

A prewar summary, and 4 observations

South Carolina left Union in mid-Dec. 1860. Although the election had been fair, S.C. refused to acknowledge the Presidential outcome. “Our rights are no longer guaranteed in Union & slavery is no longer safe with a Rep. President.”

Feb. 1, 1861 – 6 more deep South states had left the Union (Georgia, Alabama, Miss. Florida, Louisiana, Texas). They were part of the South where slavery was most important to the economy. The people never had a direct vote on whether or not to leave the Union. (Probably would have succeeded anyways, even if they had voted).

Feb. 7, 1861 – Southern states form the Confederate States of America. The South considers this a separate nation, with a President – Jefferson Davis, and a V.P. – Alexander Stephens, both would serve 6 year terms. Both hated each other terribly

Result – lots of empty seats in the Senate and in the House.

Slavery in South had not been threatened, yet S. felt like leaving. Pres. Buchanan does and says nothing, and leaves office March 4, 1861 (today would have left Jan. 20)

South Carolina attacks a Federal garrison at Ft. Sumter – April 12, 1861. The Civil War has begun. Immediately after Ft. Sumter falls, 4 more states leave the Union. There will be 11 Confederate states vs. 23 Union states. 4 slave states did NOT leave the Union – they felt slavery wasn’t threatened (KY, MD, DL, MO)

Some Observations

1. Northern states did NOT go to war to free the slaves, nor did Lincoln declare war to free the slaves.
2. N. and Lincoln did go to war to prevent S. states from leaving the Union. They said the Union is permanent, Constitution says nothing about a states right to secede – so a state doesn’t have the right to secede. N. only declared war on S. after Ft. Sumter
3. N. and Lincoln decided to free slaves after war had been happening for a year and a half (Emancipation Proc.) At this point, thousands have died, might as well abolish slavery while we’re at it.
4. S. went to war because rest of U.S. would not allow extension of slavery. S. – “lets build a wall around ourselves and keep out N. and world criticism.”

War will last 4 years, and hundreds of thousands of lives. But slavery will end.