

## Secession Timetable

**August 1619** –English settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, purchase 20 black Africans from a Dutch frigate.

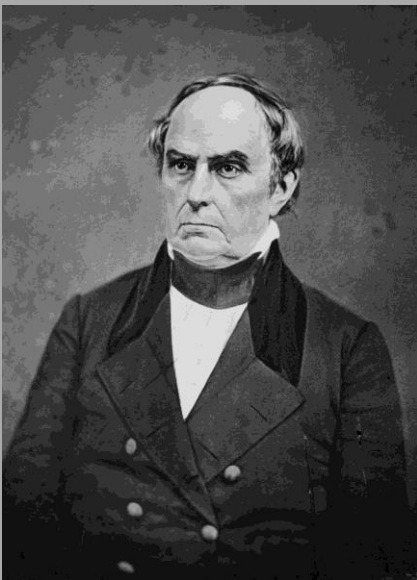
**September 1787** – The Constitutional Convention adopts a draft that contains three clauses sanctioning the continuation of slavery: (1) Fugitive slaves are to be returned to their owners; (2) Importing of slaves is to be permitted until 1808; and (3) for apportionment of congressional districts, slaves are to be counted as three fifths of a white person.

**1792** – Eli Whitney, a Yankee while visiting the widow of Nathaniel Greene, invents his cotton gin, enabling a slave to increase his production of cotton “lint” from one pound per day to 300 to 1000 pounds per day. Within two years, the cotton states increase cotton exports twelve fold, thereby severely increasing the need for cheap labor. But within the next half century, Northerners also invent the steamboat, the clipper ship, the steel plow, the telegraph, the mechanical reaper, the revolver, the sewing machine, the lead pencil, the friction match, the safety pin, the typewriter, and the rubber ball thus catapulting the North into the industrial age.

**July 3, 1803** – U.S. Purchases Louisiana Territory from France for \$15 million dollars.

**March 1820** – In order to maintain balance between slave states and free states, Congress admits Missouri as a slave state to offset the admission of Maine as a free state. Furthermore, Congress adopts the Missouri Compromise that would bar slavery in rest of the Louisiana Purchase north of 36 degree 30 minute latitude.

**June 1822** – In the aftermath of the Denmark Vesey Rebellion – apparently a rumored plot -- in the area of Charleston, SC, 35 Blacks were executed and twenty-one were sold into exile. Moreover South Carolina began enacting legislation severely limiting the rights of Blacks, including freemen.



Daniel Webster

**January 1830** – During Senate debate over the sale of western lands, it becomes apparent the real issue is that of states’ rights versus federal power. During the climax to his speech defending the latter, Daniel Webster argues, “Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!”

**August 1831** – The onset of the Nat Turner (1800-1831) Rebellion in Virginia. Earlier slave revolts – including one by Gabriel Prosser, in 1800 -- had shattered the myth of slave docility but Turner’s Rebellion brought a fearful reality, and fright, into Southern homes. After killing all members of his master’s household, Turner’s “army” began a house-to-house murdering spree that swelled Turner’s army to more than 40

slaves. The Virginia militia was summoned and began to chase Turner's army, many of whom were soon arrested or killed, but Turner eluded capture for two more months. By the time he was captured, as many as 60 whites had been stabbed, shot and/or clubbed to death. The rebellion brought Virginia to the verge of abolishing slavery but the state ultimately chose instead to clamp down even harder on slaves. Altogether there were approximately 250 slave revolts or uprisings prior to the Civil War.

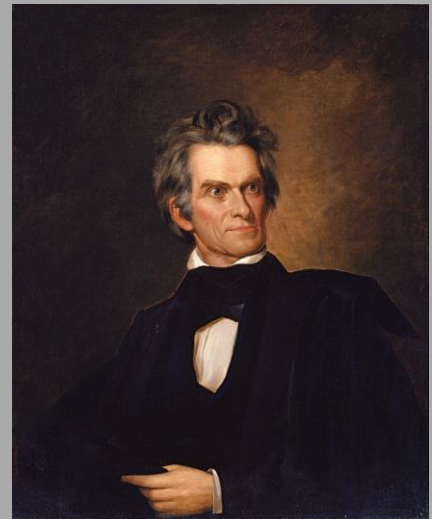
**November 1832** – A special convention meets in South Carolina and passes ordinances to (1) nullify recent Tariff Acts of 1828 and 1832, felt to be discriminatory against the South, (2) allow for secession if the Federal Government resorts to force.

**December 1832** – President Andrew Jackson issues a proclamation warning the people of South Carolina that no state can secede from the Union “because each secession ... destroys the unity of the nation.”

**Early 1833** – John C. Calhoun resigns as the nation's Vice-President and is appointed to the US Senate from South Carolina in order so that he can openly and “with passion and excitement” advocate nullification. The nullification crisis is averted, at least for the time being, when the Senate adopts a compromise drafted and negotiated by Henry Clay.

**December 1835** – Mexico abolishes slavery throughout all its territory, including Texas. North Americans in Texas threaten to secede from Mexico in order to protect their “right” to slavery.

**1836** – Congress, at the urging of Andrew Jackson, passes Species Circular Act making it more difficult for small farmers to buy land from the government. Instead buyers must use only gold or silver.



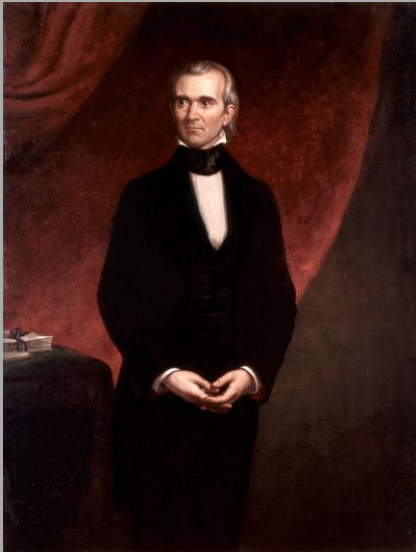
John Calhoun

**April 1836** – Following the siege of the Alamo, Texans defeat the Mexicans and declare their independence, and send an envoy to Washington demanding either recognition as an independent republic or annexation to the United States as a slave state. This precipitates more Congressional debate pitting the pro-slavery Southerners against the anti-slavery Northerners.

**Early 1837** – On the floor of the US Senate John C. Calhoun became the first prominent American statesman to advocate the new orthodoxy of South Carolina that slavery was a positive good.

**March 1837** – On his last day in office, and contrary to the weight of international law, President Jackson recognizes Texas as an independent republic. More debate ensues over the issue of balancing the number of slave states versus free states.

**April 5, 1841** – John Tyler, then an anti-Jackson Whig, becomes the first “accidental president,” whose secret maneuverings will bring Texas into the Union and set secession in motion.



James Polk

**November 1844** – James K. Polk, taking an aggressive-expansionist position on acquiring Texas, Oregon, and California, wins the Presidential election against Henry Clay who had opposed the annexation of Texas.

**March-May 1846** – Notwithstanding Mexico’s desire to negotiate the possible annexation of Texas, Polk persists in seeking a war with Mexico. Eventually Congress, acting along sectional lines with the south favoring war and the North opposing, approves a declaration of war against Mexico.

**August 1846** – Polk requests an appropriation of \$2 Million for the purchase of territory from Mexico. In the House, David Wilmont, a Representative from Pennsylvania, manages to attach the so-called Wilmont Proviso that would prohibit slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico.

**1846** – In New Orleans James B. D. DuBow establishes his magazine, popularly known as *DeBow’s Review*. Although initially a monthly magazine covering commerce, business and agriculture issues and statistics, DeBow eventually will publish several notions of the superiority of Southern culture, including the incorrect assertion that Southerners are a “nationality” descended from the Normans.

**1846** – Congress approves the acquisition of California and New Mexico.

**February 1848** – The United States signs the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the War with Mexico, and granting 500,000 square miles of new territory the United States, making it a transcontinental republic but also setting the stage for more controversy over whether newly admitted states would be slave or free.

**1848** – Gold is discovered near Sutter’s Farm in California.

**December 1849** – President Zachary Taylor, former hero of the Mexican War, asks Congress to admit California as a free state. Southerners object because this will create a majority of free states, and, led by Calhoun, suggest they might secede. Taylor says he will crush such secession even if he has to personally lead troops again.

**1850** – The 1850 census shows the following:

1. During the preceding decade population growth had been 20% greater in free states than in slave states.
2. Three times as many people born in slave states had migrated to free states than visa versa.
3. 7/8 of immigrants from abroad settled in the North.
4. Only 14% of the canal mileage runs through slave states.
5. The South possesses 26% of the railroad mileage compared to 42% in 1840.
6. With 42% of the nation's population, slave states have only 18% of the nation's manufacturing capacity, with half of the capacity being located in the four border states.

**June 1850** – After it took the 63 ballots, amid fistfights and challenges for duels on the floor, for the House of Representatives to elect a Speaker, and that by a plurality only, leaders from nine Southern states convene in Nashville to discuss the issues of slavery and states' rights. Although some delegates openly advocate secession, the moderates prevail.

**September 1850** – The Compromise of 1850 is enacted to include passage of the Fugitive Slave Law to legally require both Northerners and Southerners to turn in runaway slaves. California is also admitted as a free state. In December, a Georgia convention declares the state will secede if the North does not observe the Fugitive Slave Law. The outcry over this legislation effectively ends intersectional political parties.

**1851** – Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) writes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (or *Life Among the Lowly*) as a serial in an antislavery paper, *The National Era*. In the Spring of 1852, the Boston publishing company, Jewett, publishes it as a book that – with the exception of The Bible – sells more copies ever to that point in America. Stowe's story – replete with graphic depiction of slave life – strikes a raw nerve in the South but inspires many others.

**May 24, 1854** – In Boston a fugitive slave, Anthony Burns, is captured. The ensuing conflict over his return to Virginia causes many Whigs to become abolitionists.

**July 1854** – After debates that make the 1850 debates seem like a gentle shower, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, dividing the central territory as part of a compromise giving Senator Stephen Douglas the railroad route he desired for Illinois, is enacted. Introducing Douglas's concept of "popular sovereignty" effectively repeals the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that banned slavery north of 36 degrees 30 '. Many Northerners denounce the Act and threaten to stop obeying the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Enactment of this bill essentially kills off the Whig Party.



Harriet Beecher Stowe

**March 1857** – The *Dred Scot* decision is announced shortly after Buchanan is inaugurated. Lincoln, in particular, starts becoming more vocal in his criticism of the Court and of those supporting the expansion of slavery into the territories. One of Lincoln's specific, and available, targets is Stephen Douglas, the "Little Giant," Senator from Illinois who espouses the notion of popular sovereignty as a means of deciding whether territories should allow slavery.

**1857** – Hinton Rowan Helper, born to a NC farm family, publishes *The Impending Crisis of the South*, called the most important single book – in terms of political import – ever published in the U.S. Helper argues vigorously that the "lords of the lash are not only absolute masters of the blacks ... but they are also the oracles and arbiters of all non-slaveholding whites, whose freedom is merely nominal.

**1858** – Although illegal, slave importation has resumed. In one instance, a fast yacht takes on a cargo of 500 Africans, 400 of whom survive the crossing. Although the yacht's owner and crew were arrested and charged, Savannah juries acquit all those charged.

**October 16-17, 1859** – John Brown leads a poorly prepared, futile raid upon Harper's Ferry giving fire-eaters an opportunity to play on Southern white fears of Northerners encouraging slave revolt.

**April 1860** -- Democrats, until then the national majority party, have their convention in Charleston, SC. Pursuant to a scheme concocted by William Yancey of Alabama to split the Democratic Party to give the election to the Republicans, thereby giving fire-eaters to urge the formation of a new "nation" of slaveholding states, the convention becomes split as: 1) delegates cannot come to any agreement on a platform plank that would guarantee the right of any citizen to take his slave property into the territories. This causes some of the Southern faction that insists upon strict adherence to the *Dred Scot* decision to leave the convention. 2) Largely because of Douglas' refusal to support the Lecompton constitution for Kansas and because of his response to the Freeport question, the convention refuses to support his nomination as its Presidential candidate. Unable to agree upon anything else after 57 acrimonious ballots, the convention agrees to adjourn for six weeks before meeting again in Baltimore.

**Late May 1860** – The reconvened Democratic convention accomplishes little. The Southern faction walks out and quickly forms its own convention. As a result, there are two Democratic candidates for President, Douglas for the Northern faction and John Breckenridge of Kentucky (Buchanan's vice-president) for the Southern faction, thereby for all intents and purposes preordaining Lincoln's Electoral College election.

**November 1860** – As a result of the Democratic Party split engineered by Yancey, Lincoln is elected even though he garners less than 40% of the popular vote. (But he does receive 54% of the popular vote in Free states.)



**December 3, 1860** – In his final address to Congress, Buchanan firmly denies the right of secession. The Union was not “a mere voluntary association of States, to be dissolved at pleasure by any one of the contracting parties.” On the other hand, Buchanan states the Constitution gave the national government no power “to coerce a State into submission which is attempting to withdraw.”

**December 20, 1860** – In reaction to Lincoln’s election, slaveholding states along the southern portion of the south, led by fire-eaters among slave owning South Carolina aristocrats, ostensibly because they feared Lincoln would attempt to abolish slavery throughout all the states, begin to secede from the Union.

Some differences between original seceding states and those remaining in upper south:

- 1) Slaves constitute 47% of the population in original Confederate states but only 24% in upper South.
- 2) 37% of White families in CSA states own slaves compared to 20% of upper South families.

**December 31, 1860** – South Carolina’s convention urges other states send delegates to a convention to be held in Montgomery, Alabama, a vibrant city of 8,843, including 4,502 African-Americans. Each state would have only one vote.

**January 5, 1861** – Senators from seven Southern states meet in Washington and afterwards advise their respective states to secede.

**January 21, 1861** – Five senators representing the states of Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi withdraw from the chamber. All, including Jefferson Davis, make farewell addresses.

**Friday, February 1, 1861** – A Texas convention votes to become the 7<sup>th</sup> state to secede, subject to ratification by voters.

**Saturday, February 2, 1861** – Representatives from six seceding states, Texas not having ratified its convention’s decision to secede, begin arriving in Montgomery. None of the delegations have been granted power to agree to the formation and establishment of any form of government.

**Sunday, February 3, 1861** – Upon arrival of the Georgia delegation, not only the convention’s largest but with Alexander (“Aleck”) Stephens, Robert Toombs and Howell Cobb probably the most influential, delegations begin to meet with one another in the Exchange Hotel lobby. During these meetings it is determined, over Rhett’s consternation, to proceed to form a government and to elect a president. Among other things it is decided that Cobb will be speaker (or president) of the meeting and that deliberations will be secret.

**Monday, February 4, 1861** – The delegates convene in the Alabama statehouse. Stephens is appointed to chair the Rules Committee. Stephens’ draft emphasizes simple expediences to avoid delays.

**Tuesday, February 5, 1861** – Stephens' proposals are unanimously adopted whereupon the convention becomes a Congress, at least in Stephens' view. Another committee is appointed with Christopher Memminger as chairman to propose a constitution.

**Wednesday, February 6, 1861** – Some changes to the U.S. Constitution proposed by Memminger's committee:

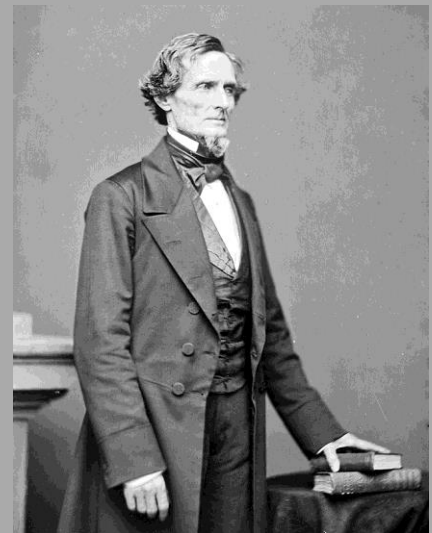
- Slavery is expressly preserved as property right.
- All new states shall be slave states.
- Ostensibly some states rights are enhanced but some others are diminished. Other than prohibition of tariffs, federal powers are not significantly reduced.
- Bans protective tariffs but authorizes certain tariffs on exports from one state to another
- Members of Congress can serve concurrently in the Cabinet.
- The provisional President must come from one of the original Confederate states.
- The Supreme Court can sit only when and if summoned by the Congress.
- Dispenses with ratification by States for amendments.
- The President has a line item veto power.
- A "gag" over the right of petition and redress

Toombs, the only serious contender against Davis for president, gets drunk at a public party thereby eliminating himself for any further consideration.

**Friday, February 8, 1861** –The six Confederate states provisionally adopt a constitution that is otherwise similar to the United States Constitution. The next day, the convention provisionally elects Jefferson Davis, a secessionist but not a fire-eater, as president and Stephens as vice-president.

The Provisional Congress, South Carolina opposing, adopts all the current statutes in effect for the U.S.A. that do not conflict with the CSA's provisional Constitution be adopted and continued in force for the CSA.

**Monday, February 11, 1861** – On his 49<sup>th</sup> birthday, Stephens is inaugurated as Confederate Vice-President



Jefferson Davis

**Wednesday, February 13, 1861** – A convention convenes in Virginia to decide whether that state should secede. One of the more outspoken anti-secession delegates is Jubal Early, later to become one of Lee's lieutenants and an originator of the myth of the Lost Cause.

**Saturday, February 16, 1861** – Yancey introduces Davis to a cheering crowd in Montgomery. “Dixie” begins its career as the unofficial Confederate anthem.

**Monday, February 18, 1861** – Davis is inaugurated.

**February 27, 1861** – While meeting with Unionists from the upper South states, Lincoln makes an off-the-cuff suggestion that he would abandon Fort Sumter in exchange for Virginia staying in the union. Nothing comes of this “offer”.

**March, 1861** – Aleck Stephens says that slavery is natural condition of blacks as well as the cornerstone of government.

**March 4, 1861** – Intending to coincide with Lincoln’s inauguration, Davis cabinet has its first meeting. Its members are:

- Attorney General – Judah P. Benjamin, 49 of Louisiana, who later will serve briefly as secretary of war and then for three years as secretary of state. Benjamin had once challenged Davis to a duel. Sometimes called the brains of the Confederacy.
- Secretary of Navy – Stephen R. Mallory, a former U.S. Senator from Florida.
- Secretary of Treasury – Christopher G. Memminger, a wealthy attorney from South Carolina. His doctrinaire, laissez-faire economic beliefs robbed him of the flexibility and boldness needed for successful planning and administration of CSA finances.
- Secretary of War – Leroy Pope Walker, a 44 year old attorney from Alabama, who will last less than seven months.
- Postmaster General – John H. Reagan, a former judge, 42 of Texas. Davis’ old friend.
- Secretary of State – Robert Toombs, of Georgia, who will soon resign to become a brigadier general, after becoming bored being a foreign minister of a nation with no foreign relations.

All cabinet members had been Breckinridge supporters in the 1860 elections.

The Provisional Confederate Congress passes legislation to create a “provisional” army. This legislation authorizes Davis to call up 100,000 volunteers for 12-month terms.

**March 9, 1861** – Davis uses his authorization to call for 7,500 volunteers to be added to the several thousands South Carolina volunteers already in service.

**March 21, 1861** – *The NY Times* writes that “... there is a growing sentiment throughout the North in favor of letting the Gulf States go.”

**Thursday, April 4, 1861** – Secession proponents in the Virginia convention submit a straightforward proposal to secede but lose 45-90.



**Saturday, April 13, 1861** – Considerably drunk, Louis Wigfall, a fire-eater from Texas, rows out to Fort Sumter in a kiff to demand its surrender. After 40,000 shells had been fired back and forth at Fort Sumter – resulting in no casualties on either side – Major Robert Anderson, with no food remaining and being seriously out manned and outgunned, concludes the further conflict is purposeless and surrenders at 1430 hours.

**Sunday, April 14, 1861** – After learning of Anderson’s surrender at Fort Sumter, Lincoln meets with his cabinet, and decides (1) to call for 75,000 volunteers, and (2) to reconvene Congress on July 4.

**Monday, April 15, 1861** – Lincoln issues his proclamation to the governors of all remaining states, including the upper South states, with detailed instructions for the mustering of 75,000 volunteers to serve three-month terms. Perhaps harkening back to Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech in 1858, which had often been construed as Lincoln’s determination to use force to preserve the Union, the secessionists assume the purpose of this proclamation is to raise enough troops to invade the South. Stirred by “fire-eaters,” the border states, including perhaps most importantly Virginia, react with dismay and discontent, repulsed by the prospect of having to fight against their Southern brethren.

**Wednesday, April 17, 1861** – Ex-governor Henry Wise makes a fiery speech that electrifies the Virginia convention; the convention – which only 13 days earlier had been leaning strongly in favor of staying with the Union – votes 85 to 55 to secede, quickly followed in order by Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee. Governors of Arkansas and North Carolina do not even wait for legislative action before seizing Federal facilities in their respective states.

The importance of Virginia becoming part of the Confederacy is that:

- 1) Virginia’s population is the largest of any state in the CSA.
- 2) Her industrial capacity is nearly as great as the combined capacity of the original seceding states.
- 3) The Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond is the only Southern plant capable of manufacturing heavy ordinance.
- 4) Being the home of Washington, Jefferson and Madison gives Virginia immense prestige that is expected to attract states to join the CSA.
- 5) More territory to be conquered.
- 6) Gained leadership capabilities of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, James Longstreet, Joe Johnston, Jubal Early, and Nathan Forrest

**Sunday, April 21, 1861** – A group of anti-secessionists meets in Monongahela County, Virginia, resolves to still support the Union despite the action taken by the rest of the state.

**Monday, April 29, 1861** – The state legislature of Maryland repudiates secession by a vote of 53-13.

**May 20, 1861** – Despite Davis' objections, the Confederate Congress votes to relocate its capital to Richmond, Virginia, having a population of 38,000, the Confederate's third largest city after New Orleans and Charleston.

**May 24, 1861** – The Kentucky State Senate concurs with legislation previously passed by the state's House of Representatives to stay neutral.

**June 8, 1861** – In a popular vote, Tennessee voters formalize the action by the Tennessee legislature to secede.

DF --Prepared 01/12/09, revised 09/20/14