**The 1850s: The Road to Secession**

*During the 1850s, sectional issues such as slavery became very divisive. The issue of slaver polarized people, and Southern slave owners felt that their rights and interests were no longer being fairly represented. Northerners began to increasingly support free soil and even abolition, so tensions between the two-sided mounted until Southerners became convinced that nothing short of secession could protect them Northern persecution.*

**Nashville Convention:** Delegates of the northern and southern states assembled in the summer of 1850 to decide on the issue of the Compromise of 1850. Fire-eaters discussed southern rights, while suspicion of their secession rose amongst the northerners. The meeting itself led to the ultimate decision on the compromise.

**Fire-Eaters:** The fire-eaters were extreme advocates of southern rights. They walked out on the Nashville convention in 1850, raided a mass of Irish canal workers, and whipped and lynched slaves in the 1860s. They were labeled "fire-eaters" due to their recklessness and by making their presence strongly felt by all those around.

***Uncle Tom’s Cabin*:** Harriet Stowe, a Northern abolitionist outraged by the Fugitive Slave Law, wrote this novel to illustrate the evils of slavery. Though the South denounced the novel, 500,000 copies were sold in the U.S. and others were translated into 20 languages. The novel stimulated Northern action against slavery, contributing to the Civil War.

**Harriet Beecher Stowe:** Stowe was an abolitionist writer who wrote powerful novels attacking slavery both before and after the Civil War in such novels as Dred, A Tale of Great Dismal Swamp (1856) and The Minister’s Wooing (1859). The novels are rambled in structure, yet rich in pathos and dramatic incident. She also wrote short stories and poetry.

**Election of 1852:** The election of 1852 was the end of the Whig Party. Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act split the Whig Party, and the nomination of General Winfield Scott exacerbated the sectional split. The loss of votes from the South was the result of Scott’s campaign. Franklin Pierce of the Democratic party won the election with 27 of 31 states.

**Birth of the Republican Party:** The party was formed in 1854 by northern Democrats who left the party because of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Former Whigs and Know-Nothings were party members, also. All opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act and believed that slavery should be banned from all territories of the nation, except those states where slavery already existed.

**Election of 1856:** Republican Party, Know-Nothing Party: This election was between John C. Fremont of the Republican Party, Millard Fillmore of the Know-Nothing Party, and James Buchanan of Democratic Party. Fillmore’s inexperience weakened his party, increasing the popularity of the Republicans. Buchanan won the election.

**John Brown’s raid:** The raid took place at Harper’s Ferry in 1859, and was conducted by an abolitionist to raid the federal arsenal and start a slave uprising. It failed and Brown was convicted of treason and hanged because he had ties with the northern abolitionists. At his death, southern fear of future slave uprisings increased, leading to the cruel treatment slaves.

**Sumner-Brooks affair:** Charles Sumner, a senator from Massachusetts, made a speech titled, "The Crime Against Kansas," denouncing slavery, and, at the same time, ridiculing the South Carolina senator, Charles Butler, in 1856. Preston Brooks, Butler’s nephew came into the Senate chamber and hit him on the head, making Brooks a hero in the South.

**DRED SCOTT DECISION:** Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that Scott was not a citizen because he was a slave in 1856, therefore, he did not have the right to sue in federal court. It was determined that temporary residence in an area did not make one free, and that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because it violated the fifth amendment, which did not allow Congress or territorial governments to exclude slavery from any area. Republicans became more suspicious of Slave Power in Congress.

**Chief Justice Roger B. Taney:** Taney was a Southerner appointed by Jackson as the 5th justice of the Supreme Court. He is well-known for handing down the Dred Scott decision. Under his leadership, the federal government had increased power over foreign relations. Taney ruled in 1861 that Lincoln exceeded his authority in suspending habeas corpus.

**John Brown:** John Brown was an American abolitionist who attempted to end slavery through the use of violence. This increased the tension between the North and South. He was the leader of John Brown’s raid and the Pottawatomie massacre. His life ended when he was hanged for murder and treason. He is regarded a martyr to the cause of human freedom.

**Compact Theory of Government:** This theory involves the idea that the United States of America was founded by the union of thirteen individual states creating a federation of states. This plays a major role in justifying the secession of the Southern states by stating that a state had the right to withdraw from the political entity it created.

**ELECTION OF 1860:** candidates, parties, issues: A united republican party attempted to appeal more to the North in order to win the campaign and developed an economic program to amend the damages of the 1857 depression. They nominated Abraham Lincoln, who held a moderate view on slavery. The democrats nominated two candidates, Douglas and Breckenridge, each with opposing viewpoints on the slavery issue. The constitutional party, created by Whigs, nominated John Bell, who had the desire to preserve the Union.

**Democratic Party conventions:** The first assembly of delegates in Charleston in 1860 resulted in the split of the Democratic party as the Southern "fire-eaters" left the convention. They were unable to agree on a platform based on the protection of slavery. An unsuccessful second attempt to reach a consensus in Baltimore led them to nominate two candidates.

**John Bell:** Opposed to both Lincoln and Douglas, Whigs nominated Bell in 1860, an opposer of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Lecompton constitution. Bell created the new Constitutional Union party, which had a platform based on the preservation of the Union, and not on the controversial slavery issue.

**John Breckenridge:** A division in the Democratic Party led to the nomination of two candidates for the 1860 election. Breckenridge, Buchanan’s vice president, was nominated by secessionists on a platform based on protection of slavery in territories. His nomination completed the split of the Democratic party.

**Republican Party of 1860:** In order to lure votes from Northern states to their party, an economic system based on protective tariffs, federal aid for internal improvements and the distributing of 160-acre homesteads to settlers in order, was organized in favor of the Northerners. Lincoln’s nonchalant views towards slavery led them to victory.

**Buchanan and the secession crisis:** Buchanan declared secession of states illegal, yet he had no power to prevent it. He refused Southern demands to remove troops from Fort Sumter. Because his efforts to supply the fort failed and due to failure of a constitutional plan, he left the office disappointed and discredited.

**Crittenden Compromise proposal:** The compromise was proposed by John Crittenden in an attempt to preserve the Union. The amendments were to bar the federal government from intervening in southern states’ decision of slavery, to restore the Missouri Compromise, and to guarantee protection of slavery below this line. It also repealed personal liberty laws.