

## Chapter 180 – The Nashville Convention Fails To Support A Call For Secession



**Dates:**  
June 3-11, 1850

**Sections:**  
• One More Effort Fails To Align The Southern States

\*\*\*\*\*

Date: June 3-11, 1850

### One More Fire-Eater Effort Fails To Align The Southern States



“Merchant’s Day” In Downtown Nashville, Tennessee

John C. Calhoun’s final speech to the Senate, before his death on March 31, 1850, calls for the South to gather together to address the obvious threat he sees in the admission of California as a Free State.

His wish is fulfilled in early June, when a “Southern Convention” convenes at the McKendree Methodist Church in Nashville.

Attendance, however, is uneven and foreshadows the outcome. Only five of the fifteen total “slave states” send official representatives: Mississippi, South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia and Texas. Four others (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and Tennessee) send “observers” – while the remaining six states (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina and Louisiana) stay home.

The agenda is devoted to yet another attempt by the firebrands to unify and rally the South against what they see as the rising tide of “Northern aggression.”

One sponsor is Governor John Quitman of Mississippi, who has just secretly backed the filibustering invasion of Narciso Lopez in Cuba. Quitman and his supporters hope that Nashville will lead to secession, which is the South’s “constitutional right.”

At the convention, the Fire-Eaters ring the alarms of Southern disaster on the horizon:

- The future economic prosperity of the South rests on the demand for, and prices of, their cotton and their slaves.
- The only way to secure this demand lies in extending slavery into the west.
- The North is now firmly committed to opposing this expansion.
- The only way to avoid looming economic disaster is to secede.

But again they are met by the Unionists who regard secession as too extreme – even traitorous – and want to keep pushing for compromise.

The meeting drags on over nine days, before it closes with 28 resolutions, among them assertions that slavery is sanctioned by the Constitution, that Clay’s Compromise Bill is to be resisted, and that the best alternative lies in extending the 36’30” Missouri Line to the Pacific.

These are all a far cry from the firebrand’s call for secession.

Instead they signal the majority wish across the South for a peaceful compromise.