

18.6 "Bleeding Kansas"

Tensions between the North and the South became even worse as the territories of Kansas and Nebraska prepared to become states. Both territories were north of latitude $36^{\circ}30'$. According to the Missouri Compromise, both should have become free states. But, in 1854, Congress changed the rules by passing the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

This new law allowed people in the two territories to elect representatives to write state constitutions. The constitutions could either permit or forbid slavery.

Congress's action turned Kansas, the more southern territory, into a battleground over slavery. Both pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers raced to Kansas so that they could vote in the election. The two sides attacked each other with weapons as well as words. For the first time, Americans were killing each other over slavery.

On election day, the pro-slavery settlers won by a huge margin. But those who were against slavery refused to accept the results. They claimed that slavery supporters from Missouri had crossed into Kansas and voted illegally. Ignoring the election, they set up their own government in the town of Topeka.

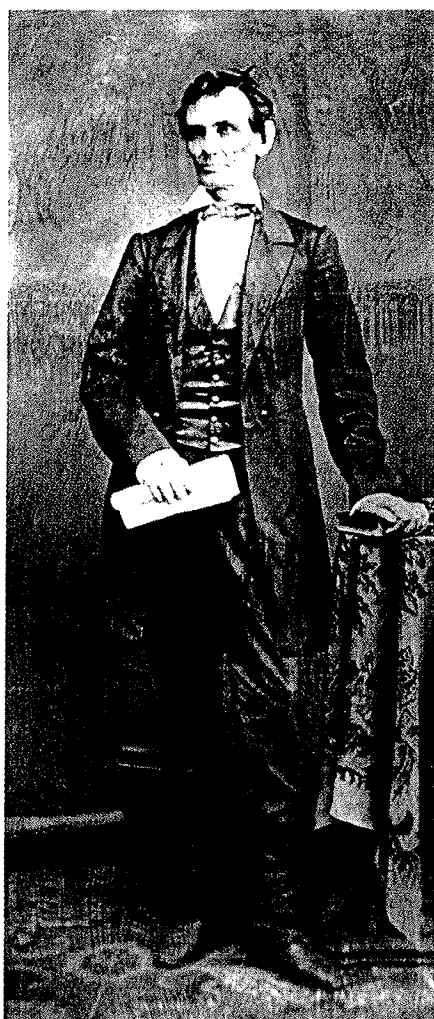
In 1856, a pro-slavery mob entered the town of Lawrence in Kansas to arrest anti-slavery leaders. The mob burned a hotel and wrecked much of the town. This attack enraged an abolitionist named John Brown. Armed with swords, Brown and a small band of followers attacked and killed five settlers at Pottawatomie Creek.

The fighting in Kansas continued throughout the summer. Abolitionists called the conflict "Bleeding Kansas." By the time federal troops restored order, 200 people had died. For many Northerners and Southerners alike, "Bleeding Kansas" showed that the time for compromise was over.



The Kansas-Nebraska Act caused bitter fighting in Kansas between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces.

Abraham Lincoln opposed the spread of slavery into new territories. When he was elected president, the South seceded from the Union.



secede: to reject the government of the United States and leave the Union

Confederates: supporters of the Confederacy, especially soldiers in the Confederate armies

18.7 The Election of Abraham Lincoln

By the time Americans voted for president in 1860, the Union was close to splitting apart over slavery. The Republican Party's candidate, Abraham Lincoln, promised to leave slavery alone in the South. But he was firmly against letting it spread into new territories. For most white Southerners, that was enough to make Lincoln an enemy. Disagreement over slavery helped to split the other major party, the Democrats, in two. With the vote against him divided among other candidates, Lincoln won the election without winning a single Southern state.

Lincoln's election alarmed Southern leaders. One by one, seven Southern states **seceded** from the Union without even waiting to see what Lincoln would do as president. To protect the right to own slaves, they joined together as the Confederate States of America, also called the *Confederacy*. Early in 1861, the Confederacy selected its own president, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi.

The Confederacy moved quickly to take over federal forts and other property in the South. Still, President Lincoln and many other Americans hoped that somehow the Union could be put back together.

Then, on April 12, 1861, **Confederates** attacked Fort Sumter, a federal fortress in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. For 33 hours, Southern cannons shelled the fort. Finally, the Union commander surrendered. The Civil War had begun.

In the South, church bells rang out in celebration. Soon, four more states joined the Confederacy. Most Southerners believed that the United States would let the South go without putting up much of a fight. Not many imagined how long, bloody, and terrible the Civil War would turn out to be.