



◀ President Buchanan

**WITNESS HISTORY**  AUDIO

## The President Falters

Outgoing President James Buchanan condemned South Carolina's secession from the Union but was unwilling to use force to stop it. Many northerners criticized his weak response to the crisis. In an address to Congress, he seemed almost baffled that the situation had deteriorated so far:

“How easy it would be for the American people to settle the slavery question forever and to restore peace and harmony to this distracted country! . . . All that is necessary to accomplish the object, and all for which the slave States have ever contended, is to be let alone and permitted to manage their domestic institutions in their own way. As sovereign States, they, and they alone, are responsible before God and the world for the slavery existing among them.”

—President Buchanan, December 3, 1860

# Lincoln, Secession, and War

## Objectives

- Compare the candidates in the election of 1860, and analyze the results.
- Analyze why southern states seceded from the Union.
- Assess the events that led to the outbreak of war.

## Terms and People

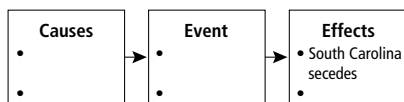
Jefferson Davis  
John C. Breckinridge  
Confederate States of America

Crittenden Compromise  
Fort Sumter

## NoteTaking

### Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects

Use a cause-and-effect chart to show the events that led to secession.



**Why It Matters** Despite repeated attempts at compromise, disagreement between the North and the South over the issue of slavery continued to deepen. With the election of Republican President Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the crisis came to a head. The Union of states that had been formed less than a hundred years before was about to dissolve. **Section Focus Question:** How did the Union finally collapse into a civil war?

## The Election of 1860

John Brown's raid and execution were still fresh in the minds of Americans as the 1860 presidential election approached. Uncertainty about Kansas—would it be a slave state or a free state?—added to the anxiety. In the North, loss of confidence in the Supreme Court resulting from the *Dred Scott* decision and rage about the Fugitive Slave Act's intrusion into the states' independence further aggravated the situation.

The issue of states' rights was on southern minds as well. Would northern radicals conspire to eliminate slavery not only in the territories but also in the original southern states? In the spring of 1860, Mississippi senator **Jefferson Davis** convinced Congress to adopt resolutions restricting federal control over slavery in the territories. The resolutions also asserted that the Constitution prohibited Congress or any state from interfering with slavery in the states

where it already existed. Even southerners who did not own slaves felt that their way of life and their honor were under attack.

With ill will running so deep, the upcoming elections posed a serious dilemma. It was hard to imagine that either northerners or southerners would accept a President from the other region. Could the Union survive?

**Democrats Split Their Support** The Democrats held their nominating convention in Charleston, North Carolina. For ten days, they argued about the issue that had plagued the nation for decades: slavery. The southern Democrats called for a platform supporting federal protection of slavery in the territories. The northern Democrats, who backed Stephen Douglas, supported the doctrine of popular sovereignty. When the Douglas forces prevailed, the delegates from eight southern states walked out and formed a separate convention.

The Democrats were now split into two parties. The northern Democrats nominated Stephen A. Douglas. The southern Democrats nominated the Vice President, **John C. Breckinridge** of Kentucky. Breckinridge was committed to expanding slavery into the territories.

**Whigs Make a Last Effort** In the meantime, the few remaining Whigs teamed up with the Know-Nothings to create the Constitutional Union Party. They hoped to heal the split between North and South. Their candidate was John Bell, a little-known moderate from Tennessee. Their platform condemned sectional parties and promised to uphold “the Constitution of the country, the Union of the States and the enforcement of the laws.”

**Republicans Nominate Lincoln** The Republicans, who had gained great strength since their formation, held their nominating convention in Chicago. After several ballots, they nominated Abraham Lincoln as their candidate. When the party convened, seasoned politician William H. Seward of New York had been the favorite to win the nomination. But when many delegates began to worry that Seward’s antislavery views were too radical, the convention went with the more moderate Lincoln.

## The Candidates for President

### Abraham Lincoln

- Republican
- Illinois
- Platform:

Slavery must not be allowed in the territories.



### Stephen Douglas

- Northern Democrat
- Illinois
- Platform:

Popular sovereignty should decide the issue of slavery in the territories when they become states.



### John Bell

- Constitutional Unionist
  - Tennessee
  - Platform:
- The federal government should support slavery and also defend the Union.



### John Breckinridge

- Southern Democrat
- Kentucky
- Platform:

The federal government must protect slavery.



**Vocabulary Builder**  
stipulate—(STIHP yuh layt) *v.* to  
specify or indicate

The Republican platform called for the end of slavery in the territories. At the same time, the Republicans defended the right of each state to control its own institutions and stipulated that there should be no interference with slavery in the states where it already existed. Abraham Lincoln—with his great debating skills, his moderate views, and his reputation for integrity—was seen as the ideal candidate to carry the Republican platform to victory.

**Lincoln Wins the Election** Benefiting from the fracturing among the other political parties, Lincoln won the election handily, with 40 percent of the popular vote and almost 60 percent of the electoral vote. Still, he did not receive a single southern electoral vote. In fact, he was not even on the ballot in most southern states.

Breckinridge was the clear favorite among southern voters, carrying every cotton state, along with North Carolina, Delaware, and Maryland. The border

Events That Changed America

# THE ELECTION OF 1860

**The Election of 1860** The election of 1860 was a turning point for the United States. Looking at an election map shows clearly how the country was divided.

Look at the cartoon to the right to see one viewpoint of the campaign for the presidency. Try to figure out what the cartoonist thinks of each of these candidates. Lincoln is on the left, dressed as a member of a Republican support group called the “Wide Awakes.” As he approaches the White House, the other candidates try to sneak in.

John Bell tells Stephen Douglas to hurry up. Douglas, meanwhile, tries to unlock the door with different keys, but none of them works. In the far right, the current President, Buchanan, tries to pull John Breckinridge in through the window.

| Candidate (Party)                          | Electoral Vote | Popular Vote | % Electoral Vote | % Popular Vote |
|--|----------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| Abraham Lincoln (Republican)               | 180            | 1,866,452    | 59               | 40             |
| John C. Breckinridge (Southern-Democratic) | 72             | 847,953      | 24               | 18             |
| Stephen A. Douglas (Democratic)            | 12             | 1,380,202    | 4                | 29             |
| John Bell (Constitutional Union)           | 39             | 590,901      | 13               | 13             |



states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee—whose economic interests were not as closely tied to slavery as the cotton states were—gave their votes to Bell. Stephen A. Douglas, although running second to Lincoln in the popular vote, won only in Missouri and New Jersey.

The election of 1860 demonstrated that Americans' worst fears had come to pass. There were no longer any national political parties. Bell and Breckinridge competed for southern votes, while Douglas and Lincoln competed in the North and West. The North and South were now effectively two political entities, and there seemed no way to bridge the gap.

### Vocabulary Builder

**entity**—(EHN tuh tee) *n.*  
something that exists as a single and complete unit

- ✓ **Checkpoint** How did Lincoln's election reflect the break between the North and the South?



▲ Election propaganda for Bell and Breckinridge

### Why It Matters

The election of 1860 was the first national contest for the Republican Party, which became one of the two major political parties. More importantly, the election was the immediate cause for the secession of the southern states.

### Thinking Critically

1. **Analyze** What is the meaning of the keys with which Douglas is trying to open the door?
2. **Make Comparisons** How is Lincoln portrayed in a different manner from the other candidates?

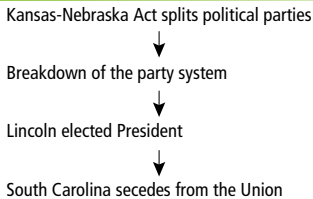
### History Interactive★

For: More about the election of 1860  
Web Code: ncp-1008

### Long-term Causes of the Civil War

- Sectional economic and cultural differences
- Debate over expansion of slavery into the territories
- Political compromises failed to ease sectional differences and resolve question of expanding slavery
  - Missouri Compromise (1820)
  - Compromise of 1850
  - Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854)
- Laws increased sectional tension
  - Fugitive Slave Act (1850)
  - Dred Scott decision
  - Tariff policy
- Growth of the antislavery movement
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

### Short-term Causes of the Civil War



## The Union Collapses

Southerners were outraged that a President could be elected without a single southern vote. In the southerners' perception, the South no longer had a voice in the national government. They decided to act.

**Southern States Leave the Union** As soon as Lincoln's election was confirmed, the South Carolina legislature summoned a state convention. Meeting in Charleston on December 20, 1860, and without a dissenting vote, the convention declared that "the union now subsisting between South Carolina and the other States, under the name of the 'United States of America,' is hereby dissolved." They cited as their reason for seceding the election of a President "whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery." They further declared:

**Primary Source** "On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March next, [a new administration] will take possession of the Government. It has announced . . . that a war must be waged against slavery until it shall cease throughout the United States. . . .

The Guarantees of the Constitution will then no longer exist; the equal rights of the States will be lost. The slaveholding States will no longer have the power of self-government, or self-protection, and the Federal Government will have become their enemy."

—Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina From the Federal Union, December 20, 1860

In the next few weeks, six other states of the Deep South seceded from the Union. Sentiments favoring secession were not always unanimous, with the gravest doubts surfacing in Georgia. State senator Alexander H. Stephens, though alarmed by Lincoln's election, was devoted to the Union of states under the Constitution: "This government of our fathers, with all its defects, comes nearer the objects of all good government than any other on the face of the Earth," he said. But Georgia voted to secede anyway. Like delegates in the other slave-dependent, cotton-growing states, they believed they had to take this step to protect their property and way of life.

**The Confederacy Is Formed** In February 1861, the seven seceding states established the **Confederate States of America**. They then proceeded to frame a constitution for the new government. The Confederate constitution closely resembled the U.S. Constitution. However, it stressed the independence of each state and implied that states had the right to secede. It also guaranteed the protection of slavery. To win the support of Britain and France, which adamantly opposed the slave trade, it prohibited importing new slaves from other countries.

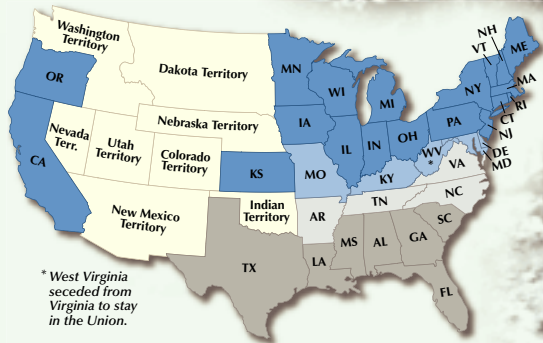
Not all southerners backed the Confederacy. Some large planters with economic ties to the North still hoped for a compromise. So, too, did many small farmers with no vested interest in slavery. To gain the loyalty of such citizens, the Confederacy chose former Mississippi senator Jefferson Davis as their president. Davis had supported the Compromise of 1850, but he had also insisted that the South should be left alone to manage its own culture and institutions—including slavery.

**A Final Compromise Fails** Some politicians sought a final compromise. Kentucky senator John Crittenden proposed a constitutional amendment allowing slavery in western territories south of the Missouri Compromise line. He also called for federal funds to reimburse slaveholders for unreturned fugitives.

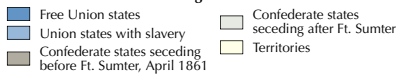
## Focus On Geography

### Slavery and Secession

Cotton cultivation increased substantially in the nineteenth century. Harvesting cotton (right) was a time-consuming and difficult task that required a large labor force. This led planters to buy more enslaved people. In 1861, more than 50 percent of the population was enslaved in some areas of the Deep South. Tension built over extending slavery into the territories. The states with the largest slave populations seceded. Border states, which had fewer enslaved people, stayed in the Union.

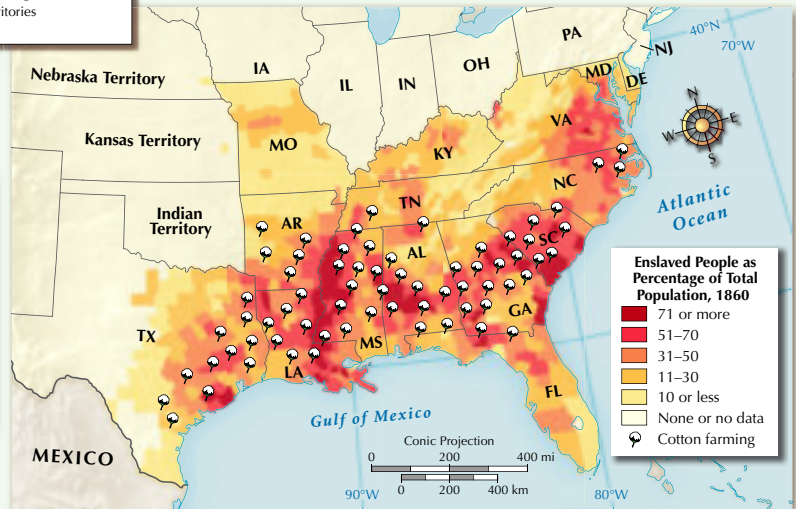


**States Seceding from the Union**



### Geography and History

- Which states had the greatest concentrations of enslaved people?
- What was the relationship between the percentage of enslaved people and secession?





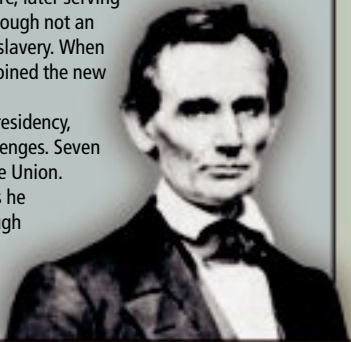
## HISTORY MAKERS

### Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

Lincoln grew up on the Kentucky frontier and moved to Illinois as a young man. Although he had little formal education, he enjoyed reading and disliked farming. In 1836, he began practicing law in Illinois.

Lincoln began his political career as a Whig in the Illinois state legislature, later serving in the U.S. Congress. Although not an abolitionist, he opposed slavery. When the Whigs fell apart, he joined the new Republican Party.

Upon assuming the presidency, Lincoln faced tough challenges. Seven states had already left the Union. Lincoln won reelection as he steered the country through the Civil War. He is best remembered for ending slavery in the United States.

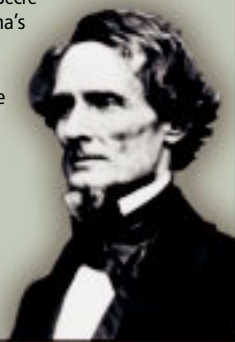


### Jefferson Davis (1808–1889)

Davis is best known for his role as president of the Confederate States of America. Before the Civil War, he served in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1845 but left to join the army during the war with Mexico in 1846.

Returning home to Mississippi as a hero, Davis became a U.S. Senator and, later, the Secretary of War. He opposed South Carolina's secession, still hoping for a compromise. Even when his own Mississippi seceded a few weeks later, he left the Senate by appealing for peace.

Two weeks later, he became president of the Confederate States of America. Despite his strong leadership, the Confederacy lacked the manpower and manufacturing capability to defeat the Union. He was imprisoned for treason after the war but was never tried.



Lincoln, now President-elect, warned that Crittenden's plan would "lose us everything we gained by the election." A narrow margin of senators voted down this **Crittenden Compromise**.

President Buchanan, in his last few weeks in office, told Congress that he had no authority to prevent secession. He lamented the breakup of the Union and he sympathized with the South's concerns, but he made no serious effort to resolve the crisis. Other pacifying attempts also failed. A secret peace convention held in Washington, which drew delegates from the border states as well as the North and South, failed to reach a compromise that could save the Union.



**Checkpoint** Why did the states of the Deep South leave the Union?

## The Civil War Begins

Amid this turmoil, the new President took office. Lincoln had no illusions about the challenge he faced. He confronted "a task," he feared, "greater than that which rested upon [President George] Washington."

**Lincoln Takes Office** Lincoln was sworn in as President on March 4, 1861. In his inaugural address, he took a firm but conciliatory tone toward the South. "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists," he began. But he *did* intend to preserve the Union. "No state, upon its own mere action, can lawfully get out of the Union," he said. Still, he would avoid violence. There would be no war, he pledged, unless the South started it. He concluded with an appeal to the South to live in peace:

### Primary Source

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

—Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1861

**Lincoln Decides to Act** When the southern states seceded, they seized the federal forts and arsenals within their borders. Only four forts remained in Union hands. The most important of these was **Fort Sumter**, which guarded the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina. In January 1861, President Buchanan tried to send troops and supplies to the fort, but the unarmed supply ship sailed away when Confederate guns fired on it. Upon taking office, Lincoln had to decide whether to take the risk required to hold on to these forts or yield to Confederate demands that they be surrendered.

By April, the troops at the fort desperately needed food and supplies. Lincoln, who still hoped to bring back the South without bloodshed, faced a dilemma. Should he try to resupply the fort? Or should he let the Confederates take it? Lincoln struggled to make a decision. During his inaugural address, he had promised southerners that “the government will not assail you.” But as President, he was sworn to defend the property of the United States. A wrong move could touch off a war. At last, trying to steer a middle course, Lincoln notified South Carolina that he was sending supplies—food only, no arms—to the fort.

**Fort Sumter Falls** South Carolinians were suspicious of Lincoln’s motives and ordered the Fort Sumter garrison to surrender to the Confederacy. When the Union troops refused, the Confederates fired on the fort. The Union troops eventually ran out of ammunition, forcing the commander to surrender.

Northerners responded to the attack on Fort Sumter with shock and anger. A few days later, on April 15, President Lincoln declared that “insurrection” existed and called for 75,000 volunteers to fight against the Confederacy.

The South responded just as strongly. At the outbreak of hostilities, the states of Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina joined the Confederacy. As in the North, the South raised troops quickly and struggled to equip and train them before sending them into battle.

Both sides predicted a short skirmish, with victory only a few days or months away. These predictions were unfounded. Americans faced years of terrible suffering before the fighting that had begun at Fort Sumter finally ended.



The flag above flew over Fort Sumter as Confederate troops attacked (pictured above).

 **Checkpoint** What event led to the outbreak of war?

## SECTION 2 Assessment

### Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice

Web Code: nca-1010

#### Comprehension

**1. Terms and People** For each item below, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Jefferson Davis
- John C. Breckinridge
- Confederate States of America
- Crittenden Compromise
- Fort Sumter

**2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:** Use your cause-and-effect chart to answer the Section Focus Question: How did the Union finally collapse into a civil war?

#### Writing About History

**3. Quick Write: Outline an Argument** Outline an answer to this question: Was secession the only option for the South?

#### Critical Thinking

**4. Recognize Effects** How did the election of 1860 increase sectional tensions?

**5. Recognize Causes** Why did the southern states secede?

**6. Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment** How could Buchanan have prevented war?