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Setting the Stage for War



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Many events led to the Civil War in the United States. The Civil War was fought over the issue of secession. **Secession** is the withdrawal of a state from the Union. The southern states (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas) wanted to secede from the United States. They wanted to form a new country that was independent from the United States.

States' Rights

Slavery was at the root of many of the problems between the North and the South. The southern states wanted to follow their own laws. They did not want federal laws to overrule the laws of states.

The people of the Missouri Territory wanted to join the United States as the next state. People in Missouri wanted slavery to be legal. However, abolitionists from the North did not want slavery to expand. An **abolitionist** is a person opposed to slavery and in favor of ending it. A compromise was reached that allowed Missouri to become a state.

The **Missouri Compromise** of 1820 was an agreement between the North and South about slavery in new states. The United States had an equal number of states where slavery was legal and illegal. The northern states wanted Missouri to be a state, but only if slavery were illegal there. Since Missourians wanted slavery, the compromise sought a balance of slave and non-slave states. Missouri joined as a slave state, while Maine joined as a non-slave state. The compromise also banned slavery above the parallel 36° 30' north in the Louisiana Purchase.

The Tariffs of 1828 and 1832

The Tariff of 1828 caused even more division in the country. A **tariff** is a tax on foreign goods. The tariff was put in place to protect northern factories from foreign competition. The South was buying goods from Britain, which were cheaper than those from the North. The tariff would force the South to buy northern goods.

The Tariff of 1828 led to discussions in the South about nullification. **Nullification** is the argument that a state has the right not to follow a federal law. The state of South Carolina wanted to ignore the tariff. By 1832, Congress slightly modified the Tariff of 1828 to appease the southern states. However, the people of South Carolina were still outraged with the federal government for taxing their main supply of goods.

The people of the state planned to use force to stop federal tax collectors. President *Andrew Jackson* said that he would use the army in South Carolina to collect the tariff, forcing the state to comply with federal law. Jackson called on Congress to pass a Force Bill giving Jackson the authority to use military force to collect taxes. Congress did pass the Force Bill, but it also passed a bill to reduce tariffs over a ten-year period. The compromise tariff bill satisfied South Carolina and averted crisis for a short time.

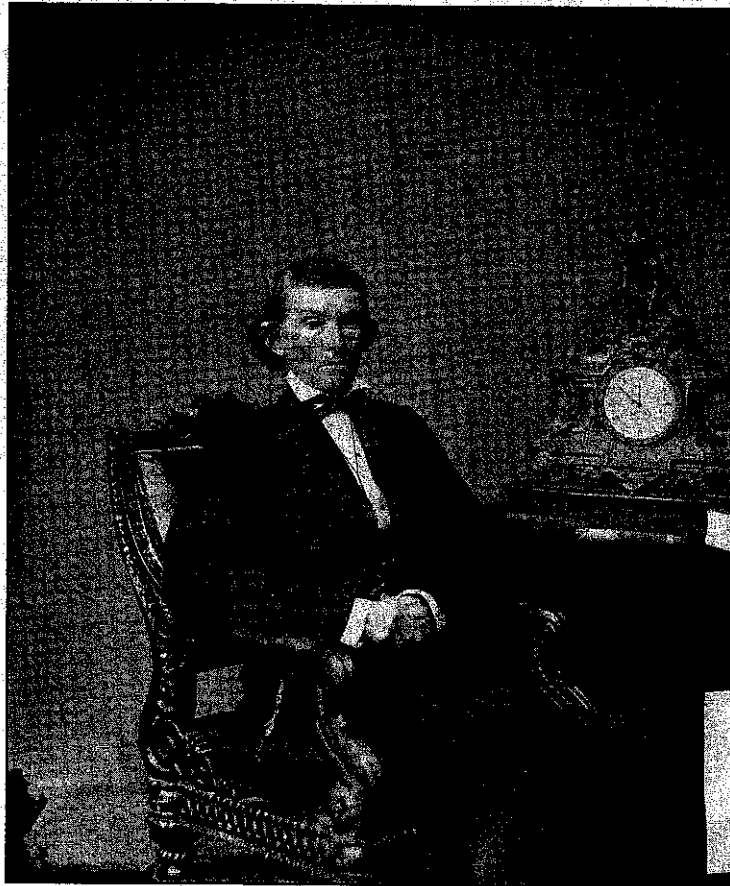
Compromise of 1850

California and Texas both wanted to become states. Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Nevada would soon want to be states as well. The existing states, however, could not agree on the issue of slavery. A balance was struck again by making California a free state and Texas a slave state. This was known as the **Compromise of 1850**. A series of laws were fought in Congress for eight months and consisted of five compromises. These laws were made to keep the balance between slave and non-slave states.

In addition to the admittance of California and Texas as states, the compromise included the **Fugitive Slave Act**. This act said that all states must return enslaved people that had fled back to their owners. The compromise also prohibited the slave trade in Washington, D.C.

Georgia Platform

The state of Georgia held a convention in Milledgeville, to debate the Compromise of 1850. A proclamation was adopted called the **Georgia Platform**. Georgians wanted the North to support the Fugitive Slave Act and to stop trying to ban slavery in new states. *Alexander Stephens* was one of three representatives from Georgia who supported the Union. He argued that the Compromise of 1850 should be upheld. Stephens's arguments led to the Georgia Platform being written in support of the Compromise of 1850. Georgia was credited by many around the country with preventing war and secession.



Alexander Stephens was Georgia's representative in Congress, and eventually, vice president of the Confederacy.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

The **Kansas-Nebraska Act** of 1854 was similar to the Compromise of 1850 and the Missouri Compromise. Again, the North and South argued over how slavery should be handled in new states. Kansas and Nebraska were one large territory at that time. The borders of the two new states were drawn as part of a compromise. One state would allow slavery and one would not. The vote of the people of each state would decide the issue. This policy was called **popular sovereignty**.

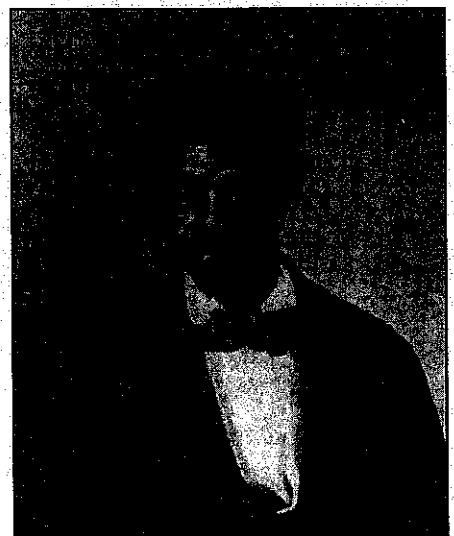
An election was held in Kansas to decide the issue of slavery in the state. Anti-slavery forces banded together and moved into Kansas to sway the results of the election for a slave-free Kansas. Proslavery advocates also crossed the Missouri border into Kansas to ensure slavery rights. The situation turned violent as both factions fought to control the slave vote. The crisis became known as **Bleeding Kansas**.

Kansas was voted to be a slave state in 1857. However, the U.S. Congress rejected the results and a new election was held in Kansas. The abolitionists won the second election. Kansas declared itself a free state, or one that would not allow slavery. It joined the United States in 1861.

Dred Scott

The trials of *Dred Scott* increased the divisions in the United States. Dred Scott was an African American born into slavery in Virginia, in 1799. Scott traveled with his owner through Illinois and Wisconsin where slavery was illegal. He lived in free territory for over nine years. Missouri's law stated that once a man was free for any amount of time, he was free for life. In 1846, Dred Scott went to court in Missouri to win his freedom. In the famous court case *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, Scott argued that he had been a free man while traveling through Illinois and Wisconsin, so he should be able to live as a free man in Missouri.

Scott lost his first case. He appealed his case to a higher court in 1850 and won. The case was appealed again by the Missouri Supreme Court. Scott's victory was overturned there. Dred Scott and his lawyers took their case to the state of New York where they once again lost. They appealed this loss, and the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled against Scott. The cases received news coverage throughout the country and caused people to debate the issue.

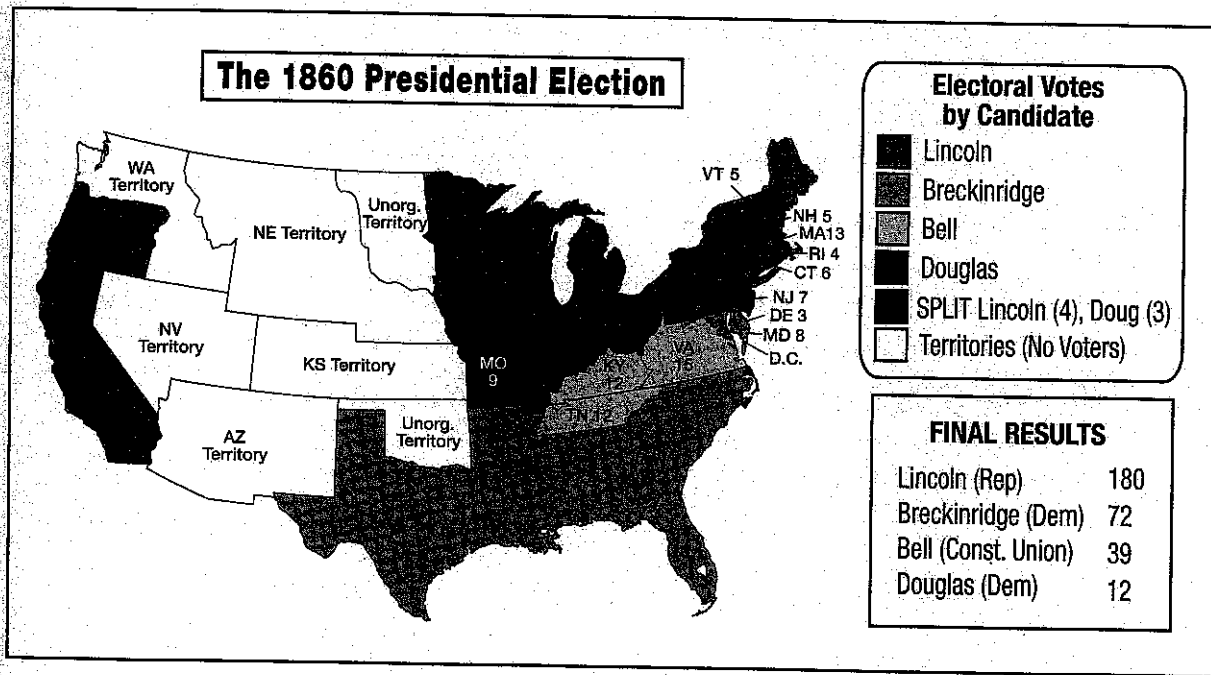


Dred Scott's trials divided the country before the Civil War.

Election of 1860 and Secession

A new political party formed after the Dred Scott case, called the Republican Party. It took an anti-slavery position. In the 1860 presidential election, its candidate was *Abraham Lincoln*. He was an abolitionist and supported Dred Scott's desire for freedom. Lincoln said he would try to end the spread of slavery. Lincoln won the election in November 1860, without the support of southern states.

Lincoln's victory caused the southern states to hold conventions on secession. South Carolina was the first state to vote for secession. The Georgia Secession Convention was held in 1861, in Milledgeville. It was the fifth southern state to hold such a convention. The powers and rights of states versus the federal government were debated. *Alexander Stephens* called for the south to remain loyal to the Union. He voted against secession. However, Georgia voted to secede from the Union. On January 21, 1861, Georgia officially seceded from the United States. Georgians participated in the creation of the new southern Confederate government including Alexander Stephens who served as vice president to the new government.



Lesson Practice

DIRECTIONS

Circle the letter of the best answer for each item.

Thinking It Through

1. The term "popular sovereignty" describes

- A. abolitionism.
- B. the right of states to vote on laws.
- C. the right of the federal government to nullify laws.
- D. the nullification of tariffs.

The term popular sovereignty was coined when Kansas and Nebraska had to vote to decide their position on slavery.

2. Which of the following is described by the statements in the box below?

- Maine had to agree to outlaw slavery.
- Territories wanted to become new states.
- Abolitionists wanted to change the laws.

- A. Tariff of 1832
- B. Georgia Platform
- C. Kansas-Nebraska Act
- D. Missouri Compromise

HINT

Northern states and southern states had to agree to balance slave and non-slave states.

3. Which statement BEST describes the outcome of the Dred Scott case?

- A. The New York court system changed the laws of Missouri.
- B. Missouri granted Scott the right to be free.
- C. The U.S. Supreme Court decided against Scott.
- D. The U.S. Supreme Court sent the case back to the Missouri Supreme Court.

4. In what way is the Kansas-Nebraska Act similar to both the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850?

- A. Each was concerned with tariffs.
- B. Each decided the legality of slavery in new states.
- C. Each was written to end the Civil War.
- D. Each was written by Alexander Stephens.