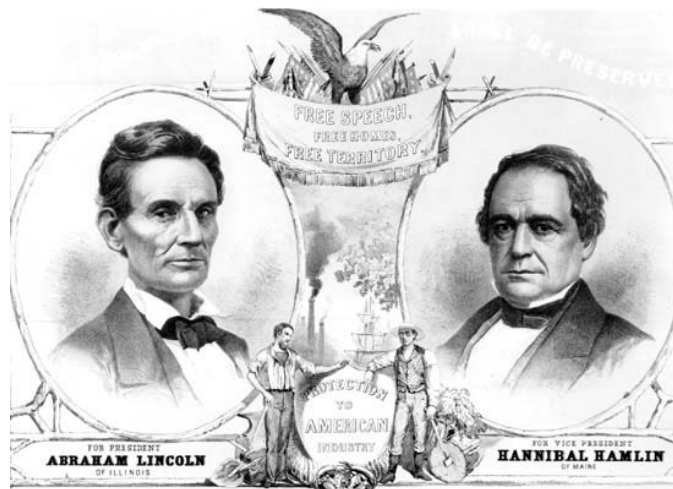


Slavery and the Civil War

THE ELECTION OF 1860

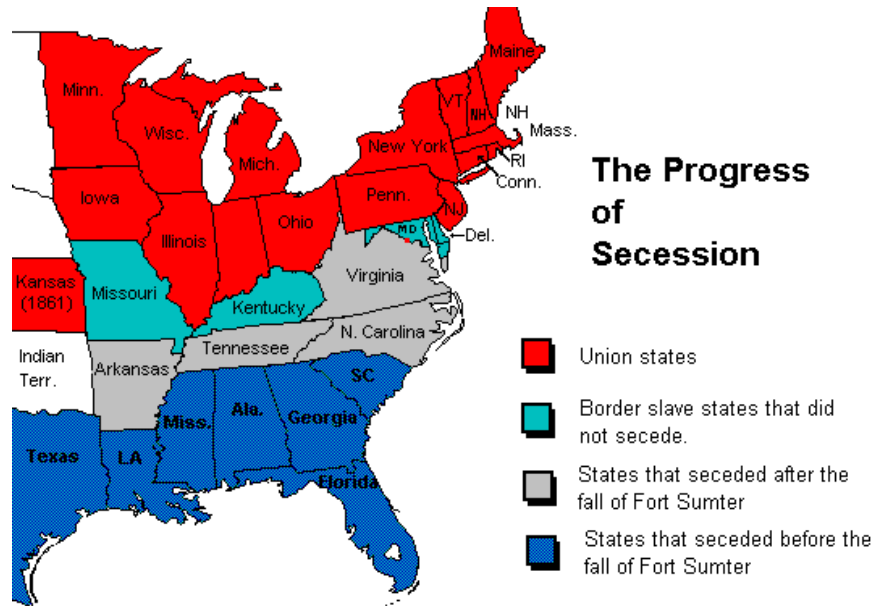
By 1860 the issue of slavery had weakened America's principles of freedom. 1860 was a Presidential election year. **Abraham Lincoln** was the Republican party nomination. The Democratic Party was split and had two candidates. Representing the Northern Wing was **Stephen A. Douglas**. The candidate from the Southern Wing was **John C. Breckinridge**. The third national party, The Whigs, were so weak because of deserting members, had to split up into a conservative Whig Wing. They were forced to align with the **Know-Nothing Party** and formed a new party called the **Constitutional Union Party**. Their candidate for President was **John Bell**.



Lincoln's Presidential Campaign Poster

Abraham Lincoln won the election easily on November 6, 1860 due to the unity on party issues within the Republican Party. Lincoln became the 16th President of the United States. Most of his votes came from the Northern States. Prior to the election, Lincoln had built a reputation as an opponent of slavery. The South made it known that if Lincoln was elected then there would be a split within the United States. On **December 20, 1860, the secession of the Southern States began**. South Carolina was the first to break away and then in January 1861, the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi followed South Carolina.

A separate Union within the United States was created. It was called the **Confederate States of America**. Before the end of February, five other states joined this Confederacy. They were Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.



When Abraham Lincoln took office on March 4, 1861 - the United States was a divided country with slavery as the major issue before the Republic.

The South moved fast and decided to seize U.S. Federal forts within their jurisdiction. **Fort Sumter** in Charleston Harbor was considered a Union stronghold. Lincoln saw its importance and began to reinforce and provide stronger protection for Fort Sumter. Lincoln's actions to strengthen the fort now meant that it had to be captured by force by the Confederates. The firing on Fort Sumter **on April 12, 1861** was the start of the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln had been in office only one month

THE CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)

The disunity of the states escalated into one of America's most dreadful and bloody wars. Lincoln's first actions as President were to preserve the Union at all costs. In a speech before Congress President Lincoln adamantly stated, "*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*"

Earlier, in 1858, Lincoln had stated that, "*I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free.*"

At the outset of the Civil War, both northern Whites and free Blacks came forward to join the Union Army. Right from the start of the war, both black slaves and freeman saw this opportunity to serve in the military as a way to relinquish their chains and prove their worthiness to the nation.

Many black slaves in the South remained with their masters and assisted them on the side of the Confederacy. Despite these acts of patriotism, there was widespread resistance by whites on both the Union "blue" and Confederate "gray" sides in accepting Blacks as part of the military.

At the start of the war Lincoln rejected the participation of Blacks in the Union Army. He did not want to alienate the border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Their white people still owned slaves but were loyal to the Union. In 1863, West Virginia became a state and chose to stay in the Union.

There were also many anti-abolitionist groups in the North who felt this war should not involve Blacks. The Union Secretary of War issued a statement: *"This Department has no intention at the present to call into service of the government any colored soldiers."* However, as the bloody war progressed, many slaves *"flocked to the Union lines seeking freedom."*

Slaves, by the hundreds, were crossing into Union territory, and were placed in "contraband camps." The need for able-bodied fighting men soon led individual states to swear them into the military and create separate regiments of all black troops. Other Blacks were enlisted as volunteers in semi-military or military support positions. It was not until August of 1862 that Blacks received the endorsement of Congress to serve in the Civil War. "Congress revoked the militia laws banning Blacks" from serving in the Union Army. Despite Congressional approval, there was still a great deal of confusion about Blacks fighting for the North.

When Abraham Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863, "freeing all slaves in areas still in rebellion," all male, ex-slaves were then given their formal right to enlist in the U.S. Union Armed Forces. The casualties on both sides of the war were climbing. More soldiers were needed by both sides. Lincoln's Union Army was in desperate need of a major victory over the South. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation only freed those states in the Confederacy, the Union army was set to receive badly needed recruits.



On May 1, 1863, the War Department created the **Bureau of Colored Troops**. Their job was to handle the recruitment and organization of all black regiments. These units were known as the United States Colored Troops. Unfortunately, there was much doubt as to their competency, loyalty, and bravery. These regiments were always under close scrutiny.

These newly formed Black Regiments had White officers as their commanders. Sometimes acceptance of ex-slaves by these commanders was not always positive. One exception was the valor displayed by the **54th All Black Infantry Regiment** out of Boston, Massachusetts. After months of “dirty work” within the Union Army and not being allowed into combat, they were the leading regiment in the charge to capture Fort Wagner. The first African-American medal of Honor was awarded to William Carney of this 54th Infantry Regiment. More than 300 African-Americans died at the Fort Wagner assault.



By the end of the Civil War over 186,000 men of African descent had joined the United States Armed Forces. Over 38,000 died in an effort to be part of America's freedom. By the end of the war, twenty-four black soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In total, 620,000 troops were killed during the Civil War. The Union army lost 360,000 men, the Confederate army losing about 260,000.

The Civil War ended April 9, 1865.

THE RECONSTRUCTION (1865-1877)

After the war, America, especially the South, had to be rebuilt. The South still had a hostile resistance toward African-Americans. In 1868, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution confirmed the long awaited citizenship for Blacks in America. By 1870, the 15th Amendment was added to the Constitution. It was now illegal to deny the right the vote based on race.



Richmond at the end of the Civil War

Reconstruction, although short-lived, showed the first real attempts of inclusive freedom for African-Americans. Gains were taking place: Citizenship, Voting, Education, and Politics.

In later years, that freedom became more restrictive with the creation of the Jim Crow Laws. American saw new forms of racial discrimination, and the denial of equal protection under the law. The Journey from Slavery to Freedom only opened the door halfway. 1877, the end of Reconstruction was only the beginning of a long journey for African Americans.