



History 201

Lectures 9

The Rise of the Republican Party

The emergence of the Republican Party as the major opponent of the Democrats accelerated the drift toward disunion. In the 1856 election, Republicans won seats in both the House and the Senate, and while they did not gain a majority in either house, their numbers increased enough for them to become a formidable opposition to the Democrats. Even more Republicans won seats in the midterm elections of 1858, leaving Democrats still holding on to a slim majority in both houses of Congress. It is worthwhile to remember that the Republican Party was the first successful truly sectional party, representing only northern interests and comprised entirely of northern constituents.

Combined with the new regionality of party politics, differences in social, economic and political attitudes between the North and South made efforts at reconciliation impossible. Additionally, a series of events and political conflicts began in the late 1850s that further complicated American politics, and exacerbated the ongoing political/ideological regional rift over the question of slavery, and especially the issue of the advance of slavery into the new territories of the United States. Here are a few of those events.

The Panic of 1857—Republican politicians used the depression rich occurred shortly after the election of James Buchanan as a means of discrediting the Democrats' economic policies. Northern manufacturers claimed that the low tariffs, which the Democrats had passed, had weakened the American economy and given trade advantages to Great Britain. The Republican Party supported high tariffs.

The Dred Scott Decision (1857)—an attempt to settle the slavery issue by judicial decision in the Supreme Court only succeeded in increasing the hostility between the pro- and anti- slavery factions. Dred Scott, a slave residing in Missouri had been taken by his master into the free state of Illinois, and later into the northern portion of the Louisiana Purchase territory. Slavery had been banned in that area by the Missouri Compromise. Scott sued for his freedom in the court system. The case finally reached the Supreme Court. Chief justice Roger Taney wrote the majority opinion. Taney held that “no Negro slave or descendant of a



Dred Scott

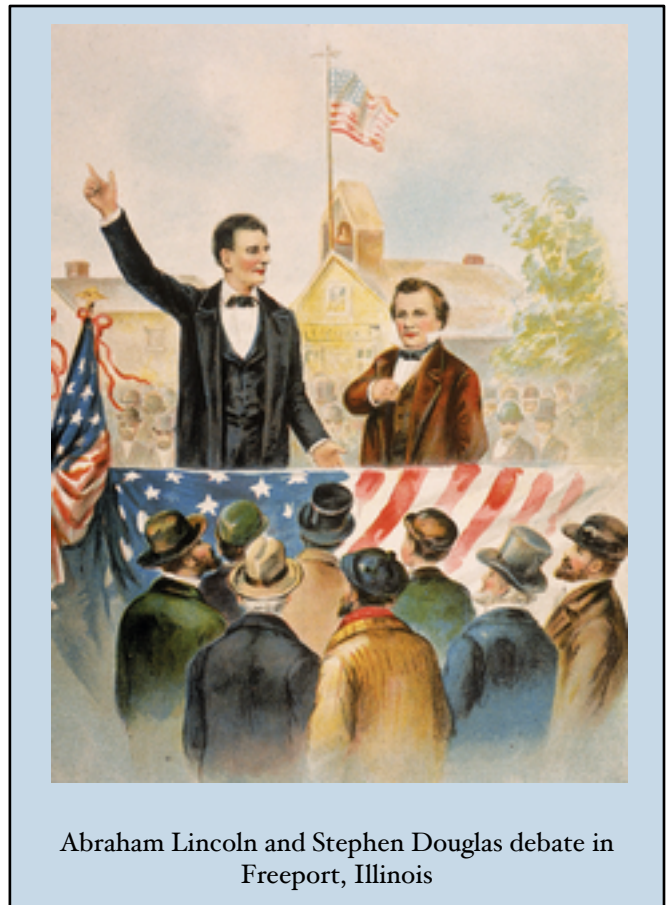
slave could be a citizen of the United States.”

Therefore, Scott could not bring suit in the federal courts. If Scott had no standing to bring suit, then Taney should have ended his opinion right there, but he had considerably more to say. Taney also ruled that Congress had no right to prohibit slavery in the territories and that the Missouri Compromise was null and void from the day of its enactment.

Needless to say, the decision delighted the South. Now slavery was protected by constitutional guarantees in every part of the national territories. The southerners' property was also protected from the possibility that a hostile Congress might ban slavery in the United States at some future date. The Republican Party, which was demanding Congressional legislation against slavery in United States territories, was placed in a defensive position.

The Lincoln Douglas Debates (1858)—the Dred Scott Decision, and its impact on the slavery controversy became the subject of a series of important debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas (Dem.) and Lincoln (Rep.) were competing to gain an Illinois Senate seat. The Illinois Central Railroad agreed to take the candidates from town to town. Lincoln and Douglas debated each other in seven Illinois towns. Slavery in the territories quickly became the most important topic. Douglas insisted that the Dred Scott Decision was good law, and that the Decision in no way compromised his principle of popular sovereignty.

Abraham Lincoln was convinced that the doctrine of popular sovereignty was very dangerous. At the debate at Freeport, Illinois, Lincoln forced Douglas into making a statement that has come to be known as the “Freeport Doctrine.” Douglas said that although slavery might be legal in the territories, it could not exist where the people of the territory failed to enact legislation that supported it. In other words, any territory could refuse to pass laws that supported slavery. Without legal support for slavery, it could not exist in that territory. This rather confusing doctrine met with enough approval in Illinois to get Douglas chosen for the Senate seat by the Illinois state legislature. However, Douglas’s statement appalled

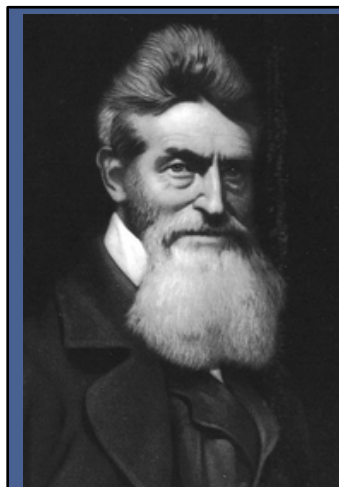


Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debate in Freeport, Illinois

Southerners. Douglas’s Freeport Doctrine nullified both the Dred Scott Decision and the spirit of all of the various compromises. Southerners began to realize that Douglas’s principle of popular sovereignty did not necessarily support the expansion of slavery. Up to that point, Stephen Douglas had been about the only Northern politician who had enough support in the South to solidify the Democratic Party. His charm among southern Democrats ended at Freeport.

John Brown’s Raid (1859)—John Brown, the fanatical abolitionist, attempted to lead a slave insurrection in Virginia in the fall of 1859. Brown’s raid is certainly one of the most bizarre events in American History. Brown believed that God told him to go to Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and seize the federal arsenal there. God told Brown that If he did so, thousands of slaves would come to Harpers Ferry, take the weapons

from the arsenal, and begin a massive insurrection



John Brown (1859)

that would end slavery in America. Brown and his sons and several others left Kansas and went to Boston, where they met with influential abolitionists and told them about God's Plan for Brown and his colleagues. The abolitionists gave Brown money and got him out of Boston as quickly as they could. Brown and his little band traveled to Harpers Ferry, killed the guards seized the federal arsenal, and waited for the slaves to come and get the weapons. In the meantime, a gunfight erupted between Brown and his men and residents of Harpers Ferry. Four militia members were killed and eight wounded. President Buchanan sent out a Marine unit under the command of Robert E. Lee. The Marines captured Brown and his accomplices, who were tried for murder and conspiracy to commit treason. Brown was convicted and hanged. Southerners regarded Brown's raid as the result of the propaganda and principles of the abolitionist movement and of the Republican Party both of which Brown belonged to. The bizarre nature of Brown's raid stimulated conspiracy theories in the South. Seen as as a single independent event, the raid makes no sense (unless, of course, one accepts the fact that John Brown was a delusional lunatic), so southern conspiracy theorists argued in newspapers and pamphlets that Brown was simply one part of a greater, much more dangerous conspiracy. Many southerners began to feel that if the northerners couldn't abolish slavery by legal means, they meant to do so by violence. Most northerners were shocked at the news of the raid, and quickly condemned it as the work of a dangerous and irresponsible fanatic. To northern abolitionists, however, Brown became a hero and a martyr. Ralph Waldo Emerson called Brown a "new saint."

The Republican Party was born out of the turmoil of the series of political conflicts that shook the nation in the mid 1850s—from the aftermath of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, from the Kansas/Nebraska Act, and from the Dred Scott Decision. The first campaign in which the Republicans put up a presidential candidate was in 1856. If politics make for strange bedfellows, as the saying goes, the Republican Party's bed held the strangest. It was all over the political map of the 1850s. It contained Free Soilers, Northern anti-slavery Democrats (Barn Burners) who were convinced that their party had sold out to the southern "slave power," Northern Whigs, Protestant immigrant groups like Germans



The Last Moments of John Brown
by Thomas Havenden

and Scandinavians, remnants of the Know-Nothing Party, a nativist group who opposed all immigrants. The Republican Party was a patchwork of political positions and interests, some of which would seem diametrically at odds with each other. What they had in common was that they were all northern voters who held largely northern interests and prejudices.

The party leadership was made up of some very skilled politicians, who were practical, worldly and very savvy about the world of politics. Their first presidential candidate (1856) was John C. Frémont, the liberator of the Bear Flag Republic in the Mexican War. The Republicans finished second in the election of 1856. Their political leaders knew that the important thing in the first election was to get recognition, and they were very happy with a second place showing.

The events from 1856-1860 were tailor made to build support for the Republicans. They used Kansas/Nebraska and the Dred Scott case masterfully to preach against slavery in the territories. But they knew that slavery, as a single issue would not put a Republican in the White House, so they supported several issues. In December of 1856, Republicans in

Congress introduced a subsidy bill to lay a transatlantic telegraph cable. This received the wholehearted support of American business. The Democrats opposed the Republican measure. Northern business and industry wanted protective tariffs, and the Republicans obliged by introducing tariff bills in 1856 and 57. The Democrats opposed them again, and when the tariff bills failed the Republicans won more members.

The Republicans also went after the Midwest. They supported improvements there, and again the Democrats opposed them. The Democrats were also gridlocked over a transcontinental railroad. Southern Democrats wanted the railroad to go through the South, and in the North every Representative wanted it to go through his district. The Republicans promised that if they were elected they would complete a northern transcontinental rail line. The Republicans also proposed a homestead bill that would make land free and available in the West to actual settlers rather than just to land speculators. Again the Democrats killed the legislation, and again the Republicans garnered support out of the process. So the Republican Party was gradually able, between 1856 and 1860, to build a powerful northern and western coalition of farmers, laborers, businessmen, and industrialists. They also introduced a land-grant college bill that would create agricultural and technical colleges across the nation. The bill found enough support among some Democrats that it passed. But, to the absolute glee of the Republicans, Democratic President James Buchanan vetoed the bill. So if education was your issue, then you also found a home in the Republican Party.

Right: Republican campaign poster for the 1856 presidential election. Presidential candidate is John Frémont of California; V.P. candidate is William Dayton of New Jersey.

The Republicans lost to Democrat James Buchanan, but Republican leaders were optimistic that the Republican party would succeed in 1860.

Below: President James Buchanan (Dem.)

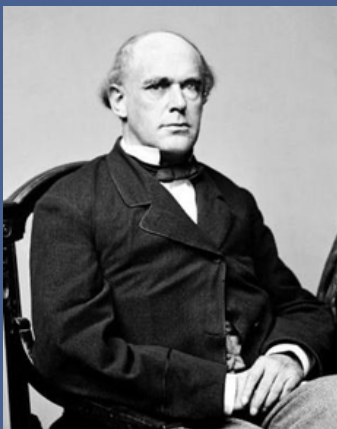




Election of 1860

Approaching the election of 1860 the Democrats were in national disarray. The Republican Party was growing. They began the campaign early by publicizing a new homestead bill. They began to employ Democrat watchers to find embarrassing news about Democratic politicians and get it into the newspapers. In 1859, the Republicans held a secret caucus, comprised of their top leadership, to try to figure out who would be the best presidential candidate to hold the coalition together in the 1860 election. The problem was that there were too many hopefuls. They decided that to be fair they would hold the election in a neutral, Midwestern city that was not home to any particular leader. They chose Chicago. The only hopeful from Illinois was some fellow named Abraham something, who didn't have a prayer of getting the nomination. The heavy hitters in the party hoped to nominate either William Seward (known as "Mr. Republican") of New York, or Samuel Chase of Ohio.

Abraham Lincoln didn't have a very distinguished record in politics. He really was born in a log cabin. He had served in the Illinois state legislature as a Whig, and in the House of Representatives for one term. He had supported Zachary Taylor. Even though he lost a Senate bid to Stephen Douglas, he was in very good shape after Republicans began to agree with his assessment of popular sovereignty. Lincoln had been a



Republican frontrunners at the beginning of the 1860 National Convention. Left: Salmon Chase of Ohio. Right: William Seward of New York.



Right: Republican National Convention in Chicago. Below: Southern Democrats walk out of Democratic National Convention in Charleston, South Carolina.



politician who was used to avoiding political extremes like abolitionism, nativism, or extreme Free Soil positions. Illinois is divided horizontally at about the middle. Both northerners and southerners settled it. Some portions of Illinois are even further south, geographically and perhaps ideologically than Richmond, Virginia.

Lincoln, like Richard Nixon, was an accomplished grass-roots politician. He knew that to get anywhere in politics you have to work the hustings, to speak everywhere you can, to get recognition with individual voters, to support the party at every opportunity, and to pick up political IOUs at every opportunity.

Lincoln was all over Illinois politics like “white on rice.” If somebody was sick and couldn’t make a speaking engagement, he would volunteer to give a speech for them. If the party needed foot soldiers, Lincoln would slog for the party, if a baby in the state of Illinois had not been recently kissed by a Republican, Lincoln would ruthlessly root it out, find it, and kiss it. He took the deadly dull jobs that nobody else in the state party wanted. He spent several years as state corresponding secretary. The job was boring and uneventful, but every piece of Republican correspondence that went out of the Republican Party office in Illinois had Lincoln’s signature on the bottom of it. Lots of people saw his name. Lincoln also found out where the political bodies were buried, and he accumulated political points.

In the Republican National Convention of 1860, people began to talk about Lincoln as a possible

vice-presidential choice for whoever won the presidential nomination. There was a deadlock at the beginning of the Convention between the two principle contenders, Seward and Chase, and each needed four more states to get the nomination. The holdout states were Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Vermont, and Indiana. Abolition was not so important in those states as other concerns, so they would be most likely to support a moderate. Lincoln would appeal to all of them. He was getting to be everyone’s second choice for the Republican Party presidential candidate. Lincoln had no enemies and no political record. He had wide name recognition after the Lincoln/Douglas Debates, and he wouldn’t split the party. The Convention dragged on; this was bad for the leading candidates, but very good, indeed, for Lincoln.

Lincoln’s handlers were, after all, local folks, so they volunteered to do lots of the dull stuff that has to get done at a convention, like count ballots. They took their time. Lincoln’s people on the floor debated everything and took their time about it. Delay hurt Seward who was emerging as the strongest frontrunner. The Illinois Central Railroad carried Lincoln supporters in free from all over Illinois, and local party volunteers printed up bogus gallery tickets and gave them to Lincoln’s supporters, who waited at the door all night to get in. When the real ticket holders turned up, their seats were already taken. Lincoln supporters were coached to cheer on cue. A stage manager in front of the stage had a red handkerchief, and when he pulled it out the galleries roared with applause. So



Abraham Lincoln depicted as “the railsplitter.”

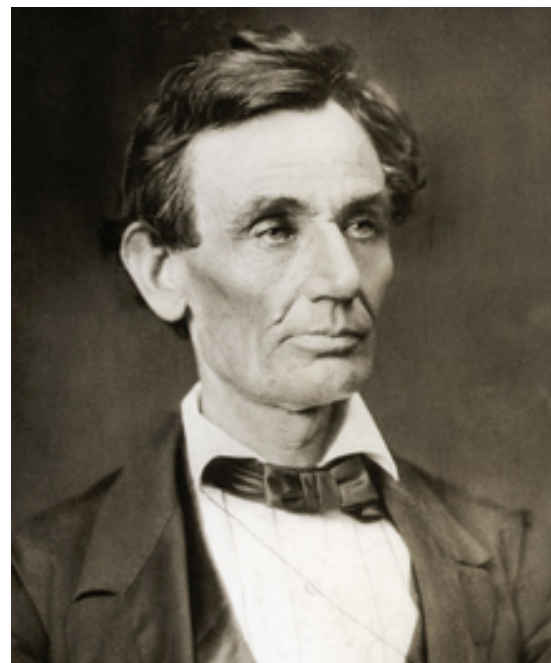
when Lincoln’s name was mentioned there was a roar from the gallery. When anyone else’s name was mentioned there was silence. Since Lincoln’s people had also made the seating arrangements, pro-Lincoln delegations were seated flanking undecided delegations.

From the first ballot Seward’s support steadily eroded. On the first ballot Seward lacked the nomination by a number of votes, by the second, Seward garnered even less support and Lincoln’s support rose. By the third ballot Lincoln was basically one delegation short of the nomination. At that point one of Lincoln’s floor managers promised the Ohio delegation that if Lincoln won, Sam Chase could have any position he wanted. Ohio changed its vote and Lincoln won the Republican nomination. Republicans were amazed that they had nominated him. Newspapers didn’t even know how to spell his name.

Abraham Lincoln—6’4” when the average height for males was 5’7”. He could be described as gloomy, melancholy, serious, and brooding. He didn’t drink, smoke, chew, or hunt. Born in Kentucky. His heroes were Henry Clay and Thomas Jefferson. In 1832 he had been a supporter of Clay’s American System, and by 1840 he was a member of the Whig Party. He was a lawyer, and made his living defending

railroads and corporations. He believed that America was great because a poor man could make it here, and he knew this was true, because he had done it. He embraced the Free Soil Party’s principles. He also opposed universal manhood suffrage. He wanted to limit the vote to property owners regardless of their gender. Lincoln had seen slavery up close and personal, and was disgusted with the institution, but he was not an abolitionist. He didn’t believe in black equality, and tended to support colonization. He didn’t like abolitionists because he thought that they threatened the Union, and he fervently believed that the Union and the Constitution were more important than slavery. He wanted slavery limited to those states where it already existed and kept out of the territories, and he believed that if it was limited, and criticized by American leaders, the institution would gradually die a natural death.

Lincoln and his handlers decided to do another log cabin style campaign. The Republican candidate was nicknamed “the Rail Splitter.” The difference between this and other campaigns in which western artifacts were featured, was that this one had actual issues—a homestead act, tariffs, land grant colleges, federally-subsidized western rail expansion, and banning slavery in the territories. So slavery was only one of many issues in the election. This fact makes it difficult to prove that the election of 1860 was a mandate against slavery, because slavery was only one of a series of more-or-less equally important issues supported by the Republicans.



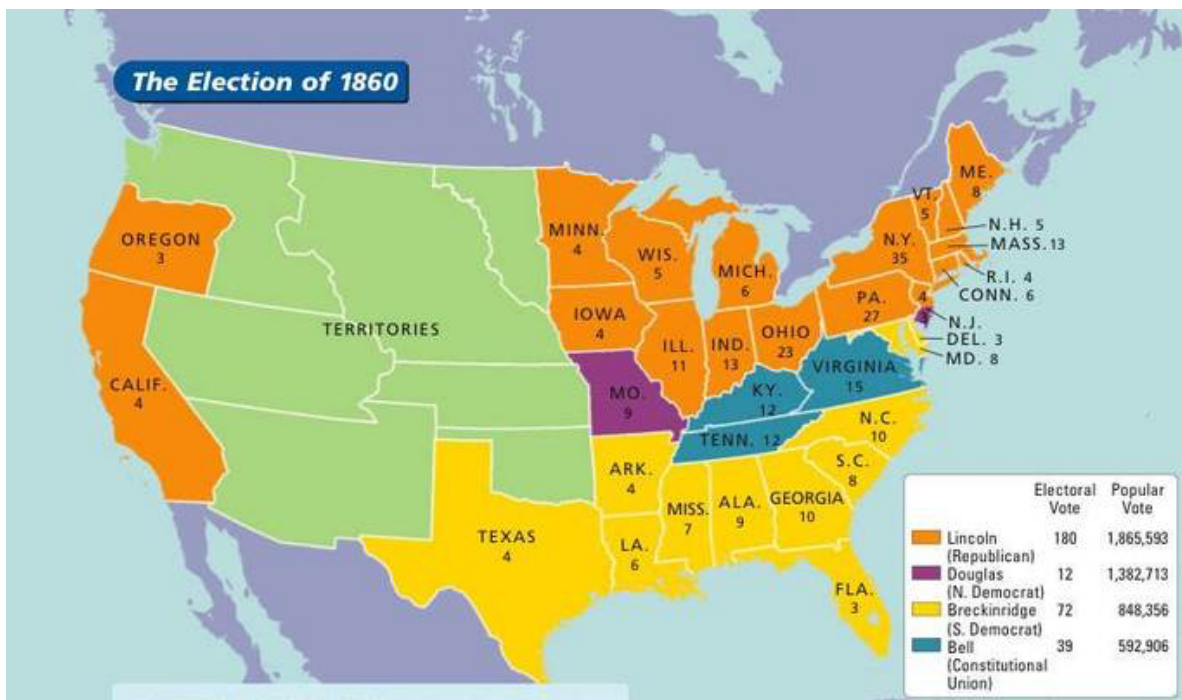
The presidential election of 1860 marks the first national victory for the Republican Party. Several factors contributed to Republican victory in all of the northern states.

In the South rumors began to spread that if Lincoln were elected the South would have no choice but to secede. Lincoln would control patronage, and that meant that northerners and northern sympathizers would control the South. Southerners argued that new postmasters across the South, married to the Republican-abolitionist cause would begin to deliver abolitionist tracts, which would foment rebellion among the slaves. All sorts of wild rumors about Republicans began to spread: Republicans were secretly circulating in the South, and arming slaves who would revolt on the announcement that Lincoln had won; Republican spies and saboteurs were poisoning wells across the South, crazy stuff like that. Some southerners argued that Lincoln was not the real problem, but that the real power behind President Lincoln (if he were elected) was William Seward, no friend to the South, who would actually control the presidency. Seward certainly hoped that this would be the case. In the North, Republicans argued that in spite of southern rumors, the South would be unlikely to secede because the Republicans would lack a majority in Congress, so even if they did their worst (from a southern point of view) abolition bills, or whatever, would fail to pass into law.

When the Democratic Party met for their national convention in 1860, the party broke over the slavery question. The northern wing of the party refused to accept a proslavery platform. This caused the southern Democratic delegates to bolt the convention, form a Southern Democratic party, and nominate John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky. Southern Whigs also joined the Southern Democrats to support Breckinridge. The moderate, primarily northern, Democrats (what was left of them) nominated Stephen Douglas of Illinois.

The remnants of the old Whig Party (who hadn't already bolted either to the Republican Party in the North or the Southern Democrats in the South) and the southern Know-Nothings united to form the Constitutional Union Party. They were committed to reaching some acceptable compromise on slavery in order to preserve the Union. The Constitutional Unionists chose John C. Bell of Tennessee as their candidate,

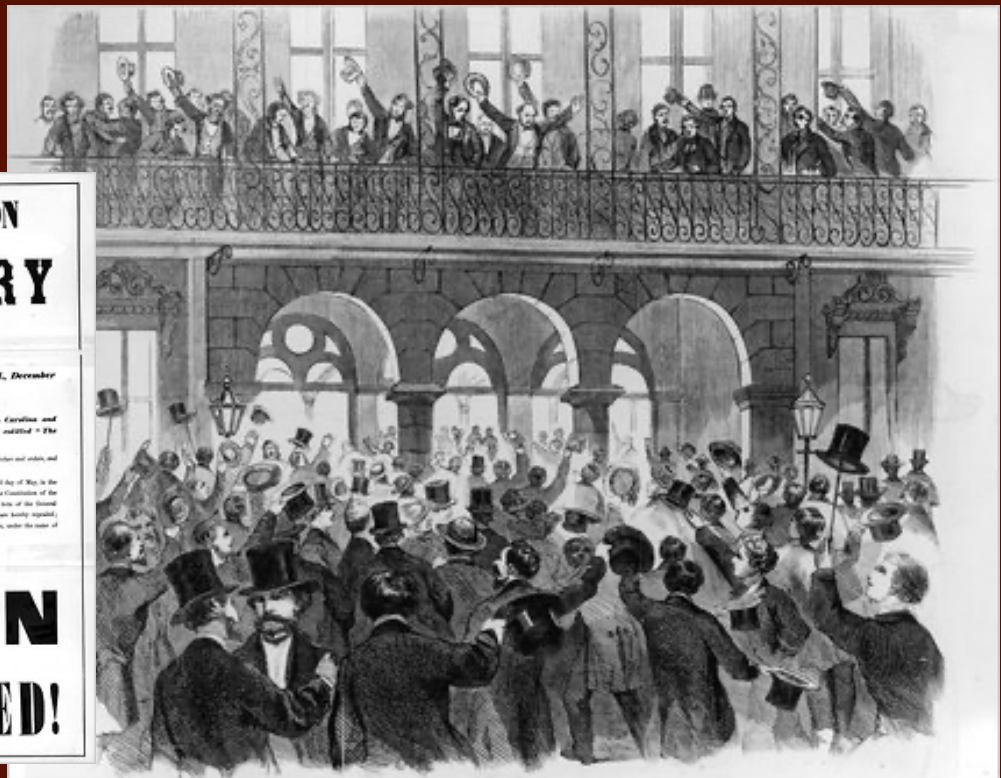
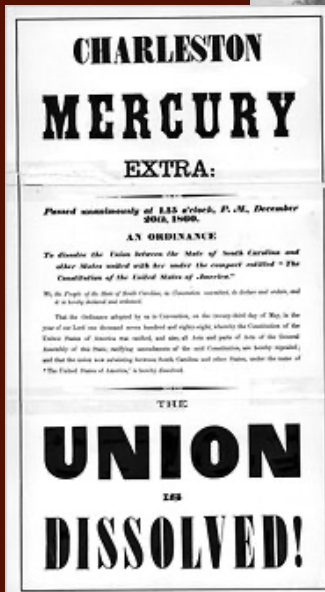
So, the contest in the free states was really between Lincoln and Douglas (who was by now tainted with Kansas-Nebraska, the Freeport Doctrine and popular sovereignty). In the slave states the contest was between Breckinridge and Bell. Although Lincoln received only 40% of the popular vote, he led decisively in the Electoral College. Although Breckinridge appeared on ballots in several northern states (he actually won more votes than Douglas in Pennsylvania), Lincoln was not even on the ballot in any southern state.



As the nap above indicates, Lincoln won the Electoral-College vote by a landslide with 180 electoral votes. Breckinridge came in second with 72 electoral votes, Bell took third with 39 votes, and Stephen Douglas won only 12 electoral votes, even losing his home state of Illinois (to be fair, Illinois was also Lincoln's home state). For the first time, a regional party with no ties whatsoever to the one entire region of the country (the South), won a national presidential election.

South Carolina's leadership vowed in early 1860 that should Lincoln become president, the state would secede from the Union. Southerners felt that the South could only suffer under a Republican regime hostile to southern interests. During Buchanan's lame duck term, the South debated the question of secession. There was substantial resistance. Which state would leave first? South Carolina settled that question on December 20, 1860, when the state met in a special convention and passed an ordinance of secession. But other questions remained. Was the South ready to fight to preserve its independence if it seceded? Or would it even have to? William Lloyd Garrison, the editor of *The Liberator*, and many northern radical abolitionists were perfectly willing to accept a geo-political divorce from the sin of slavery and the South. Garrison's solution to the problem of southern secession was characterized in his statement "let our wayward sisters go in peace." Additionally, the South was not yet united. It was difficult for the whole South to show a united front based on what Abraham Lincoln and the new Republican government *might* do. There was considerable opposition to secession in most states (Poor small farmers in northern Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi and northwestern Virginia, sugar planters in South Louisiana, German immigrants in Texas), and that opposition would pose sticky problems. The South needed a catalyst to get the ball rolling. South Carolina provided that catalyst when it seceded. All of the states but Texas, seceded by conventions with majorities of pro-secession advocates. The methods used to affect secession gave the impression of more solidarity on the issue than actually existed in any given state. Nevertheless, after the fact of secession, southerners still had to ask, could secession work? Did it mean war? Southerners debated these points in the spring of 1861, and the nation held its breath.

South Carolinians celebrate the passage of the Ordinance of Secession in Charleston.





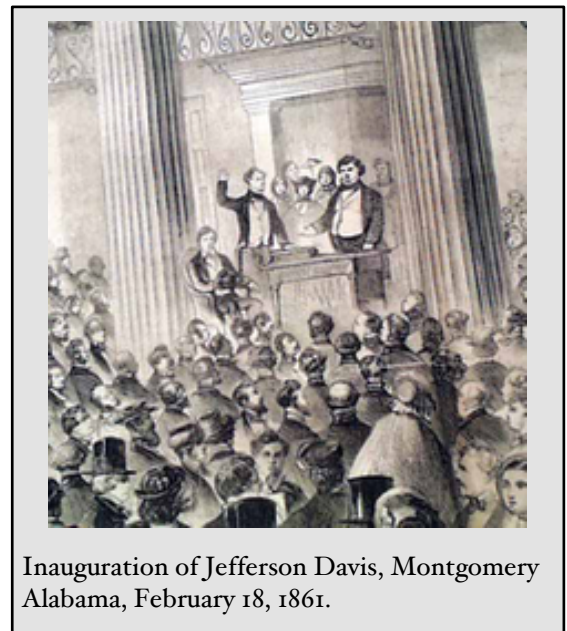
Secession and Reaction

By 1860 the battle lines had been drawn between the North and the South, but some incident was needed to cause the actual rift. South Carolina decided the cause for secession. South Carolina passed an ordinance of secession on December 20, 1860. By February 4, 1861, six more states left the union: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. These states sent representatives to Montgomery, Alabama, to form the Confederate States of America. They elected Jefferson Davis, Democrat and United States Senator from Mississippi, and former Secretary of War, to be their president.

Beyond the slavery issue, there were other reasons why some southerners felt that secession would be a practical move for the south. Some southerners felt that the South had lost its position of equality in politics to the northern free states. The political balance had been destroyed with the entrance of California into the Union. They felt that the North had violated the rights of southern citizens by spreading abolitionist propaganda, by aiding escaped slaves, and by forming a political party that was hostile to southern interests.

Southern extremists, called fire eaters, argued that the South could prosper without the Union because the South could resume trade with Europe without fear of high tariffs. They argued that they could revive the African slave trade, and that secession would make the development of banking and industry necessary in the South. Southern interests would no longer be dependent on northern or European industry and finance.

Secessionists reassured more timid southerners that the North would be unlikely to provoke a war because northern textile mill owners still needed southern cotton. They also said that, in the event of a war, the British would come to the aid of the South because the British would not want to imperil their own textile industry, so Great Britain would be quick to protect their source of cotton.



Inauguration of Jefferson Davis, Montgomery Alabama, February 18, 1861.

Sentiment about secession was mixed in the North. President James Buchanan, who was serving out his lame duck term, felt that there was no constitutional right for states to leave the Union. But, he also felt that the federal government had no right to compel the states to return to it.

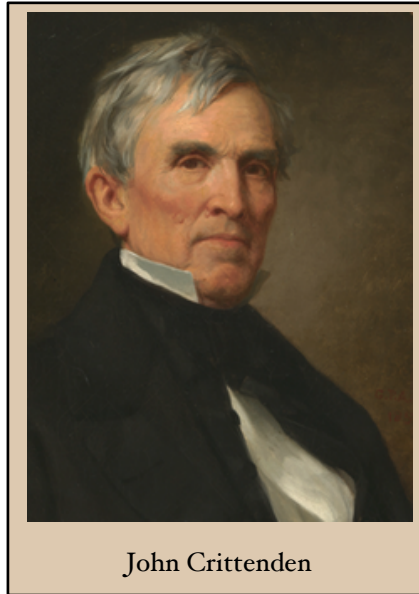
Several compromise schemes were offered during the winter of 1860-61. The two most important were the Crittenden Compromise and the Virginia Convention. John Crittenden of Kentucky introduced a resolution (called the Crittenden Compromise) that would make slavery legal in all states south of 36°30" to the Pacific. Federal codes would be created to protect slavery in that area. Finally, a series of constitutional amendments would be created that would safeguard slavery in the United States forever. The resolution failed, Republicans refused to entertain any compromise that would safeguard slavery.

The Virginia Convention. In February 1861, the Virginia General Assembly took up the question of compromise between the South and the North. The assembly invited representatives from all of the states to send representatives to Washington, D.C. in order to meet and work out a solution. The convention was a failure. None of the lower southern states attended. After several weeks of debate the delegates proposed a constitutional amendment similar to Crittenden's, but the proposal was rejected by congress.

Abraham Lincoln believed very strongly that once a state had become a member of the Union it had no right to leave it, voluntarily or otherwise. On the day of his inauguration, he announced that the secession ordinances were legally void. He vowed to use the powers of his office to "hold, occupy, and possess property and places belonging to the federal government." at the same time he promised not to begin any hostilities. As far as Lincoln was concerned, the South had not left the Union. On the other hand, Lincoln was not a fool. In terms of realistic policy Lincoln was determined to:

- ☛ Unite the North behind his administration and the Republican Party.

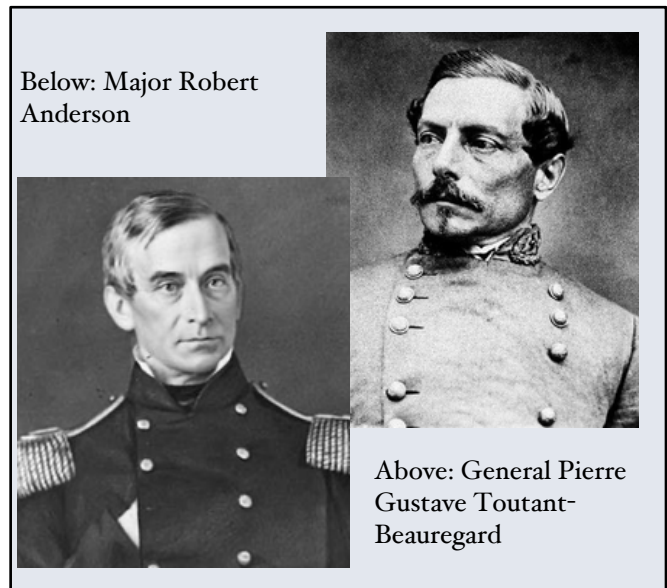
- ☛ Keep some of the slave states loyal to the union.
- ☛ Keep secession from completely disrupting the union.
- ☛ Keep and hold the two federal forts in the southern port cities of Charleston (Fort Sumter) and Pensacola/Mobile (Fort Pickens).



John Crittenden

Lincoln was hesitant to begin preparations for war. He did not want to take any action that the Confederate government, or the border slave states (still in the Union) might interpret as aggressive. But he discovered a few days after he took office that Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor was in need of provisions. After discussion with his cabinet, Lincoln decided to inform the governor of South Carolina that he would resupply the fort, but that he would send no additional troops. The message was relayed to Jefferson Davis. Davis ordered the commanding general in Charleston,

General P.G.T. Beauregard, to ask the commandant of Fort Sumter, Major Robert Anderson, who had



Below: Major Robert Anderson

Above: General Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard

been Beauregard's teacher at West Point, when he would vacate the premises. If the commandant refused to set a date then, and only then, should Beauregard begin bombardment of the fort. Anderson replied that, unless he received orders to the contrary, he would leave Sumter on the 15th of April. Before the surrender could be completed,

however, South Carolina militia opened fire on the fort with their shore batteries at 4:30 am on April 12. Anderson surrendered. Lincoln's hesitation ended. On April 15th, 1861, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling upon all of the governors of the states still in the Union to raise 75,000 militia troops to serve for three months. The war had begun.

Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee left the Union at that point. Of the slave states, only Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri remained loyal. Western Virginia formally seceded from Virginia in May of 1861, and rejoined the Union.





The Civil War

The news of Fort Sumter galvanized the North. The President had his smoking gun and on April 15, Lincoln called 75,000 militiamen for 90 days to put down the insurrection. News of the action at Charleston had a similar effect on the Upper South. The Upper South now had a crisis of decision and its choice could decide the fate of the Confederacy. The Upper South had remained ambivalent for a time; namely because slavery was less important here. Slaves constituted 47% of the population in the Confederate states but only 24% in the Upper South; 37% of white families in the Confederate states owned slaves, while only 20% in the Upper South. On April 17, Virginia moved to secession on the news that Lincoln was going to war. The Virginia Secession Convention voted 88 to 55 to secede and finally officially seceded after a referendum on May 23. The other states quickly followed suit.

Who was in the best position for war in 1861? Neither side had a substantial standing military, so each would have to start from scratch. The North was in the best position to win a long war. If the Confederacy were to win, they would have to do it quickly before the Federal advantage in resources could become a telling factor. The table above indicates the comparative resources available to both sides at the beginning of the War. The numbers really tell the story. It is hard to imagine, given those numbers, that that the South had much of a chance. Additionally, in terms of food production and food packing, most food packing plants were in the North, and the North produced the most grain. The majority of financial institutions were in the North, and the dollar was a stable and internationally accepted currency.

The South had some advantages though. The South counted on Europe's dependence on cotton to gain it recognition and support. Southern leaders also expected that Mexico would be a willing ally against the Union. As it turned out these were false hopes. Neither Europe nor Mexico had any desire to get involved in a civil war on the side of a slave state.

The war would be fought in the South, which counted as a Southern advantage. Southerners knew the terrain and would be fighting for their homes and families against an enemy that would be the invader and aggressor. Also, the sheer size of the land would require a huge effort on the part of the Union to subdue it. Both sides predicted a short glorious war. Both sides were wrong.

War Strategies

Union Strategy

At the outset of the war, the commander of the Union Army was War of 1812 and Mexican War hero, Winfield Scott. He was 75 years old, and so big that he could no longer sit a horse. Nevertheless, he was still a sound strategist. Scott realized the material advantages that the Union possessed over the Confederacy and formulated a war plan to use them to the Union's best advantage. The plan, called the Anaconda Plan, consisted of three basic parts:

1. A blockade the South, effectively cutting off the lifeblood of trade from the South, depriving it of its market for their cotton. Without trade the Confederacy would be unable to buy weapons from abroad.
2. Cut the South in progressively smaller parts—the West really is where the Civil War is won. First, occupy the the Mississippi River then the other major rivers and railroad routes, breaking the Confederacy into smaller pieces so that it was easier to conquer.
3. Push south from Maryland to Richmond to take the Confederate capital. Once Virginia had entered the Confederacy, it demanded that the capitol be in Richmond, Virginia, rather than in Montgomery, Alabama, which placed the Confederate capital just over 100 miles from Washington, D.C., rather than



General Winfield Scott



The Anaconda Plan

nearly 800 miles away from the Federal capital. This part of Scott's plan was of limited strategic value, but remember, the goal of the South was to force the Union and the world to recognize its existence. If a new nation can't defend its own capital, isn't much of a nation. Richmond, thus, took on huge symbolic importance.

Confederate Strategy

The Southern strategy was basically to stay in existence and hope that the North would tire of the War. But, for reasons having to do with Southern cultural distinctiveness, just defending territory didn't sit well with many Southerners, and also the longer the war lasted the greater the chance that the superior resources of the North would be brought to bear. Basically, the Confederates fought a defensive war, except for two invasions of the North—Antietam (1862) and Gettysburg (1863)—both of which were catastrophic for the South.

So, given the two strategies, what was the outcome? The Union, despite significant opposition in 1862 and 1863, caused by a string of Confederate victories, succeeded in maintaining the morale and motivation of its population for the war. The struggle became a war of attrition, that is, one in which the side that wears out first loses. This war was essentially one the South could not win. Under Union Generals like Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman the United States relentlessly pressed its material advantages home regardless of the losses. The war became a war of numbers in which Union generals could sustain great losses and replace their

numbers, and, simply put, the Confederacy could not. The Confederacy ultimately proved unable to defend its borders, and the Anaconda Plan worked.

Why they fought: The dichotomy between the slave South and the free-labor North created political and economic divisions, but armed conflict would not have resulted if Northerners and Southerners had not regarded each other as members of antagonistic cultures vying for ideological supremacy. In short, belief in sectional differences overpowered the reality of cultural homogeneity. Both sides believed in the common ideas seen as the legacy of the Founders—liberty, democracy, individualism, and equality—but these words had taken on somewhat different contexts for Northerners and Southerners. Slavery created the intense ideological and social clash that ultimately resisted all attempts at compromise. What the war reveals is not two civilizations but one people divided by conflicting interpretations of common American values.

Although Civil War soldiers seldom wrote about the ideological underpinnings of their patriotism, they have left enough of a record to suggest the way they viewed the war in their mind's eye. Union troops often said that they were fighting for the Union, but what did this mean? For them, there was an implicit belief in the Federalist doctrine that the Union best protected liberty.

Conversely, the Confederates believed in the essentially Jeffersonian idea that an individual left alone to pursue his own goals and interests was the best protection of liberty, an idea bound up in Confederate soldiers' commonly written phrase, "We're fighting for our rights." The issue of slavery best represents how these two views came into conflict prior to the war, although there were others.

In short, one way to view the war is to see it as a violent resolution of the tensions between the two views of what the Constitution meant from its ratification on. Behind Lincoln and Davis we should imagine Hamilton and Jefferson standing in the wings. The existence of slavery certainly was the key element in bringing about the war, but until it became obvious to the majority of Northerners that it was essential to eradicate the institution to preserve the Union, their racism prevented the war from becoming one against slavery.

Other more common sense things also contributed to the why men stuck to the fighting after the initial excitement wore off, or as both sides put it, once soldiers had "seen the elephant." Most small units were raised in towns and villages, so you knew or were related to all the men in your company. Word of your actions on the battlefield would reach home. If you ran when you "saw the elephant" then your disgrace was not temporary; all your neighbors would know it. Why was this a big deal? Remember people were dying and if someone ran and lived and your son or father didn't and died, how would you feel when you saw them around town?

Small unit cohesion: war represents perhaps the most intense bonding experience one can face - shared dangers led men on both sides to refer to their comrades as "a band of brothers" you don't run out on brothers

How they fought: The Evolution of the Civil War

Over the course of the war defensive tactics gained the ascendancy as weapons increased in range and effectiveness making them increasingly more lethal.

The most widely used artillery weapon of the war was one that would have been familiar (although not as numerous) a century before in the Wars of Napoleon and the War of 1812. The 12 lb gun (Howitzer) model 1857 smooth-bore "Napoleon" cannon had an effective range of 1,500 yards. It was manufactured by both sides during the war. But as the war progressed both sides introduced their own versions of the new rifled cannon. The most common was the 3 inch ordinance rifle. These artillery pieces had vastly improved range and accuracy. One Confederate said it "was a dead shot at any range under a mile." The improved weapon fired a 10 pound explosive shell or an iron bolt.



Long Guns



1855 Springfield .58 caliber muzzle loading single shot.

1861-1863



1863 Sharps Military Carbine .44-70 cartridge single shot.

1863-1865



1862 Henry Repeating Rifle .44 breachloads 15 rounds

1863-1865

Personal Weapons underwent a great deal of change as well. At the beginning of the war, both sides issued smooth-bore (generally .69 or .75 caliber) muzzle loaded muskets. These were not very effective weapons at long range. Grant said that a soldier armed with one of these “pumpkin slingers” might “fire at you all day without you ever finding out.” In a test shoot with a .69 calibre musket a trained marksman hit three out of 160 shots on target at 180 yards. These were the same type kinds of weapons used in Napoleonic wars 60 years earlier, and, for that matter, they were little different from “Brown Bess” used by British troops in the American Revolution.

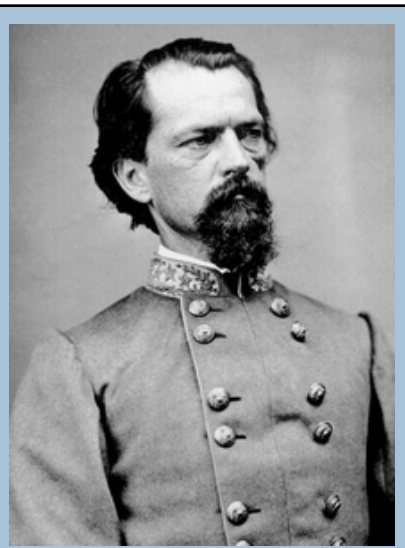
As a result, the war began with the same kind of mass tactics employed by armies of the early 19th century. Then, by 1862 the Union began to issue the standard Springfield rifled musket. It was a .58 caliber, muzzle-loaded rifle, that and fired a Minie ball—a bullet-shaped projectile that was more accurate and faster than the round lead ball. As a result, accuracy increased. A single man could load and fire 10 times in five minutes and hit a two foot target six times at 100 yards (allowed to take his time the man hit the target ten out of ten times). The narrower projectile had incredible penetrating power (11 inches of pine boards at 100 yards) Suddenly close formations and mass charges became literally suicidal against an unshaken enemy, especially if supported by artillery and intrenched. To give some kind of idea of what this did to troop morale, let’s look at the example of the second Battle of Cold Harbor in the Spring of 1864, 7,000

Union soldiers out of 40,000 man attack force were killed or wounded in less than an hour. After that first assault, many soldiers, expecting to be killed, pinned little pieces of paper with their names on their uniforms so that their remains could be identified. In addition, repeating rifles and breech loaders increased the rate of fire by the end of the war. By the end of 1863, Union troops began receiving Spencer rifles, lever-action cartridge-loaded rifles capable of firing 15 or so rounds a minute. The last 2 years of war generally revolve around trenches and other means of defensive warfare, while during the first years the troops generally shunned them.

Of course, firing on the test range and firing under the stresses of combat are two different things. On average a soldier on either side expended 240 pounds of powder and 900 pounds of lead for every man actually hit. But, as Cold Harbor and other battles illustrate, the fact remains that the Civil War battlefield was a distinctly more dangerous place, at longer range, than any previous battlefield. The vast majority of Civil War casualties were caused by small arms fire, with artillery coming in second.

Fighting during the course of the war was infrequent, but often vicious. One example is the experience of John B. Gordon, a Colonel in the 6th Alabama Regiment in an engagement called the “Sunken Road” at Antietam. At around 9 am Gordon boasted to General Lee that, “These men are going to stay here, General, until the sun goes down or victory is won.” Within a few hours he would wonder if the sun would ever fall that day. As

the Union troops advanced on his position around 9:30 am he thought “What a pity to spoil with bullets such a scene of martial beauty.” Gordon walked the line behind his men, encouraging them to remain steadfast. On several occasions he had come out of a fight with a perforated uniform, but with no wounds or with body scrapes but no show of blood. His men believed that he possessed some kind of supernatural charm—a type of immortality. The colonel, who was caught up in his own legend, made no effort to seek cover. After their first attack was repulsed by Confederate troops, the Union troops rallied and came on again



Col. John Brown Gordon

around 10 am. Between 10 and noon the attacks became too numerous to keep track of. Around 10 am Gordon was wounded in the right calf, he staggered along his line refusing to give into the wound. Minutes later he was struck in the right leg a little above the other wound. Luckily neither bullet struck bone which meant a sure amputation. He hobbled, albeit more slowly, but steadfastly, from one flank of his regiment to the other, all the while blood pumped into his trouser leg with each painful step. As noon approached Gordon began to wonder if the sun would ever set that day. His blood soaked trouser leg clung to the calf of his right leg. Knowing that his men might falter if he quit the field, he summoned every emotional reserve that he could muster and stayed afoot. Even when a musket ball tore through the upper part of his left arm, horribly ripping out tendons and mangling his flesh, he refused aid. With blood trickling, dark red, down over his hand and between his fingers, he reminded himself of his pledge to General Lee. Minutes later a bullet passed through his hat. Soon after he was hit in the left shoulder. The impact staggered but did not drop him. His men begged him to retire, he refused.

While walking along the right of his regiment. He came across the dying grey-haired Joseph A. Johnson lying protectively beside the lifeless body of a much younger man. “Here we are,” the bleeding man feebly gasped to Gordon. “My son is dead,” he whispered, as if he were tucking the boy into bed,

“and I shall soon go, but it is alright.” There was no conceivable way that John Gordon could abandon such devoted troops. Scores of wounded and dead littered the lane. Gordon had just left Johnson when a ball struck him square in the face, just below the left eye. The impact snapped his head, which hurled his cap top down onto the ground. He collapsed unconscious. The stretcher crew found him laid out like a mannequin with his face immersed in his blood filled hat. They rolled him onto his back and rough handled him onto the stretcher. Blood pumped violently from the huge exit wound on the right side of his neck with each labored breath. One of the rescuers noted that had the Yankees not put a hole in his cap he would have drowned in his own blood. They carted him off and the line held without him.

This example is by no means extraordinary. The soldiers of the North and South, black and white routinely demonstrated what today seems insanely courageous actions on the battlefield. Their actions become even more amazing when we remember that these were armies of citizen-soldiers (farmers, factory workers, and clerks, etc) not long serving professional military men.

The Butcher's Bill

Why does the Civil War continue to grasp our imagination so long after it came to an end? Who among you knew the U.S. troops occupied Mexico City in 1847-48. But who knew at an early age that Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox or that someone named Pickett lead a doomed charge at a battle called Gettysburg? One reason is the enormity of the losses sustained by the nation. For example, on September 17, 1862 on the banks of Antietam Creek more Americans were killed or wounded in battle (22,276) than in the three previous wars of the United States combined. A more modern example is that more casualties were suffered on that day than on D-Day. Roughly 205,000 men died in battle, with another 310,000 died of disease or accident. The losses were approximately the same percentage for the number

of men involved on both sides. In a country of 31,000,000 in 1860 that makes one fatality for every sixty people. In short, almost everyone was touched by death and the war in some way. For Americans of the era the war was the cataclysmic event of their lives, especially if they fought in it or lost a loved one. The survivors of that war, all of them Americans, remember, wrote about it and remembered it like no other war in the nation's history. During the Civil War slavery ended and many freedmen took up arms against their former enslavers, in the South a way of life ended, and the country irrevocably adopted the free-labor capitalism implicit in the Hamiltonian view of the Constitution. In short, the war years represent a defining moment of American history.