing social, economic, and political climate. The total number of voters grew significantly, but so did the diversity of the electorate. Building a coalition strong enough to win a national

Expectations
Constraints
Choices
Outcomes

election became increasingly difficult as regional, ethnic, and social distinctions influenced voters.

In this fragmented climate, the expansion of slavery into the territories became the dominant political issue. Political leaders *chose* either to seek compromise or to ignore the slavery question. In reality, they could do neither. Through all the debates, political platforms, and confrontations, two separate societies attempted to control the course of national destiny.

As the nation's leaders wrestled with a host of new issues amid political fragmentation, the confrontation between those two societies peaked. Although many people wanted peace and favored reconciliation, the political structure thwarted that desire. *Constrained* by the regional interests that had given birth to them, the new political coalitions proved incapable of compromise. The *outcome* was the end of the Union.

Toward a Shattered Union

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1848 Zachary Taylor elected president
Immigration to the United States exceeds
100,000 for the first time | 1855 Sack of Lawrence, Kansas
Pottawatomie massacre |
| 1850 Compromise of 1850 | 1856 James Buchanan elected president |
| 1852 First railroad line completed to Chicago
Publication of <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Harriet Beecher Stowe
Franklin Pierce elected president
Destruction of the Whig party begins
American party emerges | 1857 <i>fired Scott</i> decision
Proslavery Lecompton constitution adopted in
Kansas |
| 1853 Gadsden Purchase | 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates |
| 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act
Ostend Manifesto
Formation of the Republican party | 1859 John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry |
| | 1860 Abraham Lincoln elected president
Crittenden compromise fails |
| | 1861 Formation of the Confederate States of
America
Shelling of Fort Sumter |

Choices

The presidential election in 1848 had celebrated American expansion and nationalism, but the flow of Americans into California soon created a crisis. It began when newly elected president Zachary Taylor ordered Californians to draw up a state constitution and apply for statehood. California produced a document that barred slavery in the state. Taylor then recommended that California be admitted as a free state and that Utah and New Mexico be organized as territories without reference to slavery.

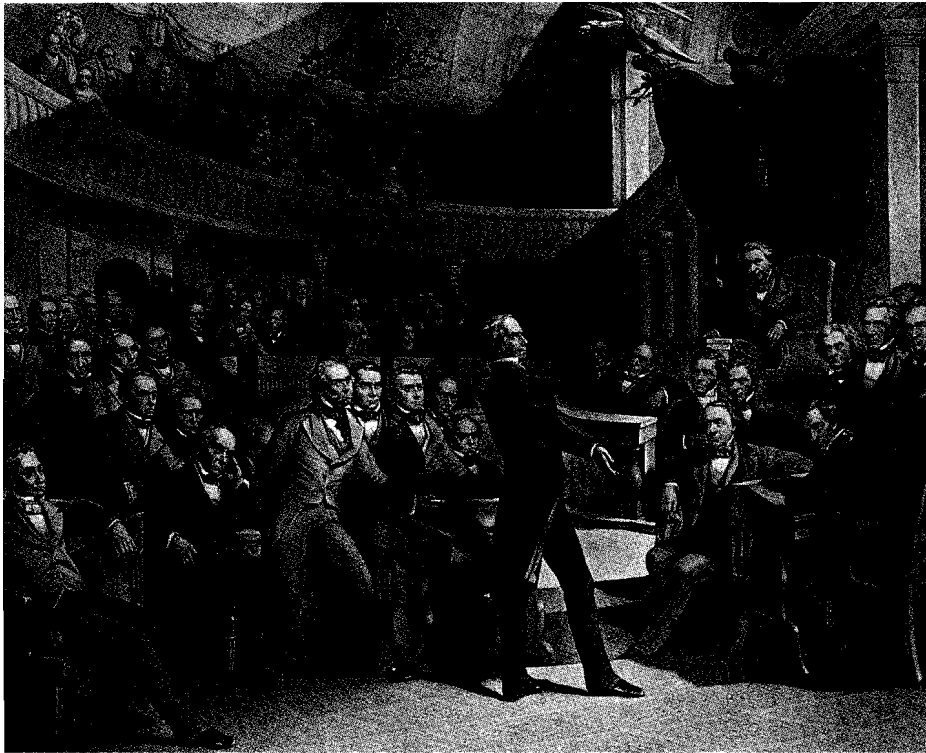
Taylor's proposal frightened and angered southerners, for they had assumed that California would be open to slavery. Southerners also pointed out with alarm that another free state would unbalance sectional representation in the Senate. John C. Calhoun stated, "I trust we shall persist in our resistance until restoration of all our rights, or disunion, one or the other, is the consequence."

New Political

The Politics of Compromise

Henry Clay, who had crafted the Missouri Compromise, believed that any successful agreement would have to address all sides of the issue. He proposed an **omnibus** bill—a package of separate proposals—to the Senate early in 1850. California would enter the Union as a free state, but the slavery question would be left to popular sovereignty in all other territories acquired from Mexico. Clay then called for an end to the slave trade in the District of Columbia to appease abolitionists and for a new, more effective fugitive slave law to ensure southern support of his proposed legislation.

omnibus Including or covering many things.
fugitive slave law Law providing for the return of escaped slaves to their owners; a 1793 law was replaced with a stiffer version as part of the Compromise of 1850.



◆ This painting shows Henry Clay attempting to convince his fellow senators to support his omnibus compromise bill in 1850. Clay failed, but Illinois senator Stephen Douglas was able to get the compromise passed by breaking up the complicated bill, calling for a vote on each separate provision. *Library of Congress.*

Congress debated the bill for six months, then finally defeated it in July 1850. However, **Stephen A. Douglas** of Illinois revived the compromise by submitting each component of Clay's omnibus package as a separate bill. Using persuasion and backroom political arm-twisting, he steered each bill through Congress. President Taylor's sudden death on July 9 also made passage of the compromise package easier because his successor, Millard Fillmore, obtained northern Whig support for the bills. Finally, in September, Congress passed the Compromise of 1850.

The Compromise of 1850 did little to settle underlying regional differences. Many northerners resented the fact that slaveowners could pursue runaway slaves into northern states and return them back into slavery. Nor did southerners find reason to celebrate. They had lost the balance of

power in the Senate and gained no protection for slavery, either in the territories or at home. Still, the compromise created a brief respite from the slavery-extension question.

Stephen A. **Douglas** Illinois senator who tried to reconcile northern and southern differences over slavery through the Compromise of 1850 and sponsor of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

Millard Fillmore Vice president who succeeded Zachary Taylor when he died in office and who tried to occupy a middle ground on slavery.

Compromise of 1850 Plan intended to reconcile North and South on the issue of slavery; it recognized the principle of popular sovereignty and included a strong fugitive slave law.

The compromise soon took its toll on the political system, particularly the Whigs. They passed over Millard Fillmore in 1852 in favor of Mexican War hero General Winfield Scott as their presidential nominee. The Democrats tapped the virtually unknown Franklin **Pierce** of New Hampshire. Despite the fact that Scott was a national figure and a distinguished military hero, he was overwhelmed by Pierce. Pierce gathered 254 electoral votes to Scott's 42. Although no one knew it at the time, the election of 1852 marked the end of the Whig party. It was the casualty of a changing political environment.

A Changing Political Economy

During the 1850s, industrial growth accelerated. By 1860, fewer than half of all northern workers made a living from agriculture. Steam began to replace water as the primary power source, and factories were no longer limited to locations along rivers and streams. The use of interchangeable parts became more sophisticated and intricate. For example, in 1851, Isaac Singer began mass-producing sewing machines. As industry expanded, the North became more reliant on the West and South for raw materials and for the food that northeastern factory workers consumed.

Railroad development stimulated economic and industrial growth. Between 1850 and 1860, American railroad trackage jumped from 9,000 to more than 30,000 miles. Most of these lines linked the Northeast with the Midwest, carrying produce to eastern markets and eastern manufactures to western consumers. In 1852, the Michigan Southern Railroad completed the first line into Chicago from the East, and by 1855 that city had become a major transportation hub.

Railroads quickly reshaped the expanding American economy. Western farmers, who had previously shipped their products downriver to New Orleans on slow and undependable barges and boats, now sent them much more rapidly by rail to eastern industrial centers. Warehouses and grain elevators sprang up to accommodate such shipments. Reliable transportation and storage facilities induced farmers to cultivate more land. Mining boomed, particularly the iron industry, as

the rail lines not only transported ore but became a major consumer.

Government actively supported railroad development and expansion, particularly in sparsely settled areas where returns on investment were expected to be meager. State and local governments loaned money directly to rail companies, financed them indirectly by purchasing stock, or extended state tax exemptions. The most crucial aid to railroads, however, was federal land grants. These were given to railroad developers who then leased or sold plots along the proposed route to finance construction. In 1850, a 2.6-million-acre land grant went to a railroad between Chicago and Mobile. Congress also invested \$150,000 in 1853 to survey routes for a transcontinental railroad.

Railroads and improved farm technology opened up many parts of the Midwest to commercial farming. The steel plow, devised in 1837 by **John Deere**, allowed farmers to cultivate more acres with greater ease, and the mechanical reaper, invented in 1841 by Cyrus McCormick, could harvest more than fourteen field hands could. The combination of greater production and speedy transportation prompted westerners to increase farm size and concentrate on cash crops. It also greatly increased the economic and political power of the West.

The Midwest developed as America's breadbasket as food shortages and poverty were driving millions from Europe. Beginning in the 1840s, a potato blight in Ireland caused extensive crop failures and increasing numbers of people to flee. Total immigration to the United States exceeded

Franklin Pierce New Hampshire lawyer and politician who was chosen as a compromise candidate at the 1852 Democratic convention and became the fourteenth president of the United States.

grain elevator A building equipped with mechanical lifting devices and used for storing grain.

John Deere American industrialist who pioneered the manufacture of steel plows especially suited for working prairie soil.

Cyrus McCormick Virginia inventor and manufacturer who developed a machine for harvesting crops in 1841 and built a factory to mass-produce the McCormick reaper in 1847.

100,000 for the first time in 1848. In 1851, 221,000 immigrants arrived from Ireland alone. Crop failures and political upheavals also pushed large numbers of Germans toward the United States. In 1852, German immigrants reached 145,000. Many newcomers, particularly the Irish, were unskilled and settled in the industrial cities of the Northeast. The concentration of immigrants there played a significant role in the unraveling of antebellum American politics.

Decline of the Whigs

During the 1850s, many unemployed artisans were forced to accept factory work at a time when the flood of immigrants was driving wages down. Such artisans wanted a political party that would address their most pressing problems: loss of status, income, and jobs.

The Whig party had been their voice in politics during the party's glory days. During the elections in 1848, however, the Whigs had tried to win Catholic and immigrant voters away from the Democrats. Not only did the Whigs fail to attract immigrant voters, but they alienated two groups of supporters. One group was artisans, who saw immigrants as the main source of their economic and social woes. The other was Protestant evangelicals, to whom Roman Catholic immigrants symbolized all that was threatening to the American republic. As a result, increasing numbers abandoned the Whig party to form coalitions more in tune with voters' hopes and fears. Between 1852 and 1856, the Whig party dissolved and was replaced by two emerging parties: the Know-Nothing, or American, party, and the Republican party.

The anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, Know-Nothings traced their origins back to secret nativist societies that had come into existence during the 1830s. These secret fraternal organizations entered politics by endorsing candidates who shared their views about immigration. They told their members to say "I know nothing" if they were questioned about the organization or its political intrigues, hence the name Know-Nothings. After the election of 1852, the societies began nominating and voting for their own candidates under the banner of the American party. The party charged that immigrants were part

of a Catholic plot to overthrow democracy in the United States. The party advocated a twenty-one-year naturalization period, a ban against naturalized citizens holding public office, and the use of the Protestant Bible in the public schools.

Know-Nothings disagreed about many issues, but they agreed that the Whig and Democratic parties were corrupt and that the only hope for the nation lay in scrapping traditional politics. As Ohio governor Rutherford B. Hayes noted, the people were expressing a "general disgust with the powers that be."

Local antislavery coalitions also deserted the Whigs. Sectional tensions doomed all Whig attempts to formulate a national policy. Those tensions were heightened in 1852 with the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Stowe portrayed the darkest inhumanities of southern slavery in the first American novel to include African Americans as central characters. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold three hundred thousand copies in its first year and became one of the most popular plays of the period. It drew attention to the new fugitive slave law and its harsh provisions for individuals caught helping runaway slaves. The work of Stowe and the lectures of people like Harriet Tubman, a former slave who rescued hundreds from slavery, made northerners increasingly aware of the plight of slaves (see Individual Choices: Harriet Tubman). When Free-Soilers and "conscience" (antislavery) Whigs saw that the party was incapable of addressing the slavery question, they began to look for other political options.

Know-Nothings Members of secret organizations that aimed to exclude Catholics and "foreigners" from public office; members' "I know nothing" response to questions about the organizations produced their nickname.

nativist Favoring native-born inhabitants of a country over immigrants.

Harriet Beecher Stowe American novelist and abolitionist whose novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fanned antislavery sentiment in the North.

Harriet Tubman Antislavery activist who escaped from slavery and led many others to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Increasing Tension Under Pierce

The Democrats were not immune to the problems caused by a changing electorate and by the issue of slavery. In May 1853, only two months after assuming office, Franklin Pierce inflamed antislavery forces by sending James Gadsden, a southern railroad developer, to Mexico to purchase a strip of land lying south of the Arizona and New Mexico territories. Pierce and his southern supporters wanted to buy this land because any southern transcontinental rail route would have to pass through it to go to California. The Gadsden Purchase, ratified by Congress in 1853, added 29,640 square miles to the United States for a cost of \$10 million and set the southwestern border of the United States.

The Gadsden Purchase led to a more serious sectional crisis. It prompted advocates of a southern transcontinental railroad to push for government sponsorship of the project. They found themselves blocked, however, by Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas.

A consummate politician, Douglas wanted a national railroad that would pass through Chicago and the Midwest, strengthening that region's economic and political strength and furthering his own career. Using his position as chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, Douglas thwarted efforts to build a southern transcontinental railroad. Because the northern route that Douglas favored would have to pass through territory that had not yet been organized, Douglas introduced a bill in January 1854 that called for incorporating the Nebraska Territory.

Douglas knew that he would need northern and southern support to get his bill through Congress. Hoping to avoid yet another debate over slavery, Douglas proposed that the issue of slavery be settled by popular sovereignty within the territory. Southerners pointed out, however, that Congress might prohibit popular sovereignty in the Nebraska Territory because it was north of the Missouri Compromise line. Douglas finally supported an amendment to his original bill that divided the territory in half: Nebraska in the north and Kansas in the south (see Map 13.1). He assumed that popular sovereignty would lead to slavery in Kansas and a system of free labor in Nebraska.

Toward a House Divided

The Kansas-Nebraska bill angered northern Democrats, "conscience" Whigs, and Free-Soil advocates. All of them feared that without the Missouri Compromise limitations, slavery would spread throughout the territories. Once again, slavery threatened national political stability. In the North, opponents of the bill formed local coalitions to challenge its passage. On January 24, 1854, a group calling itself the Independent Democrats, who included Salmon P. Chase, Gerrit Smith, Joshua Giddings, and Charles Sumner, denounced the bill as an "atrocious plot" to make Nebraska a "dreary region of despotism, inhabited by masters and slaves." On February 28, other opponents of the bill met in Ripon, Wisconsin, and recommended the formation of a new political party. Similar meetings elsewhere in the North led to the emergence of the Republican party.

A Shattered Compromise

Despite strong opposition, Douglas and Pierce secured passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Its passage crystallized northern antislavery sentiment. As Senator William Seward of New York stated, "We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas, and God give the victory to the side which is stronger in numbers as it is in right."

Southerners were determined to prevail in this struggle. They had come to believe that the expansion of slavery was necessary to prevent northern

Gadsden Purchase A strip of land in present-day Arizona and New Mexico that the United States bought from Mexico in 1853 to secure a southern route for a transcontinental railroad.

Republican party Political party that arose in the 1850s and opposed the extension of slavery into the western territories.

Kansas-Nebraska Act Law passed by Congress in 1854 that allowed residents of the Kansas and Nebraska territories to decide whether to allow slavery.

INDIVIDUAL CHOICES

To Free Others



Harriet Tubman

Fearful of being torn from her family in Maryland and sold to a cotton plantation in the Deep South, Harriet Tubman chose to run away from slavery. Seeking to reunite her family, she returned to the South to help them escape. Despite personal danger to herself, she chose to continue her efforts, finally conducting as many as 300 slaves along the Underground Railroad to freedom. She is seen here (on the left) with some of the slaves whom she helped free. Sophia Smith Collection.

Resisting slavery seemed second nature to Harriet Tubman. Born a slave on a Maryland plantation in 1820, she quickly developed a fiery spirit and was not shy about protesting bad treatment. One such incident so angered the plantation overseer that he hit her over the head with a lead weight, inflicting a permanent brain injury that would cause her to suddenly lose consciousness several times a day for the rest of her life. To overcome this disability, she worked on building herself up physically, becoming an uncommonly strong woman. It was said that she could single-handedly haul a boat fully loaded with stones, a feat deemed impossible for all but the strongest men.

Although Tubman dreamed about freedom after learning of Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831, her disability and fear of being caught prevented her from acting. But in 1849, all that changed when the owner of her plantation died. Rumors began circulating that the man's estate was going to be liquidated and that the slaves were to be sold "down the river" to cotton plantations in the Deep South. The thought of being taken so far away from any avenue to freedom forced Tubman to choose.

Leaving the plantation, she slowly made her way northward by land, stopping at places she had heard about where free blacks or sympathetic whites would provide food and shelter. After a harrowing flight, she finally arrived in Philadelphia. She was free but was not content with winning freedom just for herself. Tubman had left a large family behind in Maryland and would not be happy until she had won their freedom as well.

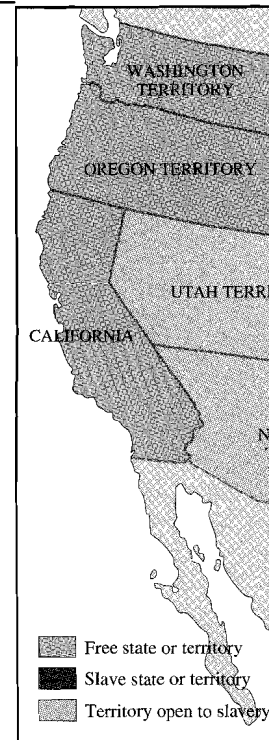
Soon after arriving in Pennsylvania, Tubman met William Still, a black clerk for the Pennsyl-

vania Anti-Slavery Society. Still had worked since 1847 as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. Every so often, he and others like him made their way secretly into the South, contacted slaves who wanted to escape, and led them northward, stopping at prearranged stations—homes and businesses owned by free blacks or white abolitionists—for food and shelter. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Tubman decided that the only way she could win freedom for her family was to become a conductor herself. She chose to risk her freedom—even her life—to bring her parents, her brother and his family, and her own two children out of slavery.

It took Tubman several trips into the South to accomplish her aim of reuniting her family. In the course of her adventure, what began as a commitment to her immediate kin became a mission to her entire people. In all, Tubman made nineteen trips back into the slave South between 1850 and the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. It was said that she was personally responsible for conducting three hundred slaves to freedom. In between trips she, like Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and other escaped slaves, told her story to northern audiences, seeking support for her efforts to free individual slaves and for the larger effort to free all slaves. Her activities as a speaker and as an underground agent brought her acclaim and notoriety. John Brown consulted her while planning his raid on Harpers Ferry, and authorities in the South acknowledged her impact by posting a \$40,000 reward for her capture.

Tubman continued her activities after the war broke out. Like other black women who had either been born into or had won freedom, she volunteered to go into the South with Union forces to serve as a nurse and cook and to help evacuate slaves from areas won by Federal troops. She also continued speaking out in the interest of her people. To beat the South, she admonished, President Lincoln must set the slaves free.





MAP 13.1 The Kansas-Nebraska Act This map shows Stephen Douglas's proposed compromise to the dilemma of organizing the vast territory separating the settled part of the United States from California and Oregon. His solution, designed to win profitable rail connections for his home district in Illinois, stirred a political crisis by repealing the Missouri Compromise and replacing it with popular sovereignty.

domination. They saw northern industrial and commercial power as a threat to reduce the South to a "colony" controlled by northern bankers and industrialists. The South needed to expand to survive.

Some southerners attempted to expand slavery by mounting private expeditions into the Caribbean and Central America. They believed that places such as Cuba and Nicaragua could be added to the list of slaveowning states. Although these expeditions were the work of a few power-hungry individuals, many northerners believed them to be part of the Slave Power conspiracy.

President Pierce perhaps unintentionally aggravated this sentiment. In October 1854, three of Pierce's European ministers, including future president James Buchanan, met in Ostend, Belgium, and secretly drafted a statement outlining conditions that might justify taking Cuba from Spain by force.

When the so-called **Ostend Manifesto** became public in 1855, many northerners feared that Pierce and the Democratic party secretly approved of adventurism to expand slavery. These perceptions stirred antislavery anxieties and fueled the growth of the newly formed anti-Democratic coalitions.

Bleeding Kansas

Meanwhile, frictions were producing sparks in the Kansas Territory. In April 1854, Eli Thayer of

Ostend Manifesto Declaration by American foreign ministers in 1854 that if Spain refused to sell Cuba, the United States might be justified in taking it by force.

Worcester, Massachusetts, organized the New England Emigrant Aid Society to encourage antislavery supporters to move to Kansas. He hoped to "save" the region from slavery by flooding it with right-minded emigrants. The society eventually sent two thousand settlers to Kansas and equipped them with rifles and ammunition. Proslavery southerners, particularly those in Missouri, also encouraged settlement of the territory. Like their northern counterparts, these southerners came armed and ready to fight for their cause.

As proslavery and abolitionist settlers vied for control of Kansas, the region became a testing ground for popular sovereignty. When the vote came on March 30, 1855, armed slavery supporters from Missouri—so-called border ruffians—crossed into Kansas and cast ballots. These unlawful ballots gave proslavery supporters a large majority in the legislature. They promptly expelled all antislavery legislators and passed laws meant to drive all antislavery forces out of the territory. Antislavery advocates, however, refused to acknowledge the validity of the election or the laws. They organized their own free-state government at Lawrence and drew up an alternative constitution.

Bloodshed soon followed when a proslavery judge, Samuel LeCompte, sent a **posse** of about eight hundred armed men to Lawrence. There they "arrested" the antislavery forces and sacked the town. With that, civil war erupted in Kansas. **John Brown**, an antislavery zealot, took his four sons and three others to exact "an eye for an eye" for the five antislavery settlers who had been killed in Kansas. Brown murdered five proslavery men living along the Pottawatomie River. (The victims had not been involved in the sack of Lawrence.) The Pottawatomie massacre triggered a series of reprisals that killed over two hundred men.

The Kansas issue also led to violence in Congress. During the debates over the admission of the territory, **Charles Sumner**, a senator from Massachusetts, delivered an abusive speech against the proslavery elements in Congress. In "The Crime Against Kansas," he insulted South Carolina senator Andrew Butler by contending that Butler was a "Don Quixote" who had "made his vows" to "the harlot, slavery." Three days later, Representative Preston Brooks, Butler's nephew, beat Sumner unconscious with a cane to avenge his uncle's honor.

Sumner was badly hurt and needed almost three years to recover. Though **censured** by the House of Representatives, Brooks was overwhelmingly reelected and openly praised by his constituents for his actions. He received canes as gifts from admirers all over the South. Northerners were appalled by Brooks's action and by southern responses to it.

As the presidential election of 1856 approached, Kansas and slavery dominated the agenda. The Know-Nothings had split over slavery at their initial national convention in 1855. Disagreement over the Kansas-Nebraska Act caused most northerners to bolt from the convention and to join Republican coalitions. In 1856, the remaining Know-Nothings nominated former president Millard Fillmore as the American party's standard-bearer.

John C. Frémont, a moderate abolitionist who had achieved fame as the liberator of California, got the Republican nomination. The few remaining Whigs endorsed Fillmore at their convention. The Democrats rejected both Pierce and Douglas and nominated **James Buchanan** from Pennsylvania, believing that he would be less controversial than the other two.

The election became a contest for the right to challenge Democratic occupancy of the office of president rather than a national referendum on slavery. Buchanan received 45 percent of the popular vote and 163 electoral votes. Frémont finished second with 33 percent of the popular vote and 114 electoral votes. Fillmore received 21 percent of the popular vote but only 8 electoral votes. Frémont's surprising showing demonstrated the appeal of

posse A group of people usually summoned by a sheriff to aid in law enforcement.

John Brown Abolitionist who fought proslavery settlers in Kansas in 1855; he was hanged after seizing the U.S. arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859 as part of an effort to liberate southern slaves.

Charles Sumner Massachusetts senator who was brutally beaten by a southern congressman in 1856 after delivering a speech attacking the South.

censure To issue an official rebuke, as by a legislature to one of its members

James Buchanan Pennsylvania senator who was elected president in 1856 after gaining the Democratic nomination as a compromise candidate.

the newly formed Republican coalition to northern voters. The Know-Nothings, fragmented over slavery, disappeared.

Bringing Slavery Home to the North

Two days after Buchanan assumed office in March 1857, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that sent shock waves through the already troubled nation. **Dred Scott**, a slave formerly owned by an army officer, sued his current owner for his freedom. Although he resided in Missouri, Scott had accompanied his former master to Illinois and to a part of the Wisconsin Territory west of the Mississippi River, where slavery was outlawed by the Missouri Compromise. Scott's attorney argued that living in free territory made Scott a free man. When Missouri courts rejected this argument, Scott, with the help of abolitionist lawyers, appealed to the Supreme Court.

In a 7-to-2 decision, the Court ruled against Scott. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, a Maryland slaveowner, argued that slaves were not people but property, could not be citizens of the United States, and had no right to petition the Court. Taney then ignited a political powder keg by stating that Congress had no constitutional authority to limit slavery in a federal territory, thus totally negating the Missouri Compromise. The Court's ruling marked the first time since its 1803 decision in *Marbury v. Madison* that it had declared a federal law unconstitutional.

Antislavery forces and northern evangelical leaders called the *Dred Scott* decision a mockery of justice. Some radical abolitionists, harking back to the Hartford Convention's threat of secession (see page 180), argued that the North should separate from the Union. Others advocated impeaching the Supreme Court. Antislavery leaders contended that the next move of the Slave Power would be to get the Supreme Court to strike down antislavery laws in northern states.

While debates raged over the *Dred Scott* decision, the Kansas issue simmered. Although very few slaveholders had actually moved into the territory, proslavery leaders meeting in Lecompton in June 1857 drafted a state constitution favoring slavery. Antislavery forces protested by refusing to vote on this constitution, so it was easily ratified. But

when the constitution was submitted to Congress for approval, northern Democrats such as Stephen Douglas joined Republicans in denouncing it. Congress ultimately returned the Lecompton constitution to Kansas for another vote. This time Free-Soilers participated in the election and defeated the proposed constitution. Kansas remained a territory.

The Kansas controversy and the *Dred Scott* case figured prominently in the 1858 contest in Illinois for the Senate between Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, a small-town lawyer and moderate antislavery Republican. Born in Kentucky in 1809, Lincoln as a young man had worked odd jobs as a farm worker, ferryman, flatboatman, surveyor, and store clerk. In 1834, he was elected to the Illinois legislature and began a serious study of law. Lincoln had steered a middle course between the "cotton" and "conscience" wings of the Whig party. He acknowledged that slavery was evil but contended that it was the consequence of black racial inferiority. The only way to escape the evil, he believed, was to prevent the expansion of slavery into the territories.

Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of seven debates about slavery that were to be held throughout Illinois. During the debate at Freeport, Lincoln asked Douglas to explain how the people of a territory could exclude slavery in light of the *Dred Scott* ruling. Douglas's reply became known as the **Freeport Doctrine**. Slavery, he said, needed the protection of "local police regulations." In any ter-

Dred Scott Slave who sued for his liberty in the Missouri courts, arguing that four years on free soil had made him free; in 1857 the Supreme Court ruled against him.

Lecompton constitution State constitution written for Kansas in 1857 at a convention dominated by proslavery forces, which tried to slant the document in favor of slavery; Kansas voters rejected it in 1858.

Abraham Lincoln Illinois lawyer and politician who argued against popular sovereignty in his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858; he lost the senatorial election to Douglas but was elected president in 1860.

Freeport Doctrine Stephen Douglas's belief, stated at Freeport, Illinois, that a territory could exclude slavery by writing local laws or regulations that made slavery impossible to enforce.

ritory, citizens could elect representatives who would "by unfriendly legislation" prevent the introduction of slavery "into their midst." Voters apparently found Douglas's position more attractive than Lincoln's. They elected a majority of Douglas supporters to the state legislature, which then returned Douglas to his Senate seat.

Radical Responses to Abolitionism and Slavery

Southerners reacted with fear to the threat of limitations on the extension of slavery. Because intensive agriculture had depleted the soil in the South, expansion seemed necessary for economic survival. Although Republican leaders maintained that they had no intention of outlawing slavery where it already existed, their commitment against expansion appeared to sentence slavery to death.

Southern apologists defended their system against northern charges that it was immoral and evil. Charles C. Jones and other southern evangelicals offered a religious defense of slavery. They claimed that the Bible condoned slavery, pointing out that the Israelites practiced slavery and that Jesus walked among slaves but never mentioned freedom. The apostle Paul even commanded slaves to obey their masters.

Northern radicals such as John Brown, however, were developing plans that called for slaves to overthrow their masters. In 1857, Brown came east to convince prominent antislavery leaders to finance a daring plan to raise an army of slaves against their masters. Brown and twenty-one followers, including four free blacks, attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, on October 16, 1859, attempting to seize weapons.

Brown's force seized the arsenal but could not convince any slaves to join the uprising. Local citizens surrounded the building until federal troops, commanded by Colonel Robert E. Lee, arrived. On October 18, Lee's forces battered down the barricaded entrance and arrested Brown. He was tried, convicted of treason, and hanged on December 2, 1859.

John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry captured the imagination of radical abolitionists and terri-

fied southerners. Although Republican leaders denounced it, other northerners proclaimed Brown a martyr. Church bells tolled in many northern cities on the day of his execution, and radical evangelicals offered eulogies to Brown's cause. Brown's raid and the perception that Republicans had secretly sponsored it caused many moderate southerners to consider **secession**. The Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida legislatures resolved that a Republican victory in the upcoming presidential election would provide justification for such action.

The Divided Nation

The Republicans were a new phenomenon on the American political scene: a purely regional political party. The party drew its strength and ideas almost entirely from the North. The Republican platform—"Free Soil, Free Labor, and Free Men"—stressed the defilement of white labor by slavery. By taking up a cry against "Rum, Romanism, and Slavery," the Republicans drew former Know-Nothings and temperance advocates alike into their ranks.

Democratic Divisions and Nominating Conventions

During the Buchanan administration, Democrats found it increasingly difficult to achieve national party unity. Northern Democrats realized that any commitment to slavery would cost them votes at home. Southern Democrats, however, believed that protecting slavery was absolutely necessary. In April 1860, these conflicting views on slavery met when the party convened in Charleston, South Carolina.

The fight began over the party platform. Douglas's supporters championed a popular sovereignty

Harpers Ferry Town in present-day West Virginia and site of the U.S. arsenal that John Brown briefly seized in 1859.

secession Withdrawal from the United States.

position. Southern radicals countered by demanding the legal protection of slavery in the territories. After heated debates, the Douglas forces carried the day on this issue. Disgusted delegates from eight southern states walked out of the convention, thereby denying Douglas the two-thirds majority required for nomination. Shocked, the remaining delegates adjourned the convention and reconvened in Baltimore in June. A boycott by most southern delegates allowed Douglas to win the presidential nomination easily. The party's final platform supported popular sovereignty and emphasized allegiance to the Union, hoping to attract moderate voters from both North and South.

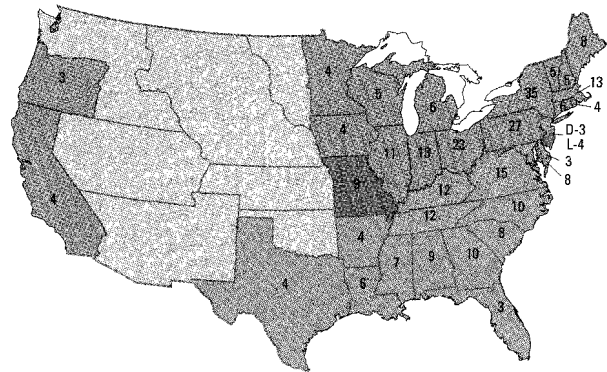
The southern Democratic contingent met one week later and nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky as its presidential candidate. The southern Democrats' platform vowed support for the Union but called for federal protection of the right to own slaves in the territories and for the preservation of slavery where it already existed.

In May 1860, a group of former Whigs, Know-Nothings, and some disaffected Democrats from the Upper South formed the Constitutional Union party. They nominated John Bell, a wealthy slave-holder from Tennessee, for president. This group had no hope of winning but believed it could gather enough support to throw the election into the House of Representatives. The party resolved to take no stand on the sectional controversy and pledged to uphold the Constitution and the Union.

The front runner for the Republican nomination was William Seward of New York. A former Whig, Seward had actively opposed the extension of slavery. Abraham Lincoln emerged as Seward's main challenger at the party's Chicago convention. Many delegates considered Seward too radical and doubted his honesty. Lincoln, by contrast, had a reputation for integrity and had not alienated any of the Republican factions. Lincoln won the nomination on the third ballot.

The Election of 1860

The 1860 presidential campaign began as two separate contests. Lincoln and Douglas competed for



	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote
Lincoln (Republican)	180 59.4%	1,865,593 39.8%
Douglas (Northern Democratic)	12 3.9%	1,382,713 29.5%
Breckinridge (Southern Democratic)	72 23.8%	848,356 18.1%
Bell (Constitutional Union)	39 12.9%	592,906 12.6%

◆ **MAP 13.2 Election of 1860** The election of 1860 confirmed the worst fears expressed by concerned Union supporters during the 1850s: changes in the nation's population made it possible for one section to dominate national politics. As this map shows, the Republican and southern Democratic parties virtually split the nation, and the Republicans were able to seize the presidency

northern votes, and Breckinridge and Bell vied for the South. The Republicans were not even on the ballot in the **Deep South**. Breckinridge and the southern Democrats expected no support in the North. Douglas proclaimed himself the only national candidate. Bell and the Constitutional Unionists attempted to campaign in both regions but at-

Constitutional Union party Political party that organized on the eve of the Civil War with no platform other than the preservation of the Constitution, the Union, and the law.

Deep South The region of the South farthest from the North; usually said to comprise the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

tracted mostly southern voters who wanted to avoid the crisis of disunion.

Sensing that Lincoln would win the North, Douglas launched a last-ditch effort to hold the Union together by campaigning in the South. Douglas tried unsuccessfully to form a coalition between moderate Democrats and Constitutional Unionists. Already in poor health, he exhausted himself trying to prevent disunion.

As the election drew near, rumors of slave uprisings incited by Yankee strangers led to hysteria in the South. Reports of violence, arson, and rape in faraway places filled southern newspapers. Although supported by no hard evidence, these rumors contributed to the climate of gloom in the South. Even moderate southerners started to believe that the Republicans intended to crush their way of life.

To improve the party's image, Republican leaders forged a platform promising not to interfere with slavery in areas where it already existed but opposing its expansion. Particularly in the Midwest, party leaders worked hard to portray themselves as "the white man's party" rather than as "black Republicans," as their opponents contemptuously called them. These tactics alienated a few abolitionists but appealed to many northerners and westerners.

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States with a clear majority of the electoral votes but only 40 percent of the popular vote. He carried all the northern states, California, and Oregon (see Map 13.2). Douglas finished second with 29 percent of the popular vote but only 12 electoral votes. Bell won in Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Breckinridge carried the Deep South but won only 72 electoral votes and 18 percent of the popular vote nationwide. For the first time in American history, a purely regional party held the presidency. The Republicans also swept congressional races in the North and had a large majority in Congress for the upcoming term.

The First Wave of Secession

After the Republican victory, southern sentiment for secession intensified, especially in the Deep

South. The Republicans were a "party founded on a single sentiment," stated the *Richmond Examiner*: "hatred of African slavery." The *New Orleans Delta* agreed, calling the Republicans "essentially a revolutionary party." To a growing number of southerners, the Republican victory was proof that secession was the only alternative to political domination.

Most Republicans did not believe that the South would actually leave the Union. Calls for secession had been heard in the South for a decade. Seward had ridiculed threats of secession as an attempt "to terrify or alarm" the northern people. Lincoln himself believed that the "people of the South" had "too much sense" to launch an "attempt to ruin the government." He continued to urge moderation.

In a last-ditch attempt at compromise, **John J. Crittenden** of Kentucky introduced several proposals in the Senate on December 18, 1860. He suggested extending the Missouri Compromise line westward across the continent. Crittenden's plan also called for compensation to slaveowners who were unable to recover fugitive slaves from northern states.

Lincoln did not like Crittenden's plan. The extension of the Missouri Compromise line, he warned, would "lose us everything we gained by the election." He let senators and congressmen know that he wanted no "compromise in regard to the extension of slavery." The Senate defeated Crittenden's proposals by a vote of 25 to 23.

Meanwhile, on December 20, 1860, delegates in South Carolina voted 169 to 0 to dissolve their ties with the United States. Seceding from the Union, they proclaimed, was the sovereign right of a state. Other southern states followed South Carolina's lead. During January 1861, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana voted to secede from the Union.

John J. Crittenden Kentucky senator who made an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the Civil War by proposing a series of constitutional amendments protecting slavery south of the Missouri Compromise line.

On February 4, 1861, delegates from the six seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama, and formed the Confederate **States of America**, or the Confederacy. Shortly afterward, Texans voted to leave the Union and join the Confederacy. The Confederate congress drafted a constitution, and the Confederate states ratified it on March 11, 1861. The Confederate constitution created a government modeled on the government of the United States—but with a few notable differences. It emphasized the "sovereign and independent character" of the states and guaranteed the protection of slavery in any new territories. The document limited the president and vice president to a single six-year term. A bicameral legislative body and six executive departments whose heads served as the cabinet rounded out the government. The U.S. Constitution, excluding provisions in conflict with the Confederate constitution, would remain in force in the Confederacy.

Responses to Disunion

Even as late as March 1861, not all southerners favored secession. John Bell and Stephen Douglas together had received over 50 percent of southern votes in 1860, winning support from southerners who desired compromise and had only limited stakes in upholding slavery. Nonslaveholders constituted the majority in many southern states. The border states, which had numerous ties with the North, were not strongly inclined toward secession. In February, Virginia had even called for a peace conference in Washington. Like Crittenden's efforts, this attempt failed.

The division in southern sentiments was a major stumbling block to the election of a president of the Confederacy. Many moderate delegates to the constitutional convention refused to support radical secessionists. The convention remained deadlocked until Mississippi moderate Jefferson Davis was put forward as a compromise candidate.

Davis appeared to be the ideal choice. A West Point graduate, he had served during the Mexican War and as secretary of war under Franklin Pierce. He had twice been elected to the Senate, resigning

immediately after Lincoln's victory in 1860. Although Davis had long championed southern interests, he was no romantic, fire-eating secessionist. Before 1860, he had been a strong Unionist. He had supported the Compromise of 1850. Like many of his contemporaries, however, Davis had become increasingly alarmed as he watched the South's political power decline.

To moderates like Davis, the presidential election of 1860 demonstrated that the South could no longer control its own affairs. It had no other option than to withdraw from the nation. Shortly after his inauguration as president of the Confederate States of America on February 9, 1861, Davis asserted: "The time for compromise has now passed. The South is determined to maintain her position, and make all who oppose her smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel."

Northern Democrats and Republicans alike watched developments in the South with dismay. Lame-duck president Buchanan argued that any state leaving the Union did so unlawfully. But he also believed that the federal government had no constitutional power to "coerce a State" to remain in the Union. Buchanan accepted no responsibility for the situation and did little to alleviate the tension.

During the four months between the election and Lincoln's inauguration, the Republicans could do nothing about secession. But Lincoln quickly defined his position: "My opinion is that no state can, in any way, lawfully get out of the Union, without the consent of the others." He tried to reassure southerners that his administration would not interfere with their slaves, but he refused to consider any compromise on the extension of slavery.

Confederate States of America Political entity formed by the seceding states of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana in February 1861.

Jefferson Davis Former U.S. Army officer, secretary of war, and senator from Mississippi who resigned from Congress when Mississippi seceded and became president of the Confederacy

Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass assessed the crisis this way: "Much as I value the current apparent hostility to Slavery, I plainly see that it is less the outgrowth of high and moral conviction against Slavery, as such, than because of the trouble its friends have brought upon the country." Many northerners, as Douglass correctly perceived, were much more concerned about the breakup of the nation than they ever had been about slavery.

The Nation Dissolved

Lincoln's inaugural address on March 4, 1861, repeated themes that he had been stressing since the election: no interference with slavery in existing states, no extension of slavery into the territories, and no tolerance of secession. "The Union," he contended, was "perpetual," and no state could withdraw from it. Lincoln pledged "that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States." This policy, he continued, necessitated "no bloodshed or violence, and there shall be none, unless it is forced upon the national authority."

Lincoln, Sumter, and War

Lincoln's first presidential address drew mixed reactions. Most Republicans found it firm and reasonable. Union advocates in both North and South thought the speech held promise for the future. Even former rival Stephen Douglas stated, "I am with him." Moderate southerners believed the speech was all "any reasonable Southern man" could have expected. Confederates, however, branded the speech a "Declaration of War." Lincoln had hoped the address would foster a climate of reconciliation, but it did not.

Even before Lincoln assumed office, South Carolina officials had ordered the state militia to seize two federal forts and the federal arsenal at Charleston. In response, Major Robert Anderson moved all federal troops from Charleston to **Fort**

Sumter, an island stronghold in Charleston harbor. The Confederate congress demanded that President Buchanan remove all federal troops from Confederate territory. Despite his sympathy for the southern cause, Buchanan announced that Fort Sumter would be defended "against all hostile attacks." On January 3, 1861, a Charleston harbor battery fired on a supply ship as it attempted to reach the fort. Buchanan denounced the action but did nothing.

Immediately after taking office, Lincoln received a report from Fort Sumter that supplies were running low. Under great pressure from northern public opinion to do something without starting a war, he informed South Carolina governor Francis Pickens of his peaceful intention to send unarmed boats to resupply the besieged fort. Lincoln thus placed the Confederacy in the position of either accepting the resupply of federal forts and losing face or firing on the unarmed supply ships and starting a war. From Lincoln's perspective, the plan could not fail. If no shots were fired, he would achieve his objective by holding the fort. But if armed conflict evolved, he could blame the Confederates for starting it.

Confederate officials determined not to allow Sumter to be resupplied. Jefferson Davis ordered the Confederate commander at Charleston, General P. G. T. Beauregard, to demand the evacuation of Sumter and, if the Federals refused, to "proceed, in such a manner as you may determine, to reduce it." On April 12, Beauregard demanded that Anderson surrender. When Anderson refused, shore batteries opened fire. After a thirty-four-hour artillery battle, Anderson surrendered. Neither side had inflicted casualties on the other, but civil war had officially begun.

Public outcry over the shelling of Fort Sumter was deafening. Newspapers across the North

Fort Sumter Fort at the mouth of the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina; it was the scene of the opening engagement of the Civil War in April 1861.

battery An army artillery unit, usually supplied with heavy guns.



◆ In this vivid engraving, South Carolina shore batteries under the command of P. G. T. Beauregard shell Fort Sumter, the last federal stronghold in Charleston harbor, on the night of April 12, 1861. Curious and excited civilians look on from their rooftops, never suspecting the horrors that would be the outcome of this rash action. *Library of Congress.*

rallied behind the Union cause. In New York, where southern sympathizers had once vehemently criticized abolitionist actions, a million people attended a Union rally. Even northern Democrats rallied behind the Republican president. Stephen Douglas proclaimed, "There can be no neutrals in this war, only patriots—or traitors." Spurred by the public outcry, Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand militiamen to save the Union. Northern states responded immediately and enthusiastically. Across the Upper South and the border regions, however, the call to arms meant that a choice had to be made between the Union and the Confederacy.

Choosing Sides in the Upper South

As of April 12, 1861, seven slaveholding states had seceded, but eight remained in the Union. The Upper South, consisting of Virginia, North Carolina, and

Tennessee, and the Border States of Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware were critical to the hopes of the Confederacy, for they contained over two-thirds of the South's white population and possessed most of its industrial capacity. If the Confederacy were to have any chance, the human and physical resources of the Upper South were essential.

After Lincoln's call to mobilize the militia, Virginia initiated a second wave of secession. On May 23, the state's voters overwhelmingly ratified an ordinance of secession. The Confederate congress accepted Virginia's offer of **Richmond** as the new Confederate capital. Not all Virginians were flattered by becoming the seat for the Confederacy. Residents of the western portion of the state had strong Union ties and long-standing political differences with their neighbors east of the Allegheny Mountains. They called mass Unionist meetings to protest the state's secession and, at a June convention in Wheeling, elected their own governor and drew up a constitution.

For many individuals in the Upper South, the decision to support the Confederacy was not an easy one. No one typified this dilemma more than Virginian **Robert E. Lee**, the son of Revolutionary War hero Henry ("Light Horse Harry") Lee. Lee had strong ties to the Union. A West Point graduate and career officer in the U.S. Army, he had a distinguished record in the Mexican War and as superintendent of West Point. General Winfield Scott, commander of the Union forces, called Lee "the best soldier I ever saw in the field." Recognizing his military skill, Lincoln offered Lee field command of the Union armies. Lee agonized over the decision but told a friend, "I cannot raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children." He resigned his U.S. Army commission and accepted command of Virginia's defenses in April 1861.

Influenced by the Virginia convention and by the events at Fort Sumter, North Carolina and Tennessee joined the Confederacy. Tennessee, the eleventh and final state to join the Confederacy, remained divided between eastern residents, who favored the Union, and westerners, who favored the Confederacy. East Tennesseans attempted to divide the state much as West Virginians had done, but Davis ordered Confederate troops to occupy the region, thwarting the effort.

Trouble in the Border States

The start of hostilities brought political and military confrontation in three of the four slave states that remained in the Union. Delaware, which had

few slaveholders, quietly stayed in the Union. Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky, however, each contained large, vocal secessionist minorities and appeared poised to bolt to the Confederacy.

Maryland was particularly vital to the Union, for it enclosed Washington, D.C., on three sides. If Maryland had seceded, the Union might have been forced to move its capital. Because southern sympathizers controlled the legislature, Governor Thomas Hicks, a Unionist, refused to call a special legislative session to consider secession.

Even without a secession ordinance, pro-southern Marylanders caused trouble. On April 6, a mob attacked a Massachusetts regiment that was passing through Baltimore on its way to the capital. The soldiers returned fire. When the violence subsided, twelve Baltimore residents and four soldiers lay dead. Secessionists subsequently destroyed railroad bridges to keep additional northern troops out of the state and effectively cut Washington, D.C., off from the North.

Lincoln ordered the military occupation of Baltimore and declared martial law. He then had the army arrest suspected southern sympathizers and hold them without formal hearings or charges. When the legislature met again and appeared to be planning secession, Lincoln ordered the army to surround Frederick, the legislative seat. With southern sympathizers suppressed, new state elections were held that resulted in an overwhelmingly Unionist legislature.

Kentucky had important economic ties to the South but was strongly nationalistic. Kentuckian

Richmond Port city on the James River in Virginia; it was already the state capital and became the capital of the Confederacy.

Unionist Loyal to the United States of America during the Civil War.

Robert E. Lee A Virginian with a distinguished career in the U.S. Army who resigned from that army to assume command of the army of the Confederate States of America.

martial law Temporary rule by military authorities, imposed on a civilian population in time of war or when civil authority has broken down.

Henry Clay had engineered compromises between the regions, and John Crittenden had made the only significant attempt to resolve the current crisis. Most Kentuckians favored compromise. The governor refused to honor Lincoln's call for troops, but the state legislature voted to remain neutral. Both North and South honored that neutrality. Kentucky's own militia, however, split into two factions, and the state became a bloody battleground of brother against brother. In Missouri, Governor Claiborne F. Jackson, a former border ruffian, pushed for secession. When Unionists frustrated the secession movement, Jackson's forces seized the federal arsenal at Liberty. Union sympathizers fielded their own forces and fought Jackson at every turn. Jackson's secessionist movement sent representatives to the Confederate congress, but Union forces controlled the state and drove pro-southern leaders into exile.

Summary

Expectations
Constraints
Choices
Outcomes

As social and economic change heightened Americans' expectations during the 1850s, individuals made a variety of choices, creating a new political environment. New political allegiances changed party composition and platforms. As the Compromise of 1850 failed to alleviate regional tensions, the Whig party disintegrated. Two completely new groups, the American and Republican parties, replaced the Whigs. Events such as the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the *Dred Scott* decision intensified regional polarization, and radicals on both sides fanned the flames of sectional rivalry.

The constraints imposed by regional interests left the new parties with far less ability to achieve com-

SUGGESTED READINGS

Fehrenbacher, Don E. *Slavery, Law, and Politics: The Dred Scott Case in Historical Perspective* (1981).

promise than their more nationally oriented predecessors. Even the Democratic party could not hold together, splitting into northern and southern wings. By 1859, the young Republican party, committed to containing slavery, seemed poised to gain control of the federal government. Southerners expected that a Republican victory would doom their way of life.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, seven southern states chose to withdraw from the Union. Last-minute efforts at compromise failed, and on April 12, 1861, five weeks after Lincoln's inauguration, Confederate forces fired on federal troops at Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor.

Lincoln's call to arms forced wavering states to choose sides. Virginia, Tennessee, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri had to make painful choices that frequently brought violence and military action. A second wave of secession and conflict over the Border States solidified the lines between the two competing societies. The sides were quickly drawn, the stakes were set, the division was completed. The nation now faced the bloodiest war in its history.

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A collection of essays by the rising generation of new political scholars. Exciting and challenging reading.

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Arguably the best single-volume discussion of the political problems besetting the nation during this critical decade.

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An extremely long and detailed work but beautifully written and informative.

Rawley, James. *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (1969).

An interesting look at the conflicts in Kansas, centering on racial attitudes in the West. Insightful and captivating reading.

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This reprint includes notes and a chronology by noted social historian Kathryn Kish Sklar, making it especially informative. See also the one-hour film version produced by the Program for Culture at Play, available on videocassette from Films for the Humanities.