

Chapter 19: Drifting Towards Disunion (1854—1861)

Stowe and Helper: Literary Incendiaries

- 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe published ***Uncle Tom's Cabin*** dead set on showing Northerners the horrors that slavery had on families
 - her novel was extremely successful all around the world with it being translated into several languages
 - it showed slavery as close as it could for what it really was
 - Lincoln later said to Stowe that she was the one who wrote the book that started the Civil War
- Uncle Tom's Cabin did more to convince moderates up north that they were to have nothing to do with the Fugitive Slave Law or tip them towards being abolitionists
 - young folk read it and it would later inspire them to fight in the war
- the novel was popular in Britain and France, with British commoners rooting for the North after the war had started
 - London and Paris had wanted to intervene on behalf of the South but were afraid their own countries would riot in them doing so
- ***The Impending Crisis of the South*** was a book that tried to prove nonslaveholding whites were the ones who suffered from slavery
 - South feared that their nonslaveholding white majority might abandon them and banned the book

The North-South Contest for Kansas

- Northerners moving into Kansas just wanted to go west
 - small group of abolitionists or free-soilers and an antislavery organization called **New England Emigrant Aid Company**
 - carried guns and wanted to create trouble for slavery in Kansas
 - Southerners weren't happy that Northerners were trying to "abolitionize" Kansas after doing so to Nebraska
 - tried to bring slaves to Kansas, but to no avail
- proslavery people came from Missouri to vote for government officials
 - set up a government at Shawnee Mission
 - free-soilers didn't like that and made their own regime in Topeka
 - Kansans had to choose a fraudulent government or an illegitimate government
- proslavery raiders burned part of free-soil town Lawrence

Kansas in Convulsion

- John Brown was obsessively abolitionist and moved to Kansas after hearing about the attack on Lawrence
 - led a band of his followers and literally hacked five proslaveryites to death in 1856

- vicious retaliation from proslavery forces
- civil war started in Kansas in 1856 until it merged with the nation's war
- 1857 Kansas had enough people to apply for statehood by popular sovereignty
 - proslavery forces made a document known as the **Lecompton Constitution** which would allow Kansans to vote for/against slavery
 - if they voted against slavery, the Constitution would still protect slaveowners that currently existed in Kansas
 - free-soilers boycotted the polls and slavery was approved in late 1857
- James Buchanan took over Pierce and threw himself behind the Lecompton Constitution
 - Senator Douglas would not stand for semipopular fraud and threw away his Southern supporters for the compromise that the state of Kansas would vote on the Lecompton Constitution
 - free-soilers won out
- Buchanan unknowingly divided the Democrats which was one of the only things holding the Union together

"Bully" Brooks and His Bludgeon

- **Bleeding Kansas** controversy appeared in Congress as well, with Charles Sumner of Massachusetts salty about lack of popular sovereignty
 - insulted South Carolina and well-liked senator Andrew Butler
 - Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina beat Sumner with an eleven-ounce cane until he fell bleeding and unconscious and everyone else stared on
 - he resigned and got reelected
 - Sumner had to go back to Europe for three and a half years for treatment and Massachusetts refused to reelect, so his seat remained empty
- the South were angry that they were applauding Sumner so hard, especially after his speech which got reprinted and sold thousands of copies
- Sumner-Brooks clash revealed tensions in the North and South

"Old Buck" Verses "The Pathfinder"

- Pierce and Douglas were too tied to the Kansas-Nebraska Act to be reelected
 - chose James Buchanan
 - Republicans chose John C. Frémont, Pathfinder of the West
- Republican party campaigned against extension of slavery while Democrats wanted popular sovereignty
- a group of nativists formed the American party, or the Know-Nothing party, who were against foreigners and Catholicism

The Electoral Fruits of 1856

- Buchanan didn't win the majority popular vote but he won the ECV 174:114:8
 - Frémont lost credibility and Northerners voted for Buchanan because they didn't want to sever ties with the south economically or start a war

- would have let the Union fall apart
- Republican party showed good signs despite only existing for two years

The Dred Scott Bombshell

- ***Dred Scott v. Stanford*** was a black slave living on free ground in Wisconsin and Illinois, so Scott sued for freedom
 - federal courts decided Scott was a slave and not a citizen so he couldn't sue
 - it actually got approved by a majority of tribunal court, which then went to Supreme Court
 - Chief Justice Roger B. Taney declared that because a slave was private property, they could be taken into any territory and held there for slavery
 - Fifth Amendment forbids Congress from depriving people of their private property
 - Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to ban slavery
- Senator Douglas and others who supported popular sovereignty were appalled which drove the North/South divide further
- Republicans insisted that the Court decision was an opinion
 - they didn't want to honor the Supreme Court

The Financial Crash of 1857

- **panic of 1857** was probably the worst psychological panic of the 19th century
 - California gold inflated the currency as well as grain demand for the Crimean War in Russia
 - need for railroads and land
 - over 5000 businesses failed in a year
- Northern grain growers were hit the hardest while the South enjoyed cotton prices abroad, showing cotton's economic superiority
- Northerners wanted free farms for the public
 - Congress passed a homestead act making public lands available at 25 cents per acre, but it was vetoed by President Buchanan
- panic created higher tariffs like the **Tariff of 1857**
 - reduced duties to 20% on dutiable goods
 - Northerners started blaming misfortunes on the tariff
 - North wanted higher tariffs on the surface, but really more protection

An Illinois Rail-Splitter Emerges

- Douglas' senator spot was about to expire in 1858 of Illinois and he was about to run against Abraham Lincoln
 - Lincoln was self-educated and became a lawyer, sometimes known as "Honest Abe"
 - made his mark as a Whig politician and served on term in Congress 1847—49

- after becoming a Republican, Lincoln was one of the foremost politicians of the Northwest

The Great Debate: Lincoln Versus Douglas

- Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of debates and the seven meetings became known as the **Lincoln-Douglas debates**
 - Lincoln pitted the **Freeport question** against Douglas: in the case of voting against slavery in a territory, the Court said that was unconstitutional, so does the Court win or do the people win?
 - Douglas' response became the **Freeport Doctrine**, which was that the people would win even if the Court ruled against it
 - when the public does not support the law, it is almost impossible to enforce
- Douglas defeated Lincoln for the Senate seat
 - however, the districts Douglas won in had fewer people, and Lincoln won the moral victory
- Lincoln had worked his way into the spotlight with those debates and considered running for something more
 - began to emerge as a possible Republican candidate for president

John Brown: Murderer or Martyr?

- John Brown prepared to invade the South, arm the slaves, and establish a black free state
 - got several thousand dollars for firearms and twenty some men
 - at **Harpers Ferry**, he seized a federal arsenal and killed seven innocents including one free black and injuring 10
 - his group was captured by US Marines Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee
- Brown was convicted of murder but tried to deny it on terms of insanity
 - he wanted to die because he knew he would be useful to abolitionists if he were dead executed
- South saw Brown as a murderer and claimed the abolitionists were too for doing so
- Northerners were furious that he was executed without even knowing the reason why
 - Brown was right, his image in death was more powerful than he would have been in life, and in choosing to embrace his fate, he was a contributing factor to starting the Civil War

The Disruption of Democrats

- Douglas lead the northern wing of Democrats
 - southerners didn't like him over Lecompton Constitution and Freeport Doctrine so they walked out and left
 - Northerners tried multiple times to organize and elect Douglas as the Democratic party presidential nomination, but each time the Southern Democrats would walk out

- Southern Democrats elected John C. Breckinridge as their candidate who liked slavery extension and wanted to annex Cuba
- a growing group of people who were worried for the Union made their own party called the **Constitutional Union Party**
 - consisted of Whigs and Know-Nothings

A Rail-Splitter Splits the Union

- Republicans appealed to just about every nonsouthern group
- Lincoln became the frontrunner for the Republican party
- Southern secessionists claimed Lincoln would split the Union

The Electoral Upheaval of 1860

- Lincoln was a minority and sectional president
 - only took 40% of the popular vote, and appealed only in the North because some of the South didn't have him on the ballot
- Douglas took second in the popular vote but only 12 ECV
- the South still had majority on the Supreme Court
 - Republicans didn't control the House or the Senate

The Secessionist Exodus

- South Carolina secedes after Lincoln gets elected
 - during the next six weeks, six other states also secede including Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas
 - seven states formed the **Confederate States of America**
 - elected Jefferson Davis as their president
- Davis suffered from chronic ill health
 - Lincoln couldn't take office until March of 1861 so that left Buchanan in charge for four more months
 - blamed Buchanan for not taking more responsibility and getting Southerners back in line
- Buchanan needed troops to control the native people
 - North didn't want to start fighting and had hopes of reconciliation
 - Lincoln basically continued Buchanan's policy when he entered the presidency

The Collapse of Compromise

- **Crittenden amendments** were designed to please the South
 - prohibit slavery north of 36 degree 30' but allow it south of that line including in Cuba
 - territories were slave territories south of 36 30
- Lincoln rejected the Crittenden amendments flat out

- he had been elected to oppose slavery and did not want to yield that opinion
- thought that the amendments would bring conflict to everyone south of the line permanently
- Buchanan had made the right decision in not warring with the South, because it would have been under unfavorable conditions for the North

Farewell to Union

- Southerners worried about the balance tipping completely against them so they secede
 - just wanted to be left alone by the North
- Southerners felt their secession would be unopposed
 - confident Yankees would not/could not fight them
 - believed they were too dependent on southern cotton
 - saw secession as a 'golden opportunity'
- worldwide aggressive nationalism
- seven states felt like they were seceding from the Union the same way the 13 original colonies did
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