

EVENTS LEADING TO THE CIVIL WAR

California Slave Compromise of 1850

- California applied for statehood in 1849 as a free state.
- Senators from slave and free states were evenly divided on the request.
- Henry Clay proposed several bills, which became the Compromise of 1850.
- The parts of the compromise legislation included the following:
 - California entered as a free state
 - New Fugitive Slave Act enacted
 - Abolished slave trade in Washington, D.C.
- Several congressmen played an important role in the passage of the Compromise of 1850:
 - Daniel Webster: Northern senator who spoke eloquently in favor of the legislation and was against slavery
 - John C. Calhoun: Senator from South Carolina who supported slavery
 - Henry Clay: Congressional leader who had worked on several compromises to bring North and South to an agreement

Fugitive Slave Act

- The first Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1793.
- A stricter law passed with the Compromise of 1850, which required citizens to help locate and capture fugitive slaves and refused to allow accused fugitive slaves a jury trial.
- Special judges heard the cases and were paid more if the person was convicted.
- Some free blacks were arrested, convicted, and sent into slavery although they were not fugitive slaves.
- Those who were outraged by the law were encouraged to join abolitionist groups, and abolitionist activity increased.
- Traffic on the Underground Railroad increased.

Uncle Tom's Cabin

- This book was written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. It first appeared in installments in a newspaper in 1851 and was published as a book in 1852.
- The fictional story was about a plantation where slaves tried to escape to freedom but were often abused and killed. Uncle Tom is the main character, a slave who stands up to the evil owner, Simon Legree.
- The story described slavery to people who were unaware of its horrors; many were moved to support abolition.
- Southerners complained that the book did not tell the true story of slavery and they didn't appreciate the negative way it portrayed slave owners.

Kansas-Nebraska Act

- Stephen Douglas introduced a bill to Congress in 1854 to organize western lands.
- He wanted to divide the territory west of Missouri into two territories: Kansas and Nebraska.
- The law provided a way to decide if states coming from these territories would be slave or free states; the citizens would vote and decide (also known as popular sovereignty).
- It repealed the Missouri Compromise, allowing slavery in the territory north of the 39° 43' latitude.
- Violence resulted as those for and against slavery fought to win the vote for their side. Kansas became a battlefield between the two groups, known as "Bleeding Kansas."
- The Republican Party formed and sought to stop the spread of slavery into the territories.

Dred Scott v. Sandford

- Dred Scott was a slave who moved with his master from a slave state into a territory where slavery was illegal.
- He was used as a test case by abolitionists, who sued for his freedom in 1857. They argued he could no longer be a slave since he had lived in an area where slavery was not allowed.
- The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Roger Taney, refused to hear the case:
 - Dred Scott was a slave, and he had no legal standing in the court. He had to be a citizen in order to argue his case, and the court said African descendants could not be American citizens.
 - The court also said that slaves were property of their owners, and they had to stay with their owners unless removed through due process of law (Fifth Amendment).
- Finally, the court ruled that part of the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. Congress did not have the power to prevent slavery from spreading to the western territories.
- The reaction to Dred Scott was divided:
 - Northerners were angry that a man was valued as property and had no rights.
 - Southerners celebrated a victory in their fight for slavery and states' rights.

Missouri Slave Compromise (1820)

- Congress was balanced between the number of free and slave states.
- The Senate was tied whenever a state applied for statehood, voting along geographic regions of North and South.
- Missouri applied for statehood as a slave state, which would shift the balance of power towards slavery.
- Missouri was admitted as a slave state at the same time Maine was admitted as a free state.
- Congress also set an imaginary line on the U.S. map (36° 30' line).
- Future states coming from the land north of the line would be free states
- Future states south of the line would be admitted as slave states.
- Henry Clay, known as "The Great Compromiser", was hailed for his role in resolving the conflict.
- The Missouri Compromise temporarily satisfied concerns about the spread of slavery, but would later be replaced by the Kansas-Nebraska Act and declared unconstitutional by Dred Scott v. Sandford.

John Brown's Raid

- John Brown wanted to end slavery and was willing to take drastic measures to do it.
- He had participated in the violence in Kansas after the Kansas–Nebraska Act was passed.
- In 1859, he led a group of men to an arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. (An arsenal is a storage facility for arms and ammunition.) He intended to use the weapons to attack slaveholders and arm slaves so they could fight for themselves.
- He and his followers were captured before they could get away with the weapons.
- He was tried and convicted of treason. He was hung as punishment.
- His execution was viewed as a martyr's death by Northerners, who saw his attempts to end slavery as heroic. He was honored in many ways.
- Southerners were appalled at the North's reaction to a man who had intended to kill them and take away their slaves, whom they considered their property.
- Southerners began to arm themselves in preparation for future insurrections.

Election of 1860

- Four men ran for president in 1860:
 - Abraham Lincoln, Republican
 - Stephen Douglas, Democrat (supported by Northern Democrats)
 - John Breckinridge, Democrat (supported by Southern Democrats)
 - John Bell of Tennessee, Independent (Constitutional Union Party)
- The popular and electoral votes were placed on sectional lines. Lincoln received only 40 percent of the popular vote, but he won a majority of the electoral votes and was elected president. However, he didn't win any Southern states.
- Southern states did not want to live under a president who they feared would abolish slavery, so they began to secede from the Union. South Carolina was first to leave in December 1860.