

Section 1

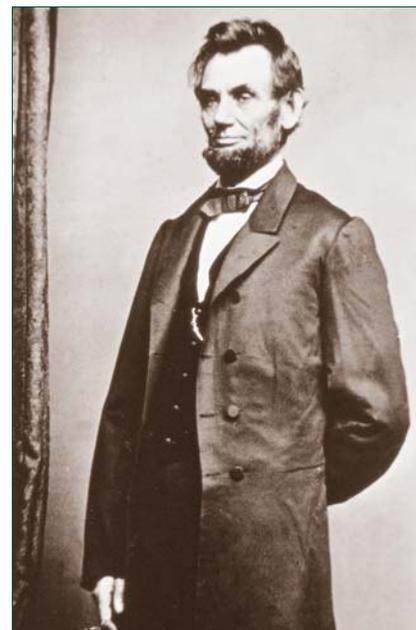
The Road to War

As you read, look for:

- the results of the election of 1860,
- the steps leading to Louisiana’s secession,
- the ways in which Louisiana prepared for the war, and
- vocabulary terms **states’ rights**, **Missouri Compromise**, **Compromise of 1850**, **abolitionists**, **secession**, **propaganda**, **Confederate States of America**, **enlist**, **bounty**, and **conscription**.

The Civil War came after years of struggle over the issues of slavery and states’ rights. People who believed in the doctrine of **states’ rights** believed that the states could block or overrule actions of the federal government. Some supporters of states’ rights also believed that states had the right to leave the Union.

Louisiana’s political leaders hoped the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850 would protect slavery and preserve the Union. But the state’s planters saw the increasing pressure from abolitionists as an economic threat. Louisiana, like the other southern states, could not see the desolation that lay ahead when it entered a war expected to last only a few weeks.



Above: Abraham Lincoln’s election as president in 1860 drew the nation closer to war.

Figure 23 Timeline: 1860–1865



<p>1860</p> <p>1860 Lincoln elected president</p>	<p>1861</p> <p>1861 Battle of Bull Run</p>	<p>1862</p> <p>1862 Battle of Shiloh</p>	<p>1863</p> <p>1863 Battle of Gettysburg</p>	<p>1864</p> <p>1864 Lincoln re-elected</p>	<p>1865</p> <p>1865 Lee surrendered to Grant (April) Confederates surrendered at Shreveport (June)</p>
<p>1861</p> <p>1861 Louisiana seceded (January) Louisiana joined the Confederacy (March) Civil War began (April) Union forces blockaded New Orleans (May)</p>	<p>1862</p> <p>1862 Union Army took New Orleans (April) Capital moved to Opelousas (May)</p>	<p>1863</p> <p>1863 Confederate government moved to Shreveport (January) Confederates surrendered Vicksburg and Port Hudson (July)</p>	<p>1864</p> <p>1864 Battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill (April)</p>	<p>1865</p> <p>1865 Lee surrendered to Grant (April) Confederates surrendered at Shreveport (June)</p>	

The Election of 1860

The pressure of the slavery issue split the Democratic Party convention wide open and led to a presidential election in 1860 with four candidates. Northern delegates to the Democratic Party convention supported Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, but the southern Democrats disagreed with his position on slavery. The extremists among the southern Democrats, labeled “fire-eaters” because of their strong speeches, led a walkout at the convention. They then held their own convention and named John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky as their candidate.

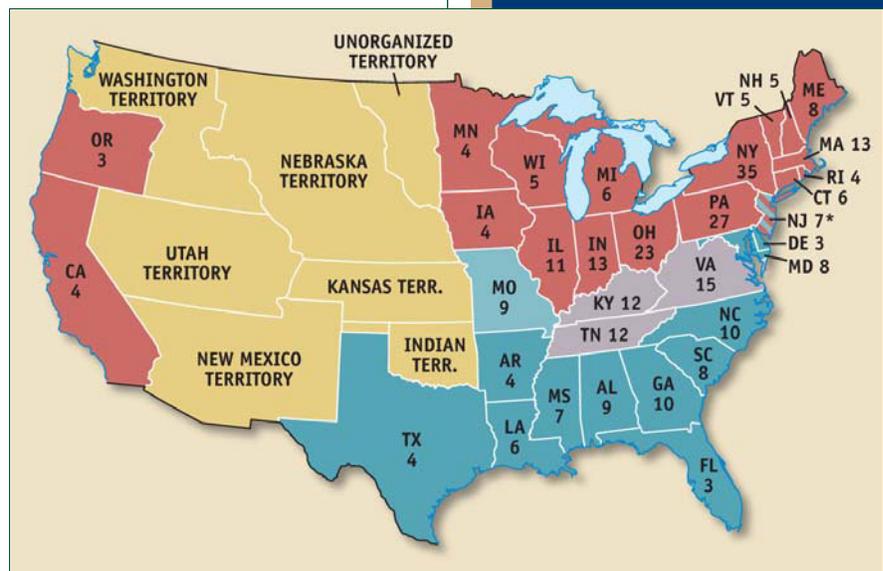
Another faction of southerners, which included many former Whigs, hoped to preserve the Union. They formed the Constitutional Union Party and nominated John C. Bell of Tennessee for president. The Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, who was a moderate compromise candidate.

The election of 1860 was like a dress rehearsal for the coming conflict. Abraham Lincoln said, “You think slavery is right and ought to be extended. We think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. . . . It is certainly the only difference between us.” Southerners heard this as the words of an abolitionist. Lincoln had actually said that he would not interfere with slavery where it already existed.

The split among the Democrats handed the Republicans the victory. To southerners, a Republican was the enemy and a threat to their way of life. The Republican Party did not even exist in Louisiana, so Lincoln’s name was not on the ballot. The new president of the United States had not received one vote in the state.

Map 32 The Election of 1860

Map Skill: What candidate won Louisiana?



KEY:

- John Bell
- John C. Breckinridge
- Stephen A. Douglas
- Abraham Lincoln
- 4 Electoral Votes

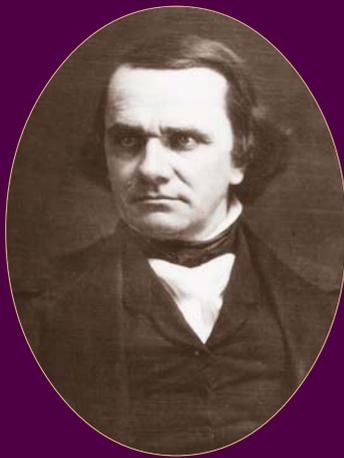
*New Jersey’s electoral votes were split between Lincoln and Douglas.

Figure 24
The 1860 Election in Louisiana

Candidate	Votes	Percentage
John Bell (Constitutional Union)	20,204	40.0
John C. Breckinridge (Southern Democrat)	22,681	44.9
Stephen A. Douglas (Democrat)	7,625	15.1
Abraham Lincoln (Republican)	-0-	-0-

Lagniappe

The *New Orleans Picayune* reported that most of the Louisiana votes for presidential candidate Stephen A. Douglas (below) were cast in Lafourche, Assumption, and Ascension parishes, and that section of the state. This was the area that depended on the sugar tariffs.



Handbill: A small printed sheet distributed by hand

Lincoln's election brought immediate reaction. One New Orleans newspaper said the Republican Party opposed the "dignity, interest and well-being of Louisiana." Another predicted, "You might as well try to breathe life into a mummy of ancient Egypt as to expect the Union to be preserved."

The South was filled with talk of **secession** (the withdrawal of a state from the Union). The cry for secession spread as quickly as a yellow fever epidemic, and the results were just as deadly. But in 1860 Louisianians could not see what lay ahead. They heard speeches loaded with words like *honor*, *self-respect*, and *principle*. They heard Lincoln labeled a "black Republican Abolitionist" who would end their way of life. In St. Charles Parish, a man was ordered to leave because he cheered Lincoln. A Boston piano manufacturer in Shreveport was advised to leave town because he was a known Lincoln supporter.

Heading to War

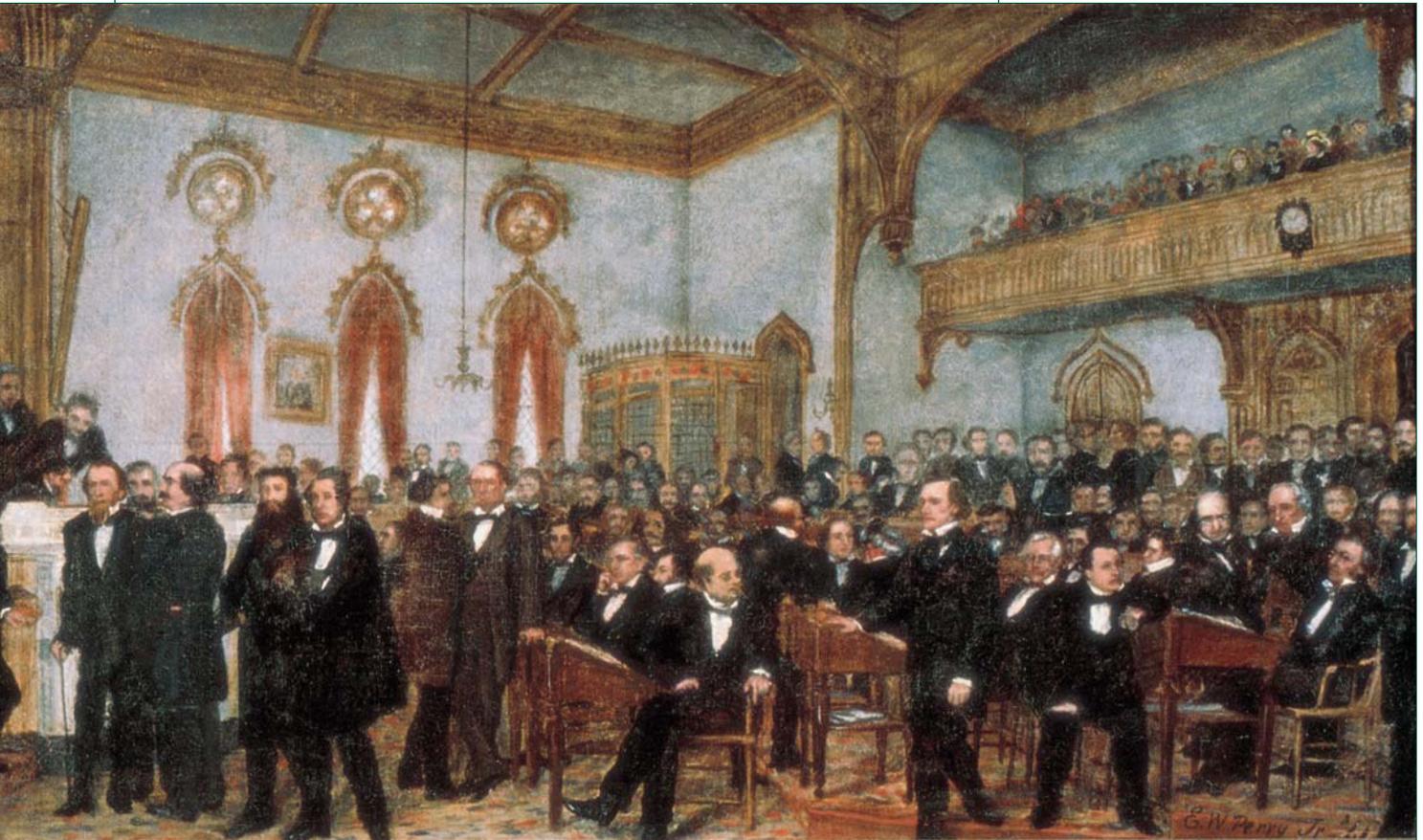
Was secession a right or was it treason? Southerners insisted that each state had the constitutional right to withdraw from the Union. In the North, some said "Let them go." But others insisted the Union formed by the U.S. Constitution could not be dissolved; secession would be treason. When he was inaugurated, President Lincoln had sworn to "preserve, protect, and defend the Union."

The election of a Republican president brought a swift reaction in Louisiana. South Carolina had seceded on December 20, 1860. Louisiana's governor and legislature called for a special convention in Baton Rouge to vote on secession in January 1861. The delegates to that convention held various views. Some wanted the state to secede immediately. Others wanted to wait to see what the other southern states did. A few announced their total opposition to secession.

Louisiana would lose much by leaving the United States. Although it was a southern plantation state, Louisiana was different in important ways. New Orleans depended on the commerce from the North, and the sugar planters needed the protective tariff the federal government enforced. The other southern states opposed tariffs because the tariffs did not help their economies.

Powerful propaganda influenced public opinion. (**Propaganda** is information that is spread for the purpose of promoting some cause.) A well-known New Orleans minister preached a sermon supporting slavery and favoring secession. His message was reprinted on handbills and distributed around the state. Some voices spoke against secession but soon realized they had no chance to be heard. Some of these people later joined the Confederacy, but others supported the Union throughout the war.





Above: The legislature debated secession then called for a special convention.

Few secessionists believed that leaving the Union would bring war. Those who did were not heeded. Richard Taylor, son of Zachary Taylor, warned that war would follow secession. The *New Orleans Picayune* warned that the only way the Union could be severed would be with a sword and a “baptism of blood.”

Even before the Secession Convention met, Governor Thomas Moore took action against the Union. The state militia seized Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip, the two forts below New Orleans on the Mississippi River. Then the governor demanded the surrender of the federal arsenal at Baton Rouge. (The *arsenal* stored weapons and supplies for the federal troops stationed in Baton Rouge.) Governor Moore justified his action to the legislature by saying he was protecting Louisiana citizens “to prevent a collision between the federal troops and the people of the state.”

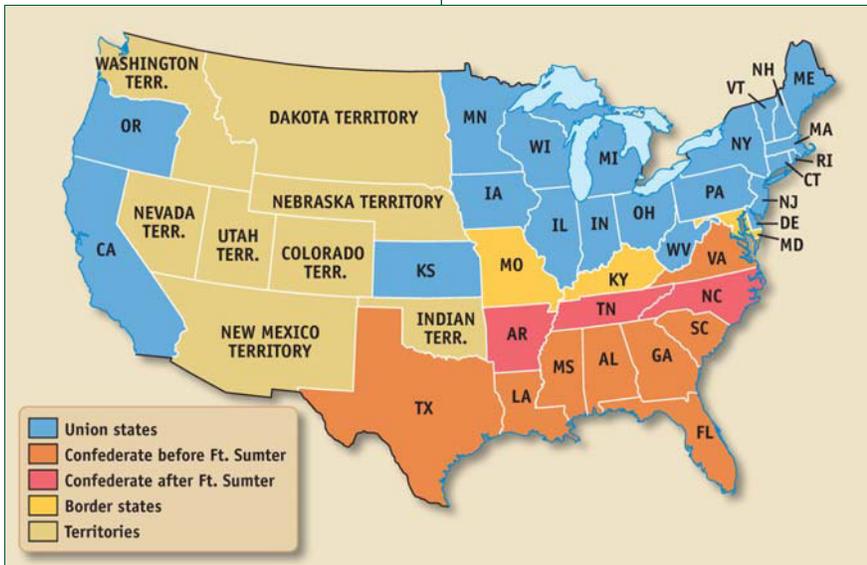
Secession

On January 26, 1861, the Secession Convention voted 113 to 17 to adopt the Ordinance of Secession. Judge James G. Taliaferro (TOL eh ver) of Catahoula Parish was the most outspoken opponent. He warned that secession threatened the interests and the destiny of Louisiana. He predicted war, ruin, and decline. His opinion, however, was not included in the official record of the proceedings.

Most of the state’s citizens celebrated secession. Pine torches lighted a night parade in New Orleans. The governor called for homes and businesses to put

Lagniappe

The Secession Convention took only three days to make the decision to secede.



Map 33 The Original Confederate States

Map Skill: Name the first seven states to secede and form the Confederacy.

Below: Judah P. Benjamin served in the cabinet of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.



lights in their windows to show their support. People cheered in the streets as fireworks exploded and cannons fired. That sound of cannon fire would soon create a very different emotion in a city under attack.

Louisiana called itself a country for less than two months. On March 21, 1861, the Republic of Louisiana joined the **Confederate States of America**, the name of the government formed by the southern states that had seceded. The newly formed Confederate government gained the political skills of Louisiana's former United States

senators. Judah P. Benjamin, called "the brains of the Confederacy," served in Confederate President Jefferson Davis's cabinet. John Slidell spent most of the war trying to persuade European nations to support the Confederacy. Louisiana also contributed four key generals to the Confederate army—Braxton Bragg, Leonidas Polk, Richard Taylor, and P. G. T. Beauregard.

History records April 12, 1861, as the date the Civil War began. The place was Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard ordered the Union commander to surrender the fort.

Building an Army

The Confederacy needed an army. Louisiana responded immediately with 5,000 volunteers. Around the state, they organized themselves into companies. They chose names like the Louisiana Swamp Rangers, Crescent City Guards, Vienna Rifles, Irish Brigade, Carondelet Invincibles, Franklin Sharpshooters, and Caddo Greys. These names and their colorful uniforms seemed suitable for the short and glorious war southerners expected. They would "teach the Yankee a lesson and . . . settle matters inside 60 days."

The spirited soldiers drilled to "save the South." Camp Walker, located at the Metairie (MET uh ree) Race Track, became the first training site. The last horse race was run there on April 9, 1861. Soon afterward the grounds were covered with marching soldiers preparing for a very different contest. The camp, although close to New Orleans, was soon abandoned. Sur-

Lagniappe

When the Civil War began, the superintendent of the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning and Military Academy (later LSU), William T. Sherman, left Louisiana to become a general in the Union army.

rounded by swamp and with no safe drinking water, the camp was a poor location for an army.

An area to the north of Lake Pontchartrain attracted the Confederate commanders to a site with hills, tall pines, and good water. Camp Moore became the main training location for Louisiana's soldiers. But life in any training camp was difficult. Providing adequate food and supplies was a constant problem. Diseases spread quickly through the troops. Epidemics such as measles killed many soldiers before they ever left the camp.

Once war became the ugly reality of blood and death, fewer men wanted to **enlist** (volunteer to join the army). When the first soldiers left home, they expected to return quickly. Instead, the war dragged on and families suffered. To encourage enlistment, the Confederate government paid a bounty and some local governments paid additional bounties. The **bounty** was a one-time reward for enlisting.

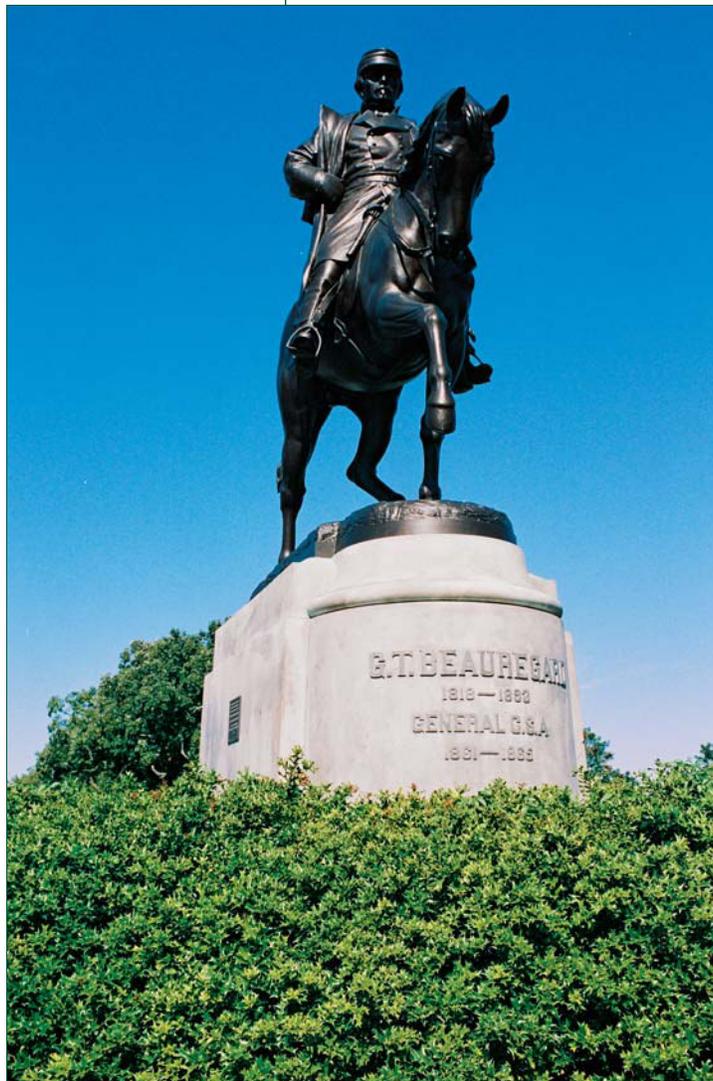
Finally, the Confederacy did not have enough volunteers. A draft or **conscription** required all men of a certain age to enlist in the army. The conscription law included a substitution clause, which allowed a man to pay someone else to take his place. Newspapers carried the names of men who were willing to serve as substitutes. The Confederate draft also exempted (excused) anyone owning twenty or more slaves. This exemption and the right to pay a substitute seemed to aim the conscription law at the poor man. Soldiers on both sides called the Civil War "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

Gathering Supplies

In 1861, Louisiana was ready for war only in attitude. But motivation alone was not enough. The focus shifted frantically to equipment and supplies.

In the early days of the war, equipment and supplies were furnished by parish governments, wealthy individuals, or the soldiers themselves. Although Louisiana imported most finished goods, some manufacturing did exist. A New Orleans factory switched from making clothing for plantations to making uniforms. Converted factories made weapons from scrap iron collected by the citizens.

Ranches in southwest Louisiana and Texas supplied the cattle for a slaughterhouse south of Alexandria. The beef was preserved by salting it. This method left the meat tough and very salty, and the soldiers had to boil the meat for hours before they could eat it. They learned to ignore the bugs floating on the water.



Above: Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard was born in 1818 near New Orleans. He commanded the artillery that fired the first shots of the Civil War at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. This statue of Beauregard is located near the New Orleans Museum of Art.



Above: New recruits were drilled at training sites, first at the Metarie Race Track and later at Camp Moore.

The salt for preserving the beef came from several salt deposits around the state. Brine (a mixture of salt and water) was pumped out of the ground and boiled down in kettles to get the salt. Discovering the extensive salt deposits at Avery Island gave the Confederates a valuable resource.

The women of Louisiana also helped "The Cause." Ladies' sewing circles made uniforms and cartridge bags. Their new sewing machines became part of assembly lines. But too soon the ladies stopped designing battle flags and began making bandages. Monogrammed linen pillow cases became sandbags at Port Hudson, and treasured carpets became blankets for freezing soldiers.

Lagniappe

Another source of salt during the Civil War was Drake's salt works in Bienville Parish.

Check for Understanding ✓

1. What was the main issue in the 1860 election for president?
2. How would the Louisiana economy be affected if the state seceded?
3. How did most people react to secession?
4. What problems were faced in the training camps?
5. How did women help prepare for war?