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## American Civil War

At 4:30 AM on April 12, 1861, Confederate artillery in Charleston, S.C., opened fire on Fort Sumter, which was held by the United States Army. The bombardment set off a savage four-year **war** between two great geographic sections of the United States. One section was the North—23 Northern and Western states that supported the federal government. The other section was the South—11 Southern states that had seceded (withdrawn) from the Union and formed an independent government called the [Confederate States of America](#). The struggle between these two combatants is generally known as the **American Civil War**, though it is also referred to as the **War** Between the States or the **War** of the Rebellion.

The **war** aims of both sides were simple. At the beginning the North fought only to preserve the Union. The South fought to win recognition as an independent nation. After President Abraham Lincoln issued the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) in 1862, the long-troublesome slavery problem took on vast importance. A Northern victory would mean ultimate freedom for slaves; a Southern victory would insure the protection of slavery in all Confederate states.

### The Basic Issue of States' Rights

The **Civil War** came as a climax to a long series of quarrels between the North and South over the interpretation of the United States Constitution. In general, the North favored a loose interpretation that would grant the federal government expanded powers. The South wanted to reserve all undefined powers to the individual states.

This difference of opinion sprang primarily from economic considerations. The North, as well as the West, wanted internal improvements sponsored by the federal government—roads, railroads, and canals. The South, however, had little desire for these projects. Another source of conflict was the opening of public lands in the West. The distribution of such lands in small lots speeded the development of this section; but it was opposed in the South because it aided the free farmer rather than the slaveholding plantation owner. A similar quarrel developed over the tariff. A high tariff protected the Northern manufacturers. The South wanted a low tariff in order to trade its cotton to Great Britain and other countries for cheap foreign goods. (See *also* tariff.)

One issue, however, overshadowed all others—the right of the federal government to prohibit slavery in the Western territories. Such legislation would severely limit the number of slave states in the Union. At the same time the number of free states would keep multiplying. Many Southerners feared that a government increasingly dominated by free states might eventually endanger existing slaveholdings. Thus the South

strongly opposed all efforts to block the expansion of slavery. If the federal government did succeed in exercising this power many Southern political leaders threatened secession as a means of protecting states' rights.

## The Slavery System in the South

The doctrine of states' rights might not have assumed such great importance had it not been related to the more basic issue of black slave labor. After black indentured servants were first brought to Jamestown in 1619, slavery gradually spread to all the colonies. It flourished, however, in the Southern colonies, where slaves could be used profitably as field hands in the cultivation of tobacco, rice, and indigo. When the **American** Revolution broke out, three fourths of the black population lived south of the Mason and Dixon's Line.

After the **war**, slavery became more and more unpopular. By 1804 seven of the northernmost states had abolished slavery, and emancipation (the freeing of slaves) was common even in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.

Just as slavery seemed to be dying out it was revived by an agricultural rebirth in the South. A new demand for cotton and the introduction of improved machinery such as the cotton gin transformed the Southern states into the greatest cotton-growing region in the world. Cotton production jumped from 178,000 bales in 1810 to 3,841,000 bales in 1860. This tremendous increase in production required an army of new workers, chiefly black slaves. Within 50 years the number of slaves rose from about 1,190,000 to almost 4,000,000. (See *also* Black Americans; [cotton](#).)

## Abolitionists and Their Work

At the same time that slavery became highly profitable in the South, a wave of democratic reform swept the North and West. There were demands for political equality and social and economic advances. The goals were free public education, rights for women, better wages and working conditions for laborers, and humane treatment for criminals and the insane.

This crusading ardor soon led to an all-out attack on the slavery system in the South, coupled with a strong opposition to its spread into new territories. It charged that such an institution nullified the greatest human right—that of being a free person. Reformers now called for the complete abolition of slavery.

The first abolitionist to gain national attention was William Lloyd Garrison of Boston, in 1831. Within a few years abolitionist newspapers, orators, and societies sprang up throughout the North. Some of the abolitionists even denounced the federal Constitution because it legalized and condoned slavery. Such a radical was Wendell Phillips, one of New England's ablest orators. In 1836 he gave up his law practice because his conscience would not allow him to take the oath to support the Constitution.

About the same time, James G. Birney of Ohio, a former slaveholder in Kentucky, began gathering all antislavery forces into one political unit, the Liberty party. Under this label he ran for president in 1840 and again in 1844. Other notable abolitionists were [Frederick Douglass](#), an escaped slave and black editor; John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet; Theodore Parker, a Unitarian preacher from Boston, Mass.; and James Russell Lowell, who denounced slavery in prose and verse.

Despite their noisy campaign the abolitionists remained a small minority. They were generally condemned by their neighbors and were often the victims of ruthless persecution. Some antislavery printing offices were mobbed and burned. One abolitionist editor, Elijah Lovejoy of Alton, Ill., was murdered.

White abolitionists, especially, had no firsthand knowledge of slavery, and their criticisms were often wide of the mark. Southerners who might have doubted the wisdom of slavery now began to defend it with great earnestness. They said it was not a necessary evil but a righteous and benevolent institution. They compared it with the "wage-slave" system of the North and claimed that the slaves were better cared for than the free factory workers. Southern preachers proclaimed that slavery was sanctioned in the Bible. Differences over the slavery issue prompted some Southern churches to break away from the parent group and form sectional denominations.

In the House of Representatives Southerners fought back in 1836 by requiring all antislavery petitions to be tabled without reading or discussion. John Quincy Adams, the ex-president and now a member of the

House, finally won repeal of the rule in 1844. (See *also* abolitionist movement.)

## Expansion of Slavery

More and more Northerners became convinced that slavery should not be allowed to spread to new territories. At the same time Southerners were becoming equally determined to create new slave states. For 40 years this issue created an ever-widening breach between the South and the rest of the nation. The slave states had long been a separate section economically. Now they began to regard themselves as a separate social and political unit as well.

The first clear evidence of political sectionalism came in 1819 when Missouri asked to be admitted to the Union as a slave state. After months of wrangling Congress finally passed the Missouri Compromise. (See *also* [Clay, Henry](#).)

This measure preserved an uneasy peace for almost a generation. Then in 1848 the acquisition of a great block of territory from Mexico seemed to open new opportunities for the spread of slavery (see **Mexican War**). For a time the North and South were on the verge of **war**, but finally both parties agreed to accept the [Compromise of 1850](#). The most disputed provision in the agreement was a law requiring the return of fugitive slaves. Many antislavery people openly flouted this law. They set up underground railroads with stations where runaway slaves might hide, receive food, and be directed to the next stop on the way to Canada and freedom (see *Underground Railroad*). Some Northern states passed personal liberty laws, in an effort to prevent enforcement of this fugitive slave act.

In 1854 President Franklin Pierce requested three **American** ministers in Europe to meet at Ostend, Belgium, to study the potential problem of slave uprisings in Cuba. On October 9 the Ostend Manifesto was issued by the three ministers—James Buchanan, John Y. Mason, and Pierre Soulé. This document urged that Spain should sell Cuba to the United States and if this plan failed, then the island should be taken by force. President Pierce's administration rejected this crude attempt to add new slave territory to the Union.

The conflict over slavery was renewed when Senator [Stephen A. Douglas](#) of Illinois persuaded Congress to repeal the Missouri Compromise in 1854. His new measure, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, led to the first armed conflict between North and South. The tension between the two regions was later heightened by the [Dred Scott Decision](#), which held that Congress could not prohibit slavery in federal territories.

In the North and West many people now began to accept the fact that slavery was morally wrong and that a start should be made toward its extinction. The moderate point of view was best expressed by a tall, gaunt lawyer from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, in a series of debates with Douglas (see *Lincoln-Douglas debates*). Extremists such as John Brown wanted direct action. In 1859 Brown led a futile raid on Harpers Ferry, planning to start a black insurrection in the South.

Meanwhile, a new political party, the Republican, had been formed in 1854 to combat the extension of slavery (see *political parties*). This party gained strength so rapidly that Southern leaders threatened to secede from the Union if the “Black Republicans” came to power. When the new party did win the elections of 1860 and Lincoln was chosen president, the Southern states, led by South Carolina (Dec. 20, 1860), carried out their threat. By February 1861, six other states of the lower South—Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, [Georgia](#), Louisiana, and Texas—had seceded.

## Efforts to Save the Union

Many efforts were made to preserve the Union and to prevent bloodshed. The outgoing president, James Buchanan, was devoted to the Union but he believed that the Constitution forbade his taking any action against the South. For several weeks Lincoln also followed a wait-and-see course.

Political factions in Congress, however, sought a solution. A Senate committee, headed by [John J. Crittenden](#) of Kentucky, prepared an amendment to the Constitution. It provided that the Missouri Compromise line would be extended to the Pacific Ocean and that Congress would be prohibited from interfering with slavery in territories below this line of 36°30'. It also provided that the federal government would pay for slaves who escaped to the North. The proposal died, however, when President-elect Lincoln refused his support because it left open the way for the expansion of slavery.

Another effort for peace was made by the Virginia legislature, which called a conference of the states at

Washington, D.C., on Feb. 4, 1861. Seven slave and 14 free states sent representatives. The conference recommended various concessions to the South. Congress ignored these suggestions, however, and instead passed an amendment to the Constitution offered by Senator Douglas. This provided that Congress should never interfere with slavery in the states. It was not ratified by the necessary number of states and was forgotten when the fighting began.

## The War Begins at Fort Sumter

When Lincoln became president he took care to avoid all threats of force, but he promised to protect “the property and places” in the South belonging to the federal government. One of those places was [Fort Sumter](#) in South Carolina. Disregarding Lincoln's vow, Charleston land batteries opened fire on the fort on April 12, 1861. The small federal garrison surrendered the next day. The **Civil War** had begun.

Until the bombardment of Fort Sumter many people in the North and South had been determined to prevent **war**. Some Northerners had argued to “let the erring sisters go in peace.” Many Southerners had opposed secession, and in some of the rebelling states the decision to leave the Union was made only after a close popular vote. The attack on Fort Sumter, however, ended all hope of peace. Lincoln at once called upon the loyal states to furnish 75,000 state militia, and Confederate President [Jefferson Davis](#) asked for 100,000 volunteers from the Southern states. Both sections were eager for battle. Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas now joined the Confederacy. The four border states—Maryland, [Delaware](#), Kentucky, and Missouri—stayed with the North. In Virginia some of the western counties broke away from the Old Dominion and set up a separate government that later joined the Union as West Virginia.



**Interior view of Fort Sumter, South Carolina**

Interior view of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, under the Confederate flag, April 14, 1861. (Credit: National Archives, Washington, D.C./National Archives, Washington, D.C.)

## Comparison of Rival Forces

In the division of the nation's resources, the North fared far better than the South. Only 11 states left the Union, and 23 (24 with West Virginia) remained loyal. The population of the loyal states was about 23 million; that of the seceding states, less than 10 million, of whom more than a third were slaves.

The wealth of the North was estimated at more than twice that of the South (excluding slave property). The North had every type of industry, including about 90 percent of the total manufacturing of the entire nation and most of its mineral resources. The South was chiefly agricultural, with a heavy dependence upon cotton production.

The North had more than twice as many miles of railroads as the South. It also possessed the means of maintaining effective railroad operation, whereas the South did not. This was militarily important because the **Civil War** was the first major **war** in which railroads furnished the chief means of transportation of troops and supplies. On the seas the North retained most of the United States Navy and most of the privately owned merchant vessels. The two main assets of the South were its armies fought on interior lines, thus lessening transportation and communication problems; and it had expert military leaders, notably in the East.



**Company "A" 9th  
Indiana Infantry.  
Photograph**

In the beginning both sides tried to raise troops only on a volunteer basis, but they soon found it necessary to adopt a military draft. The South resorted to [conscription](#) in 1862 and the North the following year. Both sides also had great difficulty in equipping their troops. It was many months before Northern factories were producing enough goods for the Union armies. The South, with few industrial resources, had to import much of its equipment from Europe, running it through the naval blockade imposed by Union vessels.

## The First Year of War

Company "A" 9th Indiana

During 1861 both sides hastened to create field armies. The first major

Infantry. Photograph by Mathew Brady. (Credit: National Archives, Brady Collection, **Civil War** Photographs)

battle came on July 21, 1861, when overconfident Union forces under Gen. Irvin McDowell were routed at [Bull Run](#) by Confederates under Gens. [Joseph E. Johnston](#) and Pierre Beauregard. It showed that the **war** could not be fought without well-trained soldiers. It also indicated that the conflict would probably last a long time.

Throughout the remainder of 1861 the fighting was concentrated in the border states. Federal troops under Gen. George B. McClellan cleared Confederate forces from what is now West Virginia, helping keep that territory in the Union. Missouri remained loyal due chiefly to the efforts of Capt. Nathaniel Lyon, Gen. John C. Frémont, and Missouri politician Francis P. Blair, Jr. In Kentucky, Governor Beriah Magoffin attempted to keep that state neutral but without success. Union troops occupied most of Kentucky throughout the **war**, though a rump convention passed an ordinance of secession late in 1862.

By the end of 1861 two major battlefronts had developed. One was in the East where Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania suffered the bulk of the fighting. The other front was in the West, at first along the Mississippi River.

## The War in the East, 1862

On the Eastern front each side tried to capture the opposing capital. General McClellan, the first Union commander here, was a great drillmaster but a timid warrior. He was repeatedly outmaneuvered by the Confederate commander, Gen. Robert E. Lee, who proved to be one of the greatest military leaders of all time.

In the spring of 1862 McClellan brought his Army of the Potomac by water as far as Fortress Monroe, Va. He planned to take Richmond by moving up the narrow peninsula between the York and James rivers. McDowell's troops, held at Fredericksburg in defense of Washington, were to be kept in reserve. The campaign got off to a slow start. The Army of the Potomac was delayed a month besieging weakly held Yorktown and was halted again at the battle of Fair Oaks (Seven Pines) on May 31 and June 1. When McClellan was almost ready to attack Richmond, McDowell was ordered away to the Shenandoah Valley.

In the Shenandoah Valley, Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson had routed Northern troops in a lightning advance on Harpers Ferry. From this point his "foot cavalry" seemed to threaten Washington itself. Jackson then slipped away and hurried his men by train to Richmond. Here Lee had sent Gen. Jeb Stuart on a cavalry raid that brilliantly encircled McClellan's forces. Lee then took the offensive. He drove McClellan back in the Seven Days battles, ending at Malvern Hill on July 1, 1862.

Alarmed by Union failures, President Lincoln placed Gen. Henry W. Halleck in command of all Federal armies. Halleck ordered McClellan to abandon his Peninsular Campaign and to unite with the Union forces in northern Virginia, then led by Gen. John Pope. Before Pope could be reinforced, Jackson's corps and Lee's other corps under Gen. James Longstreet routed the Federals in the second battle of [Bull Run](#) from August 28 to 30.

Lee now crossed the Potomac River to invade Maryland. He wanted to transfer the fighting to Northern soil and at the same time to influence the coming Congressional elections against Lincoln. To protect his rear Lee sent Jackson to capture Harpers Ferry. Meanwhile, McClellan, who had succeeded Pope, accidentally obtained a copy of Lee's general orders. He advanced to meet Lee along [Antietam](#) Creek at Sharpsburg. While McClellan hesitated for a whole day, Jackson with three divisions made a forced march up from Harpers Ferry. When the Union troops finally did attack on September 17, they met most of Lee's reunited forces. Late that afternoon Gen. A.P. Hill's division arrived from Harpers Ferry just in time to prevent a possible decisive Union victory.

## From Antietam to Gettysburg

The Union victory at Antietam, slight though it was, gave President Lincoln the opportunity to issue the



**Stonewall Jackson, 1863.**

Stonewall Jackson, 1863. (Credit: Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

[Emancipation Proclamation](#). This decreed the freedom of all slaves in territory still in rebellion on Jan. 1, 1863. The president took this momentous step to introduce a new moral aim in the **war** and to prevent foreign intervention.

Then Lincoln began a long search for a general to cope with the brilliant Lee. McClellan was relieved. He was replaced by Gen. Ambrose Burnside, who led the Army of the Potomac to a disastrous defeat at [Fredericksburg](#), Va., on Dec. 13, 1862.



**Union Gen. Joseph Hooker and his horse. Fighting**

Union Gen. Joseph Hooker and his horse. Fighting "Joe" Hooker, a veteran of the Mexican **War**, succeeded Gen. Ambrose Burnside as the commander of the Army of the Potomac. Photograph by Mathew Brady. (Credit: National Archives, Brady Collection, **Civil War** Photographs)

Lincoln's next choice, Gen. Fighting Joe Hooker, fared little better in the battle at [Chancellorsville](#), Va., from May 1 to 4, 1863, though Stonewall Jackson's death here was a blow to the Confederate cause. Lee again invaded the North, advancing into Pennsylvania. At Gettysburg from July 1 to 3, 1863, Lee suffered his first stinging defeat, but the North failed to follow up the advantage. The hesitant Union leader was Gen. George G. Meade, who had relieved Hooker just before the battle. (See *also* Gettysburg, battle of; Hancock, Winfield Scott.)

## Campaigns in the West, 1862 to 1864

Throughout the **war** the Federal forces were more successful in the West. In February 1862 Gen. Ulysses S. Grant advanced into Tennessee. He captured Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, with the aid of Commo. Andrew H. Foote and his gunboats, then crossed to the Cumberland to take Fort Donelson. After a desperate battle at [Shiloh](#) on April 6 and 7, 1862, he cut the Confederate railway communications with the East at Corinth, Miss. In this bitter engagement the able Southern general, Albert S. Johnston, was mortally wounded. While Shiloh was being fought, General Pope's men and Foote's gunboats seized Island Number 10, an important Confederate fort on the Mississippi River. A few weeks later Commo. David G. Farragut ran his fleet past the batteries at the mouth of the Mississippi River, paving the way for the occupation of New Orleans by Union forces on May 1, 1862.

It was not until more than a year later, however, that the Mississippi was completely open. On July 4, 1863, as Lee was retreating from his defeat at Gettysburg, [Vicksburg](#) fell to General Grant after a desperate siege. Five days later Port Hudson, the last Confederate river fort, surrendered. With the Mississippi River now under Union control, the Confederacy was geographically divided into two parts.

To the East, Confederate Gen. John H. Morgan led a raiding party into Kentucky in July 1862. The following summer he swept into Indiana and Ohio before his force was defeated and captured. Other raiders under Gen. [Nathan B. Forrest](#) destroyed Federal stores and lines of communication in Tennessee. The Southern Army of Tennessee under Gen. Braxton Bragg invaded Kentucky in September 1862 but was turned back by Gen. D.C. Buell's Union army at Perryville on October 8.

General Bragg withdrew to central Tennessee, pursued by the Union army now commanded by Gen. [W.S. Rosecrans](#). At Murfreesboro (Stones River) Bragg was defeated again, December 31–January 2, and retreated to Chattanooga. Six months later General Bragg gave up Chattanooga without a struggle. He was then reinforced by Longstreet's corps from Virginia. At Chickamauga, Ga., Sept. 19–20, 1863, the combined Confederate forces lashed back at the Union troops. The battle might have been a major Federal disaster but for the firm stand taken by Gen. George H. Thomas and his men.

Thomas now replaced Rosecrans, and Grant was brought from Vicksburg to take supreme command of the Union forces in the West. In fighting around [Chattanooga](#), November 23–25, the main Confederate army in the West was driven from Tennessee. Under Gen. [Joseph Johnston](#) and later Gen. J.B. Hood the Confederates retreated toward Atlanta. In direct command of the Union drive was Gen. William T. Sherman.

## The Final Phase, 1864–65

In March 1864, Grant became commander in chief of all Federal armies and moved his headquarters to Virginia. Seeing that the long fighting had

severely weakened Lee's forces, Grant began a relentless campaign of increased attrition. He forced bloody but inconclusive battles at the Wilderness, May 5–6; [Spotsylvania](#), May 8–12; and Cold Harbor, June 1–3. He then circled Richmond and laid siege to the important railroad junction of Petersburg, Va.

In July 1864, Lee sent Gen. Jubal Early raiding in Shenandoah Valley, hoping to repeat Jackson's successes of 1862. General Early, however, was routed by Gen. Philip Sheridan's cavalry who then ravaged the valley, destroying Confederate food supplies.

In Georgia, Sherman's Army of the West captured Atlanta on Sept. 2, 1864, and then marched on to the sea, leaving behind a swath of waste and destruction 60 miles wide. Sherman reached Savannah on December 20. Meanwhile Confederate General Hood, attempting a counterattack in Tennessee, was decisively defeated at Franklin on November 30 and at Nashville on December 15–16.

From Savannah, Sherman turned northward to join forces with Grant. This pincer movement against Lee proved unnecessary, however. A Federal victory at Five Forks, Va., on April 1, 1865, forced Lee to abandon both Petersburg and Richmond and flee westward. Finally, with his army depleted and his supplies exhausted, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House, Va., on April 9. Sherman took the surrender of Joseph Johnston's army in North Carolina on April 26. On May 4 Gen. Richard Taylor surrendered the Confederate forces in Mississippi and Alabama. Three weeks later Gen. Kirby Smith surrendered the trans-Mississippi forces in Texas. The **American Civil War** was over.

## The War at Sea

Early in the **war** President Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of the entire Southern coastline and, by pressing all kinds of ships into use, severely curtailed Confederate shipping. Efforts to break the blockade were in vain. In the first battle between [ironclad](#) ships the *Merrimack* (*Virginia*) could get no better than a draw in its famous battle with the *Monitor*.

Several commerce destroyers were built in England for the Confederacy. They did much damage to Northern shipping but they could not defeat the blockade. Gradually the Union tightened its grip on the seas by capturing the Southern ports through which blockade runners smuggled supplies. New Orleans fell first, in 1862. In 1864 Farragut's warships took Mobile harbor. The next year Fort Fisher, guarding Wilmington's harbor, was stormed by Comdr. David Dixon Porter's fleet co-operating with land forces under Gen. Alfred H. Terry. A little more than a month later Sherman's capture of Charleston sealed off the last major port.

## Foreign Affairs During the War

At the beginning of the **war** the South counted heavily on foreign intervention. It believed that European nations must have Southern cotton for their industries and that if necessary they would fight the North to get it. In 1861 the Confederacy dispatched two agents to England and France, but Federal warships took them off a British ship as prisoners of **war**. This incident nearly involved the United States and Great Britain in **war**.

The Union protested to Great Britain about the commerce destroyers that the British government permitted to be built in local shipyards. The most famous of these vessels was the *Alabama*, commanded by Capt. Raphael Semmes. Other difficulties arose from the enforcement of the Federal blockade. Fortunately neither Britain nor the United States wanted **war**; and when British workingmen learned that the Union was fighting for the cause of free labor their sympathies were all with the North. England found other sources of supply for cotton and profited from trade as a neutral.

France, however, was openly hostile to the United States. Napoleon III even sponsored an expedition to Mexico aimed at making that republic a satellite state of France. The puppet Mexican emperor, Archduke Maximilian of Austria, was executed in 1867. (See also Mexico.)



**Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Cold Harbor, Va.;**

Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, Cold Harbor, Va.; photograph by Mathew Brady, 1864.(Credit: National Archives, Brady Collection, **Civil War Photographs**)

## War on the Home Front

One of the big problems on the home front was the large group of Northerners who opposed the **war**. These copperheads, as they were called, organized secret societies such as the Knights of the Golden Circle. They sought to embarrass the government by discouraging enlistments, opposing the draft, and even helping Confederate prisoners to escape. Copperheads became influential in the Democratic party and in the elections of 1862 scored important victories in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa.

In preparation for the 1864 presidential election the peace-at-any-price element wrote the Democratic party's platform position calling for an immediate end to the **war**. They nominated General McClellan for their presidential candidate, but he came out openly for winning the **war**. President Lincoln was renominated by the Republicans under the label of Union party, with Democrat Andrew Johnson as his running mate. Although the popular vote was close, Lincoln carried all but three states—New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky. Voting for the first time was Nevada, admitted as a state on Oct. 31, 1864. Much of Lincoln's success was due to Sherman's timely victories in Georgia.

President Lincoln served only six weeks of his second term. He was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865, and died the following day.

The victory of the Federal forces established that no state could secede from the Union or even nullify a national law. The **war** paved the way for the adoption of the 13th Amendment, which forbade the use of slave labor in the United States. After the **war** the United States faced grave problems of readjustment and reconstruction. The economic, social, and political outgrowths of the **war** are discussed in the article covering the Reconstruction period. (See *also* Black Americans; United States Constitution.)

## Some Major Civil War Battles

The first shots of the long-feared **civil war** were fired by the South on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. The fort was named for a Revolutionary **War** hero, Thomas Sumter. The federal government had begun building it on a small island in the harbor of Charleston, S.C., in 1829. The nation was at peace, and construction lagged. The fort was still not finished when South Carolina seceded from the Union on Dec. 20, 1860. South Carolina claimed that secession entitled it to all government property within its boundaries. President James Buchanan refused to give up forts in seceded states but promised not to send reinforcements.

When the dispute began, Fort Sumter was unoccupied. But Maj. Robert Anderson soon moved his small force into Sumter from Fort Moultrie, a weaker position on the north side of the harbor. Fort Sumter was besieged until the outbreak of the **war**. On April 11 Gen. Pierre Beauregard, commanding the Confederate forces, demanded the surrender of the fort. Anderson refused. On April 12 the bombardment began. Faced with overwhelming odds, Anderson was forced to surrender on April 13. He sent the following dispatch to Washington:

“Having defended Fort Sumter for 34 hours, until the quarters were entirely burned, the main gates destroyed, the powder-magazine surrounded by flames, and no provisions but port remaining, I accepted the terms of evacuation offered by General Beauregard, and marched out of the fort with colors flying and drums beating, saluting my flag with 50 guns.”

Men of the North who had calmly been saying, “Let the South go,” were now aroused to fever heat. Many enlisted in response to Lincoln's call for 75,000 men. The North gained much in unity of action by the loss of Fort Sumter; the South gained only the fort. When the Confederate forces abandoned Charleston in 1865, Fort Sumter again passed to the North but as a battered ruin of no military value. It became a national monument in 1948.

## Battles of Bull Run (Manassas)

Two battles of the **Civil War** were fought in northern Virginia near a small river called Bull Run and a town called Manassas Junction. First Bull Run was the first major battle of the **war**. Both the North and the South thought it might be the last.

### First Bull Run.





### Federal cavalry at Sudley Ford, Bull Run, Virginia

Federal cavalry at Sudley Ford, Bull Run, Virginia, photograph by George N. Barnard. (Credit: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-B8171-0313 DLC))

The Union troops were commanded by Gen. Irvin McDowell; the Confederate army by Gens. Joseph E. Johnston and Beauregard. The armies clashed on July 21, 1861.

The first Union attack seemed to be successful. The Confederate lines fell back. Only Gen. Thomas Jackson's brigade stood like a stone wall (see Jackson, Stonewall). The Confederates were reinforced and McDowell's army retreated. The retreat became an unorganized flight back to Washington, D.C.

First Bull Run had two far-reaching effects. The South rejoiced, but it also developed a false sense of security. The North was dazed. Lincoln and his generals realized that the **war** would be a long one.

## Second Bull Run.

After First Bull Run there was a lull in the fighting in northern Virginia. Then in the spring of 1862 a series of battles in the east led to the second battle of Bull Run. The Confederate commanders in Second Bull Run were Gens. Stonewall Jackson and James Longstreet under the overall command of

Gen. Robert E. Lee. The Union commander was Gen. John Pope.

The third (main) phase of Second Bull Run was fought on Aug. 29–30, 1862. Pope's army was drawn up along the Rappahannock River to defend Washington. It faced Lee's two corps under Jackson and Longstreet. Pope advanced on Jackson, who pretended to retreat but held his ground until reinforced by Lee and Longstreet. The entire Confederate Army attacked the Union Army and forced it to retreat all the way back to Washington. The way was open for Lee to invade the North.

## First Battles of the Ironclads

On the afternoon of March 8, 1862, five vessels of the United States Navy lay at anchor in Hampton Roads, Va. Suddenly a strange-looking object moved through the water toward the United States vessel *Cumberland* from the Confederate stronghold in Norfolk, Va. It was a reconstructed United States ship, the *Merrimack* (renamed the *Virginia*). The vessel had been sunk when the Norfolk navy yard was abandoned at the beginning of the **war**. The Confederates had raised the vessel, cut off the sides, and covered what was left with iron plates. This was one of the earliest practical applications of armor to a warship.

The ironclad steered straight for the *Cumberland*. It was met by heavy fire, but, when it reached the *Cumberland*, its iron beak cut through the side of the wooden vessel "as a knife goes through cheese." The *Merrimack* next set fire to the *Congress* with red-hot shot from its guns. Then the vessel steamed away to prepare for its next victory.

By the next morning, however, the situation was entirely changed. When the *Merrimack* started toward the *Minnesota*, preparing to dispose of it as quickly as the two victims of the previous day, there suddenly appeared in the ironclad's path an odd object, about one fourth the *Merrimack*'s size and resembling a "cheese-box on a raft." This was the famous *Monitor*, a Union ironclad designed by [John Ericsson](#), a Swedish engineer.

The fight between the two ships began at once and lasted for nearly four hours. The *Monitor* was more easily handled than the *Merrimack*, but its shots could not do much harm to the other's iron sides. On the other hand, the *Monitor*'s single revolving turret offered a hopeless target for its opponent. Thousands of people stood on the shore and breathlessly watched the combat. The distance between the vessels varied from half a mile to a few yards. The *Monitor*'s commander was wounded, and the *Merrimack*, badly damaged, steamed back to Norfolk.



### At the second battle of Bull Run, Confederate

At the second battle of Bull Run, Confederate forces under Gen. Robert E. Lee defeated a Union army under the command of Gen. John Pope. (Credit: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)

This fight between the *Merrimack* and *Monitor* was one of the most important naval battles ever fought, for it made the warships of all the old navies useless. All countries had to discard their wooden vessels and to begin building ironclads. During the **Civil War** the Union was able to build more iron ships faster than the Confederacy could.

## Battle of Shiloh

On a Sunday morning in southwestern Tennessee, on April 6, 1862, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant sat enjoying a leisurely breakfast below Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River, while his army cooked breakfast in the camps grouped about Shiloh church not far away. Nobody expected trouble from the retreating Confederate forces under Gen. Albert S. Johnston that were supposed to be camped at Corinth, Miss., 20 miles away. Grant had not kept cavalry watching the Confederates, nor had he posted outposts sufficiently far in front.

Suddenly the crack of rifles and roar of battle broke the calm. When Grant reached his troops, his situation looked disastrous. The Confederates in full force had burst from covering woods and were driving the desperately resisting bands of Union soldiers from their camps. All day the battle raged with terrific losses. Practically no control could be exercised by either commander over his raw troops. By night the Union troops had been driven almost to the river.

The situation changed overnight. Gen. D.C. Buell arrived with 25,000 Union troops, and Johnston of the Confederates died of a wound he had suffered while leading a charge. His successor, General Beauregard, was driven from the field the next day and retired to Corinth. The Union armies of some 70,000 lost about 13,000 killed and wounded. The Confederate loss was 10,000 out of some 40,000.

Shiloh was the second great battle of the **war** and the most bitterly fought engagement of the whole struggle. Bitter criticism was heaped upon Grant for his heavy losses. But President Lincoln refused to remove him, and Grant soon justified the president's faith. The Confederates, on the other hand, lost almost as heavily and missed their chance to break up the Union advance in the west.

## Battle of Antietam

For weeks the tide of the **Civil War** ran in favor of the Confederacy. The morale of the North had been lowered by Gen. George B. McClellan's disastrous Peninsular Campaign in Virginia in 1862. As a result President Lincoln was forced to postpone issuing his Emancipation Proclamation for fear of seeming to appeal to blacks for aid in a losing cause. When he laid aside the proclamation, he vowed he would give it to the world after the first Union victory.

Instead of victory came more setbacks. General Lee crossed the Potomac River, carrying the **war** into the North and striking terror into the hearts of the people of Maryland and Pennsylvania. Finally, on Sept. 17, 1862, his troops met the numerically superior forces of McClellan at the little creek of Antietam in Maryland. All day long the battle raged. The loss of men either killed or wounded on each side was about 11,000.



### The battle of Antietam during the American Civil

The battle of Antietam during the **American Civil War** proved indecisive; General Lee's

No decisive results were obtained from the fierce conflict of that day. On the next day, however, Lee felt that it was wiser to withdraw from the field. Thus the victory seemed to be left with McClellan. Lee had not obtained the aid from the people of Maryland that he had expected, and so he recrossed the Potomac into Virginia. McClellan made no attempt for a while to follow him, and so little military advantage was gained. Nevertheless the people of the North were encouraged, and Lincoln had the opportunity to issue his [Emancipation Proclamation](#). For these two reasons the battle of Antietam was one of the important battles of the **Civil War**.

## Battle of Fredericksburg

One of the costliest defeats suffered by the



### Fredericksburg,

men retreated to Virginia, and General McClellan did not follow up his advantage and pursue them. (Credit: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)



### Before the Battle of Fredericksburg

Before the Battle of Fredericksburg, the Confederate armies ranged themselves on one side of the Rappahannock River, and the Union armies were on the other. (Credit: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)

Union forces in the war was at the battle of

### Virginia, from the east bank

Fredericksburg, Virginia, from the east bank of the Rappahannock River. Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, March 1863. (Credit: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-B8171-7927 DLC))

Fredericksburg, Va., on Dec. 13, 1862. At that time Lee had retreated from the North as a result of his defeat at Antietam. With about 78,000 men he had established himself on the high bluffs of the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg.

The Army of the Potomac, led by Union Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, held the north bank of the river



**Ambrose E. Burnside, photograph by Mathew Brady.**

at Falmouth. There were about 120,000 men under his command. With many difficulties he transported them across the river on pontoon bridges to attack the strongly entrenched Confederates.

After six assaults with great losses, Burnside was persuaded by his officers not to renew the attack. Two nights later, under the cover of a storm on December 15, the discouraged remainder of the Union army was brought back to Falmouth.

The Union army had lost about 12,500 men, while the Confederate loss was more than 5,000 men. As a result of his tragic defeat, Burnside was replaced a week later by Gen. Joseph (Fighting Joe) Hooker.

The gloom that this disaster brought to the people in the North was changed to rejoicing a few weeks later. Then news came of the Union victory in the battle of Murfreesboro, or Stones River, Tenn., fought from December 31 to January 2.

At Murfreesboro the Confederate forces under Gen. Braxton Bragg were repulsed by the Union army under Gen. William S. Rosecrans. This victory opened the way for the Union advance to Chattanooga and finally to "Atlanta and the sea."

Ambrose E. Burnside, photograph by Mathew Brady. (Credit: Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C./Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

## Campaign for Vicksburg

A primary

objective of the Union forces in the **Civil War** was to cut the Confederacy in two by winning control of the Mississippi River. To do this it was necessary to take the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg, Miss. As long as Vicksburg was held by the South, Union vessels could not operate



### The battle of Vicksburg came at the same time

The battle of Vicksburg came at the same time as Gettysburg, giving the North two very significant victories.

freely on the river. The city also served as an important transportation point for the Confederacy. Supplies, arms, and men from the southwestern states were assembled at Vicksburg and then transported eastward by rail.

On Jan. 29, 1863, General Grant was put in command of the Army of the West, with orders to capture Vicksburg. It was a difficult assignment because the city, located east of the Mississippi, was on a high bluff overlooking a hairpin bend in the river. All earlier attacks against Vicksburg had failed. Grant now set his men to work with pick and shovel rather than with guns. They tried to dig a canal across the neck of land opposite the city and thus bypass Vicksburg by turning the river from its old bed. Despite their most strenuous efforts Grant's troops failed to change the course of the river. Another way to reach the city had to be found. Grant saw that Vicksburg could be approached only from the south and east.

The west bank of the Mississippi became dry enough for the men to travel over, but how were they to recross to the east bank after getting below the city? This could be done in only one way: The Union fleet would have to face the Confederate batteries and go down the stream as the men marched along the west shore. One dark night the attempt was made. The Confederates learned of the plan and sent troops across the river in skiffs. They set fire to houses on the shore so that Confederate gunners might have light to see the Union ships. Nevertheless all but one of the Union's vessels ran by the batteries in safety and transported Grant's men to the eastern bank.

This was all accomplished by the end of April 1863. Now began the task of pushing the Confederate troops back into the city. Seven times Grant met and defeated them before he reached Vicksburg. Failing to take the town by storm, he settled down to starve it into surrender. For seven weeks the town held out.

A Confederate woman who was shut up in the city gave this description of life during that time: "So constantly dropped the shells around the city that the inhabitants made preparations to live under the ground during the siege. We seized the opportunity one evening, when the gunners were probably at their supper, for we had a few moments of quiet, to take possession of our cave. Our dining, breakfasting, and supper hours were quite irregular. When the shells were falling fast, the servants came in for safety, and our meals waited; again they would fall slowly . . . and out would start the cooks to do their work."

Supplies ran low and were rationed. Horses and mules were killed for meat. Men died of disease and starvation. When Gen. John Pemberton finally asked what terms would be given them, Grant replied: "Unconditional surrender." Pemberton was forced to accept these hard terms on July 4, 1863. Vicksburg had fallen; the Confederacy was divided.

## Battle of Chancellorsville

Before the Union finally took over Vicksburg, the South won one of its greatest victories in the **Civil War** in May 1863 at Chancellorsville, Va. General Lee achieved perhaps his most brilliant success in this battle. At the start of the battle, Lee had about 60,000 men in a region east of Chancellorsville and south of Fredericksburg.

The newly appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac, General Hooker, had moved his forces during April to an area north of Chancellorsville and west of Fredericksburg. By April 30 the Union army of about 130,000 men was well entrenched. Hooker sent a detachment under Gen. John Sedgwick to attack Fredericksburg. He then prepared to advance and engage Lee's army in a major battle.

Lee's cavalry leaders had told him of the movements of Hooker's troops, including some actions that were meant to be deceptive. Quickly Lee decided to attack.



**Circled numbers indicate some major places**

Circled numbers indicate some major places at the site of the battle of Chancellorsville: 1, where the Union army concentrated; 2, Lee's

On the morning of May 1 he sent a division under Gen. Jubal Early to pin down Sedgwick's forces at Fredericksburg. With the remainder of his army Lee marched west to meet Hooker's advancing troops. By midafternoon the armies were in combat. Under heavy Confederate pressure the Union soldiers slowly withdrew to their strongly fortified defensive positions. Fighting came to a halt at nightfall.

divisions; 3, Sedgwick's detachment; 4 and 5, Early's division; 6, area where Jackson's troops attacked and where Jackson was wounded.

During the night Lee decided to attempt an encircling movement. He ordered Stonewall Jackson to lead 30,000 men around the southern flank of the Union army. General Jackson began the long march after midnight. In the morning the Confederates were seen by the Federals guarding the southern flank of the Union army. The Federals attacked but did not seriously hamper Jackson's march.

Jackson moved west, then north. He entered the tangled forest called The Wilderness, and soon his forces were in the rear of the Union army. Jackson then turned eastward and attacked. His Confederates drove into the Union lines, which faltered and fell back. When the Federals reached their defenses near Chancellorsville, they held their ground.

During the night Jackson rode ahead of his lines to scout the situation around United States Ford. On returning he was mistaken for a Federal officer and was fired upon by a Confederate sentry. The wound proved to be mortal. He died eight days later.

On the morning of May 3 the Confederates seized Hazel Grove, a hill near Chancellorsville. They mounted 50 cannons on it. Fire from this artillery killed large numbers of Union men. Fierce fighting raged throughout the day, and losses were heavy on both sides. Hooker himself was a casualty of the day. A cannon shell wrecked the porch of the two-story brick house that was Hooker's headquarters. A falling pillar struck Hooker on the head. When the general regained consciousness he was dazed and in pain, yet refused to turn over full authority to the officer next in command. This decision has been blamed for much of the uncertainty and confusion that led to the defeat of the huge Union army.

At Fredericksburg Sedgwick defeated Early and routed his troops. Sedgwick then marched westward to join the battle around Chancellorsville. He attacked Lee's rear guard, which was larger than he had expected. When darkness stopped the fighting on all fronts, Sedgwick had trenches dug and other defenses prepared.

In the afternoon of May 4 Lee attacked Sedgwick's well-entrenched corps. Its lines held firm for the most part, and Lee made little progress. Federal forces repelled attempts to take United States Ford and other key points. Sedgwick maintained his position throughout the day.

There were only unimportant skirmishes on May 5. That night Hooker decided on a total withdrawal. Early on May 6 the first Federal units began crossing the Rappahannock River at United States Ford. By the evening of May 6 most of the Union army was safely across the river. Lee, with his badly battered army, did not attempt to pursue the Federals. Meanwhile Sedgwick's detachment succeeded in crossing at Scott's Ford.

Union losses in killed, wounded, and missing amounted to some 17,000 men, or about 13 percent of the total force. The Confederates lost about 13,000 men, or more than 21 percent of the Army of Northern Virginia, and in Stonewall Jackson they lost an irreplaceable leader. The South's victory was its costliest as well as one of its greatest.

## Battle of Chattanooga



**Site of the second day of battle along the banks**

Site of the second day of

The North won three of the most important battles of the **Civil War** in 1863. Two of these Union victories occurred in early July in Gettysburg, Pa., and, after a long siege, in Vicksburg, Miss. In the fall the third crucial engagement was staged in the area around Chattanooga, Tenn. (*See also* Gettysburg, battle of.)

The campaign began on Sept. 19, 1863. General Rosecrans' Union army at Chickamauga, Ga., was routed by General Bragg's Confederates. Rosecrans fell back to Chattanooga. Bragg occupied Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain.

battle along the banks of Chickamauga Creek, near Chattanooga, Tenn. (Credit: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (B8184-10260))

Confederate troops then cut off the Union army from its supply base at Bridgeport, Ala., downstream on the Tennessee River.

To aid the trapped Federals the government sent reinforcements to Chattanooga—General Sherman with an

army from Vicksburg and General Hooker with 15,000 men from Virginia. General Grant was put in supreme command. He immediately replaced Rosecrans with Gen. George H. Thomas.



### In the battle of Chattanooga during the fall

In the battle of Chattanooga during the fall of 1863, the Union forces won a decisive victory. (Credit: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)

On October 27 and 28 Grant's command cleared the Tennessee River of Confederates west of Lookout Mountain. This reopened the road to Bridgeport. East of the city Union troops seized Orchard Knob on November 23. The next day Grant sent Hooker to attack Lookout Mountain. This seemed foolhardy because the mountain sides were steep and choked with vegetation. In addition, a thick fog had gathered, giving the conflict the name "battle above the clouds."

Hooker attacked vigorously. He had about 9,000 men against a defending force of less than 2,000. By afternoon the lower slopes had been taken. Bragg then abandoned Lookout Mountain to meet a new threat on his right flank—Sherman was attacking Gen. William J. Hardee at the north end of Missionary Ridge.

Sherman was stopped and Hooker prevented from joining in the attack on Gen. John C. Breckinridge. By the afternoon of November 25 the Union offensive had stalled completely. To help Sherman's attack from the north, Grant ordered Thomas to capture a line of rifle pits at the western foot of the ridge. Thomas' men won their objective. Then, instead of halting as ordered, they continued the attack up to the top of the ridge. The surprised Union generals could only follow, and the equally surprised Confederates on the crest broke ranks and fled. Soon Bragg's entire army was in headlong flight to the south. This victory gave the North control of the railroads centered in Chattanooga. The South now had only one east-west route—through Atlanta. During the series of battles the Union army, which consisted of 56,359 men, suffered 5,824 casualties. The Confederates, with 46,165 men, lost 6,667 killed, wounded, or missing.

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