

Timeline from the Election of 1860 to Death in 1865

January 1861 -- The South Secedes.

When Abraham Lincoln, a known opponent of slavery, was elected president, the South Carolina legislature perceived a threat. Calling a state convention, the delegates voted to remove the state of South Carolina from the union known as the United States of America. The secession of South Carolina was followed by the secession of six more states -- Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas -- and the threat of secession by four more -- Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. These eleven states eventually formed the Confederate States of America.

- Why did the south secede after Lincoln became president?

February 1861 -- The South Creates a Government.

At a convention in Montgomery, Alabama, the seven seceding states created the Confederate Constitution, a document similar to the United States Constitution, but with greater stress on the autonomy of each state. Jefferson Davis was named provisional president of the Confederacy until elections could be held.

- Who became president of the Confederacy?

February 1861 -- The South Seizes Federal Forts.

When President Buchanan -- Lincoln's predecessor -- refused to surrender southern federal forts to the seceding states, southern state troops seized them. At Fort Sumter, South Carolina troops repulsed a supply ship trying to reach federal forces based in the fort. The ship was forced to return to New York, its supplies undelivered.

- What happened at fort Sumter?

March 1861 -- Lincoln's Inauguration.

At Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, the new president said he had no plans to end slavery in those states where it already existed, but he also said he would not accept secession. He hoped to resolve the national crisis without warfare.

- What did Lincoln say as his first Inauguration?

April 1861 -- Attack on Fort Sumter.

When President Lincoln planned to send supplies to Fort Sumter, he alerted the state in advance, in an attempt to avoid hostilities. South Carolina, however, feared a trick; the commander of the fort, Robert Anderson, was asked to surrender immediately. Anderson offered to surrender, but only after he had exhausted his supplies. His offer was rejected, and on April 12, the Civil War began with shots fired on the fort. Fort Sumter eventually was surrendered to South Carolina.

- Where were the first shots of the Civil War fired?

April 1861 -- Four More States Join the Confederacy.

The attack on Fort Sumter prompted four more states to join the Confederacy. With Virginia's secession, Richmond was named the Confederate capitol.

- What became the capital of the South?

June 1861 -- West Virginia Is Born.

Residents of the western counties of Virginia did not wish to secede along with the rest of the state. This section of Virginia was admitted into the Union as the state of West Virginia on June 20, 1863.

- Why did West Virginia become a state?

June 1861 -- Four Slave States Stay in the Union.

Despite their acceptance of slavery, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri did not join the Confederacy. Although divided in their loyalties, a combination of political maneuvering and Union military pressure kept these states from seceding.

- Why did the Border States stay with the Union and not secede?

1862—Emancipation Discussed with Cabinet

January 1863 -- Emancipation Proclamation.

In an effort to placate the slave-holding border states, Lincoln resisted the demands of radical Republicans for complete abolition. Yet some Union generals, such as General B. F. Butler, declared slaves escaping to their lines "contraband of war," not to be returned to their masters. Other generals decreed that the slaves of men rebelling against the Union were to be considered free. Congress, too, had been moving toward abolition. In 1861, Congress had passed an act stating that all slaves employed against the Union were to be considered free. In 1862, another

act stated that all slaves of men who supported the Confederacy were to be considered free. Lincoln, aware of the public's growing support of abolition, issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring that all slaves in areas still in rebellion were, in the eyes of the federal government, free.

- Why did Abraham Lincoln choose to write the Emancipation Proclamation when he did?

June-July 1863 -- [The Gettysburg Campaign.](#)

Confederate General Lee decided to take the war to the enemy. On June 13, he defeated Union forces at Winchester, Virginia, and continued north to Pennsylvania. General Hooker, who had been planning to attack Richmond, was instead forced to follow Lee. Hooker, never comfortable with his commander, General Halleck, resigned on June 28, and General George Meade replaced him as commander of the Army of the Potomac.



Six officers of the 17th New York Battery
Gettysburg, Pa.
June 1863

On July 1, a chance encounter between Union and Confederate forces began the Battle of Gettysburg. In the fighting that followed, Meade had greater numbers and better defensive positions. He won the battle, but failed to follow Lee as he retreated back to Virginia. Militarily, the Battle of Gettysburg was the high-water mark of the Confederacy; it is also significant because it ended Confederate hopes of formal recognition by foreign governments. On November 19, President Lincoln dedicated a portion of the Gettysburg battlefield as a national cemetery, and delivered his memorable "Gettysburg Address."

Photographs of the battleground began immediately after the battle of July 1-3. This group of photographs also includes a scene of Hooker's troops in Virginia on route to Gettysburg.

- What two events happened at Gettysburg?

November 1864 -- Abraham Lincoln Is Re-Elected. The Republican party nominated President Abraham Lincoln as its presidential candidate, and Andrew Johnson for vice-president. The Democratic Party chose General George B. McClellan for president, and George Pendleton for vice-president. At one point, widespread war-weariness in the North made a victory for Lincoln seem doubtful. In addition, Lincoln's veto of the Wade-Davis Bill -- requiring the majority of the electorate in each Confederate state to swear past and future loyalty to the Union before the state could officially be restored -- lost him the support of Radical Republicans who thought Lincoln too lenient. However, Sherman's victory in Atlanta boosted Lincoln's popularity and helped him win re-election by a wide margin.

- What boosted Abraham Lincoln's popularity and helped him win re-election?

April 1865 -- Surrender at Appomattox Courthouse.

General Lee's troops were soon surrounded, and on April 7, Grant called upon Lee to surrender. On April 9, the two commanders met at Appomattox Courthouse, and agreed on the terms of surrender. Lee's men were sent home on parole -- soldiers with their horses, and officers with their side arms. All other equipment was surrendered.

- What happened on April 9, 1865?

April 1865 -- The Assassination of President Lincoln.

On April 14, as President Lincoln was watching a performance of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., he was shot by John Wilkes Booth, an actor from Maryland obsessed with avenging the Confederate defeat. Lincoln died the next morning. Booth escaped to Virginia. Eleven days later, cornered in a burning barn, Booth was fatally shot by a Union soldier. Nine other people were involved in the assassination; four were hanged, four imprisoned, and one acquitted.

- Why did John Wilkes Booth shoot President Lincoln? What happened to Booth?

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/tl1861.html>

This time line is drawn largely from the work of Richard B. Morris, in particular his Encyclopedia of American History.