

Chapter 281 – The Chaotic 36th Congress Convenes Amidst The Harpers Ferry Turmoil



Dates:
December 5,
1859

Sections:

- Selection Of A House Speaker Reveals Growing Political Fractures

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Selection Of A House Speaker Reveals Growing Political Fractures



The U.S. Capitol Seen From Pennsylvania Avenue

The 36th Congress convenes on December 5, 1859, three days after John Brown is executed in Virginia.

From the beginning, the proceedings are marked by open hostility over the issue of extending slavery into the new western territories -- the South demanding foolproof guarantees of this outcome and the North hardening its opposition. The sectional breach is evident not only in the words spoken on the floor, but also in the fact that members now enter the chamber armed to the teeth. James Hammond, the fire-eater Senator from South Carolina, captures this fact in his diary.

The only persons who do not have a revolver and a knife are those who carry two revolvers.

The discord begins with the choice of a new Speaker of the House to succeed James L. Orr of South Carolina, who has retired. Total membership is 237 seats, with the surging Republicans accounting for 113; the American Party at 6; the Mainstream Democrats at 84; and the remaining 34 divided among dissident Democrats unwilling to toe the traditional party line for a variety of reasons.

Division Of House Seats In The 36th Congress

Party	# of Seats
Republican	113
Mainstream Democrats	84
Anti-Lecompton Democrats	8
Independent Democrats	7
Opposition Party (South)	19
American	6
	237

The election will require forty-four ballots cast over an eight week period, and will reveal the deep divisions within the Democratic party.

The Republican are unified, and, after the first ballot, they line up behind a 36 year old third term congressman, John Sherman of Ohio, an anti-slavery man who has served in 1856 as a Whig on the “Kansas Investigation Committee.” They will stick with him through 39 ballots, when it becomes evident that he cannot win the majority needed.

The Mainstream Democrats throw their initial support behind Thomas Bocock of Virginia, who, ironically, will become Speaker of the Confederate House in 1863. Bocock is already in his sixth term, but proves too polarizing, having earlier praised the caning of Charles Sumner. He reaches 85 votes, but then fades after the eleventh round.

From there the search is on for a compromise candidate at least minimally acceptable to the divisive factions within the party:

- Northerners who have backed Pierce and Buchanan, the *Dred Scott* decision, and the Lecompton Constitution.
- The Stephen Douglas loyalists, committed to popular sovereignty, and a re-vote in Kansas.
- The Opposition Party Democrats of the South, demanding federal guarantees on slavery, talking secession.
- The Independent Democrats who, like the American Party stragglers, focus on preserving the Union.

Another Virginian, John Milson, peaks at 95 votes on the 17th ballot. More names spring up from there, albeit falling short of Milson’s total. Opposition Party candidate Horace Maynard of Tennessee hits 65 votes on the 23rd round, and the Doughface Ohioan, Clement Vallandigham, garners 69 votes on the 26th. Next up with 88 ballots is Independent Party Texan, Andrew Jackson Hamilton, a Southerner who will eventually side with the Union.

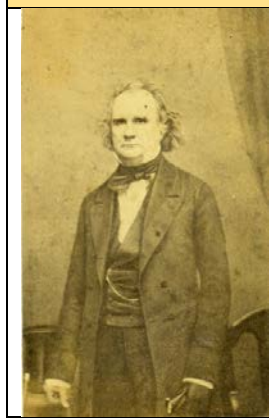
Still, nothing appears promising for the Democrats until the 39th ballot when William N.H. Smith of North Carolina reaches the 112 vote mark on ballot #39. Smith is a conservative Presbyterian, Yale-educated, previously a Whig, both pro-slavery and fiercely pro-Union, although later serving in the Confederate Congress.

Once the Republicans see the tide shifting to Smith, they drop Sherman in favor of William Pennington, the 63 year old ex-Governor of New Jersey who is just beginning his only term in the House. While opposing the Lecompton Constitution, Pennington is less outspoken on slavery than Sherman and favors compromises to save the Union. On the 44th ballot Pennington achieves the majority 117 votes needed to win, after a futile attempt by the Douglas Democrats to back John McClernand of Illinois.

Round By Round Voting For Speaker Of The House in 1859-60

	1 st	7 th	11 th	17 th	23 rd	26 th	28 th	31 st	35 th	39 th	40 th	44 th
Thomas Bocoek (D) – Va	86	86	85		14	2	32		51	1	1	
John Sherman (R) – Ohio	66	96	112	106	101	104	102	105	105	106		
Galusha Grow (R) – Pa	43					2						
Alex Boteler (D) – Va	14	1	21									
John Milson (D) – Va	0			95			4					
John Gilmer (O) – NC	3	26	1	6	2	17		19	3			16
Charles Scott (D) – Ca					3							
Clem Vallandingham (D) – OH					2	69						
Horace Maynard (O) – TN					65							
Andrew Hamilton (ID) – Tex					1			88	4			
William N.H. Smith (ID) – NC									26	112	113	4
John McClernand (D) – IL				1	5	2	37					85
William Pennington (R) – NJ										1	115	117
All Others	18	8	11	17	22	16	41	7	26	8	5	11
Total Cast	230	217	230	225	215	212	216	219	215	229	234	233
Needed to win	116	109	116	113	108	107	109	110	108	115	118	117

Chapter 282 – A Congressional Investigation Of Harpers Ferry Solves Nothing

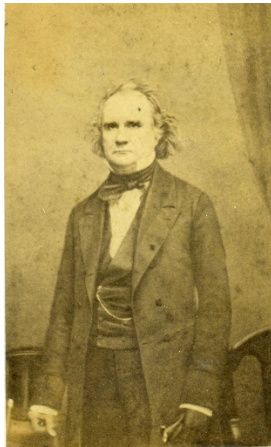


Dates:
January – June 1860

Sections:
• A Senate Committee Investigates Harpers Ferry But Adds Little News

Date: January 4 to June 15, 1860

A Senate Committee Investigates Harpers Ferry But Adds Little News



In the Senate, a special committee, chaired by Virginia Senator James Mason, is set up on December 14, 1859 to investigate four questions related to the Harpers Ferry raid:

1. The facts in relation to the invasion and seizure of the armory and arsenal at Harper's Ferry.
2. Whether it was in pursuance of an organization, and the nature and purpose thereof.
3. The arms and munitions there possessed by the insurgents, and where and how obtained.
4. Were any citizens, not present, implicated in, or accessory thereto, by contributions of arms, money, ammunition, or otherwise.

James Mason (1787-1871)

The effort runs from January 4 to June 15, 1860 and includes testimony from 32 witnesses – albeit missing key figures like Hugh Forbes, four of the Secret Six, John Brown Jr., and Frederick Douglass. The final reports detail the facts surrounding the raid; cite Brown's efforts to establish a Provisional Government at the Chatham, Ontario convention, and trace the origin and shipment of the weapons used. When it comes to co-conspirators, George Stearns and Samuel Howe admit to dealing with Brown, but insist they thought their support was directed at Kansas and not Virginia. The majority report, written by Mason, concludes:

The committee, after much consideration, is not prepared to suggest any legislation, which, in their opinion, would be adequate to prevent like occurrences in the future....(but) would earnestly recommend that provision should be made by the executive, or, if necessary, by law, to keep

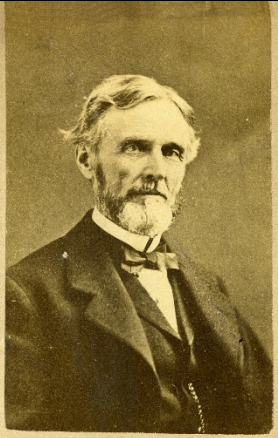
under adequate military guard the public armories and arsenals of the United States, in some way after the manner now practiced at the navy-yards and forts.

A minority report, written by Jacob Collamer, the Republican Senator from Vermont, rejects assertions that free state abolitionists provoked Brown's attack, while announcing that as long as Southerners insist that slavery is a divinely inspired and humanizing institution, they need to be prepared for further debate in Congress from those who disagree.

So long as Congress, in the exercise of its power over the Territories, is invoked to exert it to extend, perpetuate, or protect the institution of slavery therein...so long must its moral, political, and social character and effects be unavoidably involved in congressional discussion... So long as slavery is claimed before the world as a highly benignant, elevating, and humanizing institution, and as having Divine approbation, it will receive at the hands of the moralist, civilian, and theologian the most free and unflinching discussion; nor should its vindicators wince in the combat which their claims invite.

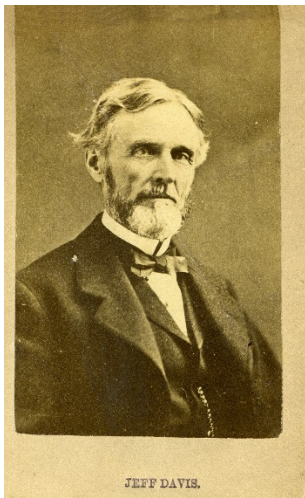
In the end, the Mason Committee proves anti-climactic, adding little to what was already known about the Harpers Ferry raid, and certainly not healing the sectional wounds it has caused.

Chapter 283 – Jefferson Davis Announces Latest Southern Demands

 <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">JEFF DAVIS.</p>	<p>Dates: February 2, 1860</p>	<p>Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South Wants A Congressional Act Sanctioning Slavery in the Territories
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Date: February 2, 1860

The South Wants A Congressional Act Sanctioning Slavery in the Territories



Legislative activity in the 36th Congress proves every bit as contentious as the election of a Speaker, with the Republicans lacking enough power to accomplish their agenda, and the Democrats continuing to splinter along sectional lines.

A new Homestead Act, granting 160 acres of federal land in the territories free of charge to settlers, passes both chambers, but is vetoed by Buchanan. The acreage is far too small to accommodate plantations and the South fears that it will only attract more small farmers who oppose competition from slaves.

The Republicans drive a protective tariff through the House, but it is blocked in the Senate. Infrastructure projects on the intercontinental railroad and Great Lakes navigation meet the same fate.

Jefferson Davis (1808-1889)

Taken together Northerners conclude that the South intends to impede all forms of progress until it gets its way on the expansion of slavery.

A bill is even introduced to re-open the international slave trade, banned as of 1808 by the 1787 Constitution. This is strictly a cynical move by Southern fire-eaters to force more contentious debate on their assertion that “slavery is a positive good.” It goes nowhere, and even irritates Upper South states like Virginia and North Carolina, who want to profit by selling their own “excess slaves,” not increase the supply and lower the prices through imports.

Further threats of Southern secession only add to the animus. Congressman Lawrence Keitt says he is ready to “shatter this Republic from turret to foundation stone.” Governor William Gist, also of South Carolina, adds his voice:

I am prepared to wade in blood rather than submit to inequality and degradation.

(Keitt will subsequently be killed in action at the Battle of Cold Harbor on June 2, 1864.)

But instead of buckling to these threats, they only serve to stiffen the backbone of the Republicans.

Finally, on February 2, 1860, the Southern demands on slavery are put forth by Jefferson Davis of Mississippi. He is 51 years old, a West Point graduate, son-in-law of Zachary Taylor and valorous Colonel, wounded during the US victory at the Battle of Buena Vista. He leaves the military for good in 1847 when Mississippi Governor Albert Brown selects him to fill a vacant Senate seat. He then serves as Secretary of War under Pierce, before returning to the upper chamber in 1857. He believes in a slave society, but also fears that the North will not allow the South to secede peacefully, and that his region lacks the military might to prevail in a war.

What he wants instead is an unequivocal federal guarantee, backed by Congress, to protect the practice of slavery in territories before they apply for statehood, and after, if that becomes the will of the residents. As he says:

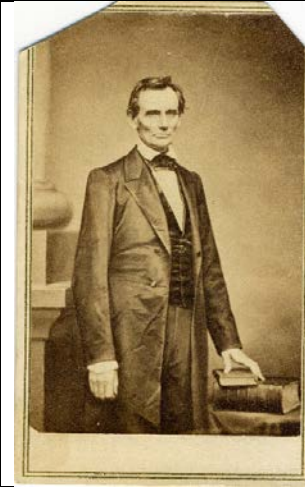
It is the duty of the Federal Government there to afford the needful protection (of slavery), and if experience should prove that the judiciary does not possess power to insure adequate protection, it will then become the duty of Congress to supply such deficiency.

Davis’ intent here is to force his fellow Democrats to visibly reject the so-called Freeport Doctrine that Stephen Douglas announced in his second debate with Lincoln – the notion that even if Kansas became a Slave State under the Lecompton Constitution, the people could still avoid the outcome by refusing to pass local policing measures needed to achieve compliance.

But this too fails due to resistance from the large body of mainly Northern Democrats still committed to Douglas for President and the historical plank of “popular sovereignty” as the best solution on slavery.

With these issues on the table, all eyes now turn to the 1860 nominating conventions.

Chapter 284 – Abraham Lincoln Delivers His Famous Cooper Union Address In New York



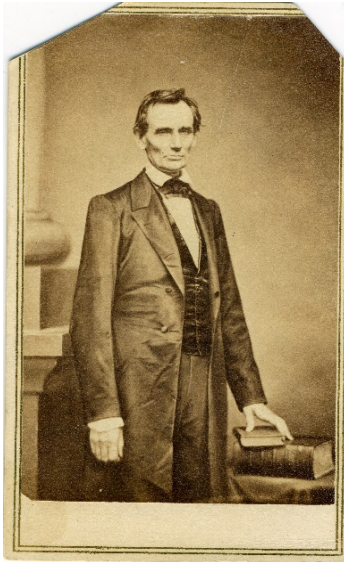
Dates:
February 27,
1860

Sections:

- Lincoln Speaks At Cooper Union In New York City
- Lincoln Shows That The Founders Supported Federal Control Over Slavery In The Territories
- He Counters The Basis For Southern Attacks On Republicans
- He Calls On Republicans To Stand Firm Against The Expansion Of Slavery

Date: February 27, 1860

Lincoln Speaks At Cooper Union In New York City



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Eleven weeks before the Republican convention opens, Abraham Lincoln walks on stage in New York City to speak for the first time to an audience of curious, but skeptical easterners.

The event is originally scheduled to take place at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, home to abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher. But this changes when the Young Men’s Central Republican Union – a “Stop Seward” group including Horace Greeley and **W. C.** Bryant – invite Lincoln to appear before a much larger audience in lower Manhattan.

The new venue is the Cooper Union and it will lend its name to a pivotal moment in Lincoln’s ascent to becoming a credible candidate for president – the “Cooper Union speech.”

The site is the brainchild of the inventor, businessman and philanthropist, Peter Cooper, whose intent is to provide a free college-level education for “serious students” seeking practical jobs in the modern economy.

In the basement of the Union building is the Great Hall, the largest public auditorium in the city, seating upwards of 1500 people, and home to a lecture circuit connecting students with the world around them.

Lincoln's appearance represents the third in a series on politics and it follows prior visits by Frank Blair of Missouri and Cassius Clay of Kentucky.

Lincoln purchases a new \$100 suit for his appearance, and adjusts his text to fit with his non-theological setting and audience. The result is a very lengthy speech for him, some 7,000 words, that is divided into three parts -- one addressing the Founding Father's views on slavery, one addressing criticisms leveled at him from the South and one aimed at rallying his Republican supporters.

As usual, audience twitters accompany his initial impression, the gangly 6'4" frame, all arms and legs, large hands and feet, accompanied by the rural Kentucky twang. But soon enough even the doubters are drawn into the sheer power and clarity of his arguments. By the time he is through, his jury of 1500 are on their feet cheering on behalf of "Honest Old Abe."

The political editor Horace Greeley sums up this transformation in his *New York Tribune* coverage:

No man ever made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience.

Sidebar: The Cooper Union

The site of Lincoln's speech is the brainchild of Peter Cooper, one of the most prominent men of his generation, whose lifespan runs from 1791 to 1883.

Cooper's humble origins in New York city include one year of formal education followed by a series of apprenticeships that tap into his God-given talents as an inventor and businessman. Early on he designs a crude washing machine and a chain cable to help move flatboats along difficult canal patches.

He becomes fascinated with the science of glue-making and buys a factory in 1821 which puts him on the road to wealth. Next comes the dawning age of railroads, and Cooper opens up an iron foundry to meet the demand for tracks.

In 1830 comes the invention for which he is most remembered – America's first steam locomotive, christened the *Tom Thumb*, which he constructs mainly out of spare parts lying around his foundry. It helps put the *Baltimore & Ohio* line on the map.

The locomotive also spurs demand for more rails which in turn allows him to expand his iron rolling mill in Trenton, New Jersey that soon employs some 2,000 workers. As the money rolls in, Cooper follows the lead of other tycoons in purchasing and then profiting from real estate in New York city.

Communications get his attention, and in 1855 he co-founds the *American Telegraph Company* and participates in laying the first transatlantic cable in 1858. He continues to add patents to his name, one being for the popular desert known as Jell-O.

By 1859 he is one of the richest men in the nation, and is already invested in his "reform causes," which include opposition to slavery, the rights of Native Americans, gender equality and fierce opposition to the "gold standard." The latter prompts him to run for President in 1885 on his own Greenback Party.

But nearest to Cooper's heart is his wish to provide people with the kind of education that he failed to experience in his own life. He decides that he wants this to be targeted at adults and he wants it to be free of charge, so everyone has their own shot at the American Dream.

This leads in 1854 to construction of The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, also known at the time as the Cooper Institute. Its charter lies in educating adults of all ages, genders, races and religions in skills required to obtain "useful occupations in life." It offers an open library, a broad range of courses, and free tuition "for all serious students."

It also boasts the largest public auditorium of its day, the Great Hall, where visiting speakers will include Lincoln, the tribal chief Red Cloud, the suffragette Susan B. Anthony, and the writer Mark Twain, and many other dignitaries.

Peter Cooper's Institute continues to operate according to its original mission as of 2108.

Date: February 27, 1860

Lincoln Shows That The Founders Supported Federal Control Over Slavery In The Territories

Lincoln begins his address with a remarkable history lesson on the *original intent* of the "Founding Fathers" in regard to federal authority over controlling slavery in federal territories. He frames the question as follows:

Does the proper division of local from federal authority, or anything in the Constitution, forbid our *Federal Government* control as to slavery in *our Federal Territories*?

To answer it, he completes a meticulous examination of the votes cast over time by the "Founders" -- the thirty-nine men who signed the 1787 Constitution in Philadelphia -- on legislation relevant to the issue. He finds that six such bills exist, dating from 1784, 1787, 1789, 1798, 1804 up to 1819-20, and that a total of 23 of the 39 Founders voted on at least one of them during their legislative careers.

The most telling bill by far is the 1789 Northwest Ordinance, with 17 of the 23 Founders casting a vote, and *all approving* a federal ban on slavery north of the Ohio River in the territory just won during the Revolutionary War. This bill is signed into law by George Washington himself.

In 1789, by the first Congress which sat under the Constitution, an act was passed to enforce the Ordinance of '87, including the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory...George Washington, another of the "thirty-nine," was then President of the United States, and, as such approved and signed the bill; thus completing its validity as a law, and thus showing that, in his understanding, no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government, to control as to slavery in federal territory.

A handful of the original thirty-nine Founders also voted on subsequent bills.

When the Mississippi Territory is organized in 1798, the federal government and Congress prohibited importation of slaves from abroad. Three Founders supported this bill.

In 1798, Congress organized the Territory of Mississippi. In the act of organization, they prohibited the bringing of slaves into the Territory, from any place without the United States, by fine, and giving freedom to slaves so bought. This act passed both branches of Congress without yeas and nays.

Two Founders supported similar federal controls on slavery in 1804 in the Louisiana territory around New Orleans, including one which said:

That no slave should be carried into it, except by the owner, and for his own use as a settler; the penalty in all the cases being a fine upon the violator of the law, and freedom to the slave.

As with the 1789 Northwest Ordinance, the 1820 Missouri Compromise again finds the federal government, by act of Congress, banning slavery north of the 36°30' latitude across all Louisiana Territories. One surviving Founder, Rufus King, favors it, while another, Charles Pinckney, is opposed.

How “Founders” Voted On Bills Involving Federal Controls Over Slavery In Territories

Year	Bills	Aye	Nay
1784	1 st Ban on slavery in NW Territory (Articles of Confederation)	3	1
1787	2 nd Ban on slavery in NW Territory (Articles of Confederation)	2	0
1789	Final ban on slavery in the NW Territory (post Union)	17	0
1798	Banning “foreign” slaves in the Mississippi Territory	3	0
1804	Regulations on slavery in and around New Orleans	2	0
1820	Missouri Compromise banning slavery above 36°30'	1	1

Having laid out the facts, Lincoln concludes that the overwhelming majority of the Founders found that the federal government has every right to control slavery in the federal territories.

The sum of the whole is, that of our thirty-nine fathers who framed the original Constitution, twenty-one - a clear majority of the whole - certainly understood that no proper division of local from federal authority, nor any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control slavery in the federal territories; while all the rest probably had the same understanding. Such, unquestionably, was the understanding of our fathers who framed the original Constitution; and the text affirms that they understood the question "better than we."

But he is not yet done, because he says those who wish to forbid federal control over slavery look to the first ten amendments for support – specifically the 5th which guarantees the right to “life, liberty and property” and the 10th which grants the states authority over all powers not explicitly handed to the federal body in the Constitution.

He dismisses these pleas saying that the Founders who supported these amendments were the same men who simultaneously passed the 1789 Northwest Ordinance placing federal constrictions on slavery in the territories along the Ohio River.

Now, it so happens that these amendments were framed by the first Congress which sat under the Constitution - the identical Congress which passed the act already mentioned, enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory. Not only was it the same Congress, but they were the identical, same individual men who, at the same session, and at the same time within the session, had under consideration, and in progress toward maturity, these Constitutional amendments, and this act prohibiting slavery in all the territory the nation then owned. The Constitutional amendments were introduced before, and passed after the act enforcing the

Ordinance of '87; so that, during the whole pendency of the act to enforce the Ordinance, the Constitutional amendments were also pending.

Given these facts, he asks if it isn't "a little presumptuous" to assume that the Founders really intended for the theory of the 5th and 10th amendments to overrule the direct actions they took with the Northwest Ordinance!

Is it not a little presumptuous in any one at this day to affirm that the two things which that Congress deliberately framed, and carried to maturity at the same time, are absolutely inconsistent with each other? And does not such affirmation become impudently absurd when coupled with the other affirmation from the same mouth, that those who did the two things, alleged to be inconsistent, understood whether they really were inconsistent better than we - better than he who affirms that they are inconsistent?

This does not according to Lincoln mean that Americans are forever bound to "follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did," but rather that no one should mislead people about the true intent of the Founders on the issue of federal authority.

Now, and here, let me guard a little against being misunderstood. I do not mean to say we are bound to follow implicitly in whatever our fathers did... (and) if any man at this day sincerely believes that a proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbids the Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories, he is right to say so.... But he has no right to mislead others, who have less access to history, and less leisure to study it, into the false belief that "our fathers who framed the Government under which we live" were of the same opinion - thus substituting falsehood and deception for truthful evidence and fair argument.

On that note, he ends the opening phase of his address having demonstrated his main point: that the original intent of the Founders was to give the federal government authority over controlling slavery in the territories, and that those who consider this an "overreach" are simply wrong.

Additionally, since slavery is "evil" the Republicans not only have the right to ban it, but also a moral duty.

This is all Republicans ask - all Republicans desire - in relation to slavery. As those fathers marked it, so let it be again marked, as an evil not to be extended, but to be tolerated and protected only because of and so far as its actual presence among us makes that toleration and protection a necessity.

By this point in his talk, those in the audience who initially questioned his gangly appearance and Kentucky accent are being drawn in by the clarity and power of his intellect. He precedes next to address the men of the South.

Date: February 27, 1860

He Counters The Basis For Southern Attacks On Republicans

The remainder of the Cooper Union speech is political in nature. It begins with a plea to the South to stop the name-calling directed at all Republicans and engage in a debate over the principles at stake.

And now, if they would listen - as I suppose they will not - I would address a few words to the Southern people.... You consider yourselves a reasonable and a just people... Still, when you speak of us Republicans, you do so only to denounce us as reptiles, or, at the best, as no better than outlaws.... If we do repel you by any wrong principle or practice... bring forward your charges and specifications, and then be patient long enough to hear us deny or justify... Meet us, then, on the question of whether our principle, put in practice, would wrong your section.... Do you accept the challenge?

Given the facts Lincoln has already laid out, a failure to discuss the principles implies that the South is willing to ignore or condemn what the Founders intended on federal control of slavery.

No! Then you really believe that the principle which "our fathers who framed the Government under which we live" thought so clearly right as to adopt it, and indorse it again and again, upon their official oaths, is in fact so clearly wrong as to demand your condemnation without a moment's consideration.

He again returns to Washington's actions and commentary on the 1789 Northwest Ordinance as proof of the principles the Republicans espouse.

Washington...as President of the United States, approved and signed an act of Congress, enforcing the prohibition of slavery in the Northwestern Territory, which act embodied the policy of the Government upon that subject up to and at the very moment he penned that warning; and about one year after he penned it, he wrote LaFayette that he considered that prohibition a wise measure, expressing in the same connection his hope that we should at some time have a confederacy of free States.... Could Washington himself speak, would he cast the blame of that sectionalism upon us, who sustain his policy, or upon you who repudiate it? We respect that warning of Washington, and we commend it to you, together with his example pointing to the right application of it.

While the South seems ready to reject the Founder's and the Republican's proposals on slavery, they have been unable to arrive at a consensus plan of their own.

Some of you are for reviving the foreign slave trade; some for a Congressional Slave-Code for the Territories; some for Congress forbidding the Territories to prohibit Slavery within their limits; some for maintaining Slavery in the Territories through the judiciary; some for the "gurreat pur-rinciple" that "if one man would enslave another, no third man should object," fantastically called "Popular Sovereignty;" but never a man among you is in favor of federal prohibition of slavery in federal territories, according to the practice of "our fathers who framed the Government under which we live." Not one of all your various plans can show a precedent or an advocate in the century within which our Government originated. Consider, then, whether your claim of conservatism for yourselves, and your charge or destructiveness against us, are based on the most clear and stable foundations.

Lincoln next turns to a series of Southern accusations made against the Republican Party, beginning with the contention that it supported John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry.

We deny it; and what is your proof? Harper's Ferry! John Brown!! John Brown was no Republican; and you have failed to implicate a single Republican in his Harper's Ferry enterprise. If any member of our party is guilty in that matter, you know it or you do not know it. If you do know it, you are inexcusable for not designating the man and proving the fact. If you do not know it, you are inexcusable for asserting it, and especially for persisting in the assertion after you have tried and failed to make the proof. You need to be told that persisting in a charge which one does not know to be true, is simply malicious slander.

He knocks down the charge that Republicans have caused the slave uprisings.

Slave insurrections are no more common now than they were before the Republican party was organized. What induced the Southampton insurrection, twenty-eight years ago, in which, at least three times as many lives were lost as at Harper's Ferry? You can scarcely stretch your very elastic fancy to the conclusion that Southampton was "got up by Black Republicanism." In the present state of things in the United States, I do not think a general, or even a very extensive slave insurrection is possible. The indispensable concert of action cannot be attained.

He quotes Thomas Jefferson's comments on slavery and his wish to see Virginia rid itself of "the evil" over time.

In the language of Mr. Jefferson, uttered many years ago, "It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation, and deportation, peaceably, and in such slow degrees, as that the evil will wear off insensibly; and their places be, pari passu, filled up by free white laborers. If, on the contrary, it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up."

Mr. Jefferson did not mean to say, nor do I, that the power of emancipation is in the Federal Government. He spoke of Virginia; and, as to the power of emancipation, I speak of the slaveholding States only. The Federal Government, however, as we insist, has the power of restraining the extension of the institution - the power to insure that a slave insurrection shall never occur on any American soil which is now free from slavery.

In seeking to destroy the Republican Party, the South will not be able to end "the feeling against slavery in the nation" expressed by over a million and a half voters.

There is a judgment and a feeling against slavery in this nation, which cast at least a million and a half of votes. You cannot destroy that judgment and feeling - that sentiment - by breaking up the political organization which rallies around it. You can scarcely scatter and disperse an army which has been formed into order in the face of your heaviest fire; but if you could, how much would you gain by forcing the sentiment which created it out of the peaceful channel of the ballot-box, into some other channel? What would that other channel probably be? Would the number of John Browns be lessened or enlarged by the operation?

In threatening to "rule or ruin" the Union," Lincoln says the South continues to claim "rights" regarding slavery that are simply not contained in the Constitution.

But you will break up the Union rather than submit to a denial of your Constitutional rights. That has a somewhat reckless sound; but it would be palliated, if not fully justified, were we

proposing, by the mere force of numbers, to deprive you of some right, plainly written down in the Constitution. But we are proposing no such thing.

When you make these declarations, you have a specific and well-understood allusion to an assumed Constitutional right of yours, to take slaves into the federal territories, and to hold them there as property. But no such right is specifically written in the Constitution. That instrument is literally silent about any such right. We, on the contrary, deny that such a right has any existence in the Constitution, even by implication. Your purpose, then, plainly stated, is that you will destroy the Government, unless you be allowed to construe and enforce the Constitution as you please, on all points in dispute between you and us. You will rule or ruin in all events.

He next goes head-on against the notion that the *Dred Scott* decision is definitively in favor of the South's position. His argument here mirrors his prior views, namely that the justice's opinions were divided and contradictory, and that neither the words "slavery nor property" even appear in the Constitution. Furthermore, the absence of the word "slavery" shows that the majority of Founders were embarrassed to acknowledge the thought of "property in men" in their defining document.

Perhaps you will say the Supreme Court has decided the disputed Constitutional question in your favor. Not quite so. ,,The Court have decided the question for you in a sort of way...I mean it was made in a divided Court, by a bare majority of the Judges, and they not quite agreeing with one another in the reasons for making it; that it is so made as that its avowed supporters disagree with one another about its meaning, and that it was mainly based upon a mistaken statement of fact - the statement in the opinion that "the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution."

An inspection of the Constitution will show that the right of property in a slave is not "distinctly and expressly affirmed" in it....Neither the word "slave" nor "slavery" is to be found in the Constitution, nor the word "property" even... Also, it would be open to show, by contemporaneous history, that this mode of alluding to slaves and slavery, instead of speaking of them, was employed on purpose to exclude from the Constitution the idea that there could be property in man.

Lincoln ends his "words to the South" by dismissing the idea that the Republicans will be responsible for destroying the Union if he is elected President. He compares this to blaming a victim of a robbery for his own death for failing to turn over his money upon demand.

But you will not abide the election of a Republican president! In that supposed event, you say, you will destroy the Union; and then, you say, the great crime of having destroyed it will be upon us! That is cool. A highwayman holds a pistol to my ear, and mutters through his teeth, "Stand and deliver, or I shall kill you, and then you will be a murderer!"

To be sure, what the robber demanded of me - my money - was my own; and I had a clear right to keep it; but it was no more my own than my vote is my own; and the threat of death to me, to extort my money, and the threat of destruction to the Union, to extort my vote, can scarcely be distinguished in principle.

With that said, Lincoln turns to closing remarks for the Republicans in the audience.

Date: February 27, 1860

He Calls On Republicans To Stand Firm Against The Expansion Of Slavery

Lincoln begins the third and closing part of his speech with a plea to Republicans to do everything within reason to accommodate Southern concerns in order to hold the union together.

A few words now to Republicans. It is exceedingly desirable that all parts of this great Confederacy shall be at peace, and in harmony, one with another. Let us Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion and ill temper. Even though the southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of our duty, we possibly can. Judging by all they say and do, and by the subject and nature of their controversy with us, let us determine, if we can, what will satisfy them.

But that has not been an easy task so far.

The question recurs, what will satisfy them? Simply this: We must not only let them alone, but we must somehow, convince them that we do let them alone. (This) is no easy task. We have been so trying to convince them from the very beginning of our organization, but with no success. In all our platforms and speeches we have constantly protested our purpose to let them alone; but this has had no tendency to convince them.

The only answer seems to be for the Republicans to affirm out loud that slavery is “right,” in fact “a social blessing” that deserves “full national recognition.”

This, and this only: cease to call slavery wrong, and join them in calling it right. And this must be done thoroughly - done in acts as well as in words. Silence will not be tolerated - we must place ourselves avowedly with them. Senator Douglas' new sedition law must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. We must pull down our Free State constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us.

Holding, as they do, that slavery is morally right, and socially elevating, they cannot cease to demand a full national recognition of it, as a legal right, and a social blessing.... If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it, are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away.

Lincoln asks his audience if they are willing to surrender their belief that slavery is wrong to satisfy the South.

Can we cast our votes with their view, and against our own? In view of our moral, social, and political responsibilities, can we do this? Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the National Territories, and to overrun us here in these Free States?

His answer is a ringing call to action for all Republicans to have faith in the rightness of their convictions, to “stand by our duty,” and to reaffirm the clear intent of the Founders to stop the spread of slavery.

If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty, fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored - contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man - such as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care - such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance - such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did.

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government nor of dungeons to ourselves. LET US HAVE FAITH THAT RIGHT MAKES MIGHT, AND IN THAT FAITH, LET US, TO THE END, DARE TO DO OUR DUTY AS WE UNDERSTAND IT.

Chapter 285 – The Democrat Party Fractures At Its Charleston Convention



Dates:
April 23 – May 2,
1860

Sections:

- Stephen Douglas Arrives With High Hopes And A Few Worries
- Several Southern States Bolt After A Platform Vote Goes Against Them
- The Voting Continues But Douglas Fails To Get The Required Majority

Date: April 23, 1860

Stephen Douglas Arrives With High Hopes And A Few Worries

The 1860 Democratic National Convention opens on April 23, 1860 at the Institute Hall, a 3,000 seat venue in Charleston which, a year later will be memorialized as the site of South Carolina's secession from the Union.

The opening day of the Charleston Convention coincides with Stephen Douglas' 47th birthday, and the Little Giant arrives with high hopes of winning the presidential nomination. He has twice before been a serious contender, peaking at 102 votes in 1852, before losing to Pierce, and at 122 votes in 1856, before Buchanan wins. Now Douglas feels it is his turn. He has long been the point person in Congress for his beloved Democratic Party; his "popular sovereignty" solution remains its official position on slavery in the west; and, just eighteen months ago, he has been able to defeat the Republican, Abraham Lincoln, for his third term in the Senate.

As an astute politician, however, Douglas knows that some within the party are out to deny him the nomination. The main roots of this resistance are three-fold. First, his refusal to support Buchanan's effort to pass the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution in December 1857 has been an embarrassment to the president and to the party as a whole. This antagonism is then compounded for Southerners by Douglas' "Freeport Doctrine," and then his refusal to support Davis' proposed Congressional law positively sanctioning slavery in the territories.

The extent of his opposition in the South becomes evident three days before the convention opens, when seven states -- Georgia, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Texas -- meet and agree to walk out along with South Carolina, if he is nominated. With the number of convention votes based on each state's Electoral College allocation, the loss of these seven states would potentially cost Douglas 43 of the 303 to be cast in total.

But the Douglas camp still takes comfort in the fact that the Free States comprise 74% of that total, more than the 2/3rd needed for the nomination -- even if all 80 of the Slave State votes go against him.

Distribution Of Convention Votes

	#	%
Slave States	80	26%
Free States	223	74
Total	303	100%

Date: April 27-29, 1860

Several Southern States Bolt After A Platform Vote Goes Against Them



William Yancey (1814-1863)

The convention proceeds at a crawl as various factions line up between candidates and planks in the platform. On Day 5, the final document is almost completed as two animated speakers make their final appeals.

One is the fire-eater, William Yancey, of Alabama, who, like Edmund Ruffin, wants to see the South leave the Union unless the North buckles on its demands. The “Orator of Secession” is in rare form as he tells the audience that the argument against slavery – that it is morally evil – is all wrong, and that the practice has always been a “positive good” for the souls of the Africans and for the economy of the entire nation.

Yancey is met head-on by the equally emphatic George Pugh, Senator from Ohio. Pugh is a veteran of the Mexican War and a staunch supporter of Douglas. He has previously spoken out against the *Dred Scott* decision and any attempts by the South to “nationalize slavery.” Now he rises against Yancey’s efforts to force another “doughface” candidate on the delegates, like Pierce or Buchanan, who will surrender to Southern demands on behalf of party unity. As Pugh says...

Gentlemen of the South, you mistake us – you mistake us. We will not do it.

Others weigh in, including Missouri Governor Austin King who warns that the Southern plank would permanently divide the party and hand the election to Seward and the Black Republicans.

This session closes at 11:30 PM with a call for a vote the following day.

On April 28, the sixth day of the enclave, delegates are asked to choose between two alternative platform planks:

- A Southern version calling upon Congress to pass a law protecting the rights of slave-owners and their “property” in the territories; and
- A Douglas-backed version throwing any decisions made by territorial governments back into the laps of the Supreme Court.

When the ballots are cast, the Douglas option wins by a fairly narrow margin of 165 to 138.

The response is a full or partial walk-out by nine states in total which had sworn in advance to oppose Douglas. They leave the hall over a two day period, and simply gather in town waiting to see what happens next with the nomination of president.

Date: April 30 – May 2, 1860

The Voting Continues But Douglas Fails To Get The Required Majority

The remaining delegates decide to proceed with the process of trying to pick the presidential nominee.

Of the 303 total votes allocated among the various states, a total of 50 have disappeared from the hall as the first ballot is about to be recorded. According to traditional rules, aimed at indulging the South, a candidate is required to win 2/3rds of the votes to be nominated. But now the question becomes whether that should be 2/3rds of the original 303 votes, or of the remaining 253 votes after the walk-out.

Optional Voting Requirements To Win

Base Count	Total	2/3rd Needed
Before Walk-out	303	202
After Walk-out	253	169

The ruling here is delivered by the Convention Chairman, Caleb Cushing, a renowned Doughface, former Attorney General under Pierce, supporter of Buchanan, and no friend of Stephen Douglas. He demands that the threshold be unchanged from the original plan, meaning that 202 votes (2/3rds of 303) are required to win.

While Cushing's ruling dramatically lengthens the odds for Douglas, the fact is that the slavery plank he favors only receives 165 of the 303 votes cast. Clearly there is more Northern resistance to him than anticipated, most likely from those embarrassed by his refusal to support the Lecompton Bill.

Competition for Douglas comes primarily from two candidates from slave states that have remained in the hall.

Virginia puts forward Senator Robert M.T. Hunter, a 51 year old planter with a very distinguished career in government service, including a stint as Speaker of the House (1839-41), three terms in the Senate, and an offer from Millard Fillmore to become Secretary of State, which he declined. He is pro-slavery, but not a fire-eater, instead committed to searching for compromises to preserve the Union.

The other contender is 67 year old James Guthrie, from Kentucky, best known as an astute businessman for his prominent role in developing the city of Louisville. Franklin Pierce recognizes his financial talents and names him Secretary of the Treasury in 1853. He is the leading force in the Cabinet, a "hard money" man, who uses the windfall revenue from California gold to pay down the federal debt. After leaving office in 1857 he eventually becomes president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Like Hunter, Guthrie is a slave holder, but also a staunch opponent of secession.

The first nominating ballot, cast on April 30, sets the tone for all that follows. Douglas collects 146 votes, well short of the 202 mark required, while Hunter and Guthrie split about 80 of the remainder. From there another 56 ballots are taken through May 1, with Douglas never exceeding 152 and Guthrie pulling ahead of Hunter, but peaking at only 66 votes.

Voting For Democratic Party Presidential Nomination:

	1 st	2 nd	13 th	25 th	30 th	37 th	47 th	57 th
Stephen Douglas - Illinois	146	147	150	152	152	152	152	152
Robert M.T. Hunter - Virginia	42	42	28	35	25	16	16	16
James Guthrie - Kentucky	36	36	40	42	45	64	66	66
Andrew Johnson _ Tennessee	12	12	12	12	11	1	0	0
Joseph Lane – Oregon	6	6	20	10	6	12	13	14
Daniel Dickinson – NY	7	6	1	2	13	6	5	4
Jefferson Davis – Miss.	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	0
Others	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/3rds needed to win	202							

What Douglas now sees is the extent of the opposition he faces not only in the South, but also the North. Then the next piece of bad news materializes. It comes from his long-term ally in the House, and convention manager, William Richardson of Illinois, who reports that the New York delegation will abandon him on the 60th ballot, if he hasn't won by then.

The only option for Douglas at this point is retreat, and the stalemated convention declares a recess on May 2, after ten days of turmoil. The new plan calls for the convention to resume in Baltimore on June 18, roughly a month after the Republicans are scheduled to meet, on May 16 in Chicago.

Meanwhile, the Southern walk-outs decide to hold their own convention on June 11 in Richmond.

Chapter 286– A New Constitutional Union Party Holds Its Convention

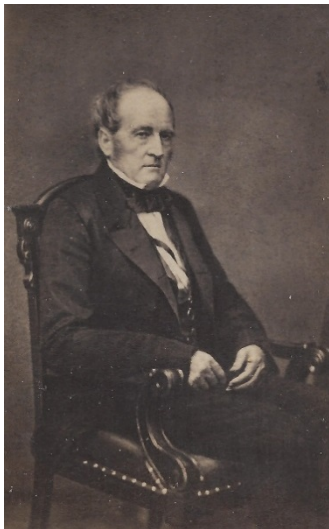


Dates:
May 9, 1860

- Sections:**
- Many Senior Public Figures Fear The Loss Of The Union
 - The Delegates Pass A Platform Designed To Alienate No One
 - Bell And Everett Chosen To Head The Ticket

Date: May 9, 1860

Many Senior Public Figures Fear The Loss Of The Union



John Bell (1796 – 1869)

One week after the Democrats recess in Charleston, the new Constitutional Union Party holds its first and only convention in Baltimore. The prime mover behind the event is Kentucky Senator, John J. Crittenden, and the venue is the Eastside District Courthouse. Roughly 250 delegates from 23 states show up for a tightly choreographed session completed in a single day.

What draws the attendees together is a shared fear that the Union of States is about to collapse over the controversies surrounding slavery in the territories. All present agree this must not happen.

Their antidotes lie in rallying emotional support among the public for the “grand old flag” and persuading their fellow politicians to abandon harsh rhetoric and embrace “forbearance, concession and conciliation.”

The leadership of the Constitutional Union Party includes many nationally recognized figures whose service includes the military, the nation’s leading universities, the clergy, as well as the legislative and judicial branches of government. Their home states run from Massachusetts to Texas, albeit concentrated in the upper south, from Virginia and North Carolina through Kentucky and Tennessee. Several are slave owners, but without insisting that the institution be expanded to the territories.

Many are former Whigs, whose political roots trace back to Henry Clay and Presidents Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore. After the demise of their party in 1852, some shift to the now defunct American Party. None seem comfortable with the new Republican alternative, whose policies on slavery seem likely

to provoke disunion. A few former Democrats are also in the mix, troubled by the growing divisiveness of its overtly Southern stances.

Another characteristic of this group is their advanced age. Many have been born before the turn of the century and several have fought in the War of 1812. Together they have a shared memory of the early days of the Union, when its very survival remained in doubt.

One man in particular has become the spokesman for the birth of the nation. He is Edward Everett, America's leading lecturer at the time, who tours the country with a stirring, fully memorized, speech about George Washington and the Revolutionary War era – delivered in the name of raising funds to acquire and preserve the Mt. Vernon estate.

In 1851, Everett publishes his compendium on Daniel Webster, including a famous line that captures the spirit of the movement he now joins:

I was born an American; I will live an American; I shall die an American!

Profiles Of Several Constitutional Union Party Leaders

	State	Age	Party History	History
John Bell	TN	64	Jacksonian then a Whig, American & Constitutional Union	House '27-41, Speaker '34, Sec of War '41, Senate '47-59, opposes KN Act, Comm on Territories, owns slaves but opposes expansion and secession, but finally goes with CSA.
John Minor Botts	Va	57	Whig, American, Constit. Union	Planter and slave owner, House '39-43 & '47-49, opposes extension of slavery & Kansas admission as slave state and Virginia secession, ferocious Unionist.
John Crittenden	Ky	72	Whig, American, Constit. Union	War of 1812, Senate '17-19, '35-48, US Atty General '41, opposes Texas annexation, Mexican War, Taylor campaign mgr & AG '50-53, opposes KN Act and Lecompton, Senate '55-61, fails to support Lincoln for Senate, deflects runs for President, House '61-63, last will shows he was a slaveholder.
Edward Everett	Mass	64	Cotton Whig & Constit. Union	Harvard president and Unitarian minister, House '25-35, Mass Gov '36-40, Amb to UK '41-45, Sec of State '52-53, Senator '53-54, Committee on Territories, famous national lecturer.
William Graham	NC	55	Whig & Constit. Union	Planter family, owns slaves & supports practice, but fears for Union, Senate '40-43, NC Governor '45-49, Sec of Navy '50-52, Whig VP nominee in '52 to reassure South, opposes secession, but eventually a CSA Senator in war
Sam Houston	TN/TX	67	Democrat, Union, Constit. Union	War of 1812 (w), House '23-27, Tenn Governor '27-29, commands Texian

				army, win at San Jacinto, Republic of Texas President '36-38, '41-44, Senate '46-59, slave owner, but opposes KN Act & against expansion, Governor of Texas '59-61
John McLean	Ohio	75	Democrat, Anti-Mason, Whig, Free Soil & Republican	House '13-16, Postmaster General '23-29, Supreme Court Associate Justice '29-61, declines Tyler offer as Sec of War, anti-slavery, dissenter in <i>Prigg v Pa</i> (fugitive slave case) & <i>Dred Scott</i> .
William Rives	Va.	67	Democrat, Whig	Planter family, T Jefferson protégé, House '23-29, Minister to France '29-33, Senate '32-34, candidate for Dem VP but falls short, Senate '36-39, '41-45, switch to Whigs in '44, Minister to France '49-53, opposes secession but then goes with Va into CSA.

Date: May 9, 1860

The Delegates Pass A Platform Designed To Alienate No One

Members of the Constitutional Union Party are well aware that they have no chance of winning enough popular votes in the 1860 presidential election to defeat the Democrat and Republican nominees.

Instead their strategy lies in denying both the Electoral College majority required to win outright, and thus throw the election back into the House. Once there, they foresee a prolonged stalemate ending with a compromise candidate in the form of their own nominee.

To preserve this middle ground position for their candidate, the delegates approve a two paragraph platform that avoids any fixed position on the issue of slavery in the territories – and instead promises loyalty to time honored principles of the Constitution and all measures to insure domestic tranquility and preserve the Union. Here it stands in its entirety:

Whereas, Experience has demonstrated that Platforms adopted by the partisan Conventions of the country have had the effect to mislead and deceive the people, and at the same time to widen the political divisions of the country, by the creation and encouragement of geographical and sectional parties; therefore

Resolved, that it is both the part of patriotism and of duty to recognize no political principle other than THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNTRY, THE UNION OF THE STATES, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS, and that, as representatives of the Constitutional Union men of the country, in National Convention assembled, we hereby pledge ourselves to maintain, protect, and defend, separately and unitedly, these great principles of public liberty and national safety, against all enemies, at home and abroad; believing that thereby peace may once more be restored to the country; the rights of the People and of the States re-established, and the Government again placed in that condition of justice, fraternity and equality, which, under the example and Constitution of our fathers, has solemnly bound every citizen of the United States to

maintain a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Date: May 9, 1860

Bell And Everett Chosen To Head The Ticket

The final task for the delegates lies in selecting their nominees for the top of their ticket.

Enthusiasm runs highest for John Crittenden, but, as in the past, he continues to opt out of a run for the presidency.

The next most popular choice is Edward Everett, but his Massachusetts' roots fail to correspond to the party's upper southern demographics.

Almost by default this leaves John Bell in the spotlight. His colleagues consider his manner to be aloof and formal, hardly the stuff of an inspirational leader. But he has steered a middle course in government, mustered enough personal support to have been chosen as Speaker of the House, held a cabinet post, and is a Southern slave owner who has avoided alienating those in the North.

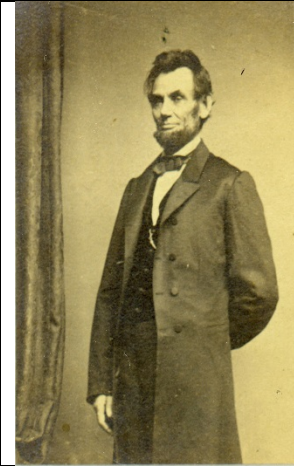
On the first ballot, Bell and Sam Houston take the lead. By the second, however, almost all of the "favorite son" candidates have dropped out and their votes have gone to Bell, who wins the nomination.

Constitutional Union Party Ballot Results

Candidates	State	1st	2nd
John Bell	Tenn	68.5	138
Sam Houston	Tex	57	69
John Crittenden	Ky	28	1
Edward Everett	Mass	25	9.5
William Graham	NC	22	18
John McLean	Ohio	21	1
William Rives	Va	13	0
John Botts	Va	9.5	7
William Sharkey	Miss	7	8.5
William Goggin	Va	3	0
Total		254	252
Needed to Win		128	127

After the Vice-Presidential slot goes easily to the popular northerner, Edward Everett, the convention adjourns.

Chapter 287 – The Republicans Nominate Abraham Lincoln



Dates:
May 16-17 to Fall 1860

- Sections:**
- The Republican Convention Opens In Chicago
 - A Platform Is Written To Win The Entire North
 - Five Candidates Vie For The Presidential Nomination
 - Reservations Exist For Each Contender
 - Lincoln’s Campaign Begins Well In Advance
 - Lincoln Wins The Nomination On The Third Ballot

Date: May 16, 1860

The Republican Convention Opens In Chicago

Republicans are riding a wave of political optimism as they gather in Chicago on May 16, 1860 for their second national convention.

The city itself is booming, its population up to 109,000 (9th in the nation), and its unique combination of Great Lakes shipping and railroad lines is cementing its role as the hub for East-West commercial traffic.

To accommodate the large crowds, a mammoth wooden convention center, christened the *Wigwam*, is built along the south branch of the Chicago River, on the site of the old Sauganash Hotel, the first such facility in the city. On the opening day some 12,000 people pack the new structure, with another 20,000 milling about outside the hall, enjoying the various bands, parades, entertainers, food tents and free liquor available.

A total of 466 official delegates are seated in the hall. They represent 24 of the current total of 33 states, the other nine ominously comprising Southern hold-outs (NC, SC, Ga, Fla, Ala, Miss, La, TN and TN). Each attending state’s voting power is a rough reflection of their prominence in the US Congress.

Delegate Count At Chicago

States	#
NY	70
Pa	54
Ohio	46
Massachusetts	26
Indiana	26
Kentucky	23
Virginia	23
Illinois	22

Missouri	18
Md	16
Maine	16
Iowa	16
NJ	14
Conn	12
Mich	12
Texas	10
WI	10
NH	10
Vt	10
RI	8
California	8
Minnesota	6
Del	6
Oregon	4
Total	466

Notable delegates include John Andrew (MA), Gideon Welles (CT), Preston King, William Evarts and George Curtis (NY), David Wilmot and Thaddeus Stevens (Pa), Francis P. Blair Sr. (Md), Thomas Spooner (Oh), Caleb Smith (Ind), David Davis and Nathan Judd (IL), Carl Schurz (WI), Francis P. Blair Jr and Gratz Brown (MO), Horace Greeley and Eli Thayer (OR),

The temporary chairman of the convention is Judge David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, famous for his 1846 Proviso in the U.S. House demanding that slavery be excluded from any lands won in the Mexican War, not on moral grounds, but so that white men and free labor would prevail. Wilmot’s keynote address emphasizes the mission of the Party – to stop the Democrat’s attempt to nationalize slavery.

A great sectional and aristocratic party, or interest, has for years dominated with a high hand over the political affairs of this country. That interest has wrested, and is now wresting, all the great powers of this government to the one object of the extension and nationalization of slavery. It is our purpose, gentlemen, it is the mission of the Republican Party and the basis of its organization, to resist this policy of a sectional interest.... It is our purpose and our policy to resist these new constitutional dogmas that slavery exists by virtue of the constitution wherever the banner of the Union floats.

George Ashmun, an ex-congressman from Massachusetts is elected President of the convention and a committee is named to draft a platform.

Date: May 17, 1860

A Platform Is Written To Win The Entire North

The paramount goal for the Republicans is to win the Presidency in 1860, and to do so they must be sure to sweep the Northern states, including the five won by Buchanan in 1856.

Northern States Won By Buchanan in 1856

States	Electoral Votes	Buchanan % of Votes	Runner Up
Pennsylvania	27	50%	Fremont 32%
Indiana	13	50	Fremont 40
Illinois	11	44	Fremont 40
New Jersey	7	47	Fremont 29
California	4	48	Fillmore 33

Their primary appeal to the North lies in the promise to oppose the “nationalization of slavery” sought by the South in response to the *Dred Scott* ruling. This is the glue that holds the Republican coalition together, despite the internal division between the minority, who oppose slavery on moral grounds, and the majority, who would simply prefer an all-white America.

The latter group, along with potentially “switchable” Northern Democrats, want a platform that offers more than just a ban on the expansion of slavery – something that the savvy newspaperman and at-large delegate, Horace Greeley, notes:

I want to succeed this time, yet I know the country is not Anti-Slavery. It will only swallow a little Anti-Slavery in a great deal of sweetening. An Anti-Slavery man per se cannot be elected; but a Tariff, River and Harbor, Pacific Railroad, Free Homestead man may succeed although he is Anti-Slavery.

The Platform Committee shares Greeley’s assessment and writes a succinct document in seventeen articles that explain the core principles for the 2016 campaign. It accuses the Democrats of abandoning the intent of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, being co-opted by Southern demands, and, in so doing, risking disunion. It promises to end this subservience and carry out the original intent of the founders to end the spread of slavery, so that it eventually withers away.

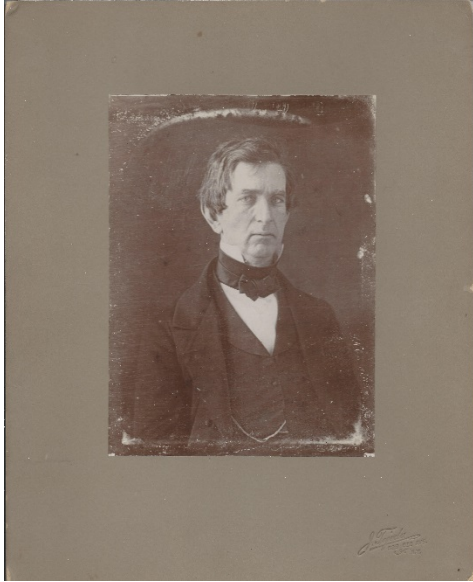
Then come some flourishes intended to deliver the “sweetening” sought by Greeley. Article 4 tries to reassure the South about state’s rights against any threats of abolition. Article 12 offers up a protective tariff much desired in New Jersey. Article 13 supports a homestead act offer of 160 free acres of land to western settlers. Article 14 gently defuses Know Nothing threats to immigrants. Article 15 is aimed mainly at the Great Lakes states wishing for upgrades in ports and navigational problems. Article 16 reaffirms the intent to move ahead with the long-delayed Pacific railroad, a boon to all commercial entities.

1. *“The history of the nation during the last four years has...established the necessity...of the Republican Party.*
2. *That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence including “all men are created equal,” along with “the Federal Constitution, the Rights of the States and the Union...must be preserved.*
3. *“No Republican member of Congress has uttered...the threats of disunion so often made by Democratic members.*
4. *“The right of each state to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively...is inviolate.*

5. *“The Democratic Administration has far exceeded our worst apprehension in its measureless subserviency to the exactions of a sectional interest, as especially evinced in its desperate exertions to force the infamous Lecompton Constitution upon the protesting people of Kansas...”*
6. *“The recent...developments of frauds and corruptions at the Federal metropolis show that an entire change of administration is imperatively demanded.*
7. *“That the new dogma that the Constitution, of its own force, carries slavery into any or all of the territories of the United States, is a dangerous political heresy, at variance with the explicit provisions of that instrument itself, with contemporaneous exposition, and with legislative and judicial precedent; is revolutionary in its tendency, and subversive of the peace and harmony of the country.”*
8. *“That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom: That...it becomes our duty, ...to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.”*
9. *“That we brand the recent reopening of the African slave trade, under the cover of our national flag, aided by perversions of judicial power, as a crime against humanity and a burning shame to our country...”*
10. *“That in the recent vetoes, by their Federal Governors, of the acts of the legislatures of Kansas and Nebraska, prohibiting slavery in those territories, we find a practical illustration of the boasted Democratic principle of Non-Intervention and Popular Sovereignty, embodied in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and a demonstration of the deception and fraud involved therein.”*
11. *“That Kansas should, of right, be immediately admitted as a state under the Constitution recently formed and adopted by her people, and accepted by the House of Representatives.”*
12. *Support for “duties upon imports...which secures to the workingmen liberal wages...and to mechanics and manufacturers an adequate reward for their skill, labor and enterprise....”*
13. *That we protest against any sale or alienation to others of the public lands held by actual settlers...and we demand the passage by Congress of the complete and satisfactory homestead measure which has already passed the House.*
14. *That the Republican party is opposed to any change in our naturalization laws...and in favor of giving a full and efficient protection to the rights of all classes of citizens, whether native or naturalized, both at home and abroad.*
15. *That appropriations by Congress for river and harbor improvements of a national character, required for the accommodation and security of an existing commerce, are authorized...and justified...*
16. *That a railroad to the Pacific Ocean is imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country; that the federal government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction...*
17. *Finally...we invite the co-operation of all citizens...who substantially agree with us in their affirmation and support.*

Date: May 17, 1860

Five Candidates Vie For The Presidential Nomination



William Henry Seward (1801-1872)

The platform is approved and on May 17 attention turns to nominating a Presidential candidate. Five men enter the convention with enough support to have a shot. They are:

Leading Candidates For President At The 1860 Republican Convention

Name	State	Age	Currently
Henry Seward	NY	59	U.S. Senator from New York
Abraham Lincoln	IL	51	Law practice in Illinois
Simon Cameron	Pa	61	U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania
Salmon Chase	Oh	52	Recently retired Governor of Ohio
Edward Bates	MO	66	Law practice in Missouri

The clear front-runner is the New Yorker, Henry Seward, coming to the end of his second term in the Senate after previously serving as Governor. At the 1856 convention, he was also the leading candidate, but withdrew after his long-time advisor, Thurlow Weed, convinced him that no Republican could beat Buchanan that year.

An emerging challenger to Seward is Abraham Lincoln, a contender for the Vice-Presidential candidacy in 1856, whose 1858 debates with Stephen Douglas for a Senate seat in Illinois have thrust him into the national spotlight. Lincoln enters the convention as a logical “second choice” across many different delegations.

Three other men enjoy support at a more confined, regional level.

In the crucial swing state of Pennsylvania the nod goes to sitting Senator Simon Cameron. Prior to entering politics, he becomes a wealthy businessman, first as a printer, then a railroad builder and finally a banker.

Salmon Chase is known initially for his distinguished career as a lawyer in Cincinnati, and then for playing a crucial role in founding the Liberty Party in 1843, the Free Soil Party in 1848, and the Republican Party in 1854. He has been twice elected as Governor of Ohio, retiring from that office in January 1860.

Lastly there is the conservative ex-Whig, Edward Bates, another accomplished lawyer, whose involvement in Missouri politics dates back to 1822, and who is touted at the convention by two king-makers, Francis Preston Blair Sr. and Horace Greeley.

Eight other men will gain minor support on the first ballot, but most qualify merely as “favorite sons.”

Date: May 17, 1860

Reservations Exist For Each Contender

Henry Seward and his campaign manager, Thurlow Weed, arrive in Chicago confident of victory. For well over a decade he has been in the national spotlight, opposing the leading Democrats in Congress and championing the ban on extending slavery to the new territories.

Despite this, many delegates are concerned about his ability to carry the lower North states, from Pennsylvania through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, where their mid-to-southern districts still retain some conservative and even pro-slavery sentiments. Two convention attendees who damage Seward’s chances are Andrew Curtin, about to run for Governor of Pennsylvania, and Henry Lane, doing the same in Indiana. Both spread their fear of losing should Seward head the ticket in their states.

For these men, and others, Seward is considered “too radical” for their constituents. Conservative Whigs remain shocked by his March 1850 speech opposing slavery based on a “higher law” than the Constitution. Likewise his October 1858 “irrepressible conflict” address seems to dismiss all hope that the break-up of the Union might yet be avoided.

For Horace Greeley -- who appears to favor his fellow New Yorker while secretly behind Bates – Seward is the symbol of unbridled Anti-Slavery fervor that is out of touch with the majority of white voters. If he wins the nomination, the door will be left open for Democratic attacks on the “Black Republicans” as wild-eyed abolitionists, supporting negro suffrage and outrages like racial inter-marriage – the kind of opprobrium Douglas hurled at Lincoln in their 1858 debates.

Aside from Seward, the other candidates also have their vulnerabilities.

Simon Cameron is accused of shady financial practices throughout his business career, and for relying on machine politics and the spoils system while in office. His support is also thin outside of his home state of Pennsylvania.

Salmon Chase is considered more radical than Seward on the issue of slavery, and is not even certain of carrying Ohio in the general election. He possesses a brilliant legal mind and is an astute political strategist, but his manner is decidedly grave and lacking in personal wit and charm.

Edward Bates is another dour individual who suffers from extensive “baggage” despite endorsements from Blair Sr. and Greeley. He grows up on a slave plantation in Virginia; lives in the slave state of

Missouri; and may or may not be willing to argue strongly on behalf of banning slavery in the territories. He never officially joins the Republican Party and his momentary membership with the Know Nothings alienates its German immigrant wing.

Finally there is Abraham Lincoln, a fresh face for a still fresh Party. But he is also an outsider to Washington politics, with only a one lackluster term in the House some twelve years ago, and back to back losses in 1854 and 1858 for a Senate seat from Illinois.

As he enters the field, Lincoln is not a dark horse, but every bit a long shot.

Date: Summer-Fall 1860

Lincoln's Campaign Begins Well In Advance



David Davis (1815-1886)

Lincoln's genius as a politician is on display as he carefully positions himself to defeat Seward and win the 1860 nomination.

He has always had an easy-to-like personality, marked by a witty and self-deprecating sense of humor and an open manner that appeals to both the humble and the high and mighty. This earns him the sobriquet as "Honest Abe," a valuable distinction within the less than trustworthy political class.

He has also proven again and again that his intellectual capacity far exceeds expectations, given his lack of formal education, his gangly appearance and dress, and his high pitched Kentucky twang. Anticipating relatively little, his audiences -- be they trial juries or potential voters -- are startled by his razor sharp mind and his capacity to simplify the complex and state his arguments with pristine logic and touching emotional pleas. As a speaker, Lincoln is able to pack more powerful thoughts into fewer words than any of his contemporaries.

He arrives at the convention on the wings of three magnificent speeches – at Peoria in 1854 attacking the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Springfield in 1858 warning of a "house divided," and ten weeks earlier at Cooper Union in New York, demanding an end to the spread of slavery. These speeches, along with his ability to hold his own against Stephen Douglas in the 1858 debates, have made him into a credible contender in Chicago.

But still he is still less well known than Seward and less plugged into the national party hierarchy than all four of his main competitors. He writes on March 24, 1860:

My name is new in the field; and I suppose I am not the first choice of a very great many. Our policy, then, is to give no offence to others—leave them in a mood to come to us, if they shall be compelled to give up their first love.

Instead of waiting for the delegates to come to him, he assembles his campaign team and goes on the offensive.

His supporters (see below) are drawn from different phases in his past. Many of them (Speed, Herndon, Logan, Browning, Oglesby, Koerner) share his ties to Kentucky. All have emigrated to Illinois, typically in the 1830's, often to practice law and to participate in the state legislature. Their home bases vary, with some (Davis, Swett, Fell and Hatch) in Bloomington, others (Speed, Herndon, Logan, Dubois) in Springfield, Norman Judd in Chicago, Oglesby in Quincy, Gillespie in Galena, Koerner in Belleville, and Lamon in Danville. Most are contemporaries of Lincoln, within five years of his age, at fifty-one. A few are younger: his legal protégé, "Billy" Herndon (41), Leonard Swett and Richard Oglesby (both 35), and "Hill" Lamon (32). His most intimate, long-term friend is Joshua Speed, with whom he shared an apartment in 1837 upon his arrival in the state capital. Some are firmly in his camp from their first encounter; others, like Judd, Dubois and Browning, have occasion to waver in their support or affection.

The first campaign moves occur well before the convention. To broaden his name recognition and establish his core ideas, with the delegates and public alike, Lincoln publishes a popular 258 page book that recaps his debates with Douglas. He then adds an autobiography focusing on his personal history.

His chances improve markedly when Norman Judd convinces other members of the Republican National Committee to hold the nominating convention in Chicago rather than back east again in Philadelphia. This insures that large crowds of Lincoln supporters will attend the event, and that the local press will impress delegates with a barrage of editorials for their favorite son.

One week before the *Wigwam* event opens, he adds another victory at the Republican Party's state convention in Decatur. David Davis, Jesse Fell, Norman Judd and his other key strategists have set their sights on securing unanimous support for Lincoln among the Illinois delegation, especially since other contenders, like Cameron and Chase, are plagued by internal schisms. To help with this outcome, the youthful Decatur-based politician, Richard Oglesby, decides that Lincoln would benefit from a more dynamic and forceful image than simply "Honest Abe." The result is a new moniker, Lincoln as the "Rail Splitter," shirt-sleeves rolled up, wielding an ax, getting the necessary tasks accomplished swiftly and decisively. The candidate is said to burnish this vision of physical labor by quipping that, given ten hours to fell a tree, he would spend the first nine sharpening his ax. The Decatur delegates love Oglesby's sell, and Lincoln walks away with the unanimity he sought.

At the same time his confidence is bolstered by reassurances, especially from Jesse Fell, that beating Seward and Chase is within reach if he plays his cards right. The first step, according to his floor captain, Judge David Davis, will be to register 100 votes on the first ballot, and then try to scoop up support from those who defect as the voting wears on.

Sidebar: Early Friends And Supporters Of Lincoln



Here are the men who help carry Lincoln to the Republican nomination in 1860.

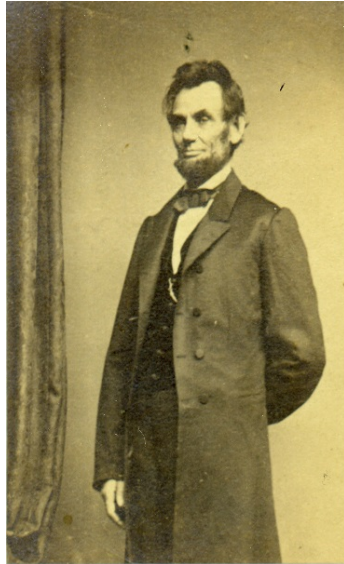
Richard Oglesby (1824-1899)

Name	Age	Profile
David Davis	45	Ohio, Kenyon College, Yale Law, to Bloomington '35 as lawyer, IL House '45, '48-62 Judge of 8 th circuit in IL, a registered Independent, delegate and lead floor manager for AL in Chicago, often competitive with Judd, later US Supreme Ct '62.
Norman Judd	45	New York, bar and move to Chicago in '36, law practice, city attorney '36-39, state Senate '44-60, initially anti-Nebraska Democrat, supports Trumbull over Lincoln for Senate '54, breaks with Douglas over KN Act, then advisor to AL, helps with Douglas debates, Chair of Republican Party in IL, gets national committee to select Chicago site, nominates AL.
Orville Browning	54	Kentucky, Augusta College, passes bar and to Quincy IL in '31, Blackhawk War, conservative Whig politics, serves terms in state legislature, another intimate friend despite some jealousy, also one of few who get on well with Mary L over time, US Senate '61-63.
Joshua Speed	45	Kentucky plantation with slaves, to Springfield in '35, runs general store, rents room to AL in '37, considered his best friend, disagree on slavery but acts as constant sounding board, his brother James becomes Attorney General in '64.
Leonard Swett	35	Maine, attends Colby College, into Mexican War, Bloomington IL as lawyer, rides circuit with AL, fails in bids for US House and Governor, but enter IL legislature in '58, helps bring Seward into the eventual cabinet.
Richard Oglesby	35	Kentucky, orphaned, to Decatur IL in '32, combat in Mexican War, Louisville Law School, gold rush, back to IL in '51, helps found Republican Party there, IL legislature in '60, creates "Rail Splitter" imagery to promote AL at the convention.

Stephen Logan	60	Kentucky, bar, to Springfield '32 and meets AL, Circuit court judge, mentors AL, Logan & Lincoln law firm '41-43, dissolved when his son joins firm, prickly personality, four terms in state legislature but lost for higher slots, floor manager for AL try to defeat Shields for Senate '55.
Jesse Fell	52	Pennsylvania Quaker, studies for bar in Ohio, to Bloomington IL in '31, diverse career in law, newspapers, education, land development, AL friend since '34, urges him to debate Douglas, especially close to Davis, tells AL he can defeat Seward and Chase, advisor on cabinet picks.
Jesse Dubois	49	IL native, wealthy family, Indiana College, four terms in state legislature '34 on, moves to Springfield in house near AL, family friends in the '50's, helps form Republican Party in IL at '56 Bloomington Convention, State Auditor '57-64, teams with Davis at Chicago to help win nomination, but bitter at the end when AL refuses his pleas for patronage jobs.
William Herndon	41	Kentucky, in Sangamon County '21, works at father's tavern in Springfield, one year at Illinois College, clerk at Joshua Speed's store, apprentice lawyer at Logan & Lincoln firm '40, bar in '44 then Lincoln & Herndon '44-65, "Billy" as surrogate son, Whig and Republican ties, not a confidante like Speed, but ever loyal.
Ward Hill Lamon	32	Virginia to Danville, IL, bar '53, state prosecutor, pro-South & anti-abolition, "fixer" role at convention and "extra tickets" to pack the hall, then bodyguard and US Marshal for DC per AL appointment. Called "Hill" Lamon. At Ford's Theater in '65.
Joseph Gillespie	50	NYC, to Galena IL in '27, Blackhawk War, Transylvania Law School, state House as Whig in '40 where befriends AL, state Senate '46-58, law practice including IC railroad, momentarily a Know-Nothing but then helps found Republican Party in IL in 1856 at Bloomington Convention.
Ozias Hatch	46	New Hampshire, to Pike County IL in '36, runs general store, on circuit court then state House '51-53, at Bloomington to help found Republican Party, IL Secretary of State '56-64 serving in Springfield, his office the "center of IL politics" at the time.
Gustav Koerner	50	Born in Frankfurt, Germany, JD from Heidelberg U, accused of treason as a revolutionary and flees to US in '33, in Kentucky at Transylvania College, meets Mary Todd, to Belleville, IL in James Shield's law firm, co-counsel with AL on some cases, into state legislature '42, IL Supreme Court '45-48, Lt Governor '53-57, switches from Democrat to Republican over anti-slavery. Important link into foreign immigrant groups.

Date: May 17, 1860

Lincoln Wins The Nomination On The Third Ballot



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

The day before the convention opens, local editor, Joseph Medill, pitches in with an oversized headline -- “The Winning Man: Abraham Lincoln” -- in his *Chicago Press and Tribune*.

“Hill” Lamon and Davis also link up to rig the make-up of the 10,000 plus attendees on May 17, when the polling actually begins. Seating in the hall is “first come, first served” and requires a valid entry ticket. Lamon locates a printer who counterfeits “extra tickets” and then completes an early run by Illinois groups to pack the hall and dominate the cheering on behalf of Lincoln.

In addition to Davis and Judd, two other hand-picked delegates-at-large, Orville Browning and Gustav Koerner, also play their roles on the floor. Browning is there to reassure conservative Whigs that Lincoln is more moderate and balanced than the “radical” Seward on the slavery issues. The German-born Koerner signals that Abe is not tied to the anti-immigrant Know Nothing faction within the party.

After the nominating speeches are completed -- with Norman Judd offering Lincoln’s name -- the first round of balloting begins. At this point, Seward’s manager, Thurlow Weed, remains confident of victory, and plans to recruit Lincoln for the Vice-Presidential slot, to help carry Illinois. He informs the delegation of this intent, and also volunteers a \$100,000 payment to the Illinois Republican Party in exchange for their support of Seward.

But when the first ballot ends, Seward comes up well short of the 233 vote majority needed to win -- while Lincoln squeaks past the 100 vote target set by Davis and Judd.

This opens up the potential for second ballot defections, and these prove fatal to Cameron, who drops from 50 votes down to two. The clear benefactor here is Lincoln, which sparks talk that the Lincoln men have bought off the Pennsylvanian with a promised Cabinet post. Honest Abe’s instructions to Davis in this regard have been loud and clear: “make no contracts that will bind me.” Despite this, the fact that Cameron ends up as Secretary of War, suggests that Davis may have done what he thought necessary at the moment.

On the second ballot, Seward actually adds eleven votes, but his lead over Lincoln shrinks to 184.5 -- 181, and the momentum is clearly in favor of the challenger.

All of the stops come out as the roll is about to be called a third time. Leonard Swett works the Maine and New England delegates and Browning does the same with the Bates supporters in Missouri. When a sizable group of Ohioans swing to Lincoln, he is within 1.5 votes of victory on the third ballot, before a few “revisions” are called in that put him over the top. Seward’s men then gracefully call for unanimous consent to the sound of cheers throughout the hall.

Republican Party Presidential Nomination Results

Candidates	State	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	3 rd Rev
Henry Seward	NY	173.5	184.5	180	111.5
Abraham Lincoln	IL	102	181	231.5	349
Simon Cameron	Pa	50.5	2	0	0
Salmon Chase	Oh	49	42.5	24.5	2
Edward Bates	MO	48	35	22	0
William Dayton	NJ	14	10	1	1
John McLean	Oh	12	8	5	0.5
Jacob Collamer	Vt	10	0	-	-
Benjamin Wade	Oh	3	0	-	-
John Read	Pa	1	0	-	-
Charles Sumner	Mass	1	0	-	-
John C. Fremont	Cal	1	0	-	-
Cassius Clay	Ky	0	2	1	1
Total		465	465	465	465
Needed To Win		233	233	233	233

Once the westerner Lincoln is chosen, the convention looks to optimally balancing the ticket and plugging potential vulnerabilities. Pennsylvania remains a concern, and two men, garner support: John Hickman, an ex-Democrat currently serving his third term in the U.S. House, and Andrew Reeder, who returns to the state after his troubled stint as the first Territorial Governor of Kansas. Three anti-slavery men living in Slave States are also considered: the Kentucky abolitionist, Cassius Clay; Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, a Know-Nothing; and the 67 year old sitting Governor of Texas, Sam Houston. Finally there are the northeasterners: Senator Hannibal Hamlin, an ex-Democrat, from Maine; Massachusetts Governor Nathaniel Banks; and the Attorney General of New Jersey, William Dayton, who ran as VP with Fremont in the 1856 race.

While two ballots are required, adding an easterner wins out, and Hannibal Hamlin joins the ticket. He and Lincoln will meet face to face for the first time on November 21, 1860, two weeks after the general election.

Vice-Presidential Nomination Results

Candidates	State	1 st	2 nd
Hannibal Hamlin	Maine	194	367
Cassius Clay	Ky	100.5	86
John Hickman	Pa	57	13
Andrew Reeder	Kansas	51	0
Nathaniel Banks	Mass	38.5	0
Henry Davis	Md	8	0
Sam Houston	Texas	6	0
William Dayton	NJ	3	0
Total		458	466
Needed To Win		233	234

Chapter 288 – The Reconvening Democrats Nominate Two Separate Tickets



Dates:
June 11 – June 23,
1860

- Sections:**
- Dissenters From The First Democratic Convention Meet To Plot Strategy
 - The Second Democratic Convention Opens With A Fight Over Seating Credentials
 - The Break-away Southern Democrats Nominate John Breckinridge
 - The Nominating Conventions Are Now At An End

Date: June 11, 1860

Dissenters From The First Democratic Convention Meet To Plot Strategy

Seven weeks pass between the collapse of the Democratic Convention at Charleston and the party's follow-up effort scheduled to open June 18, 1860 in Baltimore.

The interim is spent searching for any form of compromise between the largely Northern faction backing Stephen Douglas and popular sovereignty, and delegates from the seven Southern states who bolted after their platform demand for a Congressional bill protecting slavery was defeated.

On June 11, before the second convention, an informal meeting is held in Richmond to settle on a unified strategy among the bolter states: Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Texas and Delaware.

The debate is between those who would immediately form a separate party to protect the interests of the slave states and those who wish to retain their long-standing identity as Democrats.

The separatists involved are well known by this time, especially William Yancey of Alabama and John Slidell of Louisiana. Their message to the potential delegates is well summed up in an editorial written by R.B. Rhett, Jr. in the *Charleston Mercury*:

The Democratic Party, as a party based on principles, is dead. It exists now only as a powerful faction. It has not one single principle common to its members North and South.

But others at the meeting hear the voice of men like Georgia's Alexander Stephens, who urges a more cautionary wait and see stance, and this is what prevails. Rather than staying away, the delegates will head to Baltimore and measure the reception they get – one litmus test being whether or not the delegate credentials they carried in Charleston are honored again in Baltimore.

Date: June 18-23, 1860

The Second Democratic Convention Opens With A Fight Over Seating Credentials

The official Democratic convention opens on June 18 at the Front Street Theater in Baltimore, a two story brick structure sporting a stage and balcony, built in 1829 to house cultural performances.

While Caleb Cushing, the “doughface” politician from Massachusetts, continues to serve as President, supporters of Stephen Douglas are firmly in charge of the event. His headquarters are set up at the nearby home of Reverdy Johnson, the prominent Maryland Democrat, and his floor manager is again William Richardson of Illinois, a long-time partner in driving legislation through Congress. The Little Giant is confident of a victory:

All we have to do is to stand by the delegates appointed by the people in the seceding states in place of the disunionists.

The atmosphere, however, is tense by the time the first session is called to order at 10am. Even the benediction, spoken by the Reverend John Macron, is a plea for restraint amidst the “rising tempest of sectional discord.”

As the waters of the political deep are agitated by the rising tempest of sectional discord, give the spirit of a large and liberal forbearance to everyone that “peace may be within our walls and prosperity within our palaces.

The immediate source of stress is a battle over seating credentials that soon focuses on delegates from Alabama, Louisiana and Georgia in particular. This pairs attendees who had walked out in Charleston against “new slates” recently chosen in state conventions that favor Douglas.

For three solid days the Credentials Committee searches for an accommodation that satisfies both sides.

As this drags on, Douglas sends a rather astonishing letter to Richardson, offering to withdraw his name if those present think it will restore party unity:

I learn there is eminent danger that the Democratic Party will be demoralized if not destroyed by the breaking up of the convention...If therefore you and any other friends...shall be of the opinion that...the Democratic Party (could be) maintained, and the country saved from the perils of Northern abolitionism and Southern disunion by withdrawing my name...I beseech you to pursue that course.

Richardson pockets the letter, although inquiries go to the New York delegation to see if they have an option to Douglas who might restore order. The Georgia Unionist, Alexander Stephens, is mentioned, but even he is considered too soft on guaranteeing slaveholder rights for Yancey, Slidell and other fire-eaters.

On June 21, the fourth day of the convention, the Credentials Committee issues its majority report calling for:

- *Re-admitting original delegates from Texas and Mississippi plus some from Arkansas and Delaware;*
- *Declining those from Alabama and Louisiana in favor of newly elected (Douglas) alternates; and*
- *Accepting and equal mix of old and new delegates from Georgia, with each given 0.5 votes.*

This motion passes by a 150.5-100 margin on June 22, but with a proviso from New York, allowing for members to consider a possible response from those who have been excluded.

Date: June 23, 1860

Douglas Wins The Nomination After Fifteen States Exit The Convention



Herschel V. Johnson (1812-1880)

Rejection of the original Charleston delegates sparks a Southern states walk-out that signals the death knell for the Democratic Party coalition that will persist for the next twenty-five years.

Within hours, the initial nine “bolters” are joined by attendees from Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Maryland, along with those from California and Oregon. They will be joined by Kentucky the following day.

Of the original 303 delegates to be seated, a total of roughly 108 leave the hall.

What follows is a mad dash to complete the nominating process and close the event.

Despite the obvious fact that Douglas will win, six other names are offered up almost out of spite. What follows is another humiliation after he tallies 173.5 votes on the first ballot only to encounter the “convention rule” requiring the winner to get 2/3rds of the original delegate count (i.e. 202) – now a mathematical impossibility.

A motion to re-set the standard at 2/3rds of the votes cast leads to a victory for Douglas on the second roll call.

Presidential Nomination Results

Candidates	State	1 st	2 nd
Stephen Douglas	IL	173.5	181.5
James Guthrie	Ky	9	5.5
John Breckinridge	Ky	5	7.5
Horatio Seymour	NY	1	0
Thomas Boccock	Va	1	0
Daniel Dickinson	NY	0.5	0
Henry Wise	Va	0.5	0
Total		190.5	194.5
Needed To Win		202	130

Dysfunction continues with the selection of a running mate. Douglas signals his interest in Alexander Stephens, but his managers insist that any remaining hope for unity rests with allowing the remaining Southern delegates to select their favorite. Their fury toward William Yancey of Alabama leads them to choose Benjamin Fitzpatrick, the 57 year old ex-Governor of the state, and now one of its sitting U.S. Senators.

But Fitzpatrick neither supports Douglas' commitment to popular sovereignty nor wants to risk his own public support in Alabama, and he quickly turns down the nomination. He is replaced by Herschel V. Johnson, a planter and slave-holder, who has formerly served as Governor and Senator from Georgia. While Johnson will eventually serve in the CSA Senate, in 1860 he is still hoping to avoid secession.

The closing business at Baltimore involves platform support for Douglas' fall-back position trying to square his popular sovereignty with the *Dred Scott* – namely that the final say on slavery in the new Territories will rest with the U.S. Supreme Court.

A twenty-five man National Committee is also named to oversee the upcoming campaign. It is headed by August Belmont, born in Germany and educated in Jewish schools, before coming to New York in 1837 to support the Rothschild Company during the financial panic that year. Belmont proves his worth throughout the race and continues to serve as Chairman of the Party for the next twelve years. He will also be remembered for his horse racing passion, as founder of The Belmont Stakes.

On the evening of June 23, a somber Stephen Douglas meets with supporters at a railway station in Washington, telling them that:

Secession from the Democratic Party means secession from the federal Union.

Events will prove him right on that assessment.

Date: June 23, 1860

The Break-away Southern Democrats Nominate John Breckinridge



John C. Breckinridge (1821-1875)

Unlike the “wait and see” tactic they followed back in Charleston, the “Bolter” states decide that a permanent split with the Northern Democrats is now unavoidable.

On the same day that Douglas is nominated, they re-group at the Maryland Institute Hall to pick their own ticket and settle on their demands regarding slavery. They number over 100 delegates, coming from the 15 slave states plus Oregon, California and a few members from New York and Massachusetts. The latter includes Caleb Cushing who shifts from presiding over the original convention to do the same for the Southerners.

By in large the majority remain opposed at this point to leaving the federal Union. But they know that their future economic well-being rests on extending slavery to the west, and their platform remains unchanged from the minority report which was voted down at Charleston.

It calls upon Congress to pass a law protecting the rights of slave-owners and their “property” in the territories.

Two candidates are nominated for President: America’s current Vice-President, John Breckinridge, from Kentucky, and Daniel Dickinson, the ex-Senator from New York. Both men are letter-of-the-law Constitutional conservatives.

Breckinridge prevails on the first ballot.

Nomination Results: Southern Democrats

Candidates	State	1 st
John Breckinridge	Ky	81
Daniel Dickinson	NY	24
Total		105
Needed To Win		70

Joseph Lane, the pro-slavery Senator from Oregon, is chosen as Vice-President.

The convention is about to end when the Alabama fire-eater, William Yancey, grabs the floor and delivers what is generally seen as an “unhelpful tirade” on behalf of secession.

Still the drama continues after the session ends.

When Breckinridge learns of the nomination, he says that he intends to reject it, on the grounds that it will only guarantee the election to Abraham Lincoln. This holds until he meets with Jefferson Davis, who

posits the only way out for the South. That would be an agreement between Lincoln's three opponents – Breckinridge, Douglas and John Bell – to all withdraw their names, and unify behind a single anti-Republican candidate, to be chosen later.

Davis argues that this single opponent should be able to either defeat Lincoln outright or, at least, deny him the needed majority in the Electoral College, and throw the election back into the House. Once there, the South would indeed have a chance, given that each state would be given one vote to cast and a simple majority would be needed to win.

Even though the existing split in the House is 15 Slave States versus 18 Free States, several states (e.g. California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, even New York) just might reject Lincoln, giving his opponent a chance at victory.

But Stephen Douglas refuses to go along, believing that many of his voters would simply switch to Lincoln over either a Southern slave owner (e.g. Stephens) or another Northern doughface like Buchanan (e.g. Dickinson or even Cushing).

With the “all drop-out” notion gone, Breckinridge finally agrees to stay in and represent his region.

Sidebar: The Politician Warrior John Breckinridge



General John C. Breckinridge (1821-1875)

John Breckinridge is a loyal defender of slavery, but by no means a member of the Fire-eater class of Southerners who lobby for years on behalf of secession.

He models himself after two moderate political giants from Kentucky, the Whig, Henry Clay, and the Democrat, John J. Crittenden. His friendships extend in many directions, including Abraham Lincoln and his distant cousin, Mary Todd Lincoln.

He becomes Vice-President of the United States at 35 years old, after passing the bar in 1841, entering politics to campaign for James Polk in 1844, and serving as Major of the 3rd Kentucky Regiment, which arrives in Mexico City after the combat has ended. It is said that his eulogy on behalf of Henry Clay, Jr., killed at Buena Vista in February 1847, brings tears to the father's eyes.

Breckinridge is forever cautious about “waiting his turn” when it comes to politics, but he finally runs, and is elected to the US House in 1851 and again in 1853 as a Democrat. When Clay himself dies in 1852, he delivers another moving memorial in Congress. During that year, he stumps for Franklin Pierce, who twice offers him government positions he turns down, first as Governor of the Washington Territory and later as Minister to Spain.

Given his subsequent break with Stephen Douglas, it is ironic that he supports his 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act and the principle of popular sovereignty, and almost fights a duel over it with one Francis Cutting, a fellow Democrat in the House.

The sharp rise of the Know-Nothing Party in Kentucky convinces Breckinridge to forego the race for a third term, and he returns to his Lexington law practice, along with promoting horse racing and breeding in the state. Soon enough, however, the 1856 events in “bloody Kansas” bring him back into the political arena and force him to take a more assertive stance on slavery.

While he owns a handful of slaves between 1849 and 1857, the Presbyterian church he attends condemns the practice, he defends “free blacks” in court, and supports “colonization.” But he is also a Southerner and a lawyer who is convinced that the 1787 Constitution guarantees slave holders the absolute right to take “their property” into the new Territories at least until statehood.

Again ironically, Breckinridge backs first Pierce and then Douglas, still a friend, for the 1856 nomination. Buchanan will never forgive him for this, but does agree to have him join the ticket as Vice-President, to help carry the South – including Kentucky, which the Democrats win for the first time since 1828.

His final split with Douglas occurs when the Illinois Senator refuses to support the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution. Breckinridge, like Clay and Crittenden, is committed to the sacred Union, and fears that Douglas's action will fatally divide the Democratic Party and the nation.

With the sectional chaos mounting, his Vice-Presidential duty of presiding over the Senate is completed “respectfully and impartially.” Fellow Kentuckians look to him next to fill a Senate seat of his own, after Crittenden retires, and he is nominated for that slot in late 1859. His acceptance speech on December 12, 1859 praises the *Dred Scott* ruling and attacks John Brown’s raid, but still opposes all talk of secession.

He deflects moves to nominate him for president at the Charleston Convention in May, but then agrees to run after the Democratic schism at Baltimore in June. In the fall he will win 18% of the popular vote and 72 Electoral votes, second only to Lincoln. Despite the loss, he greets Lincoln and Mary to DC and helps create the “Committee of Thirteen,” which fails to stop secession. On April 2, 1861 he pleads for peaceful reconciliation before the Kentucky General Assembly; ten days later the guns at Ft. Sumter issue in the Civil War.

Breckinridge now must choose between the Union and the Confederacy and he goes with the South, being appointed Brigadier General of the 1st Kentucky Regiment on November 2. Two of his sons enlist with him and two others fight for the USA. On December 4, 1860 he is expelled from the Senate seat he just won, declaring:

I exchange with proud satisfaction a term of six years in the Senate...for the musket of a soldier.

Thus begins a remarkable record as a Confederate army field commander. He leads his “Orphan Brigade” at Shiloh in April 1861, where he receives his first wound and is promoted to Major general. In early January 1863 he fights heroically at Stones River. He falls out with Braxton Bragg after summer 1863 battles at Vicksburg and Chickamauga, and goes east to join Lee’s troops, winning further fame at New Market in May 1864, being wounded again at Cold Harbor in June and being declared the “second Stonewall” for his dying days victories in the Shenandoah Valley. On January 19, 1865, Jefferson Davis names him Secretary of War, and his first act is to name Lee as General-in-Chief. By then, however, the cause is lost, and he urges Davis to end it.

This has been a magnificent epic. In God's name let it not terminate in farce.

Ten days after Lee surrenders on April 9, Lincoln is assassinated and Breckinridge mourns the loss: “Gentlemen, the South has lost its best friend.” In turn he flees to Cuba on June 11, then to Britain and back to Toronto in September 1865. On Christmas day 1868 President Johnson pardons all Confederates, and Breckinridge is back home in Lexington in March 1869, where he resumes his law practice. On March 17, 1875, he dies after surgery on his liver, damaged during the war – having packed an amazing life into only 54 years!

Date: Summer 1860

The Nominating Conventions Are Now At An End

Once the Southern “Bolters” settle on Breckinridge and Lane, four distinct tickets have been identified, and the search for a solution to the issue of slavery in the west is in the hands of the voting public.

Recap Of The Nominating Conventions In 1860

Party	Date	City	Ticket
Democrats	April 23-May 2	Charleston, SC	None
Constitutional Union	May 9	Baltimore, MD	John Bell & Edward Everett
Republican	May 16-18	Chicago, IL	Abraham Lincoln & Hannibal Hamlin
Southern “Bolters”	June 11	Richmond, Va	None
Democrats	June 18-23	Baltimore	Stephen Douglas & Hershel Johnson
Southern “Bolters”	June 23	Baltimore	John Breckinridge & Joseph Lane

Chapter 289 – The 1860 Campaign For President



Dates:
Fall 1860

Sections:

- The 1860 Race Is Unique In American History
- The Focus Is On The Northern States
- The Campaign Is Lively From Start to Finish
- Stephen Douglas Attempts To Forestall The Collapse Of The Union
- John Breckinridge Makes His One Speech During The Run-Up

Date: Fall of 1860

The 1860 Race Is Unique In American History

The 1860 campaign for President is unique in America’s history, and it sets the stage for the break-up of the Union which follows.

Never before has the country been confronted with more than three sizable political parties in a presidential race.

Historical # Of Parties Competing For President

Year	Parties
1832	Democrats + National Republicans + Nullifiers
1836	Democrats + Whigs
1840	Democrats + Whigs
1844	Democrats + Whigs + Liberty
1848	Democrats + Whigs + Free Soil
1852	Democrats + Whigs + Free Soil
1856	Democrats + Republicans + Know Nothings

In 1860, there are suddenly four separate political parties, each offering distinct platforms and reasonably credible candidates.

The Four Party Presidential Race Of 1860

Candidates	Party	Main Platform Promise
Abraham Lincoln	Republican	Ban slavery in the western Territories
Stephen Douglas	North Democrats	Rely on popular sovereignty to decide
John Breckinridge	South Democrats	Pass a Congressional Bill to protect slavery nationwide
John Bell	Constitutional Union	Seek a new compromise that preserves the Union

On top of that, this becomes the first election since James Monroe in 1820 where the outcome is almost a certainty before the first ballot is cast.

The man destined to be chosen is Abraham Lincoln, assuming he can simply carry nearly all of the 183 electoral votes available in the North, based on his, and the Republican's, opposition to the presence of slaves (or even "free blacks") in the new territories.

Allocation Of Electoral Vote In 1860

Section	#
North/Free States	183
South/Slave States	120
Total	303
Needed To Win	152

Of course this kind of regional clean sweep has never happened in the era of two or more competing parties.

Prior campaigns have always been waged on a national basis, at least by the major parties, and past Presidents have always been able to carry at least five Free States and five Slave States.

Free And Slave States Won In Prior Presidential Elections

Year	Winner	Total States	# States Won	# Free States	# Slave States
1828	Jackson	24	15	5	10
1832	Jackson	24	16	8	8
1836	Van Buren	26	15	8	7
1840	Harrison	26	19	14	5
1844	Polk	26	15	7	8
1848	Taylor	30	15	8	7
1852	Pierce	31	27	16	11
1856	Buchanan	31	19	5	14

But this pattern changes in 1860, and with devastating results.

Date: Fall of 1860

The Focus Is On The Northern States

Instead of a national election in 1860, the race comes down to two separate sectional contests:

- *In the North, a "stop Lincoln" effort to throw the election into the House of Representatives; and*
- *In the South, a largely irrelevant run-off between Breckinridge and Bell.*

The Republican strategy is to concentrate exclusively in the North, knowing that their platform banning slavery in the west will be rejected out of hand in the South -- and that trying to campaign there would be a waste of time and money.

While smart in the short-run, this strategy will negatively affect Lincoln when he enters office. At that point he will remain a total mystery to people across the South. They will never see that he is a Kentuckian by birth; a loyal protégé of the Great Compromiser, Henry Clay; not a radical abolitionist; an outspoken opponent of John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry; a strict believer in the Constitution and the inviolable right of the old South to maintain slavery; a friend of the powerful Georgian Democrat Alexander Stephens (later the Confederate Vice-President), and one who wishes intensely to maintain the sacred Union. All of this “missing information” will weaken Lincoln’s capacity to hold the nation together after he is elected.

Lincoln’s opponents meanwhile concentrate on stopping his steamroller across the North.

Early in the campaign, even his long-term adversary, Stephen Douglas, is convinced that he cannot derail Lincoln by himself. The result is a joint agreement between the Little Giant and the two Southern candidates to construct what are known as “fusion ballots” (see below for details). These are intended to allow Northern voters who oppose Lincoln to choose a “generic alternative” representing “electors” for Douglas or Breckinridge or Bell.

If the total ballots cast for the “fusion candidate” were to exceed those for Lincoln in a given state, the effect would be to deny him some or all of its electoral votes needed for a majority.

Representatives of Douglas, Breckinridge and Bell agree to construct these “fusion ballots” in three Northern states where they think Lincoln might be vulnerable: Pennsylvania (with 27 electoral votes), New Jersey (7 votes) and New York (35 votes).

In the end, this strategy succeeds only in the least important state, New Jersey, where the “fusion ballots” is chosen by 51.9% of the votes. Despite this outcome, four of the top seven vote counts for the “electors” listed belong to Lincoln, while the other three are for Douglas – thus giving Lincoln a 4-3 win in the electoral college.

Popular Votes For President In 1860 In “Fusion” States

States	Lincoln	“Fusion”	Other
New York	53.7%	46.3%	0.0%
Pennsylvania	56.3	37.5	6.2
New Jersey	48.1	51.9	0.0

Sidebar: Ballots And Voting In The 1860 Election

INSERT NEW PHOTO

It is not until the election of 1888 that Americans vote by going to a secure polling place, being handed a pre-printed ballot listing all candidates side by side for given federal or state offices, marking their choices in secret, and placing them in a locked ballot box.

Before that, the process is much more chaotic and prone to manipulations and even fraud.

Thus in 1860, each party is responsible for naming their slate of candidates, then printing up paper ballots, and distributing them to the public in newspapers (to be clipped out) or via “peddlers” who hand them out at the polling places. A voter would secure the ballot for their favored candidate, then enter the polling place and put this slip of paper in a box. “Poll judges,” often appointed by the party in power, are present to hopefully recognize local voters and to insure that only one ballot was cast per person.

A Newspaper Ballot For The 1860 Election In NY

Most of the ballots are constructed like the one shown above – with one set of candidates listed for President and Vice-President, and their “designated electors” shown below.

But the law also allows for so-called “fusion ballots,” often with a “generic” title such as “Opposition Parties.” These list a pre-set number of “electors” for each of the two or three candidates who have agreed to appear together on the same ballot. This was the case, for example, in the state of New Jersey, where all three of Lincoln’s opponents joined the “fusion” – in this case with Douglas naming three electors and Breckinridge and Bell listing two each.

The intent of this “fusion ballot” was to try to deny Lincoln the majority needed in a given state to win all of its electoral votes.

In 1860, this strategy failed in New York and Pennsylvania, while succeeding in New Jersey, where Lincoln won 48% versus 52% for the “Fusion” of Douglas, Breckinridge and Bell.

Still, four of the top seven vote-getters among the “electors” belonged to Lincoln, while the other three went for Douglas. Hence Lincoln still manages to squeak out a 4-3 victory in the final electoral college vote for New Jersey.

Date: Fall of 1860

The Campaign Is Lively From Start to Finish



One Of Lincoln's "Wide Awake" Supporters

The importance of the 1860 election is obvious to all, and 4 out of 5 citizens will eventually turn out to vote.

Three of the four candidates remain aloof from personal campaigning, thus conforming to the old dictate that "the office seeks out the man and not vice versa." The exception is Douglas, who stumps on his own behalf throughout much of the run-up period.

Surrogate speakers are the norm for Lincoln, Breckinridge and Bell, along with fiery editorials from the roughly 327 newspapers extant at the time, many propaganda machines for state and local party bosses.

Endorsements are also sought and gotten, perhaps most notably from Presidents Buchanan and Pierce, two doughfaces who back Breckinridge to little avail.

Armies of followers line up to promote their favorites and to have a rollicking good time in the process.

Lincoln's forces are the "Wide-Awakes," carrying oil lamps to light the way, wearing treated capes to prevent the inevitable dripping from staining their clothes. As they march they sing "Lincoln & Liberty Too" to the beat of "the old grey mare:"

*Old Abe Lincoln/Came out of the wilderness/Out of the wilderness/out of the wilderness,
Old Abe Lincoln/Came out of the wilderness/Down in Illinois.*

They personify the man himself as "Honest Old Abe – The people's choice" and "the Rail-Splitter of the West." Their parades are marked by six-foot spheres of cloth and tape which they roll down the streets shouting "The Republican ball is in motion." In more serious moments they offer slogans: "Vote Yourself A Farm" and "Protection for American Industry" and "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Home."

Predictably the Douglas backers cast themselves as "The Little Giants" and are eager to chant that "No Rail Splitter can split this Union" and "Popular Sovereignty/Let The People Rule."

In frivolous moments, the dour Bell supporters become "Bell Ringers" before they morph back into "Minute Men" and "Union Sentinels" touting Daniel Webster's line, "Liberty and Union, Now and Forever,"

The ever serious Breckinridge has his "National Democratic Volunteers" who proclaim "Our Rights, The Constitution and The Union" – while Douglas counters "Breckinridge may not be for dis-union, but all the dis-unionists are for Breckinridge!"

Date: Fall of 1860

Stephen Douglas Attempts To Forestall The Collapse Of The Union

The one man at the center of the actual campaigning turns out to be Stephen Douglas, who will work initially on his own behalf before dedicating his remaining energy to trying to save the Union.

Douglas is only 47 years old at the time, but will be dead within a year, the victim of lifelong health issues, excessive drinking and a typically brutal public appearance schedule in 1860 that saps his remaining strength.

He is stunned in June 1860 by the break-up of his beloved Democratic Party at Charleston, but undeterred in his drive to once again compete against his arch-rival Lincoln, this time for the presidency. By July he announces his strategy in a letter to one of his supporters:

No time must be lost and no effort spared... We must make the war boldly against the Northern abolitionists and the Southern Disunionists, and give no quarter to either. We should treat the Bell & Everett men friendly and cultivate good relations with them, for they are Union men...(but) we can have not partnership with the Bolters.

At the same time, he is every bit as deluded as Lincoln about the sense of alienation spreading across the South. In his own mind, Douglas believes that he has been a good friend of the South, going all the way back to his earlier days in Congress, rooming at the “F-Street mess” with pro-slavery men like the Missouri “ruffian,” David Atchison, James Mason and Robert M. T. Hunter of Virginia and Andrew Butler of South Carolina. His record of support includes the 1850 Compromise, the Kansas-Nebraska Act and his doctrine of popular sovereignty, the last ditch effort to combat the Republican effort to ban slavery in the western territories. Surely, he tells himself, these credits to the South should be enough to offset his refusal to go along with the bogus Lecompton Constitution in Kansas.

Within this frame of mind, he predicts in July that he will carry many Northern states along with seven in the South -- when in fact, he will end up with only Missouri and a few electors in New Jersey.

Douglas’ Election Forecast For The South As Of July 1860

Candidate	# Wins	States
Breckinridge	2	SC and perhaps Mississippi
Bell	6	Ky, Tenn, NC, Va, Md, Del
Douglas	7	MO, Ark, La, Tex, Ala, Ga, Fla.

He departs on July 14 from disappointing fund raising efforts in New York, to stump across New England, with appearances in Boston, Albany and his birthplace, Vermont. The responses are lukewarm, and by August the *New York Times* predicts that Lincoln is certain to win, and his reluctant running mate, the Georgian Herschel Johnson, tells him: “I have not much hope for the future.”

But with his usual tenacity, Douglas heads South, into Virginia. When asked in Norfolk whether the South would be justified in seceding immediately, were Lincoln elected, he offers an unequivocal “no.” In Petersburg he tells his audience:

I am not here on an electioneering tour. I am here to make a plea, an appeal for the invincibility of the Constitution and the perpetuation of the Union.

On August 30 in Raleigh, North Carolina, he adds:

I know of but one mode of preserving the Union. That is to fight against all disunionists...The only mistake we Democrats made was in tolerating disunionist sentiments in our bosoms so long.

The more bleak his presidential prospects become, the more he turns to what he sees as his duty as a patriot to stave off secession. In the same vein as his opposition to accepting the Lecompton Constitution, Douglas now places the well-being of the nation above his own political ambition.

In early September he is up North in Pennsylvania where a key battle is under way between the Democrats and Republicans for Governor. On September 11 he meets with Herschel Johnson in New York, who tells him that he is unlikely to win *any* Southern states, and that various “stop Lincoln” men, including Jefferson Davis, are asking all three current candidates to step aside in favor of one alternative who might unite the opposition. Douglas is shocked and dismayed by Johnson’s alarms, but again refuses to drop out – although he does authorize an effort to create “fusion ballots” in several states.

He barrels forward to the west, through Cleveland and Cincinnati to Indianapolis on September 28, and then to Louisville. Observers comment on his voice (a “spastic bark”), the lemons he squeezes into his mouth to continue to speak, and the overall wear and tear on his frame.

The only wonder is that his health does not give way under the trials and fatigue he is compelled to endure in order to meet demands.

After passing through Chicago, he is off to Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan. On October 9 he hears the devastating news from two early gubernatorial (October 9 polling) races. In the crucial state of Pennsylvania, Republican Andrew Curtin defeats Democrat Henry Foster by 53-47%, while in Indiana, the abolitionist Henry Lane bests the Democrat Thomas Hendricks by a 52-48% margin. This ends all remaining hope for Douglas. Lincoln will be the next President and all that’s left is to try to throw himself against the looming threat of secession. He writes:

Mr. Lincoln is the next President. We must try to save the Union. I will go South.

On October 19, 1860, just eighteen days before the election, Douglas begins another southern swing which will take him through Memphis to Huntsville, Nashville, and Chattanooga and, on October 29, Atlanta, where Alexander Stephens introduces him to an assembled crowd. November 2 brings him to Montgomery, soon to be the capital of the Confederacy, followed by Mobile on November 5, where he makes his final address. For the most part, Douglas is treated respectfully by the Bell supporters while being roundly denounced by the Breckinridge men. His message is the same to both:

I believe there is a conspiracy on foot to break up this Union. It is the duty of every good citizen to frustrate the scheme.

On November 6 he will monitor the election results from Mobile, with a friend who records that he seems “more hopeless than I had ever before seen him.”

But in many ways, the Little Giant’s courageous march into the South during the campaign is his finest hour, both as a politician and patriot.

Date: September 5, 1860

John Breckinridge Makes His One Speech During The Run-Up

Like the other three men in the race, Vice-President John Cabell Breckinridge declares that he is intensely committed to preserving the Union.

He makes this point in the one public speech he delivers during the campaign, at a rally on September 5, 1860 in Ashland, Kentucky. The talk rambles on for over three hours, with Breckinridge pausing at several intervals to ask the audience if they wish to hear more, the response being calls to continue.

He begins by asserting, properly, that he never sought to run for President, and is doing so only because “a particular individual” (Douglas) tried to foist a “pernicious doctrine” (popular sovereignty) on the delegates in Charleston and Baltimore.

I did not desire to be presented to the American people... (but) the most flagrant acts of injustice were perpetrated, for the purpose of forcing upon the Democratic organization a particular individual as the representative of a pernicious doctrine, which I shall be able to show is repugnant alike to reason and the Constitution.

He also runs to clear his name of false accusations that have been made – that he backed a pardon for John Brown, that he was a Know Nothing, that he opposed slavery like his famous preacher uncle Robert, that he favor emancipation. All wrong, he says, and goes on to define the core issue fueling the conflict.

It is contended, on one hand... that the citizens of the slaveholding States may remove to them with their slaves, and that the local legislature cannot rightfully exclude slavery while in the Territorial condition; but it is conceded that the people may establish or prohibit it when they come to exercise the power of a sovereign State. On the other hand, it is said that slavery, being in derogation of common right, can exist only by force of positive law; and it is denied that the Constitution furnishes this law for the Territories; and it is further claimed that the local legislature may establish or exclude it any time after the government is organized.

I did not hold the doctrine that a Territorial Legislature could exclude slave property from the Territory during the Territorial condition.... I held precisely the opposite,

The *Dred Scott* ruling should have ended the slavery debate, by defining slaves as “property” pure and simple, with no distinction versus other forms of property.

Between slave property and other property, no distinction exists; property in slaves is recognized by the Constitution of the United States,... I am content to stand upon these principles, thus announced by the Supreme Court of the Union. After this decision, we had arrived at a point where we might reasonably expect tranquillity and peace. The equality of rights of persons and property of all the States, in the common Territory, having been stamped by the seal of judicial authority, all good citizens might well acquiesce

Because the South will not give up their rights, they are being unfairly accused of being disunionists.

Because we will not bow down to a doctrine that deprives us of our rights, we are bolters, demagogues, secessionists, dis-unionists ! (Continued applause.)

Breckinridge asserts the two principles that capture his position on slavery in the territories:

I will read these two resolutions, and you can judge whether they accord with the Constitution, the decision of the Supreme Court, and the practice of the Government as I have shown it today :

- 1. Resolved, That the government of a Territory organized by an Act of Congress, is provisional and temporary, and during its existence all citizens of the United States have an equal right to settle with their property in the Territory, without their rights of either person or property being destroyed or impaired by Congressional or Territorial legislation.*
- 2. That it is the duty of the Federal Government in all its departments to protect, when necessary, the rights of persons and property in the territories, and wherever else its constitutional authority extends." These are two principles we avow*

He cites support for his views by the icon of Kentucky politics, the 73 year old Senator, John Crittenden, and assures the listeners that acting on them will produce fairness and harmony between the States.

I derive some satisfaction from the fact that the Hon. John J. Crittenden, has declared, by his speechies and votes in the Senate, that the principles upon which we stand are constitutional and true. (Cheers.) Fellow-citizens, these principles will give us peace and prosperity; they will preserve the equality and restore the harmony of the States. They will make every man feel that in his personal rights and rights of property he stands on a footing of equality in the domain common to all the States? (Cheers.) They have their root in the Constitution, and no party can be sectional which maintains constitutional principles.

But Republicans refuse to accept the Constitution – they reject the words declaring “slaves are property” and deny owners the right to transport them into the territories free of risk. If their views prevail, it will “destroy the Union.”

The Republican organization holds precisely opposite principles. They say we have no rights in the territories with our property. They say Congress has a right to exclude it, and it is its duty to do so... (Lincoln’s) principles are clearly unconstitutional, and if the Republican party should undertake to carry them out, they will destroy the Union.

After calling out a long list of opponents, he offers, interestingly, that he is “not ashamed” of his principles when it comes to slavery.

I am not ashamed of the principles upon which I stand. I am not ashamed of the reasons by which they are sustained. I am not ashamed of the friends that support me. I am not ashamed of the tone, bearing and character of our whole organization. (Applause. A voice — " The truth will prevail.")

On this note – that truth will prevail – he ends.

Yes, the truth will prevail. You may smother it for a time beneath the passion and prejudices of men, but those passions and prejudices will subside, and the truth will reappear as the rock re-appears above the receding tide. I believe this country will yet walk by the light of these principles.... People of Kentucky, you never abandoned a principle you believed to be right. You may be misled, but the stigma never rested on Kentucky that she abandoned principles she believed to be true. (Cries of, "We never will.")

For myself, conscious that my foot is planted on the rock of the Constitution — surrounded and sustained by friends I love and cherish — holding principles that have been in every form indorsed by my native commonwealth — with a spirit erect and unbroken I defy all calumny, and calmly await the triumph of the truth. (Prolonged applause.)

Chapter 290 – Lincoln Becomes America’s Fifteenth President



Dates:
November 6, 1860

- Sections:**
- Lincoln’s Sweep In The North Gives Him The Presidency
 - Republicans Also Pick Up Congressional Seats

Date: November 6, 1860

Lincoln’s Sweep In The North Gives Him The Presidency



Public interest in the 1860 election is high, as reflected in the 81% turn-out level.

Percent Of Eligibles Voting For President

	1840	1844	1848	1852	1856	1860
Turn-out	80%	79	73	70	79	81

As both expected and feared, November 6 offers up two elections in one: a Northern race pitting Lincoln against Douglas, and a Southern contest between Breckinridge and Bell. The result is that no candidate comes close to winning a majority – although Lincoln with his 39.8% share enjoys a sizable margin over the runner-up, Douglas.

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Percent Of The Popular Vote For Each Candidate

Lincoln	Douglas	Breckinridge	Bell	Total
39.8%	29.5%	18.1%	12.6%	100.0%

What gives Lincoln the presidency then is the sheer dominance of the Northern states in the Electoral College and the winner-take-all rules on a state by state basis. He takes every state up north with the

exception of New Jersey to rack up 180 electoral votes against the 152 needed to win. In the South, he is shut out entirely, without even appearing on many state ballots.

Full Results Of The 1860 Presidential Election

1856	Party	Pop Vote	Electoral	South	Border	North	West
Lincoln	Republican	1,865,908	180	0	0	173	7
Douglas	No. Democrat	1,380,202	12	0	9	3	0
Breckinridge	So. Democrat	848,019	72	61	11	0	0
Bell	Con. Union	590,901	39	15	24	0	0
Other		531					
Total		4,685,561	303	76	44	176	7
Need To Win			152				

The Republican campaign has concentrated on five Northern states that Buchanan carried in 1856, and is able to “flip” 59 of the 63 electoral votes there to Lincoln in 1860.

Key State “Flips” Between 1856 And 1860 Explaining Lincoln’s Victory

	Penn.	Indiana	Illinois	California	New Jersey	Total
Electoral Votes At Stake	27	13	11	4	7*	63
Popular Vote % To Win						
Buchanan in 1856	50%	50%	44%	48%	48%	
Lincoln in 1860	56%	51%	51%	32.3%	48%	
Nearest Rival	39(D)	42(D)	47(D)	31.7(D)	52(F)	

* In NJ Lincoln loses the popular vote (48/52%) to a “fusion ticket” of Douglas/Bell/Breckinridge, but still takes 4 of 7 electors.

Lincoln carries most Northern states with 54% or more of the popular votes. Douglas’ only outright win is in Missouri. Bell carries his home state of Tennessee, along with Kentucky and Virginia. Breckinridge is dominant across the Lower South.

State By State Results In The Presidential Election Of 1860

Lincoln By Majority	Electoral	Lincoln	Douglas	Breckinridge	Bell	“Fusion”
Vermont	5	75.8%	19.4%	4.2%	0.5%	
Minnesota	4	63.4	34.3	2.2	0.1	
Massachusetts	13	62.9	20.3	3.6	13.2	
Maine	8	62.2	29.4	6.3	2.0	
Rhode Island	4	61.4	38.6	0	0	
Connecticut	6	58.1	20.6	19.2	2.0	
Michigan	6	57.2	42.0	0.5	0.3	
New Hampshire	5	56.9	39.3	3.2	0.6	
Wisconsin	5	56.6	42.7	0.6	0.1	
Pennsylvania	27	56.3	3.5	0	2.7	37.5%
Iowa	4	54.6	43.2	0.8	1.4	
New York	35	53.7		0	0	46.3
Ohio	23	51.2	42.3	2.6	2.8	
Indiana	13	51.1	42.4	4.5	2.0	
Illinois	11	50.7	47.2	0.7	1.4	

Lincoln By Plurality						
Oregon	3	36.1	28.0	34.4	1.5	
California	4	32.3	31.7	28.4	7.6	
NJ Fusion	4	48.1				51.9
Total - Lincoln	180					
Breckinridge-Majority						
South Carolina	8			Leg pick		
Texas	4			75.5	24.5	
Florida	3		1.7	62.2	36.1	
Mississippi	7		4.7	59.0	36.3	
Alabama	9	0	15.1	54.0	30.9	
Arkansas	4		9.9	53.1	37.0	
North Carolina	10		2.8	50.5	46.7	
Breckinridge-Plurality						
Georgia	10		10.9	48.9	40.2	
Maryland	8	2.5	6.4	45.9	45.1	
Delaware	3	23.7	6.6	45.5	24.2	
Louisiana	6		15.1	44.9	40.0	
Total - Breckinridge	72					
Bell By Plurality						
Tennessee	12		7.7	44.6	47.7	
Virginia	15	1.1	9.8	44.5	44.6	
Kentucky	12	0.9	17.5	36.3	45.2	
Total - Bell	39					
Douglas By Plurality						
Missouri	9	10.3	35.5	18.9	35.3	
NJ Fusion	3	48.1				51.9
Total - Douglas	12					
Grand Total	303					
Needed To Win	152					

Date: November 6, 1860

Republicans Also Pick Up Congressional Seats

In the Senate, Democrats hold a one seat edge when the 37th Congress opens on March 4, 1861. But this margin will rapidly disappear, as a total of eleven Southern states secede, leaving their seats vacant and handing the majority over to the Republicans of the North.

Election Trends In The Senate

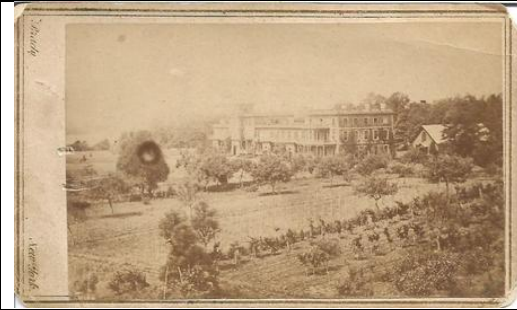
Party	1856	1858	1860
Democrats	37	38	30
Republicans	20	25	29
Whigs	3	2	0
Know Nothings	4	0	1
Vacant	1	0	8
Total	65	65	68

In the House, the Republicans extend their lead over the Democrats after massive vacancies occur across the South.

Election Trends In The House

Party	1856	1858	1860
Democrats	133	98	45
Republicans	90	116	108
Opp/Unionists	0	19	30
Know Nothings	14	5	0
Vacant	0	0	56
Total	237	238	239

Chapter 291 – The Proposed Republican Ban On Slavery Poses An Existential Threat To The South



Dates:
November
1860 Forward

Sections:

- The Republicans Think The South Is Bluffing Over Secession
- The Reality Is That A Ban On Expanding Slavery Will Devastate The Southern Economy

Date: Fall Of 1860

The Republicans Think The South Is Bluffing Over Secession

The Presidential election of 1860 will sound the death knell for the Union and for the 750,000 Americans who will eventually die during the course of the four year Civil War to follow.

To some extent this outcome results from a profound misunderstanding among Republican politicians about the Southern response to a Lincoln victory. The assumption is that the Slave Power will bluster about secession to try for concessions, but then back off in the end. The *New York Tribune* hypothesizes this outcome from the start:

The South could no more unite upon a scheme of secession than a company of lunatics could conspire to break out of bedlam.

Henry Seward agrees:

Who's afraid? Nobody's afraid. Nobody can be bought.

Lincoln himself shares the belief. He says so back in 1856:

All this talk about dissolution of the Union is humbug, nothing but Folly.

Four years later, after his nomination, his mind is unchanged:

The people of the South have too much of good sense, and good temper, to attempt the ruin of the government...At least so I hope and believe."

And he will continue this hope even after the election is won, in the famous closing passage of his Inaugural address:

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 battlefield 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.

What the Republicans fail to recognize is the devastating effects their ban on slavery in the west will have on the economic future of the entire South.

Date: Fall Of 1860

The Reality Is That A Ban On Expanding Slavery Will Devastate The Southern Economy



A Typical Southern Plantation

The belief that Northerners are a threat to their wealth is not new among the men of the South.

Early on the peril is the protective tariff on finished goods imported from the UK which suppresses the demand for their raw cotton exports. This comes to a head with the so-called 1828 Tariff of Abominations, with Senator John C. Calhoun and the state of South Carolina refusing to collect the duties at their ports. This action ends abruptly when President Andrew Jackson announces his intent to send federal troops to collect the payments.

A relative truce between the regions prevails until the Texas Annexation of 1845 and the Mexican War of 1846-7 opens up the prospect for new cotton plantations from the Mississippi River to California. What would clearly be a boom for the Southern economy is suddenly put on hold by Northern opponents of slavery. David Wilmot's 1846 Proviso seeks to cleanse the west of blacks for the benefit of free white settlers and the dignity of their labor, while the abolitionist reformers call for the end of slavery in its entirety.

Underlying this mounting tension is the fact that, unlike the North, the shift to a modern industrial economy never takes hold in the South. In 1860, for example, it accounts for only 14% of the nation’s manufacturing workers, 20% of the railroad tracks and 13% of the banks.

Location Of Manufacturing Workers

	1820	1840	1860
Northeast	62%	63%	69%
Northwest	7	14	17
Border	12	8	5
Southeast	16	11	5
Southwest	3	4	4
	100%	100%	100%

Meanwhile the North produces 17 times as many textiles as the South, 30 times the leather goods, 20 times the pig iron and 32 times the firearms.

The reason for these differences is simple. Between 1830 and 1860 the South continues to enjoy truly remarkable gains in wealth from its traditional sources of revenue: the sales of cotton and of “excess slaves.”

By 1860, there is no doubt as the South Carolinian John Henry Hammond says on the floor of the Senate, “Cotton is King!” The worldwide demand for the “white gold” has skyrocketed, with four-fold growth over the past three decades -- as have profits to the planters and others across the supply chain.

Trends In Cotton Sales, Prices And Value (millions)

Year	Lbs. Sold	Price/Lb	Total Value	Index
1830	306.8	\$9.68	\$ 297	100
1840	586.7	9.00	526	177
1850	933.5	10.49	957	322
1860	1,712.0	7.30	1,218	410

Ransom p.78

Along with this growth in sales of raw cotton comes increased demand for the South’s “other crop” – the slaves who work the fields. While the U.S. slave population is doubling between 1830 and 1860, the “selling price” is growing even more rapidly, especially for “prime” field hands.

Trends In The Slave Population And Their “Value”

Year	# Slaves	\$/ Slave	Total Value	Index
1830	2.0 mil.	\$273	\$ 548.5 mil	100
1840	2.5	377	937.6	182
1850	3.2	377	1,207.9	220
1860	4.0	778	3,076.2	561

Astonishingly, in 1860 the economic value of these slaves exceeds the invested value of all of the nation's railroads, factories, and banks combined!

The acceleration in the total “value” is particularly noteworthy between 1850 and 1860 and it mirrors the transport and sale of slaves from the South’s east coast states to new plantations starting up to the west.

The Westward Shift In The Slave Population

East Coast	1840	1860	# Ch	%Ch
Delaware	2.6	1.8	(0.8)	
Maryland	89.7	87.2	(2.5)	
Virginia	449.1	490.9	41.8	
North Carolina	245.8	331.1	85.3	
South Carolina	327.0	402.4	75.4	
Georgia	280.9	462.2	181.3	
Florida	0	61.7	61.7	
	1,395.1	1,837.3	442.2	31%
Inland				
Kentucky	182.2	225.5	43.3	
Tennessee	183.1	275.7	92.6	
Alabama	253.5	435.1	181.6	
Mississippi	195.2	436.6	241.4	
	814.0	1,372.9	558.9	69%
Trans Miss R				
Louisiana	168.4	331.7	163.3	
Missouri	58.2	114.9	56.7	
Arkansas	19.9	111.1	91.2	
Texas	0.0	182.6	182.6	
	246.5	440.2	193.7	79%

Through Southern eyes, the Republican's platform calling for a ban on slavery in the new territories is an existential threat to their entire economic future.

In downplaying these concerns – in calling them another “bluff” – the Republicans, including Lincoln, mistake the genuine desperation felt across the South.

The result will be a civil war.

Chapter 292 – Southern Anger Follows Lincoln’s Win Especially In South Carolina



Dates:
November 6-11, 1860

Sections:

- Reactions To The Election Materialize Quickly
- South Carolina Begins Its March Toward Secession
- Buchanan Turns To His Cabinet For Advice

Date: November 6, 1860

Reactions To The Election Materialize Quickly

Abraham Lincoln spends most of the election day at the Governor’s Room of the statehouse in Springfield.

Around 3pm he hears that the crowds have thinned out and goes out to cast his ballot after carefully removing his name from the top so as not to vote for himself.

He then heads over to the Illinois & Mississippi telegraph office to watch the returns come in along with messages from his supporters around the country. He stays until 1am when it is clear he has won not only nationally, but also in his own city of Springfield, long a Democratic stronghold. From there he is off home for a long night’s sleep.

The local supporters are far less restrained than the new President-elect. The city streets remain filled with revelers until 4am when a cannon sounds and the Wide Awakes break out once more in song:

*We’re the Lincoln boys!
We’re the Lincoln boys!
Ain’t you glad you joined the Republicans,
Joined the Republicans,
Ain’t you glad you joined the Republicans*

As news of the Republican’s victory circulates, responses reflect the deep divisions within the country.

Salmon Chase sees it as the culmination of his personal efforts to defeat the Democrats and the Slave Power.

The great object of my wishes & labors for nineteen years is accomplished in the overthrow of the Slave Power.

The poet and editor of the *New York Evening Post*, William Cullen Bryant forecasts the start of a new era.

At our feet, conquered, lies that great oligarchy which has so long held the South through submission and fear... A new era is now inaugurated, the old order of things has passed away, never, we hope, to return..

John Greenleaf Whittier reflects on the awesome burden that lies ahead.

Well God has laid the responsibility upon us! We must take it up and bear it.

From the South comes acrimony, none as strident as that from South Carolina. The *Charleston Mercury*, edited by the son of the fire-eater, R.B. Rhett, says the “revolution” has arrived.

The Southern States are now in the crisis of their fate, and...nothing is needed for our deliverance but that the ball of revolution be set in motion....The tea has been thrown overboard – the revolution of 1860 has been initiated.

This is seconded by Edmund Ruffin who has campaigned non-stop since John Brown’s raid on behalf of southern secession.

This...momentous...election will serve to show whether these southern states are to remain free, or to be politically enslaved – whether the institution of negro slavery on which the social and political existence of the south rests, is to be secured by our resistance, or...abolished in a short time, as the certain result of our present submission to northern domination.

South Carolina Senator James Chestnut joins in with a bellicose line that surprises many given his family’s staunch pro-Unionist history.

A line of enemies is closing us which must be broken...For myself, I would unfurl the Palmetto (flag)...determined to live or die as became our ancestors.

Date: November 5 – 11, 1860

South Carolina Begins Its March Toward Secession



James L. Petigru (1789-1863)

The first overt act of resistance to Lincoln’s election comes predictably in South Carolina, where three federal officials in Charleston -- Judge AG Magrath, District Attorney James Conner and Port Collector W.F. Colcock -- immediately resign from their posts, with the latter announcing:

I will not serve under the enemy of my country.

Governor William Gist follows with an order for 10,000 rifles from the U.S. Arsenal, routing it through a New York bank recommended by Secretary of War, John Floyd.

On November 9, the South Carolina legislature passes a bill calling for a state convention to consider secession – a move met with “hurrahs” from the public and parade ground displays by local militias.

Over the next two days, James Chestnut and James Henry Hammond resign their seats in the U.S. Senate.

About the only voice of moderation by this point belongs to 71 year old James L. Petigru, the ex-Attorney General of the state, who had opposed “nullification” and the possibility of secession back in the 1830’s. He says:

My own countrymen here in South Carolina are distempered to a degree that makes them to a calm and impartial observers real objects of pity. They believe anything that flatters their delusion or their vanity; and at the same time they are credulous to every whisper of suspicion about insurgence or incendiaries.

Date: November 9, 1860

Buchanan Turns To His Cabinet For Advice

South Carolina’s call for a convention alarms Buchanan and he holds an emergency meeting with his cabinet on November 9, 1860, to seek their advice.

James Buchanan’s Cabinet On November 9, 1860

Position	Name	Home State	In War
Secretary of State	Lewis Cass	Michigan	USA
Secretary of Treasury	Howell Cobb	Georgia	CSA
Secretary of War	John Floyd	Virginia	CSA
Attorney General	Jeremiah Black	Pennsylvania	USA
Secretary of Navy	Isaac Toucey	Connecticut	USA
Postmaster General	Joseph Holt	Kentucky	USA
Secretary of the Interior	Jacob Thompson	Mississippi	CSA

The most outspoken response comes from Attorney General Jeremiah Black, formerly a justice on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. While soon telling the President that the Constitution does not authorize the use of force against a seceding State, Black urges the deployment of troops to secure the federal forts in Charleston, and in doing so, send a signal to South Carolina to reject secession.

Black's view is supported by another Northerner, Secretary of State Lewis Cass, and by Postmaster Joseph Holt of Kentucky.

The other Southerners disagree. Their leader is Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb of Georgia, who is personally close to Buchanan and one who has long worked to avoid disunion. His message is that any attempt to alter the status quo with the Charleston forts will be taken by South Carolina as a federal provocation, and boost the odds of secession, not diminish them.

Cobb's views are seconded by John Floyd of Virginia and Jacob Thompson of Mississippi, and by the Connecticut man, Isaac Toucey, another Buchanan loyalist.

On the same day the President encounters this split in his cabinet, he also learns from Colonel J. L. Gardner, the 76 year old Mexican War hero in command of the Charleston forts, that an effort to transfer arms from the undermanned and vulnerable Ft. Moultrie to the security of Ft. Sumter has been turned back at the Charleston wharf.

With this news in his head, Buchanan turns his attention to crafting his fourth and final address to Congress on the State of the Union, scheduled for December 3, 1860. He already senses that events are spinning out of control, and intends to use the message to defend his time in office and to try to delay the growing crisis.

Chapter 293 – Major Robert Anderson Assumes Command In Charleston Harbor



Dates:
November 20-21,
1860

Sections:

- He Is Ordered To Defend The Federal Forts Without Provoking The Conflict

Date: November 20-21, 1860

He Is Ordered To Defend The Federal Forts Without Provoking The Conflict



Robert Anderson (1805-1871)

As the threat of hostilities amplifies in South Carolina, the burden falls on Secretary of War John Floyd to avoid bloodshed, at least until Buchanan's term expires. But Floyd is hardly up to this task. At 54 years old, his career has been in politics, reaching a pinnacle from 1849-52 as the Governor of Virginia, before being invited by Buchanan into the cabinet. He is an affable man, but lacks any military experience and is famous for his administrative sloppiness within the department.

On November 20, 1860, Floyd makes his first move, naming Major Robert Anderson to replace Colonel J. L. Gardner as commander in Charleston harbor over Castle Pinckney and forts Johnson, Moultrie and Sumter.

Anderson is a Southerner who hails from Louisville, Kentucky, graduates from West Point in 1825, and begins his active career in the Blackhawk War of 1832, where one of his recruits is Abraham Lincoln. He serves on General Winfield Scott's staff in the Second Seminole War of 1833 and gradually earns his Captain's bars by 1841. His next promotion, to Brevet Major, comes after he is severely wounded during the battle of Molino del Rey, during Scott's assault on Mexico City in 1847.

Robert Anderson is 54 years old and serving as Major of Artillery in 1860. While also a slave owner and close friend of Jefferson Davis, he devotes his life to military service and stays out of politics. When Floyd summons him to Washington, he stops off on his way for advice from General Scott, now residing in New York City.

Scott, at 74 years of age, remains the most famous soldier in America at the time. He is a Virginian who joins the U.S. Army as a Captain in 1808, fights heroically in all the nation's conflicts from the War of 1812 through the Mexican War of 1846-47. After his battlefield victories, the Whigs run him in the 1852 presidential election, but he is handily defeated by Franklin Pierce, a subordinate of his in the Mexico conflict. Scott then resumes his role as Commanding General of the U.S. Army, and in 1855, by a special act of Congress, he becomes the second 3-star Lieutenant General in history, after George Washington.


When Anderson visits, Scott tells him that Floyd is running the military while he is currently on the sidelines. Nevertheless, he is very familiar with the Charleston harbor sites, and predicts that the only sustainable fort will be Sumter. He encourages Anderson to concentrate there should the threats continue.

Anderson moves on to meet with Floyd, who warns him of the "delicate situation" he will be facing, and orders him to "avoid confrontation" with South Carolina officials and the state militia.

He arrives at Ft. Moultrie on November 21, 1860, and relies on his artillery acumen to assess the situation. He sees that all four forts are designed to defend against incoming attacks from the sea, and that three of them – Moultrie, Johnson and Castle Pinckney – are likely to fall easily if attacked behind, from inland.

As Scott indicated, only Ft. Sumter appears sustainable to Anderson, although he also recognizes that he is woefully undermanned, with less than 100 U.S. troops available to him, including musicians. Clearly if fighting breaks out, he knows that concentrating in Sumter and receiving reinforcements and supplies will be required to survive.

Chapter 294 – Buchanan Offers His Final State Of The Union Address

	Dates: December 3, 1860	Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buchanan Blames The “People Of The North” For Putting The Union At Risk• His Way Out Of The Dispute Lies In A Constitutional Amendment Validating Slavery• He Congratulates Himself On His Achievements In Office• He Makes One Final And Futile Attempt To Explain Kansas
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Date: December 3, 1860

Buchanan Blames The “People Of The North” For Putting The Union At Risk



On December 3, 1869, James Buchanan’s sends his fourth and final state of the union address to Congress. It arrives one month after Lincoln is elected and only seventeen days before South Carolina becomes the first state to secede from the Union.

The message is exceedingly long and self-congratulatory in nature. The implication being that he would be hailed as a great president were it not for the ongoing agitation over slavery issues he inherited.

He begins the address with a tone of contrived optimism, of “plenty smiles throughout the land.”

James Buchanan (1791-1868)

Throughout the year since our last meeting the country has been eminently prosperous in all its material interests. The general health has been excellent, our harvests have been abundant, and plenty smiles throughout the land. Our commerce and manufactures have been prosecuted with energy and industry, and have yielded fair and ample returns. In short, no nation in the tide of time has ever presented a spectacle of greater material prosperity than we have done until within a very recent period.

But why then, he asks, does discontent threaten the nation and the Union itself?

Why is it, then, that discontent now so extensively prevails, and the Union of the States, which is the source of all these blessings, is threatened with destruction?

Buchanan places the blame squarely on “the intemperate interference of the Northern people with the question of slavery.”

The long-continued and intemperate interference of the Northern people with the question of slavery in the Southern States has at length produced its natural effects. The different sections of the Union are now arrayed against each other, and the time has arrived, so much dreaded by the Father of his Country, when hostile geographical parties have been formed.

This interference has riled the slaves, upset the peaceful “family altar” on the plantations, and forced the South to band together on behalf of their own security.

It can not be denied that for five and twenty years the agitation at the North against slavery has been incessant....The immediate peril arises not so much from these causes as from the fact that the incessant and violent agitation of the slavery question throughout the North for the last quarter of a century has at length produced its malign influence on the slaves and inspired them with vague notions of freedom. Hence a sense of security no longer exists around the family altar.

How easy it would be to end the conflict if only the North would back off and allow the South to exercise its rights around slavery.

How easy would it 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.

Date: December 3, 1860

His Way Out Of The Dispute Lies In A Constitutional Amendment Validating Slavery

His shifts his attention to the remedies open to the South to protect their rights, one being secession. He argues that the election of Lincoln -- by a “mere plurality” and in the context of “temporary causes” – should not by itself be sufficient cause for the South to secede.

This brings me to observe that the election of any one of our fellow-citizens to the office of President does not of itself afford just cause for dissolving the Union. This is more especially true if his election has been effected by a mere plurality, and not a majority of the people, and has resulted from transient and temporary causes, which may probably never again occur.

Instead the South would be “justified in revolutionary resistance” only if Lincoln commits some “overt and dangerous act.”

Reason, justice, a regard for the Constitution, all require that we shall wait for some overt and dangerous act on the part of the President elect before resorting to such a remedy (secession)..But are we to presume in advance that he will thus violate his duty? This would be at war with every principle of justice and of Christian charity. Let us wait for the overt act...In that event the injured States, after having first used all peaceful and constitutional means to obtain redress, would be justified in revolutionary resistance to the Government of the Union.

But even then Buchanan finds no provision in the Constitution allowing a state to break free -- unless the other members in the contract agree to let that happen. As he says, the Union was “intended to be perpetual...and not to be annulled (by) any one of the contracting parties.”

In order to justify secession as a constitutional remedy, it must be on the principle that the Federal Government is a mere voluntary association of States, to be dissolved at pleasure by any one of the contracting parties. If this be so, the Confederacy is a rope of sand, to be penetrated and dissolved by the first adverse wave of public opinion in any of the States.... Such a principle is wholly inconsistent with the history as well as the character of the Federal Constitution.

The right of the people of a single State to absolve themselves at will and without the consent of the other States from their most solemn obligations, and hazard the liberties and happiness of the millions composing this Union, can not be acknowledged

It was intended to be perpetual, and not to be annulled at the pleasure of any one of the contracting parties.

Furthermore, any attempt by South Carolina to seize federal property such as the Charleston forts, will be met by federal resistance.

Then, in regard to the property of the United States in South Carolina...It is not believed that any attempt will be made to expel the United States from this property by force; but if in this I should prove to be mistaken, the officer in command of the forts has received orders to act strictly on the defensive. In such a contingency the responsibility for consequences would rightfully rest upon the heads of the assailants.

Conversely he asks if the Constitution gives Congress authority over “coercing a State into submission” by force, if it attempts to withdraw peacefully without permission? The answer, he finds, is “no.”

The question fairly stated is, Has the Constitution delegated to Congress the power to coerce a State into submission which is attempting to withdraw or has actually withdrawn from the Confederacy?

The fact is that our Union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war. If it can not live in the affections of the people, it must one day perish. Congress possesses many means of preserving it by conciliation, but the sword was not placed in their hand to preserve it by force.. This ought to be the last desperate remedy of a despairing people, after every other constitutional means of conciliation had been exhausted.

This brings him to his proposed “solution” which is precisely aligned with the demands of the South. It would require an “explanatory amendment” to the Constitution on slavery, validating “slaves as property,” guaranteeing the right of owners to transport them into all territories prior to statehood, and insuring Northern cooperation in returning run-aways.

This is the very course which I earnestly recommend in order to obtain an "explanatory amendment" of the Constitution on the subject of slavery.

- 1. An express recognition of the right of property in slaves in the States where it now exists or may hereafter exist.*
- 2. The duty of protecting this right in all the common Territories throughout their Territorial existence, and until they shall be admitted as States into the Union, with or without slavery, as their constitutions may prescribe.*
- 3. A like recognition of the right of the master to have his slave who has escaped from one State to another restored and "delivered up" to him, and of the validity of the fugitive-slave law enacted for this purpose.*

This section of the address ends with the totally delusional assertion that his proposal “would be received with favor by all of the States!”

It ought not to be doubted that such an appeal to the arbitrament established by the Constitution itself would be received with favor by all the States of the Confederacy. In any event, it ought to be tried in a spirit of conciliation before any of these States shall separate themselves from the Union.

Date: December 3, 1860

He Congratulates Himself On His Achievements In Office

After having his say on slavery, Buchanan launches into a review of his many accomplishments in office – believing to the bitter end that these somehow outweigh the fact that the Union is crumbling on his watch.

He begins with his first love, foreign policy, and lists, in agonizing detail, the “most friendly” conditions he has delivered around the globe.

*Our relations with Great Britain are of the most friendly character...
With France, our ancient and powerful ally, our relations continue to be of the most friendly character...*

Between the great Empire of Russia and the United States the mutual friendship and regard which has so long existed still continues to prevail, and if possible to increase. Indeed, our relations with that Empire are all that we could desire...

.With the Emperor of Austria and the remaining continental powers of Europe, including that of the Sultan, our relations continue to be of the most friendly character...

The friendly and peaceful policy pursued by the Government of the United States toward the Empire of China has produced the most satisfactory results... Our minister to China, in obedience to his instructions, has remained perfectly neutral in the war between Great Britain and France and the Chinese Empire.. (The reference here is to the Second Opium War, with the two western powers trying to legalize and dominate the trade in opium and coolie labor.)

*The ratifications of the treaty with Japan (was) concluded at Yeddo on the 29th July...
With the wise, conservative, and liberal Government of the Empire of Brazil our relations
continue to be of the most amicable character...*

The exchange of the ratifications of the convention with the Republic of New Granada (i.e. largely the combination of Panama and Columbia) signed at Washington on the 10th of September, 1857, has been long delayed from accidental causes for which neither party is censurable.

Ever the expansionist, Buchanan again pushes for the acquisition of Cuba and its sugar plantations, long a target of Southern slave owners.

Our relations with Spain are now of a more complicated, though less dangerous, character than they have been for many years...I reiterate the recommendation contained in my annual message of December, 1858, and repeated in that of December, 1859, in favor of the acquisition of Cuba from Spain by fair purchase

The one foreign policy disappointment he sees is in Mexico, where he points to the failure of Congress to send a military force into the interior to end “outrages” committed against American citizens and merchants.

Our relations with Mexico remain in a most unsatisfactory condition... our citizens residing in Mexico and our merchants trading thereto had suffered a series of wrongs and outrages such as we have never patiently borne from any other nation...

I deemed it my duty to recommend to Congress in my last annual message the employment of a sufficient military force to penetrate into the interior...Having discovered that my recommendations would not be sustained by Congress, the next alternative was to accomplish in some degree, if possible, the same objects by treaty stipulations with the constitutional Government.

His litany now shifts to the domestic front. He credits himself with quelling the unrest among the Mormons in Utah -- despite the consensus belief that he bowed in the end to the will of Brigham Young.

Peace has also been restored within the Territory of Utah, which at the commencement of my Administration was in a state of open rebellion.

He appropriately mentions his “wise and judicious” management of the economy and his efforts to reduce federal government expenditures.

In my first annual message I promised to employ my best exertions in cooperation with Congress to reduce the expenditures of the Government within the limits of a wise and judicious economy.

I am happy, however, to be able to inform you that during the last fiscal year, ending June 30, 1860, the total expenditures of the Government in all its branches--legislative, executive, and judicial--exclusive of the public debt, were reduced...

He reports the cuts down to the penny:

1858...\$71,901,129.77 (fiscal years ending June 30)
1859...\$66,346,226.13.
1860...\$58,579,780.08

He notes that “not a single slave has been imported” in the last year, and that he has put an end to “filibustering” actions both domestically and abroad. Then come a few final recommendations for the next Congress: fund the transcontinental railroad; increase select tariffs; and establish a fixed date for the election of Congressmen across all states in the Union.

Date: December 3, 1860

He Makes One Final And Futile Attempt To Explain Kansas

Buchanan knows that his presidency has been severely damaged by his handling of “bloody Kansas” and of the Lecompton Constitution, so he attempts to once again justify his actions.

He begins by saying that he did not create the conflict in Kansas. Instead, on his first day in office, he was handed a “revolutionary government,” attempting to impose the Free-State Topeka Constitution on the entire territory.

At the period of my inauguration I was confronted in Kansas by a revolutionary government existing under what is called the "Topeka constitution." Its avowed object was to subdue the Territorial government by force and to inaugurate what was called the "Topeka government" in its stead.

Naturally he turned to “the ballot box” as the best way to solve the dispute.

The ballot box is the surest arbiter of disputes among freemen...

But the “insurgent party” refused to participate in votes until January 1858, when it became clear that the anti-slavery party “were in the majority” – thus ending the “danger of civil war.”

The insurgent party refused to vote at either, lest this might be considered a recognition on their part of the Territorial government established by Congress. A better spirit, however, seemed soon after to prevail, and the two parties met face to face at the third election, held on the first Monday of January, 1858, for members of the legislature and State officers under the Lecompton constitution. The result was the triumph of the antislavery party at the polls. This decision of the ballot box proved clearly that this party were in the majority, and removed the danger of civil war. From that time we have heard little or nothing of the Topeka government, and all serious danger of revolutionary troubles in Kansas was then at an end.

Instead of leaving it at that, Buchanan wanders back to the genuine source of the criticism levelled at him all along – his persistent demand that Kansas should be admitted to the Union under the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution. He protests that it was his “duty” to submit the document to Congress for approval.

The Lecompton constitution, which had been thus recognized at this State election by the votes of both political parties in Kansas, was transmitted to me with the request that I should present it to Congress. This I could not have refused to do without violating my clearest and strongest convictions of duty.

From there, however, he proceeds to dig a hole for himself. First, by questioning “if fraud existed” – despite the overwhelming evidence that the Border Ruffians rigged the early elections. Second, by washing his hands of accountability for challenging the veracity of the Lecompton document.

If fraud existed in all or any of these proceedings, it was not for the President but for Congress to investigate and determine the question of fraud and what ought to be its consequences.

He tops that off by walking away from the key platform plank that he ran on in 1856 as a Democrat: the promise that “popular sovereignty” would be the litmus test on whether a new state’s constitution would be for or against slavery. While claiming that he “desired” such a vote, its omission he says was not without precedent.

It is true that the whole constitution had not been submitted to the people, as I always desired; but the precedents are numerous of the admission of States into the Union without such submission.

In embracing the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution, he did his “duty” and avoided “disastrous consequences” for Kansas and for the Union.

Had I treated the Lecompton constitution as a nullity and refused to transmit it to Congress, it is not difficult to imagine, whilst recalling the position of the country at that moment, what would have been the disastrous consequences, both in and out of the Territory, from such a dereliction of duty on the part of the Executive.

Thus the story he has told himself all along. Not that his loyalty to the South has led him to overlook election fraud and try to force Congress to approve a constitution that violates the will of the people. Rather that he was simply fulfilling his duty to the nation.

This self-delusional narrative has failed during his entire term and it fails again in this his farewell speech.

Chapter 295 – The Address Escalates Sectional Tension



Dates:
December 3-6, 1860

Sections:

- All Sides Attack The Address
- The Republicans Seek Alignment Against Southern Demands
- Tensions Rise As Howell Cobb Resigns From The Cabinet

Date: December 3, 1860

All Sides Attack The Address



Lyman Trumbull (1813-1896)

The South is angered by two things in the address: first the President's assertion that the Constitution prohibits any State from leaving the Union without permission from the other signatories; second that any attempt to seize federal property, such as the Charleston forts, will be met by resistance.

The North regards the address as vintage Buchanan, announcing the dilemma facing the country, acting as if he had no part in its origin, and handing the mess off to Congress to find a solution. Massachusetts congressman Charles Francis Adams, son of the sixth president, finds the message...

...In all respects like the author, timid and vacillating...It satisfied no one and did no service in smoothing the waters.

On the evening of December 3, the Republicans caucus to discuss their response to the president's call for Congress to take action. Illinois Senator Lyman Trumbull warns against committees that would surrender the ban on extending slavery in order to placate the South.

For Republicans to take steps toward getting up committees or proposing new compromises is an admission that to conduct the government on the principles on which we carried the election would be wrong.

Date: December 4-6, 1860

The Republicans Seek Alignment Against Southern Demands



Thurlow Weed (1797-1872)

Republicans are shocked a day later by an editorial published by one of their chief strategists, Thurlow Weed, in his *Albany Evening Journal*, calling for the two sides to find a solution before it is too late. This draws immediate fire from his colleagues.

Senator Preston King of New York reprimands Weed:

It cannot be done. You must abandon your position... You and Seward should be among the foremost to brandish the lance and shout for war.

Weed responds by arguing that further dialogue may convince the states in the upper South and the border to stay with the Union. But others simply disagree. Vermont congressman Justin Morrill's dissent references Seward's famous observation about an "irrepressible conflict:"

There can be no compromise short of an entire surrender... the truth (being) there is an irrepressible conflict between our systems of civilization.

Charles Francis Adams seconds the warning that the South still intends to rule and the Republicans must not surrender what they have just won at the polls.

Nothing short of a surrender of everything gained by the election will avail. They want to continue to rule.

Back in Springfield, the intensity of the Southern threat is beginning to dawn one of Lincoln's campaign advisors, Leonard Swett, who writes:

This flurry at the South can be got along with, but I don't think it ought to be trifled with.

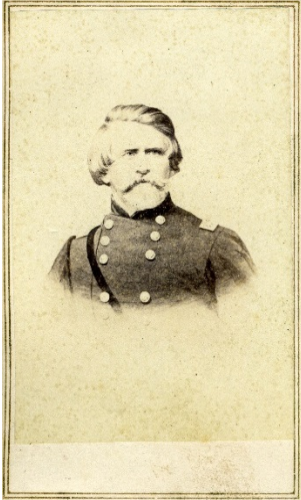
Lincoln meanwhile feels like his positions have long been spelled out in detail and joining in a new fray would prove futile.

If I were to labor a month, I could not express my conservative views and intentions more clearly and strongly than they are in our platform and in many speeches already in print...anything new would merely be seized on by the ultras and misrepresented.

Let there be no compromise on the question of extending slavery. If there be, all our labor is lost, and, ere long, must be done again. . . . The tug has to come & better now, than any time hereafter.

Date: December 6-8, 1860

Tensions Rise As Howell Cobb Resigns From The Cabinet



Milledge Bonham (1830-1890)

On December 6, 1860, South Carolina congressman Milledge Bonham meets with a cross section of Southern politicians to decide how they want to respond to Buchanan's warning about secession and the prospect of an adversarial Republican president in the White House.

Bonham then visits Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb, and learns that the strategy among the Southern members of the Cabinet, along with Jefferson Davis, lies in delaying any further confrontations until Buchanan's term expires in March.

Bonham, whose older brother was killed at the Alamo and who served as a Lt. Colonel in the Mexican War, tells Cobb that stalling is out of the question, especially as it relates to South Carolina.

The State will be eternally...disgraced now if she hesitates.

He also assures Cobb that once South Carolina secedes, other states are certain to follow.

The irony here is that, unknown to Bonham, Cobb has already drafted his own *Letter to the People of Georgia on the Condition in the Country*, laying out the case for leaving the Union.



Howell Cobb (1815-1868)

The *Letter* recaps in great detail the growing hostility of the North to the institution of slavery, leading up to the emergence of the Black Republican Party, dedicated to the belief...

That slavery is such an evil and curse, that it is the duty of everyone, to the extent of his power, to contribute to its ultimate extinction in the United States.

In his *Letter*, Cobb goes on the attack against Lincoln for "sentiments more odious than Seward;" John Andrews, the newly elected Massachusetts Governor, for his "declared sanction and approval of the John Brown raid; and finally that other band of abolitionists, "Beecher, Garrison, Cheever, Phillips and Webb." Together their messages are:

Hatred of slavery, disregard of judicial decisions, negro equality...(and) no such thing as property in our equals.

In the face of this antipathy, Cobb finds some arguing that the South should:

Rely for our safety and protection upon...the two Houses of Congress, and told...(to) delay...(as) the South responds by holding up before them a Constitution basely broken - a compact wantonly violated.

He asks if there is any credible option to “immediate secession” and, in a genuine show of loyalty, cites the “pure of heart” Buchanan as the only one still searching for patriotic solutions.

Is there no other remedy for this state of things but immediate secession? None worthy of your consideration has been suggested, except the recommendation of Mr. Buchanan, of new constitutional guarantees - or rather, the clear and explicit recognition of those that already exist. This recommendation is the counsel of a patriot and a statesman. It exhibits an appreciation of the evils that are upon us, and at the same time a devotion to the Constitution and its sacred guarantees. It conforms to the record of Mr. Buchanan's life on this distracting question - the record of a pure heart and a wise head.

But the outlook seems futile to Cobb at this point:

The Union formed by our fathers was one of equality, justice and fraternity. On the fourth of March it will be supplanted by a Union of sectionalism and hatred. The one was worthy of the support and devotion of freemen - the other can only continue at the cost of your honor, your safety, and your independence.

In turn he calls upon Georgia to leave the Union.

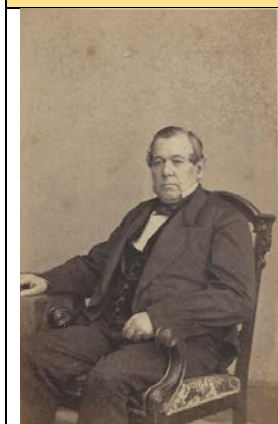
Fellow-citizens of Georgia, I have endeavored to place before you the facts of the case, in plain and unimpassioned language... You have to deal with a shrewd, heartless and unscrupulous enemy, who in their extremity may promise anything, but in the end will do nothing...

On the 4th day of March, 1861, the Federal Government will pass into the hands of the Abolitionists. It will then cease to have the slightest claim upon either your confidence or your loyalty; and, in my honest judgment, each hour that Georgia remains thereafter a member of the Union will be an hour of degradation, to be followed by certain and speedy ruin. I entertain no doubt either of your right or duty to secede from the Union. Arouse, then, all your manhood for the great work before you, and be prepared on that day to announce and maintain your independence out of the Union, for you will never again have equality and justice in it. Identified with you in heart, feeling and interest, I return to share in whatever destiny the future has in store for our State and ourselves.

On December 8, 1860, Howell Cobb submits his resignation from Buchanan's cabinet, not without regret, but with conviction that he has no other choice.

His departure is just the first in a steady stream of set-backs coming at the President.

Chapter 296 – Select Congressional Committees Search For Answers



Dates:
December 9-18, 1860

- Sections:**
- South Carolina Announces Conditions To Avoid Conflict In Charleston Harbor
 - A Select “Committee Of 33” Is Formed In The House
 - The Situation Continues To Unravel Around Buchanan
 - The Charleston Forts Draw More Military Attention
 - The Senate Sets Up A “Committee Of 13”

Date: December 9-10, 1860

South Carolina Announces Conditions To Avoid Conflict In Charleston Harbor

The next blow comes from South Carolina Governor William Gist, whose term is about to expire in five days.

He tells the administration that if attempts are made to delay the secession convention slated to begin on December 17, 1860, he will speak in Charleston on behalf of immediately seizing the federal forts in the harbor.

He also sends a delegation of South Carolina congressmen to meet face to face with Buchanan on December 10.

They tell him that the state is willing...

To negotiate for an amicable arrangement of all matters between the State and the Federal Government, provided that no reinforcements shall be sent into those forts, and their relative military status shall remain as at present.

While the South Carolinians walk away believing they have reached a “gentlemen’s agreement” on the provision, Buchanan’s legalistic mind sees some latitude in the meaning of the phrase “relative military status.”

Date: December 11, 1860

A Select “Committee Of 33” Is Formed In The House



Thomas Corwin (1794-1865)

On December 11, 1860, the House finally responds to Buchanan’s State of the Union call for help by forming a “Committee of 33” to search again for compromises.

The Chair is 66 year old Tom Corwin, former Governor and Senator of Ohio, then Secretary of the Treasury under Fillmore before returning to his previously held House seat in 1859.

Corwin is known as the “peacemaker” in the chamber, although he comes to this task with a sense of dread.

I have never in my life seen my country in such a dangerous position.

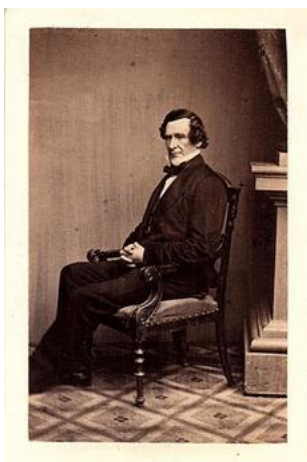
To mirror the mood of the nation, each of the thirty-three states is asked to name one member to the committee. But the prospects for this group are apparent early on, when the representatives from South Carolina and Florida refuse to attend, and four of the Republican members say they voted against having a committee in the first place.

Skepticism about the likely outcome abounds, with American Party congressman Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, who calls it...

A humbug...but as it will amuse men’s minds it may do no harm.

Date: December 11-15, 1860

The Situation Continues To Unravel Around Buchanan



Jeremiah Black (1810-1883)

On the 11th, Buchanan also loses another cabinet member, as the decrepit Lewis Cass hands in his resignation. This results in a shift of Attorney General Jeremiah Black to Secretary of State and the addition of Edwin Stanton as the new AG.

He is a friend of Black and has helped research parts of the President’s December 3 message to Congress. But more importantly, Stanton, a Democrat at the time, is also linked directly to Senator Henry Seward, who will serve in Lincoln’s cabinet. This gives the Republican’s a direct line into the workings of Buchanan’s inner circle all the way up to the inauguration

On December 12, the President names a reluctant former Governor of Maryland, Philip Thomas, to replace Howell Cobb as Treasury Secretary – a move that lasts less than five weeks before he too exits.

That same day, a caucus of seven Southern Senators and twenty-one Congressmen delivers more bad news, reporting that...

All hope of relief in the Union...is extinguished...the Republicans are resolute in the purpose to grant nothing that will or ought to satisfy the South.

Then on December 14, a new Governor of South Carolina is sworn in to replace William Gist. He is Francis Pickens, cousin of the iconic John C. Calhoun, an ardent backer of the 1832 “nullification” movement, and eager to lead his state out of the Union.

Buchanan dispatches the “doughface” Caleb Cushing to Columbia to begin negotiations with Pickens, only to learn that he has already sent a letter demanding the surrender of the Charleston forts.

Hearing this, Republican Senator James Grimes of Iowa offers his view of conditions in the White House:

The whole cabinet is tumbling to pieces, and...Buchanan...about equally divides his time between praying and crying. Such a perfect imbecile never held office before.

Date: December 14-17, 1860

The Charleston Forts Draw More Military Attention

Taken together, the public threats to the federal forts in Charleston and the impending South Carolina convention raise alarms with both General Winfield Scott and Abraham Lincoln.

Scott questions the backbone of Buchanan and the military competence and loyalty of Floyd. He does not yet know the President-elect, but says after assurances from his friend, Illinois congressman Elihu Washburn, that:

I wish to God that Mr. Lincoln was in office.

For his part, Lincoln is crystal clear about the forts. He writes to Francis Blair, Sr.:

If the forts shall be given up before the inauguration, the General must retake them afterwards.

But both Scott and Lincoln recognize that the clock is ticking on the fate of Major Anderson, as he awaits concrete orders from Washington on how to defend his position and his troops.

Date: December 17-18, 1860

The Senate Sets Up A “Committee Of 13”



On December 17, 1860, a fiery speech by Ohio’s Benjamin Wade convinces the Senate that it cannot stand idly by as the Union dissolves and the threat of violent confrontation grows.

Wade warns Southerners that their outcries and demands will not force the Republicans to back down. As he says:

What have we to compromise? We went to the people...and we beat you upon the plainest and most palpable issue that ever was presented to the American people.

Benjamin Wade (1800-1878)

On December 18, 1860, the chamber responds by creating a “Committee of 13” to “inquire into ...grievances between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding states.”

The roster is star-studded and diverse in terms of regionality and party affiliation.

It is not by accident that two Kentucky men – Constitutional Unionist, John J. Crittenden, and Democrat, Lazarus Powell – are included. They represent the border states, sitting between the lower South and the North, and the tradition of Senator Henry Clay, the Great Compromiser of a prior generation.

Senators Named To The Committee Of Thirteen

Name	Age	State	Party
William Bigler	46	Pennsylvania	Democrat
Jacob Collamer	69	Vermont	Republican
John J. Crittenden	73	Kentucky	Constitutional Union
Jefferson Davis	52	Mississippi	Democrat
James Doolittle	45	Wisconsin	Republican
Stephen Douglas	47	Illinois	Democrat
James Grimes	44	Iowa	Republican
Robert MT Hunter	51	Virginia	Democrat
Lazarus Powell	48	Kentucky	Democrat
Henry Rice	44	Minnesota	Democrat
Henry Seward	59	New York	Republican
Robert Toombs	50	Georgia	Democrat
Benjamin Wade	60	Ohio	Republican

The priorities for the Committee of 13 seem to be threefold:

- 1. To prevent secession in South Carolina, if that is still possible.*
- 2. To avoid any further departures, especially in the upper South.*
- 3. If disunion occurs, to avoid armed conflict and civil war.*

If these men cannot prevent disaster, it would seem no one can.

But here, as in the House, the start-up is hardly propitious, as Mississippi Senator Jefferson Davis labels the effort “a quack nostrum” and asks to be excused from serving. Pleas follow for him to change his mind, and he finally agrees to participate.

Chapter 297– The “Crittenden Compromise” Has The Most Potential



Dates:
December 20, 1860

Sections:

- The Committee Of 13 Hears The “Crittenden Compromise” And Other Plans
- The House Committee Of 33 Hears Two Different Southern Proposals

Date: December 20, 1860

The Committee Of 13 Hears The “Crittenden Compromise” And Other Plans



John J. Crittenden (1787-1863)

The second meeting of this Senate committee takes place on December 20, 1860, at which time a series of “compromise plans” are presented and debated. Included here are proposals from Southerners Jefferson Davis and Robert Toombs and Northerner Stephen Douglas.

But the leading contender is a very ambitious proposal set forth by John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, the most senior statesman present and the one man most determined to find a way to save the Union.

Crittenden calls upon Congress to once and for all end the sectional conflict over slavery by passing six amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

The centerpiece is a familiar plea to extend the 36’30” Missouri Compromise line across all the remaining western territories, with slavery prohibited to the north and allowed to the south until the settlers apply for statehood and declare their preference. Furthermore this type of “dividing line” would be applied to any new land “hereafter acquired” by the United States.

Southerners on the Committee of 13 applaud this idea, since it formally “recognizes” African slavery within the wording of the Constitution, and also appears to sanction the idea of new land (e.g. in Mexico, Cuba, etc.) where the institution might take hold.

Crittenden’s other five amendments are also tilted toward the South. Congress would be forbidden to ban slavery in DC or on military posts or to interfere with selling slaves across state lines. It would vigorously

enforce the return of run-aways and compensate owners for any lost slaves. And “no future amendments” would be allowed to change these commitments.

The Northern members of the Committee of 13 – especially the Republicans – see nothing to like about Crittenden’s amendments and say so at the meeting.

Given the initial impasse, the Committee of 13 adjourns after agreeing to resume talks on December 26.

Sidebar: The Crittenden Compromise Amendments

Here is the exact wording proposed by JJ Crittenden:

1. Slavery would be prohibited in any territory of the United States "now held, or hereafter acquired," north of latitude 36 degrees, 30 minutes line. In territories south of this line, slavery of the African race was "hereby recognized" and could not be interfered with by Congress. Furthermore, property in African slaves was to be "protected by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance." States would be admitted to the Union from any territory with or without slavery as their constitutions provided.
2. Congress was forbidden to abolish slavery in places under its jurisdiction within a slave state such as a military post.
3. Congress could not abolish slavery in the District of Columbia so long as it existed in the adjoining states of Virginia and Maryland and without the consent of the District's inhabitants. Compensation would be given to owners who refused consent to abolition.
4. Congress could not prohibit or interfere with the interstate slave trade.
5. Congress would provide full compensation to owners of rescued fugitive slaves. Congress was empowered to sue the county in which obstruction to the fugitive slave laws took place to recover payment; the county, in turn, could sue "the wrong doers or rescuers" who prevented the return of the fugitive.
6. No future amendment of the Constitution could change these amendments or authorize or empower Congress to interfere with slavery within any slave state.

Date: December 20, 1860

The House Committee Of 33 Hears Two Different Southern Proposals

In the House, the Committee of 33 under Tom Corwin of Ohio is also struggling to find answers.

On December 17, 1860, Albert Rust of Arkansas and Thomas Nelson of Tennessee offer a Southern proposal which, like the Crittenden plan, would guarantee the presence of slavery in all territory south of the 36°30' line. This so-called Rust-Nelson plan is being discussed on December 20, when representative Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, announces a different option.

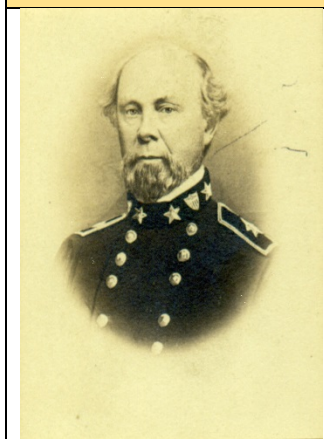
Davis argues for immediately creating one new state out of all the remaining western territory south of the 36'30" line, admitting it forthwith into the Union, and then allowing the settlers there to vote on a Free or Slave status. This approach mirrors the traditional Democratic Party call for "popular sovereignty" to decide the issue – and the fact that it comes from a slave state congressman, appears to shake the solidarity of the Southerners on the committee.

One Northerner who sees some hope in the Davis proposal is the Republican from Massachusetts, Charles Francis Adams. Along with some others, he believes the weather and soil across this New Mexico land would not support a plantation economy, so a popsov vote is likely to go against slavery in the end.

If other Republicans would join him in backing the Henry Winter Davis proposal, along with an amendment to the Constitution protecting slavery in all states where it currently exists, perhaps that compromise would save the Union and avoid a civil war.

Adams' next step lies in trying to convince his colleagues to get behind the Davis option.

Chapter 298 – South Carolina Secedes And Demands Control Over Federal Forts



Dates:
December 17-22, 1860

- Sections:**
- South Carolina Secedes!
 - South Carolina Demands The Surrender Of Federal Property Including The Charleston Forts
 - Secretary Of War John Floyd Is Implicated In A Scandal

Date: December 17-20, 1860

South Carolina Secedes!



While Congress debates, the nation’s eyes turn toward South Carolina where the state convention opens in Columbia at the local Baptist Church on December 17, 1860.

Roughly 170 delegates appear, including members chosen from many of the leading families in the state, men such as James Chestnut, R.B. Rhett, James Orr, Lawrence Keitt, William Gist and others.

Judge David F. Jamison, a former member of the local legislature, is chosen to preside, and a series of grievances are debated and agreed to. They include:

- The 1820 Missouri Compromise banning slavery south of 36° 30’
- Disproportionate taxation levied on the region to run the federal government
- Denial of slaveholder access to western land they fought for in the Mexican War
- Persistent lack of Northern enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law
- Admission of the entire territory of California as a Free State
- Repeated attacks on Southern settlers in Kansas by abolitionists

Robert Barnwell Rhett (1800-1886)

But before the delegates agree by 159-0 to draft an Ordinance of Secession, the convention is interrupted by rumors of a potential outbreak of smallpox in Columbia – possibly the result of a plot originating in New York.

To avoid the risk, the delegates board a train on the morning of the 18th for a 120 mile ride southeast to Charleston, where they reconvene at the Institute Hall to resume business. The next day they move to a smaller and more secret venue at St. Andrew’s Hall, with representatives from Mississippi and Alabama joining in.

The climax of their work comes at 1:07pm on December 20 when an Ordinance of Secession is read:

We the People of the State of South Carolina, in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain...that the union now subsisting under the name of ‘The United States of America,’ is hereby dissolved.

Voting on the motion is perfunctory at this point, and it carries 169-0.

After the delegates sign the declaration back at the Institute Hall, President Jamison intones:

I proclaim the State of South Carolina an Independent Commonwealth.

Upon hearing the news, the entire city of Charleston breaks out in celebrations. Bands play, militia units parade, bonfires are set, adults and children sing out.

No one knows what will happen next, but the heroic slogans and feelings of the 1776 revolution fill the air.

Date: December 21, 1860

South Carolina Demands The Surrender Of Federal Property Including The Charleston Forts

Governor Francis Pickens wastes no time in taking charge over his “independent commonwealth.” He sets up four committees, assigned to deal with engaging other slave states, finalizing a constitution, overseeing commercial matters and preparing to deal with foreign governments.

On December 21 he also names three envoys to negotiate with Washington over transferring all federally owned property in South Carolina to state control – including the customs house, post office, armory and forts in Charleston.

Prior to their departure, Pickens has already forwarded a letter on the matter to Buchanan that comes as an *ultimatum*, demanding that South Carolina troops be allowed into Ft. Sumter, and giving the President 24 hours to reply.

This letter not only shocks Buchanan, but also Senators Jefferson Davis and John Slidell and congressman Milledge Bonham. Together they apply pressure on Pickens to withdraw the letter, and he grudgingly agrees to do so.

However, by the time a conciliatory telegram from the Governor reaches Buchanan, he has already drafted a reply, consistent with his State of the Union principles, but delivered now with undisguised temerity:

If South Carolina should attack any of these forts, she will then become the assailant in a war against the United States.

The President is greatly relieved by withdrawal of the ultimatum, responds by pocketing his response, and indicates his willingness to hold meeting with the South Carolina party, but only as “private citizens,” not as official envoys of a foreign government.

He also convenes a meeting of his revised cabinet to discuss the military situation in Charleston. This results in a vague and waffling message to Major Anderson, drafted by new Secretary of State, Jeremiah Black and signed by Secretary of War, John Floyd:

Exercise sound military discretion...It is neither expected nor desired that you should expose your own life or that of your men in a hopeless defense of these forts.

Date: December 22, 1860

Secretary Of War John Floyd Is Implicated In A Scandal



John Floyd (1806-1863)

Buchanan’s relief over the withdrawn *ultimatum* is short-lived, as he learns on December 22 that \$870,000 worth of bonds held in trust for Indian tribes have disappeared due to mismanagement in John Floyd’s War Department.

The President asks for Floyd’s resignation, but he requests time to clear his name. This lasts for six more days, during which he issues military orders which move both arms and troops into Southern states, and are regarded as treasonous by his critics.

Floyd exits the cabinet on December 28, under the face-saving guise that his advice on managing the situation in Charleston is no longer being followed.

While a DC court exonerates him on charges of fraud and conspiracy in March 1861, the taint of the scandal and his final directives bleed over onto Buchanan, who is accused even more vocally of being a puppet for the South.

When the war breaks out, Floyd will be named a Brigadier General in the Confederate Army, and given command of Ft. Donelson, a critical garrison on the Tennessee River. There he demonstrates his ineptitude as a military man, and, when the fort falls in February 1862, he is permanently relieved of field duty.

Chapter 299 – Major Robert Anderson’s Heroic Move To Sumter Shocks All Sides



Dates:
December 26-27,
1860

Sections:

- Major Anderson Takes It Upon Himself To Concentrate At Ft. Sumter
- Anderson’s Move Stuns The White House
- South Carolina Responds To Anderson’s Movement By Seizing The Other Forts

Date: December 26, 1860

Major Anderson Takes It Upon Himself To Concentrate At Ft. Sumter



Charleston Harbor In 1860-61

With all of Charleston calling upon the state militia to seize the harbor forts, Major Robert Anderson awaits orders from Washington that will allow him to leave his assigned post at the Ft. Moultrie and move to Ft. Sumter.

His patience finally runs out, and he decides that the December 21 telegram saying he should “exercise sound military discretion” is sufficient cause to act.

He develops a plan to concentrate all of his men and movable arms at Sumter, and hopes to execute it on Christmas Day, under cover of the holiday celebrations. But the city is hit with a downpour, and he delays until December 26.

His first deception involves loading women and children at Ft. Johnson onto three schooners – along with a hidden cargo of provisions and weapons – and sending them in the direction of his home base at Ft. Moultrie, before diverting them at the last second to land at Sumter. This passes without incident.

As evening approaches, Anderson informs his staff of his intent to shift all 60 men in the garrison to Sumter that night. He assigns Captain John Foster and surgeon Samuel Crawford and several others to form a rear guard, with orders to fire the fort's five heavy columbiad cannons at the rebels, should they try to impede his boats. If not, they were to spike the guns and follow the crossing.

Captain Abner Doubleday forms his troops and has them row the one mile from Moultrie to Sumter. He is followed by Captain Truman Smith's company, then by the rear guard, and other boats carrying more supplies.

By nightfall, the full contingent in the fort includes 10 officers and 75 enlisted men, another 55 laborers who have been working there and are deemed to be "loyal" to the Union, and roughly 40 women and children. He also has provisions that he hopes can last for 40 days.

This is far from an ideal outcome, but at least Anderson feels secure for the time being.

That's because Ft. Sumter is an engineering masterpiece, with construction beginning in 1829 and enhancements ongoing in 1860. Its foundation is a natural sandbar in mid-channel, which had been covered by some 70,000 tons of New Hampshire granite. This supports a five-sided fort, 190 feet in circumference, with concrete walls 5 feet thick and almost 50 feet tall.

When Anderson arrives it boasts 60 cannon, albeit almost all pointed out to sea rather than back toward the surrounding land. With diligent work over the next three months he will reposition 51 of them to target the hostile batteries that surround him.

Anderson sends a telegram to Washington, reporting his move.

I have the honor to report that I have just completed, by the blessing of God, the removal to this fort of all of my garrison...as necessary to prevent the effusion of blood.

Date: December 27, 1860

Anderson's Move Stuns The White House

A stunned Buchanan first learns of Anderson's move when Southern Senators Jefferson Davis and Robert Hunter show up at the White House on December 27 to demand an explanation.

After Secretary of War confirms the news, the President tells his visitors:

I call God to witness – you gentlemen better than anybody else know that this is not only without but against my orders. It is against my policy.

They respond by accusing him of breaking the “December 10 agreement” to maintain the status quo in the harbor, and demand that he sack Major Anderson and return the Sumter garrison to Ft. Moultrie.

An evening cabinet meeting to formulate a response leads to a clash between War Secretary John Floyd, who proposes the abandonment of all the forts in Charleston, and Secretary of State Black, who essentially accuses Floyd of cowardice.

After the President sides with Black in supporting Anderson's move, the scandal-plagued Floyd uses the rejection of his advice to resign two days later.

Date: December 27, 1860

South Carolina Responds To Anderson's Movement By Seizing The Other Forts



Johnston Pettigrew (1828-1863)

South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens is also outraged by Anderson's and immediately sends Colonel Johnston Pettigrew to meet with Anderson at Sumter. In response to the demand to return to Ft. Moultrie, Anderson replies:

I cannot and will not go back

To punctuate his refusal, Anderson orders the band to play the Star Spangled Banner as Pettigrew exits the fort.

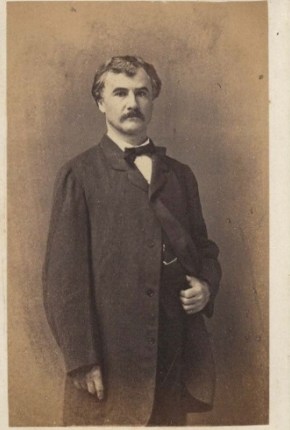
Hearing the news, Pickens orders out the state militia to seize the other federal forts, beginning with Castle Pinckney. At 4pm on December 27, 1860, Pettigrew and his troops arrive there to find Lt. Dick Meade manning the facility by himself. When Pettigrew begins to read aloud a proclamation from the Governor to assume control of the fort, Meade interrupts, saying that he does not recognize Pickens authority in the matter. Once he has occupied the site, Pettigrew offers Meade a “parole,” but Meade declines and, in the military courtesies of the era, he is allowed to rejoin Anderson at Sumter.

With Pinckney secure, Lt. Colonel W. G. DeSaussure and a 200 man militia force occupy Ft. Moultrie without opposition, while other raiders take Ft. Johnson and the Charleston arsenal.

Once the Stars & Stripes have been lowered and the Palmetto flag of South Carolina hoisted, a first red-line is crossed in the national conscience. The rhetoric of secession becomes the reality of an overt, albeit still relatively passive, act of war. The United States is no longer one nation, and that fact will soon hugely amplify the level of anger and hostility felt throughout the North.

From December 27, 1860 forward, the possibility for a compromise dims.

Chapter 300 – Republicans Oppose Select Congressional Committee Options

	Dates: December 28-31, 1860	Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buchanan Stalls For Time And The Committee of 13 Stalls Out Completely• The Henry Winter Davis Compromise Squeaks By In The House Committee Of 33• The Year Ends With A Growing Sense of Doom
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Date: December 28, 1860

Buchanan Stalls For Time And The Committee of 13 Stalls Out Completely

News of South Carolina's seizure of the secondary forts arrives in DC on the morning of December 28, along with the three envoys Pickens has chosen arrive to confer with Buchanan as "private gentlemen," not officials of a foreign nation. He ducks the meeting, telling them:

You are pressuring me too importunately. You don't give me time to consider, you don't give me time to say my prayers. I always say my prayers when required to act upon any great State affair.

That same day the prestigious Senate Committee of 13 meets for a fourth and final working session.

Several variations to Crittenden's Compromise framework and wording are debated, but is soon becomes clear that an impasse has been reached.

Georgia Senator Robert Toombs makes a final motion:

Resolved, that this Committee has not been able to agree upon any plan of general adjustment and (will) report that fact to the Senate, together with the journal of the Committee, and ask to be discharged.

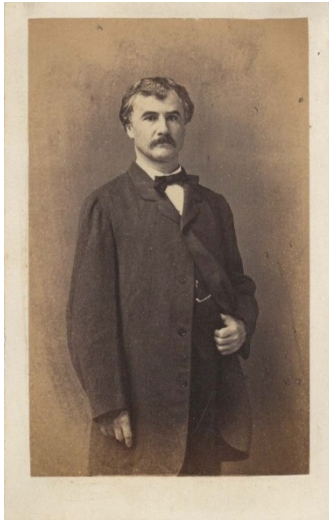
No one is more dismayed by this outcome than Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden.

He is convinced that the Republicans still fail to understand that the South is not bluffing and that disunion and civil war will follow unless a compromise is found in time. He also believes that a national referendum would demonstrate support for his six amendment plan. If only party politics weren't in the way.

(Republicans) are disposed to believe that the threatening appearances in the South will pass away...I firmly believe that a great majority of the people would accept my plan of settlement, but its fate must be decided here and by a party vote... God help us! I mean still to struggle for peace & union."

Date: December 29, 1860

The Henry Winter Davis Compromise Squeaks By In The House Committee Of 33



Henry Winter Davis (1817-1865)

Given the events in South Carolina and the collapse of negotiations in the Senate, the only compromise proposal left standing on December 29 resides in the House Committee of 33.

It has two main sponsors, the Democrat from Maryland, Henry Winter Davis, and the Republican from Massachusetts, Charles Francis Adams.

In addition to a Constitutional amendment to permanently protect slavery in states where it currently exists, it would provide a framework for dealing with all of the “territorial land” in the west still controlled by the federal government.

The particulars for this framework are drawn from the 1820 Missouri Compromise and the long-standing Democratic Party principle of popular sovereignty.

Thus Davis would draw a line at 36°30' across all of the remaining “territory” in the west, and create one large landmass called New Mexico to the south of that line. He would immediately grant statehood to this New Mexico entity, and then hold a referendum among the settlers there, on whether they wanted to accept or reject slavery.

On December 29, 1860, members of the Committee of 33 vote on the Davis plan – but not all of them. Only one representative from the deep South casts a ballot, the rest signaling their opposition by dropping out.

In the end, the Davis proposal survives by a narrow 12-10 margin, and Chairman Thomas Corwin commits to taking it to the full House in January, 1861.

But the odds of success in Congress are slim to none. Southerners far prefer the Rust-Nelson plan, and most Republicans view the measure – and C.F. Adams’ support for it -- as a betrayal of the Party’s core stance against any further spread of slavery.

Date: December 29-31, 1860

The Year Ends With A Growing Sense of Doom

As 1860 comes to a close, President Buchanan is not alone in feeling like events are spinning out of control around him.

On December 29, he decides to shift his Postmaster General, the fiercely pro-Union Kentuckian, Joseph Holt, into the War Secretary slot vacated by John Floyd, and replace him with his assistant, Horatio King.

King expresses his fears for the capital city itself.

I feel as though we are on the verge of civil war, and I should not be surprised if this city is under the military control of the disunionists in less than one month!

Several Republicans go even farther. Maine Senator, William Fessenden, says that Buchanan...

Is frightened out of his wits and in the hands of traitors. It is rumored that Mr. Lincoln's inauguration is to be prevented by force, though I can hardly believe the secessionists are so mad as to attempt it."

Henry Seward tells Lincoln:

The cabinet is again in danger of explosion...The plot is forming to seize the capital and usurp the Government, and it has abettors near the President. I am writing you not from rumors, but knowledge.

With General Winfield Scott breathing down his neck to immediately send 250 troops to Sumter and strengthen the defenses in Washington, Buchanan turns to Jeremiah Black now serving at State to formulate a response to the South Carolina envoys.

Black calls Major Anderson a "gallant and meritorious officer...(who) has saved the country...when its day was darkest and its peril most extreme." This stiffens the President's spine and is reflected in the reply to South Carolina he drafts on their demand to withdraw from the forts:

This I cannot do; this I will not do. Such an idea was never thought of by me in any possible contingency.

Thus 1860 ends with South Carolina having seceded and occupying the secondary forts in Charleston, an undermanned federal force under Major Anderson hunkered down at Sumter, a Congress unable to find a viable compromise, and a sober nation pondering whether it wants to fight a bloody civil war over expanding slavery in the west.