

Causes of the Civil War Timeline

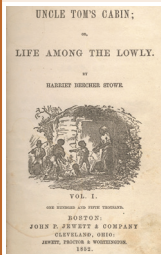
The Civil War began in 1861, but tensions between the North and South started much earlier. As new states joined the United States, the debate over slavery further divided the nation. Southern "slave states" wanted new states to legalize slavery, but northern "free states" wanted to end slavery. By the 1860s, the country was reaching a boiling point. The timeline below shows several of the key events that led to the outbreak of war.

The Missouri Compromise

1820

In an effort to keep a balance between free and slave states, Missouri joined the U.S. as a slave state and Maine joined as a free state. The remaining western territory was divided. Slavery was allowed south of the dividing line and prohibited north of it. The compromise was a temporary solution that both sides worried would not hold.

Uncle Tom's Cabin



Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel described the lives of enslaved people in the South with disturbing details. It sparked heated discussions. The book opened many people's eyes to the horrors of slavery. However, many Southerners protested that Stowe's depiction of slavery was not accurate.

1852

John Brown's Raid



John Brown was an abolitionist who led several uprisings to fight against slavery. Brown and his followers invaded Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and took 60 people hostage. Brown was captured and hanged for treason a month later. Northern abolitionists admired his mission and thought he died a hero. Many Southerners were frightened by Brown's violent tactics.

1859

Fort Sumter Attack

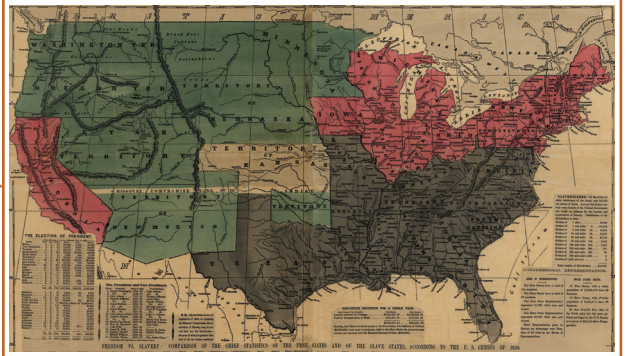
When Southern states left the Union, several military outposts in the South were at risk. President Lincoln sent ships to secure Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. On April 12, 1861, Confederate warships started a 34-hour battle and captured Fort Sumter. It was the beginning of the Civil War.



1861

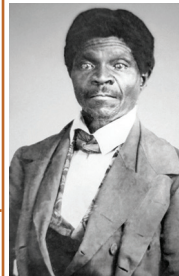
Compromise of 1850

The western territory of California included both free and slave areas. When Congress allowed California to become a free state, the slave states wanted something in return. So, Congress passed a compromise including the Fugitive Slave Law. This strict law required Northerners to return enslaved people who tried to escape. Northern anger over the brutality of this law increased calls to abolish slavery.



1850

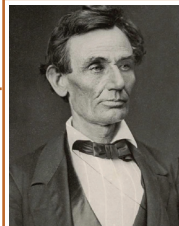
The Dred Scott Decision



Dred Scott was an enslaved man who sued for his freedom. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that enslaved people were property and that they remained enslaved even if taken to free states and territories. Many Northerners were frustrated that the Court's decision would make ending slavery more difficult.

1857

Presidential Election



Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860. Southern states were convinced that Lincoln would abolish slavery. After the election, some Southern states took actions to leave the Union and form the Confederate States of America.

1860