

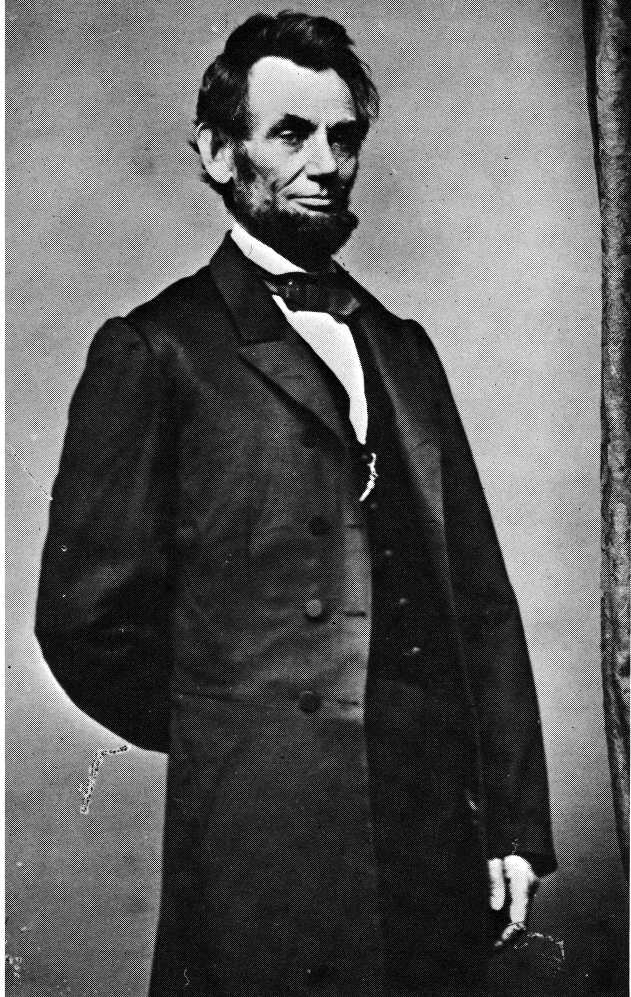
# PART SIX

## Disunity Upsets the Nation

Chapter 15: Slavery Gains a Foothold

Chapter 16: North and South Disagree

Chapter 17: The Old South Begins a New Life

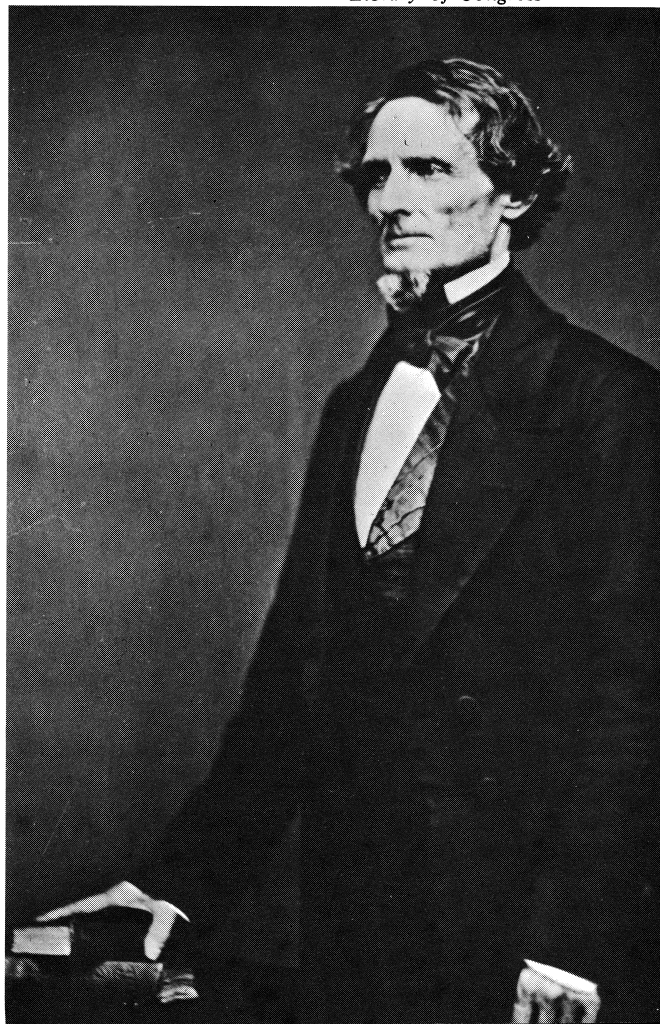


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**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**  
President of the United States of America  
1861-1865

**JEFFERSON DAVIS**  
President of the Confederate States of America  
1861-1865

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## Chapter 15

# Slavery Gains a Foothold

### SLAVERY AND FREEDOM MEET IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

ON A MILD OCTOBER day in 1492, the first known black man to enter the Western Hemisphere set foot on a little island in the West Indies. He went ashore with the crew of Columbus. The natives who had never seen either a black man or a white man, gazed in wonder at the stranger with dark skin. Five hundred years before Columbus came to the New World, the first Negroes from Africa were sold in Europe. In fact, slavery is older than recorded history. No one knows when it began. For centuries the buying and selling of human beings was a respectable business. Columbus, himself, shipped five hundred natives, whom he called Indians, to be sold in the slave market.

A short time after the Spaniards came, only a few natives were left on some of the islands in the West Indies. The long hours of toil spent in searching for gold brought an early death to many. Others succumbed to white men's diseases. Then the Spaniards began buying Negro slaves from English, Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish sea captains. Vessels made regular trips from

Africa with their cargoes of men, women, and children. Today the descendants of these slaves form almost the entire population of some of the West Indies islands.

The same thing happened in Mexico and South America wherever the conquistadores went. Long before the English founded Jamestown in 1607, thousands of Negro slaves were owned by wealthy families in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of the Americas.

In 1619, a year before the Pilgrims came to Massachusetts, a Dutch vessel had landed twenty Negroes at Jamestown. They were sold to Virginia planters who needed laborers in their tobacco fields. In that same year the Virginians had elected men to represent them in the first self-governing assembly in the English colonies. At this first meeting of the House of Burgesses the members boldly stated their rights. Yet, it did not occur to these men that persons held in bondage might be entitled to the same rights. Slavery had existed so long that it was generally accepted without question.

The profit people made in the slave trade held the Negro race in bondage in the Americas for a long time. From the lowly slave hunter in the African jungle to kings

and queens on European thrones, thousands made a living, and some reaped fortunes in this business. King Philip of Spain and Queen Anne of England owned stock in a company formed to buy Negroes in Africa and sell them in the Spanish, Portuguese and English colonies of the Americas. In New England where lumber was plentiful, shipbuilders became rich by launching "slavers" for the African trade. Sailing on the slavers brought good pay to seamen and big money to captains. Between 1680 and 1688 the Royal African Company landed about 47,000 Negroes in the Americas.

The Caucasian (white man) and the Negro came together to the New World; one as the master and the other as the slave. Both took part in the discovery and the conquest. Both shared the dangers and labor of settlement. Each race has left its mark on the ever changing way of life on both continents of the Western Hemisphere.

However, opposition to the system of slavery began early in colonial days. The first written protest against slavery was read at a religious meeting of Mennonites in Germantown, Pennsylvania about seventy years after the first Negroes arrived in Jamestown. In part, it read:

Here is liberty of conscience, which is right and honorable; here ought to be likewise liberty of body, except of evildoers. But to bring men hither, or to rob and sell them against their will, WE STAND AGAINST.

When Lord Oglethorpe was vice president of the African Company, a British slave-hunting firm, he met a young prince who had been captured by a neighboring chieftain in Africa and sold to one of the company agents. After hearing the young

man's story, Oglethorpe ordered the black prince returned to his own kingdom in Africa. Ever after, Oglethorpe refused to have any part in the slave business. When he founded his colony in Georgia, he made a law which prohibited slavery in any form. It was not long until his colonists began to look with envy at their neighbors across the Savannah River. The Carolina planters had slaves to do their work while the Georgia farmers plowed their own fields and harvested their own crops. After the benevolent founder surrendered his charter to the King and returned to England, his colonists imported slaves. Oglethorpe's settlement, founded to give freedom to the poor debtors in English prisons, became a powerful slaveholding state.

An advertisement appearing in the *Boston News-Letter* for September 26, 1754, explains in a few words why slavery did not gain a foothold in northern states:

TO BE SOLD, A LIKELY NEGRO BOY between 12 and 15 years of age, is handy about any sort of work, and is not sold for any fault, but only as his Master has no particular business for him to do.

Slave labor was profitable in the South where the climate permitted outdoor work for more months in the year than in the North. It also cost less money to clothe and house the laborers. The South depended upon agriculture, largely an outdoor occupation in which slaves were useful. Although some slaves became skilled workmen in factories, the majority were better adapted to work on the farm than in the mill. Since slave labor was not profitable in the manufacturing states, there were few bonded Negroes in the New England states except for house servants. Therefore, slavery died a natural death in the northern

states. The system might have gradually disappeared in the South if a New Englander had not invented the cotton gin.

### **INVENTION OF COTTON GIN MAKES SLAVERY MORE PROFITABLE**

IN A NEW ENGLAND farmhouse during the Revolutionary War a boy, Eli Whitney, carved, whittled, and tinkered to make little housekeeping tools for his step-mother. The war prevented the colonists from importing goods from England. They had to depend upon the work of their own hands for the tools they needed. The chips of wood from Eli's knives, augurs, and bits spurted into flame over the backlog, simmering in the fireplace. In cold weather boys of the neighborhood gathered in the Whitney kitchen to learn how to make everything from a nail to a fiddle. In the long summer twilight they crowded into Eli's little shop, apart from the house, to mend their hoes, rakes, and plows for work in the fields. While still a lad, too young to join the army, Eli's fame as a mechanic spread to distant towns in Massachusetts.

After eight years of fighting, the War for Independence came to an end. With peace came boatloads of goods from across the sea — glass, clocks, tinware, furniture, and tools. These articles from Europe sold for less money than it took to make them by hand in the little factories of New England.

Eli put away his tools and packed them in tallow to prevent rust. With a lock of his own making he bolted the door and left for Yale University to study law. There was no longer any need for mechanics. It was the time to win justice for all men, to right

wrongs such as slavery, and to prove to the world that a free people could work out a better way of life. Eli Whitney would serve his country and his fellowmen as a lawyer, pleading in the courts, and not as a mechanic.

Upon graduation Eli agreed to teach the children of planters living in the uplands of Georgia, near Athens, while he continued reading law. Enroute to Savannah he met two passengers on the boat who soon changed his plans and the course of history. They were Mrs. Greene, widow of Nathanael Greene, a general in Washington's army and Eli's old college chum, Phineas Miller, manager of the Greene plantation. This large estate was Georgia's gift to General Greene for his victories in the South during the Revolutionary War. Although a rice plantation, it was called Mulberry Grove. The early colonists on this land had tried to raise silkworms and failed. The mulberry trees they had planted still grew on the old plantation.

It was early autumn when Eli arrived in Savannah. The air was warm and moist. A boat crew of slaves rowed the party up the Savannah River to Mulberry Grove. While waiting to get a horse or mule for the trip to Athens, Whitney was the guest of Mrs. Greene.

One evening the serious young lawyer-teacher returned from a walk to find the house ablaze with candlelight and filled with men, laughing and talking. The unexpected guests were Georgia planters, former army officers who had served under General Greene. Slaves were busy carrying trays of food from the kitchen behind the house. The long dining table was soon laden with platters of ham, dishes of crabs and oysters, and bowls of

steaming rice. During the meal the conversation turned to cotton.

“It takes twenty slaves, working from sunrise to sunset, to clean twenty pounds of cotton.”

“Slavery is dying out. The planters in Virginia are selling their slaves to plantation owners in the rice country farther south. Costs too much to keep them.”

“The mills of New England, with new power looms, are ready to buy more cotton than we can raise.”

“Good times would come to the South if the seeds in cotton bolls could be removed by machinery. We need mechanics down here – men with brains –.”

Whitney listened while the planters discussed their cotton problems. He did not buy a mule. He did not leave Mulberry Grove to teach school in the uplands. In a workshed on the Greene plantation he invented a machine which would gin the cotton. To gin means to comb the sticky green seeds from the fluffy blossom of the cotton plant. Using Whitney’s machine, a man could clean ten times more cotton than he could before.

Whitney and his friend, Phineas Miller, went into business to manufacture cotton gins. A fortune would be theirs, they thought. When their sign was hung over a shop door in a narrow street in New Haven, it attracted little attention. New England was turning rapidly to manufacturing and shops were opening everywhere. In a short time cotton gins were in use in Georgia. Most of them were not made by the firm of Miller and Whitney. All over the South planters built their own gins on their own plantations and paid nothing to the inventor. Miller spent most of his time in the courts, arguing that Whitney had invented the cotton gin; that he had a patent and

that every man who built a cotton gin should pay a royalty to the inventor.

In the sixth year after the patent in 1794, the cotton crop had increased from 8,000,000 pounds to 35,000,000 pounds. The planters bought more land to plant more cotton and more slaves to raise the crop. As the demand for cotton grew, the price of slaves rose higher and higher. Good field workers sold for \$1,000 and as high as \$1,500. At such prices the slaveowners in Virginia and the border states sold their Negroes in large numbers to the planters farther south. Thus it happened that a whittling boy who hated slavery chained the South to this system of labor by inventing the cotton gin. Whitney’s invention brought new prosperity to the South, but not to himself.

## THE SLAVERY PROBLEM STALKS WEST

FROM THE BEGINNING, slavery had troubled the new nation. In the first draft of the Declaration of Independence Jefferson had accused George III of promoting slavery in the American colonies. On the whole the “Fathers of the Constitution” were opposed to slavery and would have abolished it by law if possible. Some of the strongest arguments against slavery in the Constitutional Convention came from Luther Martin of Maryland and George Mason of Virginia, who both owned slaves. During the debate over the compromise to count three-fifths of the slaves as population, Luther Martin said that “it was inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution and dishonorable to the American character to have such a feature in the Constitution.”

In the Constitutional Convention on August 22, 1787, George Mason made a long speech on the subject in which he said:

Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They bring the judgment of heaven upon a country.

Madison declared he “thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men.” He also was a slaveholder.

In both the north and the south, during the state conventions called to accept the Constitution, voices were raised against slavery. In North Carolina, James Iredell, a soldier in the Revolutionary War who was, later, a Judge on the Supreme Court of the United States, told the Convention of his state:

When the entire abolition of slavery takes place, it will be an event which must be pleasing to every generous mind, and every friend of human nature.

Northern men realized that their southern neighbors were forced to depend upon slave labor. At the time, there were not enough free men for hire on the big plantations. Washington once had complained that he was forced to buy laborers for his fields although he preferred to hire them. His last will and testament leaves no doubt as to his own personal feelings about slavery. He wrote:

Upon the decease of my wife it is my will and desire that all the slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom. — And whereas among those who will receive freedom, there may be some, who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, will be unable to support themselves; it is my will and desire that — they shall be comfortably clothed and fed by my heirs while they live. — And I do

hereby expressly forbid the sale or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any slave I may die possessed of, under any pretense whatsoever.

As the United States moved westward, the slavery problem was solved peaceably east of the Mississippi River. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, the states formed from the Northwest Territory where slavery had been forbidden, were admitted as free states. The states south of the Ohio River were admitted as slave states.

Two great men, opposed to slavery, became the unwilling agents for its spread beyond the Mississippi. One, Eli Whitney, invented the cotton gin; the other, Thomas Jefferson, bought Louisiana. They knew each other and were friends. Whitney’s invention made cotton the money crop of the South. Since cotton wears out land rapidly, the planters kept moving farther west where fresh new land was cheap and plentiful. The planters crossed the Mississippi into the Louisiana Territory to the rich farmlands of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. They took their Negroes with them.

This westward migration brought the slavery question to a crisis point. The northerners did not want slavery to spread into the western lands. The southerners felt entitled to take their slaves with them when they moved west. Each side was anxious that its representatives in Congress not be outnumbered. If this happened, then Congress would be able to pass laws that favored one group over another. Some plan had to be found for admitting the new states to the Union.

When Missouri had enough settlers for a state, the people voted on a constitution, sent it to Congress, and asked admission to the Union. When the clause providing for slavery was read in Congress, it brought

forth heated debates in both houses. If Missouri became a slave state, would slavery spread over the entire Louisiana Purchase? Henry Clay and his committee came forward with a compromise which both sides accepted. The famous Missouri Compromise of 1820 provided that Missouri would be admitted to the Union as a slave state, but that all other territory in the Louisiana Purchase, lying north of the southern boundary of Missouri, should be forever free. The South gained another slave state. At the same time Maine was admitted as a free state. For the time being this kept both slave and free states equally represented in the Senate.

When the United States gained more western territory at the end of the Mexican War, the slavery feud broke out again with renewed fury. The same question — slave or free — was debated in Congress when California applied for admission to the Union.

“We are obliged to take sides on the great question of questions — THE RIGHTS OF MAN” spoke a representative from Wisconsin. “If we properly appreciate the destiny of this republic, we shall become the emancipators of not only our own enslaved countrymen, but the liberators of the world.”

Daniel Webster, a Senator from Massachusetts, tried to convince his fellow members of the Senate that nature had turned the scale against slavery in the territory acquired from Mexico. In a speech he described the country to prove his point:

California and New Mexico are composed of vast ridges of mountains of enormous height, with broken ridges and deep valleys. The sides of these mountains are barren; their tops capped with snow. — What is there in New Mexico that could induce any body to go there with slaves? There are some narrow strips of tillable land on the borders

of the rivers: but the rivers themselves dry up before midsummer is gone. All that the people can do in that region is to raise some little articles, some little wheat for their tortillas, and all that by irrigation. And who expects to see a hundred black men cultivating tobacco, corn, cotton, rice, or anything else on lands in New Mexico? I look upon it, therefore, — that both California and New Mexico are destined to be free; — free by the arrangement of things by the Power above us.

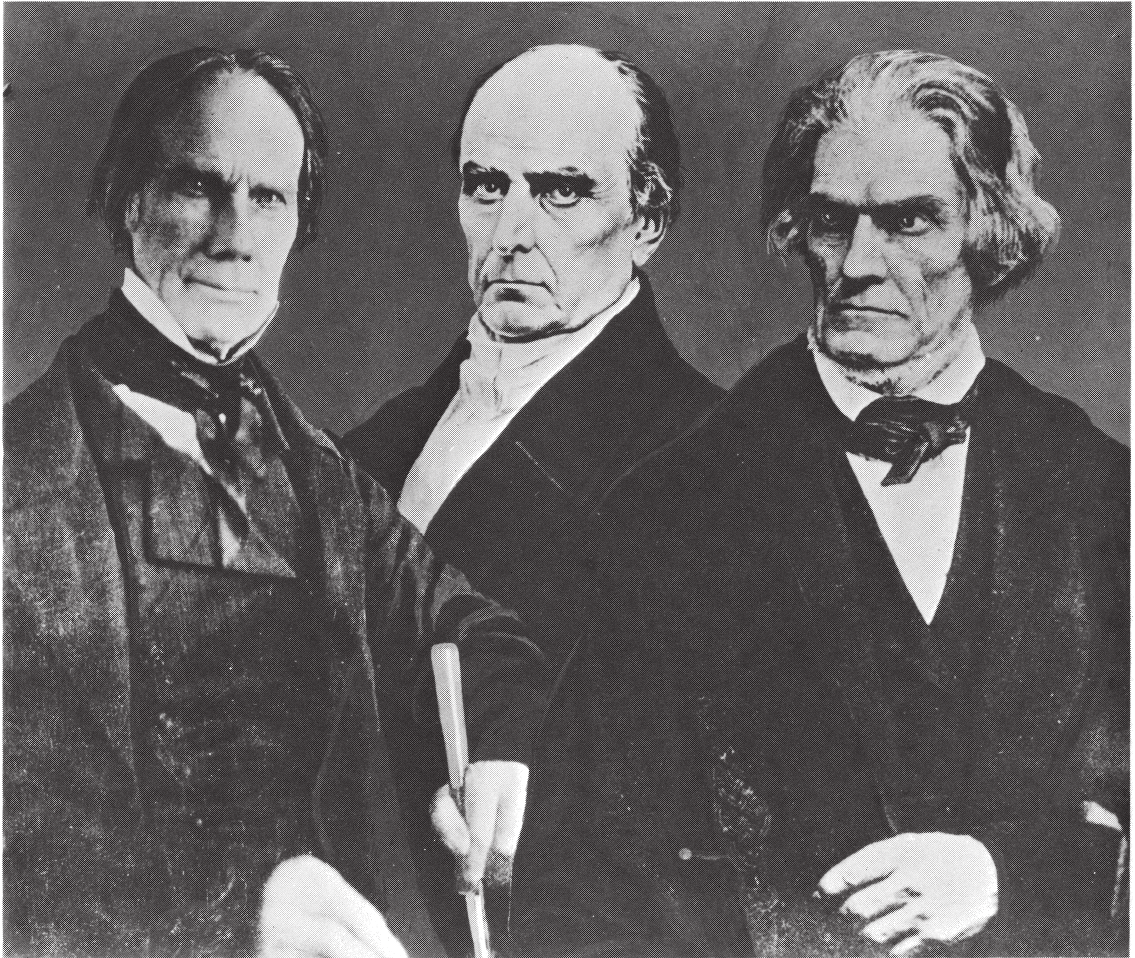
The people on both sides became so angry that they could no longer think clearly. The great compromisers arose again in Congress to calm the storm.

## THE COMPROMISE OF 1850

ON A COLD winter night in 1850, Henry Clay trudged through a snowstorm to call on his rival, Daniel Webster. The slavery issue was tearing the Union apart. The southern states were threatening to secede from the Union if Congress passed a law forbidding slavery in California, New Mexico, or any territory acquired from Mexico. Clay, deeply troubled, felt it was his duty to find a way out of war. The great peacemaker was seventy-three years old and near the end of his life. His compromise was a plan to settle the slavery problem forever, but he needed the support of his powerful rival.

In Congress the two men had often been at odds. Webster believed that the Union must be preserved at all costs. Clay, the great compromiser from Kentucky, thought it was better for each side to give up something than to risk a war where brother fought brother. In the library of the great Daniel’s home, history was made on that stormy January night. Clay did most of the talking. Webster listened. His





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**Reading left to right: Henry Clay, author of compromises; Daniel Webster, foe of nullification; John C. Calhoun, defender of states rights.**

forehead wrinkled and his lips tightened as he pondered his rival's words. War seemed imminent. Webster, like Clay, was near the end of his public life. It was late when Henry Clay trudged home through the falling snow, a happy man. Webster, the mighty orator, would speak in favor of Clay's latest compromise with slavery in an effort to save the Union.

On the seventh of March the Senate chamber was filled to overflowing with an

eager, excited crowd. The halls and stairways were jammed with people who could not get inside. They had come to hear Webster speak in support of Clay's latest compromise with slavery. They wondered if he had deserted the cause of the Union. A silence, tense with feeling, gripped the audience when the stocky Senator from Massachusetts strode across the platform. His heavy eyebrows were drawn forward over his deep-set eyes. His voice was low and calm.

“I wish to speak today,” he said, “not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a northern man, but as an American – I speak for the preservation of the Union.”

After the speech had begun, a tall, thin man tottered to his seat. He was John C. Calhoun, the Senator from South Carolina. Three days before, Senators had listened to his last speech, read by a friend, in which he asked the question, “How can the Union be preserved?”

“That this government claims, and practically maintains the right to decide in the last resort, as to the extent of its powers, will scarcely be denied by anyone . . . . That it also claims the right to resort to force, to maintain whatever power she claims against all opposition,” Calhoun said.

“Now, I ask,” he continued, “what limitation can possibly be placed upon the powers of a government, claiming and exercising such rights? And, if none can be, how can the separate government of the States maintain and protect the powers reserved to them by the Constitution, or the people of the several States maintain those which are reserved to them, and among them, their sovereign powers, by which they ordained and established, not only their separate State constitutions and governments, but also the Constitution and government of the United States?”

Calhoun and Webster, born in the same year, had been political enemies for a lifetime. Although ranged on opposite sides, they admired each other. Both staunchly defended the Constitution, although they did not agree on the meaning of it. The great southerner was a champion of states rights; the great northerner, of nationalism.

Aware that his words might kindle the

flames of war, Webster was the calm debater and not the fiery orator in this speech. He declared that the southerners were neither selfish nor dishonest in their views. He spoke:

All that has happened has been natural. The age of cotton became the golden age for our southern brethren. – There soon came to be an eagerness for other territory, a new area, for the cultivation of the cotton crop. In 1802 in pursuit of the idea of opening a new cotton region, the United States obtained a cession from Georgia of the whole of her western territory, now the rich and growing state of Alabama. In 1803 Louisiana was purchased from France, out of which the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri have been framed as slaveholding states. In 1819 the cession of Florida was made, adding more slaveholding territory. – And lastly, Texas, great and vast and illimitable Texas, was added to the Union as a slave state in 1845.

Then he explained why the geography of California and New Mexico forbade slavery. Throughout his long address, which lasted for three hours and eleven minutes, Webster coaxed his listeners into the mood of compromise. Jefferson Davis, the Senator from Mississippi who was to become the President of the Confederate States of America, heard him say:

To break up this great government? To dismember this great country? To astonish Europe with an act of folly? No, sir! No, Sir! THERE WILL BE NO SECESSION.

After months of debate Congress accepted the Compromise of 1850. The most important terms were:

1. California was admitted as a free state.
2. New Mexico and Utah were organized as territories, with permission to enter the Union as slave or free states

- according to the vote of the people.
3. A fugitive slave law was passed permitting runaway slaves to be captured in any state or territory of the Union and returned to their masters.
  4. The slave trade was abolished in the District of Columbia.

Thus the northerners won California as a free state and the abolition of the slave trade in the national capital. The southerners won popular sovereignty for New Mexico (the people of the state could vote whether to be a free or slave state) and a law to force the return of runaway slaves.

The compromise did not settle the slavery feud over western territory. The demand for an established government in Kansas and Nebraska continued the battle over lands in the West. Should they be slave or free? In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed, providing for popular

sovereignty in Kansas and Nebraska. By the Missouri Compromise Congress had forbidden slavery north of the southern boundary of Missouri. Now it was allowing the settlers in this territory to decide for themselves. The political storm broke with renewed fury, not only in the halls of Congress but in the towns and villages across the nation.

Instead of solving the slavery question, the Kansas-Nebraska Act led to actual war in Kansas. Emigration societies of free men were rushed into Kansas by people who wanted the territory to be free. Slaveholders from the neighboring state of Missouri crossed the border in large bands, determined to win the country. Two governments were set up, one slave and one free. This led to such violent fighting that the territory became known as "Bleeding Kansas." If the slavery question had been

#### "BLEEDING KANSAS"

Settlers moved into Kansas from both slave and free states trying to gain control of the new territory. This sketch depicts a "massacre" on May 19, 1858.

*The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka*



argued only on the floors of Congress, there might have been more compromises. After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the pressure of public opinion overwhelmed the lawmakers.

The Dred Scott decision handed down by the Supreme Court in 1857 increased the tension that the Kansas-Nebraska Act had been intended to ease. Dred Scott, a Negro slave, belonged to a surgeon in the United States Army. In 1834 the doctor was transferred from the state of Missouri, slave territory, to the military post at Rock Island, Illinois, free under the Ordinance of 1787. Scott sued for his freedom upon the grounds that his residence in free territory made him a free man. For over twenty years the case dragged through the courts until it reached the highest court in the nation. The Supreme Court judges decided that the Ordinance of 1787, which preceded the Constitution, "could not operate of itself to confer freedom or citizenship within the Northwest Territory on Negroes not citizens of the United States." This decision, a victory for the South, incensed the North where anti-slavery agitation was gaining ground.

## OPPOSITION TO SLAVERY INCREASES

THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW of the Compromise of 1850 turned thousands of law-abiding citizens into law-breaking citizens. Some northerners hid escaping slaves in haystacks, barns, and cellars during the day. They sent the runaways out at night to travel to another protector until the fugitives reached the Canadian line. This plan for aiding runaway slaves was known as the "underground railroad."

At a meeting in Boston, Wendell Phillips said to his audience:

We will, ourselves, trample this accursed Fugitive Slave Law under foot.

Societies had been formed to abolish slavery before the United States became a nation. However, the abolitionists did not become a serious threat to the slave system until the time of the great compromises to preserve the Union. Sometimes, near riots occurred when meetings were held even in private homes. Magazines appeared such as *The Emancipator* in Tennessee, *The Liberalist* in Louisiana, *The Weekly Emancipator* in New York, and *The Liberator* in Boston. There were many abolitionists in the South as well as in the North. William Lloyd Garrison, who published *The Liberator*, became the leader of the antislavery movement.

Poets also joined the abolitionists and wrote poems against slavery. John G. Whittier's verses exposing the abuses of slavery won many members for societies of abolitionists. Since the Negroes in Virginia and the border states lived in dread of being sold farther south to work in the flooded rice fields, Whittier wrote:

Gone, gone, — sold and gone,  
To the rice-swamp dank and lone,  
From Virginia's hills and waters;  
Woe is me, my stolen daughters!

Copies of the song, "My Darling Nelly Gray," had a place on reed organs and square pianos. It was a popular song on moonlit hayrides and summer picnics. Who did not pity Nelly Gray?

Of all the books written on slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe was the one most widely read.

Although it was a novel, the people who read it thought of it as a true story and not fiction. The furor created by this book fanned the flame of indignation that finally took the slavery problem out of the lawmakers' hands. The issue went to the people. As the breach widened between the North and the South, war loomed again on the horizon.

## THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IS STARTED

FINALLY THE PEOPLE in the North grew weary of talking and writing against slavery. They wanted to VOTE against it. In many towns from Boston to Chicago citizens met to form a party opposed to the extension of slavery. In 1856 this new party, called "Republican," held its first national convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All of the free states, except California, sent delegates who voted for a platform pledged to prevent the spread of slavery. John C. Fremont, the great western explorer, was nominated for President, and accepted by letter, July 6, 1856. His opponent was James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, nominated by the Democratic Party at its national convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. Buchanan won the election although the new Republican Party showed unexpected strength.

Six years before the South had lost its strongest champion, John C. Calhoun. He had fought in Congress for what he thought was right and just under the Constitution. Defiant to the end, he had struggled to his seat in the Senate to hear Webster's famous Seventh-of-March speech in 1850. A few weeks later the great southerner was dead. Both Webster and Clay walked beside his

coffin, their heads bowed in grief and respect. In two more years the famed compromisers were gone and no men rose to take their places. The days of compacts with slavery were also gone.

In 1860 the northerners wanted a President who would openly oppose the extension of slavery and vow to preserve the Union. Who? There were a number of learned men in the East from whom to choose a candidate. The new Republican Party, however, nominated Abraham Lincoln, reared in poverty, and educated without schools. While still a lad, Lincoln had migrated from the slave state of Kentucky to the free state of Indiana. Later he moved into Illinois and settled in Springfield where he practiced law. His neighbors nicknamed him "Honest Abe" and elected him to represent them in the state legislature.

Not until 1858 did the lawyer from Springfield, Illinois become a national figure. In that year Lincoln was a Republican candidate for the United States Senate. Stephen A. Douglas was the Democratic nominee. Lincoln challenged his opponent to a series of debates on the slavery question, to be held in towns of northern, central, and southern Illinois. The two men were opposites. Douglas was short and stocky, less than five feet tall. Lincoln, towering over six feet, was lean and gawky. Douglas was a master of oratory and debate and a Congressman of note. Lincoln had a friendly way of chatting, neighbor to neighbor, that won the confidence of his listeners. He was little known outside his own home state.

Traveling in wagons over dusty prairie roads, on horseback through narrow woodland trails, and on railroad trains from nearby towns and neighboring states, the

people gathered to hear these two men debate the question of the hour. When Lincoln accepted the Republican nomination for the Senate on June 16, 1858 in Springfield, he spoke to the convention:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free.

Douglas used this statement as a slogan. He argued that Lincoln advocated a war of the North against the South, to be carried on until one or the other won and every state in the Union was either all slave or all free. Lincoln did not back down. He cited the failure of the doctrine of popular sovereignty when public opinion did not support it in actual practice.

Douglas put on a big show that pulled in the crowds to hear these debates. He traveled on a private train from Chicago to Springfield. Cannon were mounted on flatcars. The coaches were filled with companies of militia and dozens of admirers. Welcoming committees escorted him into towns while guns fired salutes to announce his arrival. Editors of the big eastern newspapers sent reporters to cover the debates. Their copy was printed under such headlines as "The Little Giant Triumphant." They wrote about the great crowds – ten thousand at Bloomington, eighteen thousand at Galesburg, twenty thousand at Ottawa – crowds too large for any town hall. The meetings were held in public squares and in shady picnic groves. Wherever Douglas went, his trains, hacks, and hotels were swathed in banners labeled "Popular Sovereignty." Stephen A. Douglas, the popular hero, gathered the throngs that also heard his little known opponent, Abraham Lincoln..

The dapper Senator was a forceful orator

with years of experience in public speaking. The lanky frontiersman was ill at ease on the platform. His voice was somewhat shrill and his gestures were often awkward. However, as the debates continued, people began to realize that Douglas had met his match in the "six-footer" from Springfield. Lincoln punctured the theory of popular sovereignty. He cited the failure of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which had been framed by Douglas. By permitting the citizens of a territory to vote a state slave or free, the act had led to chaos and bloodshed.

At that time Senators were chosen by state legislatures. (Not until 1913, when the Seventeenth Amendment went into effect, were Senators elected by the direct vote of the people.) In 1858 fifty-four members of the Illinois legislature voted for Douglas and forty-six for Lincoln. Although "the Little Giant" went back to the Senate, these debates made Lincoln a candidate for a higher office. The new Republican Party, casting about for a leader who could win the people's trust, selected Honest Abe.

When the votes were counted in November, 1860, Abraham Lincoln, farmer, rail-splitter, grocery clerk, river boatman, lawyer, was chosen as the next President of the United States, to succeed James Buchanan.

The nomination and election of the Republican Party's candidate sent panic through the southern states. They felt that the new party would have no understanding of the needs of the South. The Republicans had declared they would forbid further uses of rich western land for slave labor. Once Lincoln was in office, the southerners knew they could never muster enough votes in Congress to

get laws passed that would preserve their way of living. They felt that the only thing left for them to do was to get out of the Union.

On the fourth of February, 1861, representatives from South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana met in Montgomery, capital of Alabama, to proclaim a new nation, THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA. Jefferson Davis of Mississippi was chosen President, and Alexander H. Stevens from Georgia, Vice President. On February 18, in front of the Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, Jefferson Davis made his inaugural address:

Our present political position has been achieved in a manner unprecedented in the history of nations. It illustrates the American idea that governments rest on the consent of the governed, and that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish them at will whenever they become destructive of the ends for which they were established.

On the last day of February, 1861, the Committee on Permanent Constitution made its report. The new government for the new nation was modeled on the Constitution of the United States, framed in 1787:

#### THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA

We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting for itself, and in its sovereign and independent character, in order to form a permanent federal government, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity — to which ends we invoke the favor and guidance of Almighty God — do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Confederate States of America.

After debate in the Confederate Congress, this Constitution was adopted on March 11, 1861, only a week after Lincoln was inaugurated as President of the United States. When Lincoln laid his right hand on the Bible and repeated his oath of office, he became the head of “a house divided against itself.” The country was divided into two separate nations. The Union did not exist.

What would Lincoln say in his speech? Crowds blocked the streets in front of newspaper offices in towns and cities. Messengers astride fleet ponies gathered at stations out west, ready to carry his words to remote places in Oregon, Texas, and California. The whole country waited breathlessly for Lincoln’s inaugural address. What would he tell the southerners? He said:

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it.

Both Lincoln and Davis were born in log cabins on Kentucky farms, about eighty miles apart. Both left the state as small children, one going north, and the other going south. The Lincolns moved to Indiana and then to Illinois. The Davis family, which had come to Kentucky from Georgia after the Revolutionary War, went first to Louisiana before settling on a cotton farm in Mississippi. Although both started their schooling in log cabins on the frontier, Lincoln was self-taught and Davis was graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point. Both fought in the Black Hawk War. As a Colonel in the United States Army, Davis

fought in the Mexican War and was wounded in the Battle of Buena Vista. Both Lincoln and Davis served in the House of Representatives. Stephen A. Douglas defeated Lincoln for a seat in the Senate, another of which was won by Davis, who resigned when his home state of Mississippi seceded from the Union. These two Kentuckians, born in

log cabins, were now rival presidents of two nations on the verge of war in 1861.

**MAP:**

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*Atlas of American History* by Edgar B. Wesley