

# Causes of the American Civil War

## 1. Missouri Compromise

- a. Created in 1820 to balance the number of slave and non-slave states in Congress.
- b. Florida & Alabama are added as slave, Maine is added as free. Shortly afterwards Arkansas and Michigan are added to balance the senate number but shifting the number of representatives in congress.
- c. Bans slavery in all states admitted to the Union north of the southern border of Missouri. 36°30' parallel will be "the line in the sand". Missouri is still allowed to have slaves.

## 2. Compromise of 1850

- a. Created to prevent a civil war by allowing California to enter as a free state if Utah and New Mexico would enter as slave states. When both southern states were entered to the Union, they were not suited to farming (didn't need slaves) and populated by ex-northerners. Both vote to ban slavery in their state shifting the balance in Congress in favor of non-slave states.
- b. To keep war from occurring the Compromise agrees to the Fugitive Slave Act (all run away slave had to be returned to their masters regardless of where they were captured) as long as the sale, not possession of slaves, is banned in Washington DC

## 3. Kansas-Nebraska Act

- a. Created in 1854 by Stephen A. Douglas
- b. Both states had to be allowed to enter the Union to complete the Transcontinental Railroad. Needed to make Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis and New Orleans all become major US cities.
- c. Allowed citizen of those states to pick whether slavery would be allowed, this went against the Missouri Compromise.
- d. Democrats see this as making both sides happy: north can prevent slavery in northern states, and the south is free to let the people choose.
- e. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis attempts to overturn this act, claiming that all states should have the right to choose slave/non-slave status.

## 4. Bloody Kansas/Bleeding Kansas

- a. Border war fought between Kansas and Missouri 1854-1858
- b. Fought between the abolitionists of free Kansas and the "border ruffians" of slave state Missouri. Northern states claimed that Kansas had to enter as a free state since it was above the 36°N latitude line – southern states claimed it could enter as a slave state since it was a territory and not a state yet
- c. Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 nullified the Missouri Compromise allowing the inhabitants of each state to choose their slave/free status, abolitionist from the region flood Kansas' borders to sway the vote
- d. Connecticut abolitionist John Brown arrives in Kansas and begins to raise an army to fight the Missouri slave owners, bloody battles erupt and many lose their lives.

## 5. Dred Scott Decision

- a. Court case heard by the Supreme Court in 1857 over slave rights
- b. Dred was born a slave in Virginia, but later taken to the free state of Illinois. After years of living there, his master died and Dred sued the federal government for his freedom claiming he was on free soil without a master.
- c. The Supreme Court ruled that first and foremost, African slaves were never American citizens and would never be. Therefore the Constitution did not protect the rights of slaves. Since Scott was born a slave, he would be placed under the control of his ex-master's wife and to remain a slave.
- d. The Supreme Court further rules that the Missouri Compromise is unconstitutional and must be lifted as well as that the US federal government has no right to promote or ban slavery from land held as a territory instead of a state.
- e. Northern abolitionist are outraged

## 6. The Raid at Harper's Ferry

- a. John Brown's men attempt to establish a military base in the Blue Ridge Mts where they can launch raids on southern slave establishments with the help of armed freed slaves
- b. Brown is forced to hold off attacking southern slave owners for 1 year and go into hiding, when he returns his army has become afraid of being caught and/or scared of allowing ex-slaves to handle weapons without proper training.
- c. Realizing that he no longer has an army to invade the south, he decides to attack the US Military base at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia – hoping that his bravery will ignite a war on slave owners and free all slaves. Once the attack begins, no slaves come forward to help fight.
- d. President Buchanan sends the US Military under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee to arrest Brown and his followers.
- e. All but 5 of Brown's men are captured, tried and executed in Virginia for crimes against the US government. Abolitionist across the country begin to lobby for a war.

## 7. Election of Abraham Lincoln

- a. The Republican Party had run on an anti-slavery platform, and many southerners felt that there was no longer a place for them in the Union. Lincoln openly announces that if elected he will officially outlaw the institution of slavery in northern states. Southern states announce in Congress that they will leave the USA if Lincoln is elected.
- b. On November 6, 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, an event that outraged southern states. Fearing the country will split in two, Lincoln announces that he will not end slavery in the south or repeal the Fugitive Slave Act, this outrages both sides and southern "War Hawks" use this as fuel to create a new nation.

## 8. Preservation of the Union/The Attack on Fort Sumter

- a. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina seceded. By February 1, 1861, six more states: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had left the Union. The seceded states created the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis, a Mississippi Senator, as their provisional president.
- b. March of 1861, Confederate troops attack Fort Sumter in SC to show that they are a separate country and that they have a sovereign right to protect their borders.
- c. Immediately following the attack on Fort Sumter, four more states: Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee severed their ties with the Union.
- d. Fearing that Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri will also leave the Union, President Lincoln declares the impending war will not be because of slavery or civil rights, but on those states who unconstitutionally left the Union.