



Lecture #1: the Civil War and What it Means to be an American



Frederick Douglass
Abraham Lincoln

What does it mean to be an American?

“It is peculiarly easy to become an American. The adjective provides no reliable information about the origins, histories, connections, or cultures of those whom it designates.”

-Michael Walzer

What is America?

“The promise of America was born in the 18th century out of the bold conviction that we are all created equal. It was extended and preserved in the 19th century, when our nation spread across the continent, saved the union and abolished the scourge of slavery. Then, in turmoil and triumph, that promise exploded onto the world stage to make this the American Century. America became the world’s mightiest industrial power; saved the world from tyranny in two world wars and a long Cold War; and time and again, reached across the globe to millions who longed for the blessings of liberty.”

-William Jefferson Clinton

What is America?

“America is still a radically unfinished society...”

-Michael Walzer

American Political Phenomena

- White adult male suffrage (democracy)
- Federalism (center and periphery)
- Judicial Review (constitutionalism)
- Persistence of chattel slavery (dominance)

The Declaration of Independence, July 4th, 1776

- “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that **all Men are created equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

The United States Constitution, 1787

- Article I, Section 2:
- Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, **three fifths of all other Persons**. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.

The Civil War

- “Any understanding of this nation has to be based, and I mean really based, on an understanding of the Civil War. I believe that firmly. It defined us.”

-Shelby Foote

The Civil War: Causes

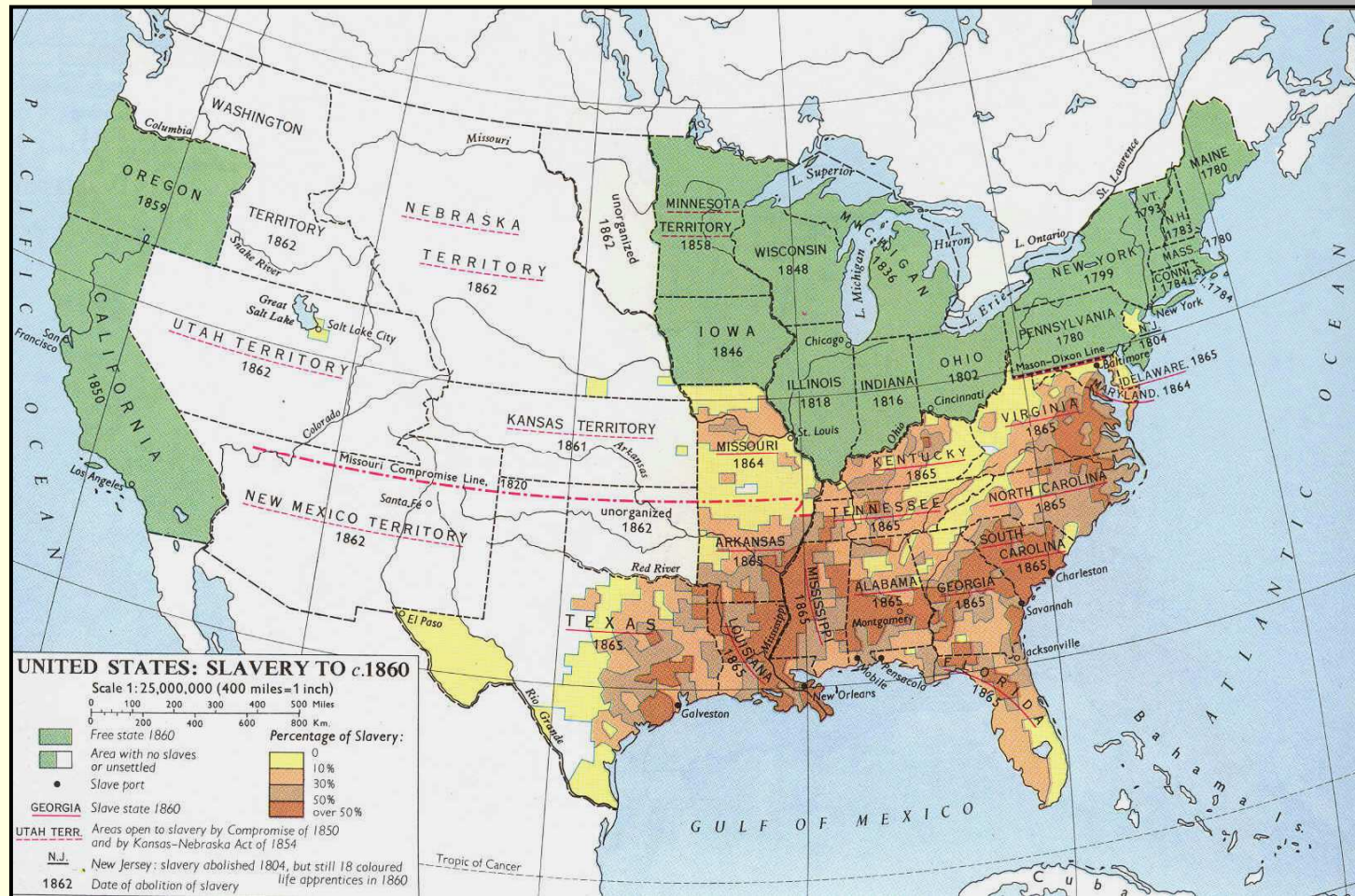
- **Slavery**
- Economics
- Politics
- Abolitionists
- Proslavery ideology
- Abraham Lincoln

And certainly other reasons, as well.

And! Slavery.

- Slavery was introduced into British North America around the year 1620 by a Dutch vessel which landed twenty Africans on the banks of the James River in Virginia.
- Plantation slaves grew sugar in the West Indies, tobacco in Virginia, rice in South Carolina, Indigo in Georgia, and later cotton throughout the South. Other slaves did domestic duties throughout the United States.
- ~4 million slaves in the U.S. in 1860.

Slavery in 1860

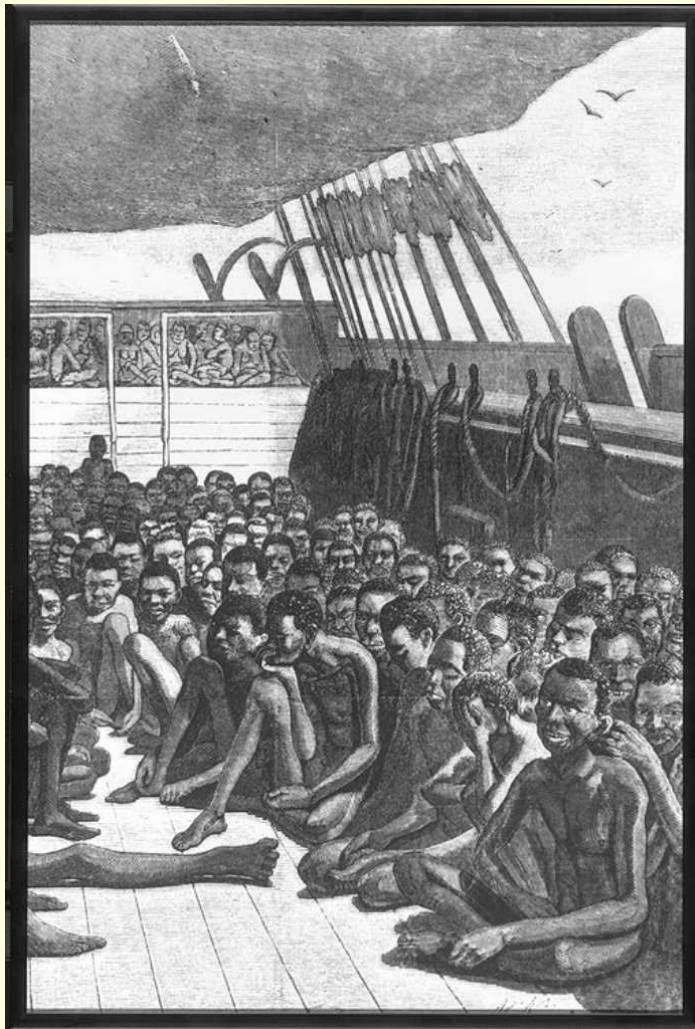


What was slavery?

- “The Negro has lost even the ownership of his own body and cannot have any control over his own existence without committing a kind of theft.”
- “For the Negro, slavery coincides with birth. What am I saying? Often he is bought in his mother’s womb and he begins his life of slavery, so to speak, before he is born.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

Slavery

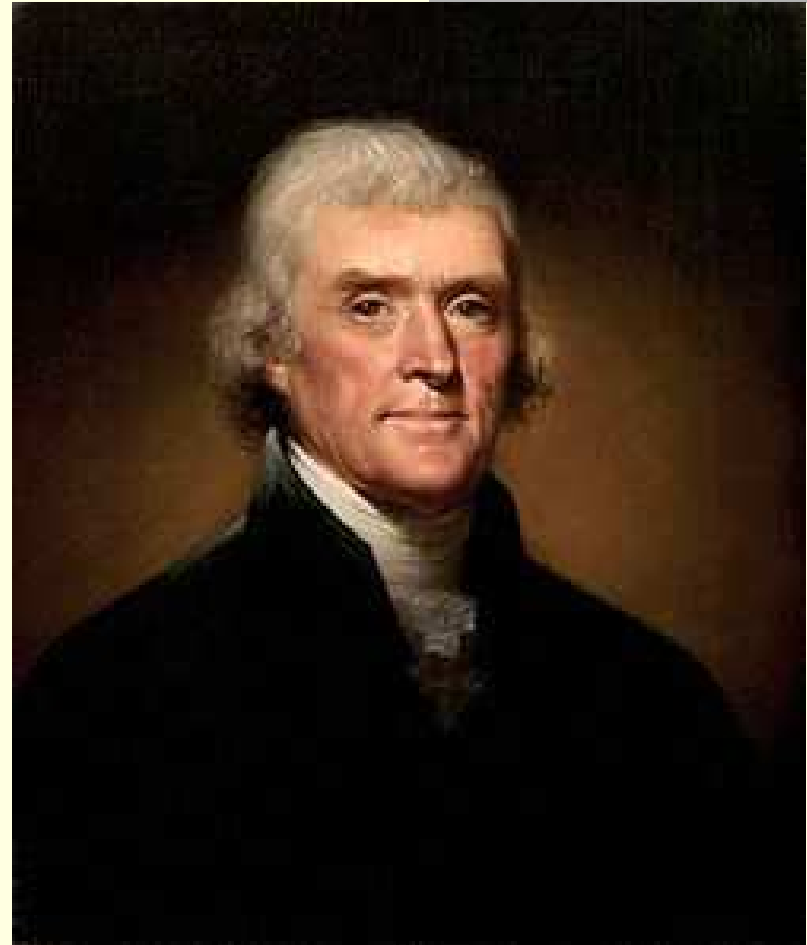


The ambivalence of Thomas Jefferson

- He wrote *The Declaration of Independence* in 1776 (all men are created equal).
- He was President of the United States from 1801-1809
- He founded the University of Virginia.
- He owned many slaves, but was himself ambivalent about slavery.

Thomas Jefferson

- “We have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.”
-Thomas Jefferson, 1820



The Civil War: Causes

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- **Economics**
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Economics

- “Slavery...brings dishonor to work; it introduces idleness into society together with ignorance and pride, poverty, and indulgence. It weakens the powers of the mind and dampens human effort. The influence of slavery, together with the English character, explains the customs and the social conditions of the South.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

Economics in the South

- “On the left bank of the [Ohio] River the population is sparse; occasionally a troop of slaves can be seen loitering in half-deserted fields; the primeval forest grows back again everywhere; society seems to be asleep; man looks idle while nature looks active and alive.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

Economics in the North

- ‘On the right bank, by contrast, a confused hum announces from a long way off the presence of industrial activity; the fields are covered by abundant harvests; elegant dwellings proclaim the taste and industry of the workers; in every direction there is evidence of comfort; men appear wealthy and content: **they are at work.**”

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

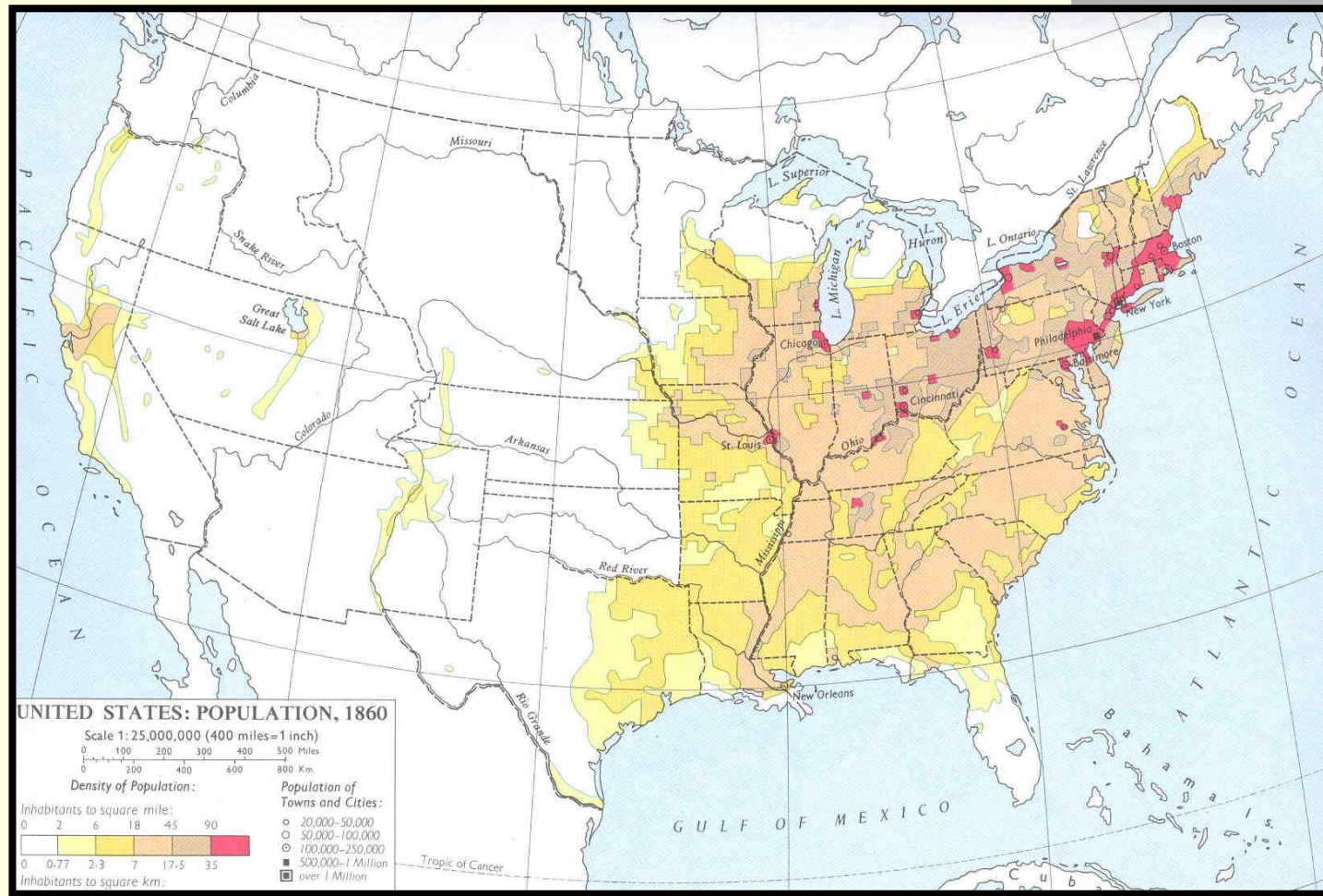
Comparative Economics (some facts)

- Population
- Urbanization
- Improved Land
- Wealth & Industry
- Railroads
- Cotton

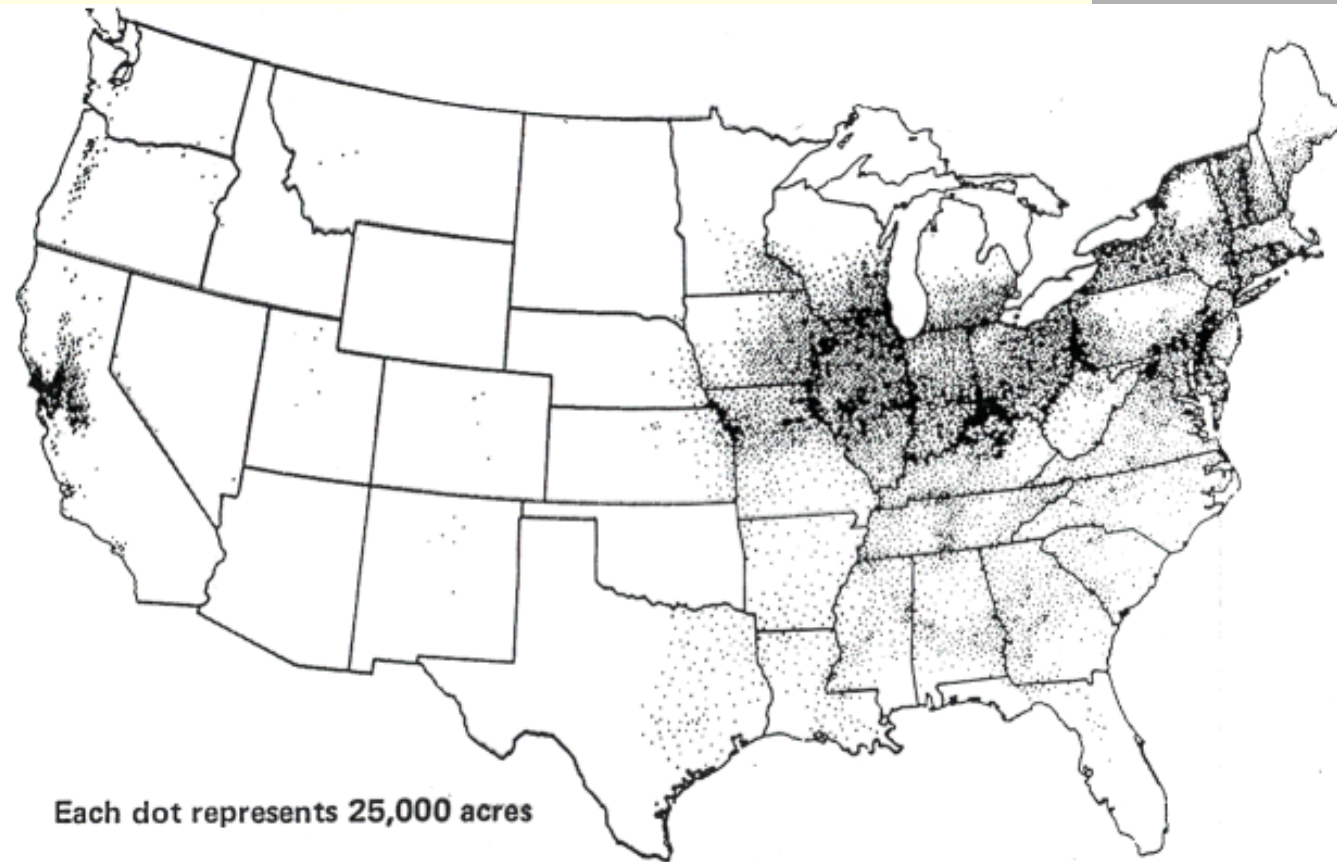
Population after secession, c.1861

- ~21 million live in the Union
- ~9 million live in the Confederacy
 - Of which ~4 million are slaves

The Economy (Urbanization)



Improved Land, 1870



Source: Charles O. Paulin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* (Washington, D.C. and New York: Carnegie Institution and the American Geographical Society of New York, 1932), plate 144E.

The Economy (Wealth & Industry)

- During the fiscal year ending 1 June, 1860 there were 128,300 industrial establishments in the United States. 110,274 were located in Union states.
- In 1860 there was a total of \$1.05 billion invested in real and personal property devoted to business. \$949 million was in the North.
- The North contributed ~92% of the total value of the annual product in the country.

The Economy (Railroads, 1860)



Cotton



The Civil War: Causes

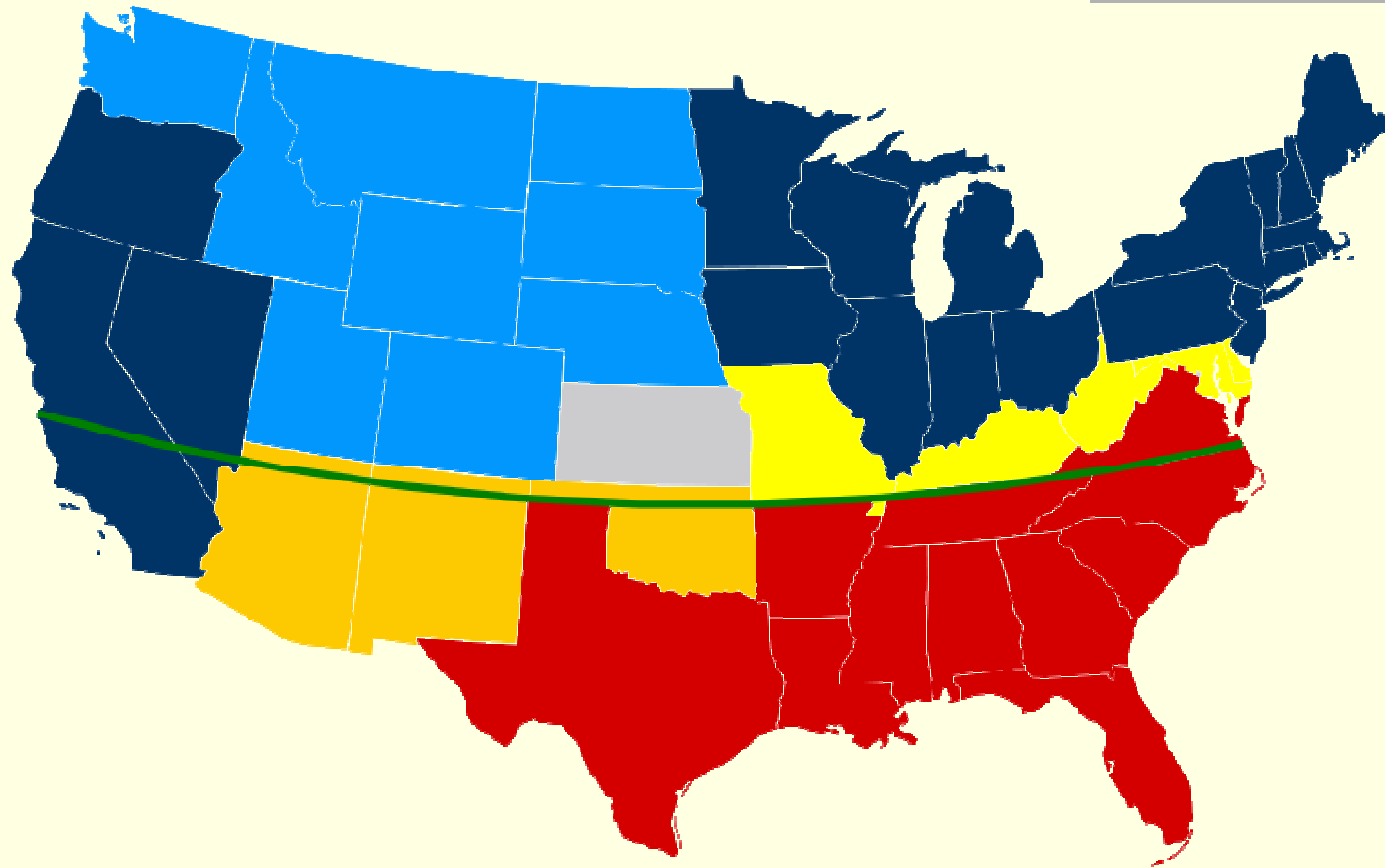
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And certainly other reasons, as well.

Politics

- Compromise of 1790
 - Placed the U.S. Capital in the South
- The Missouri Compromise of 1820
 - Established 36°30' dividing slave & free.
- The Compromise of 1850
 - Extended the line of 1820 to the west coast

Compromises of 1820 & 1850



The Civil War: Causes

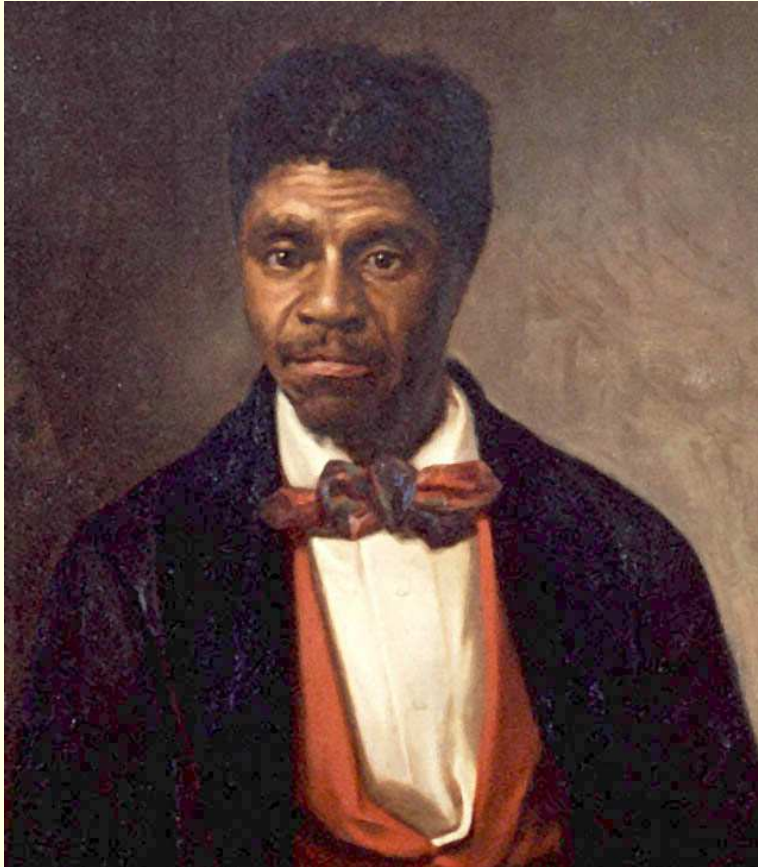
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The Humanitarian Impulse



The Abolitionists



William Lloyd Garrison, abolitionist
“that which is not just, is not law”

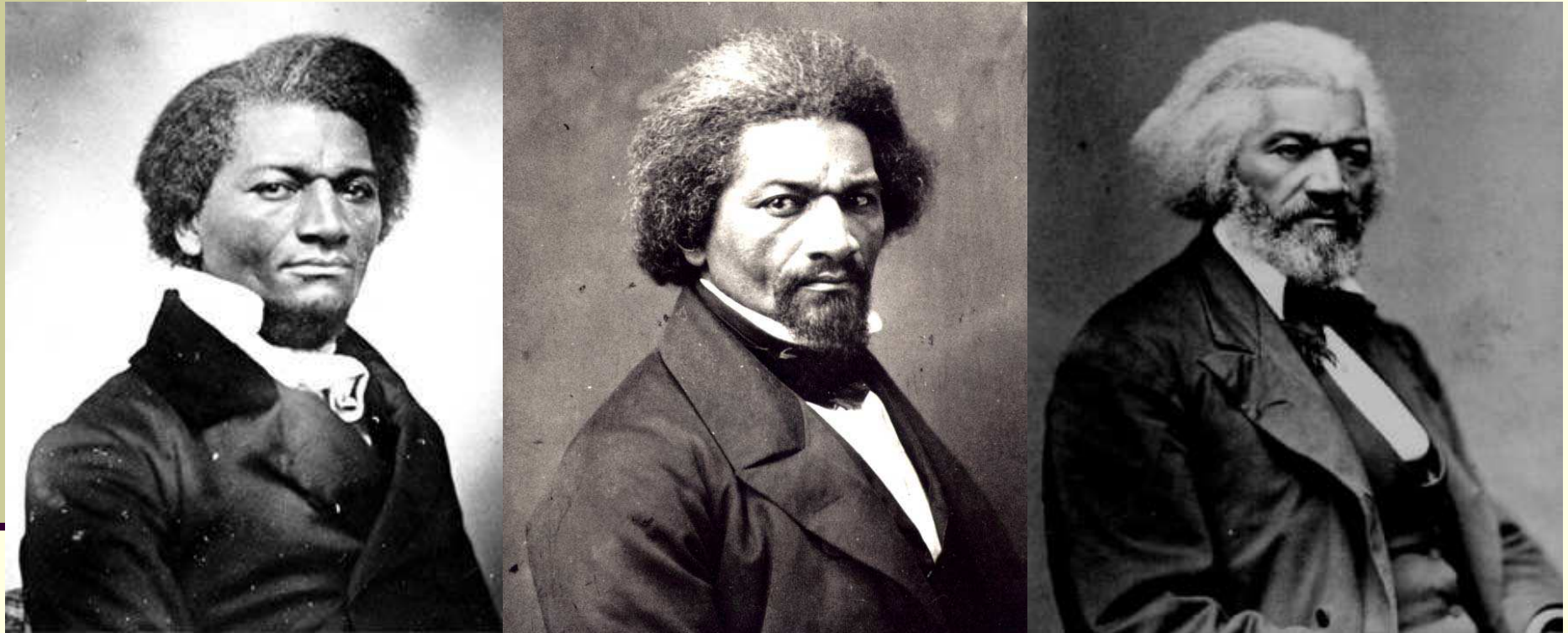
The Abolitionist Movement

- “How does it become a man to behave toward the American government today? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also.”

-Henry David Thoreau



Frederick Douglass (c.1817-1895)



The American Jeremiad

- prophets and prophecy
 - From the lamentations of Jeremiah the Hebrew Prophet
- jeremiad = lamentation, grief, distress
- potential *vs* reality

“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

- patriotic rituals
- Frederick Douglass
 - 5 July 1852
 - Rochester, NY
- virtuous men and noble ideals
- promises unkept, potential unfulfilled

Political Theory and Political Judgment

- Moral hindsight
 - courage
- Judgment
 - what is at stake?
 - what reasons can be given?
- Political theory
 - partisan
 - times of crisis
 - forms

The Civil War: Causes

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The Proslavery ideology

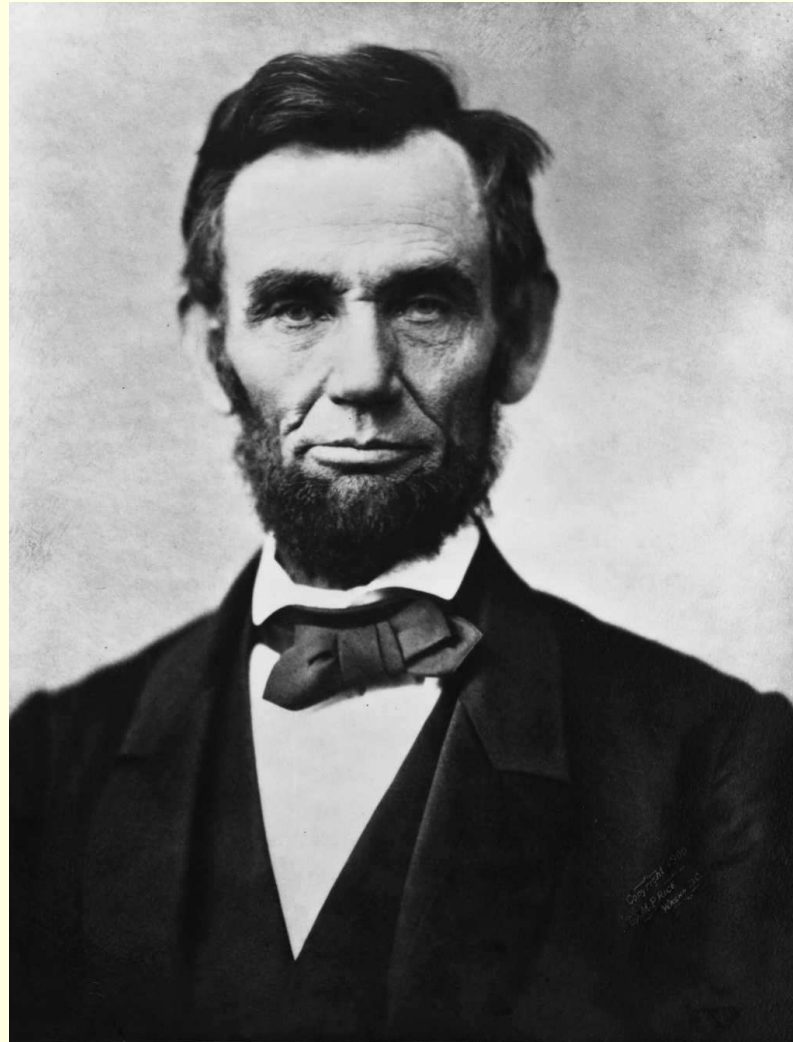
- “Our new government is founded upon...the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.”
 - Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens (1861)

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Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)



Mary Todd Lincoln (His Wife)



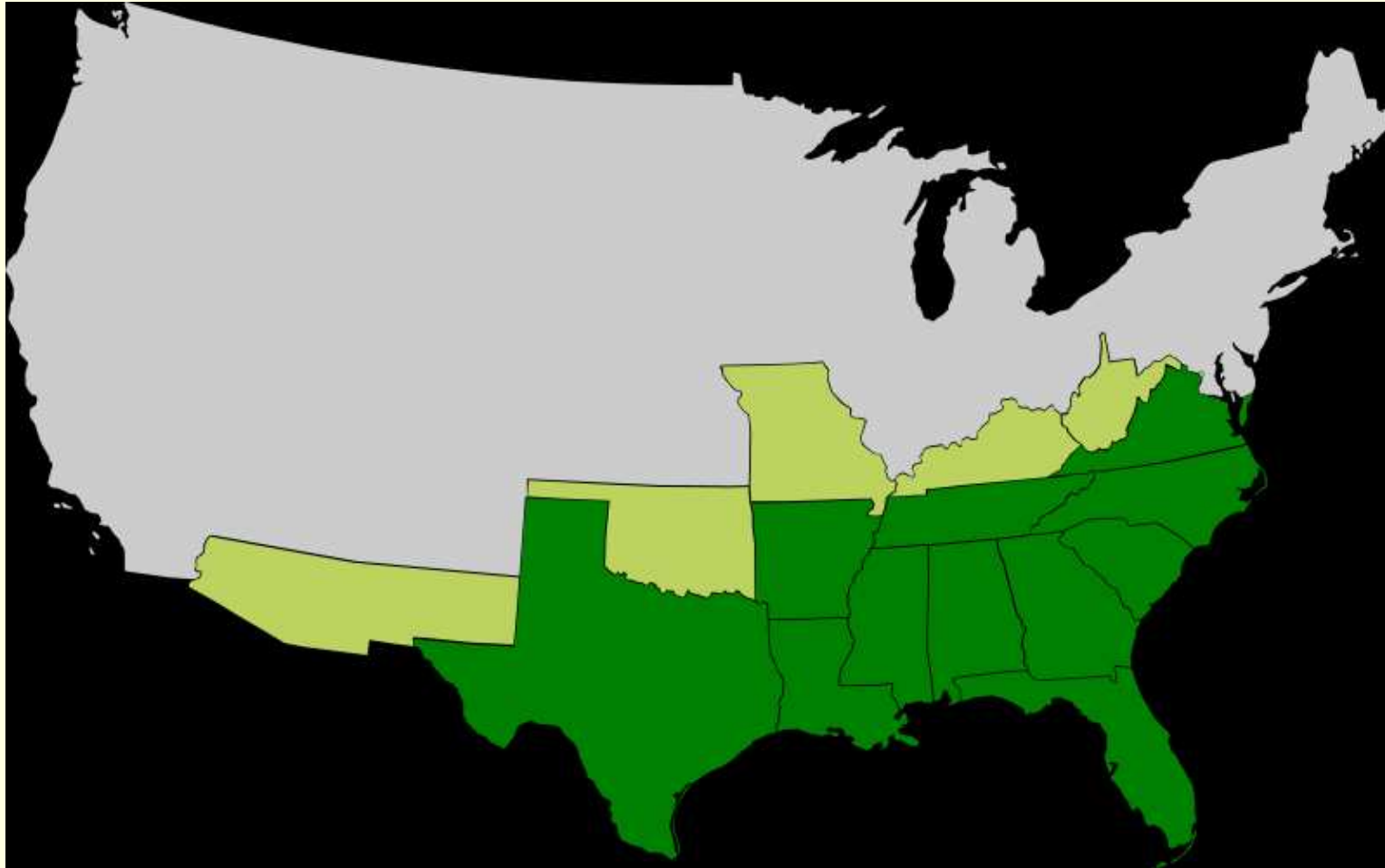
Abraham Lincoln

- Born in Kentucky
- Marries Mary Todd
- Elected to the House of Representatives in 1854
- Elected President in 1860
- Assassinated by John Wilkes Booth on April 14th, 1865

Lincoln's Inauguration (March 4th, 1861)



Secession



War!

- Shots are fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina at 4:30 AM, April 14, 1861.
- ~600,000 casualties over the next 4 years

Abraham Lincoln the war leader



- Lincoln (in top hat), with Allan Pinkerton (left) head of the Union Intelligence Service, and Major General John Alexander McClernand (right)

The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863

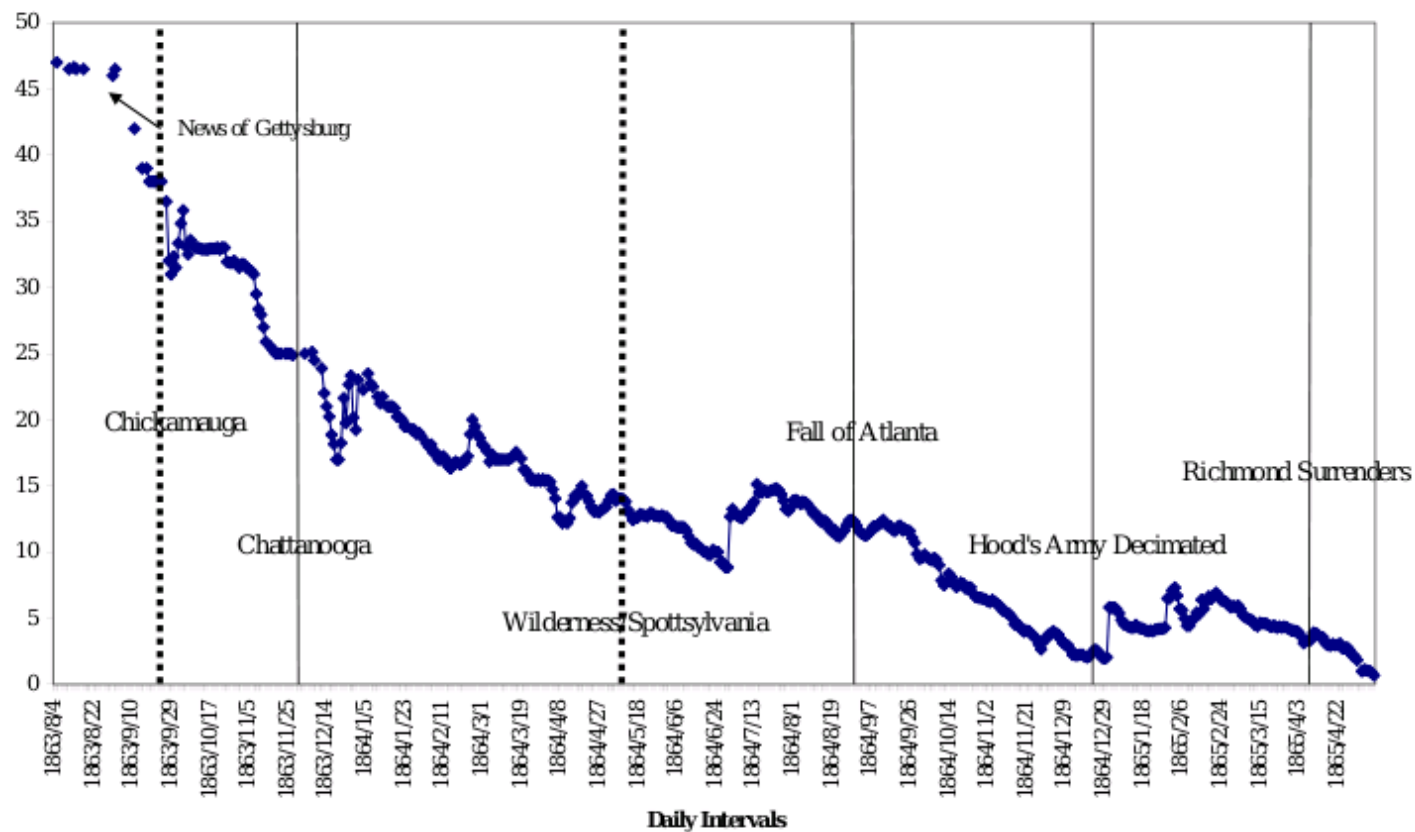
- “That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and **forever free**; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”

The Battle of Gettysburg, July 1st-3rd, 1863



The Fortunes of the Confederacy

Figure 1
Confederate Gold Bond Prices in Amsterdam
August 1863 - May 1865



The Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863



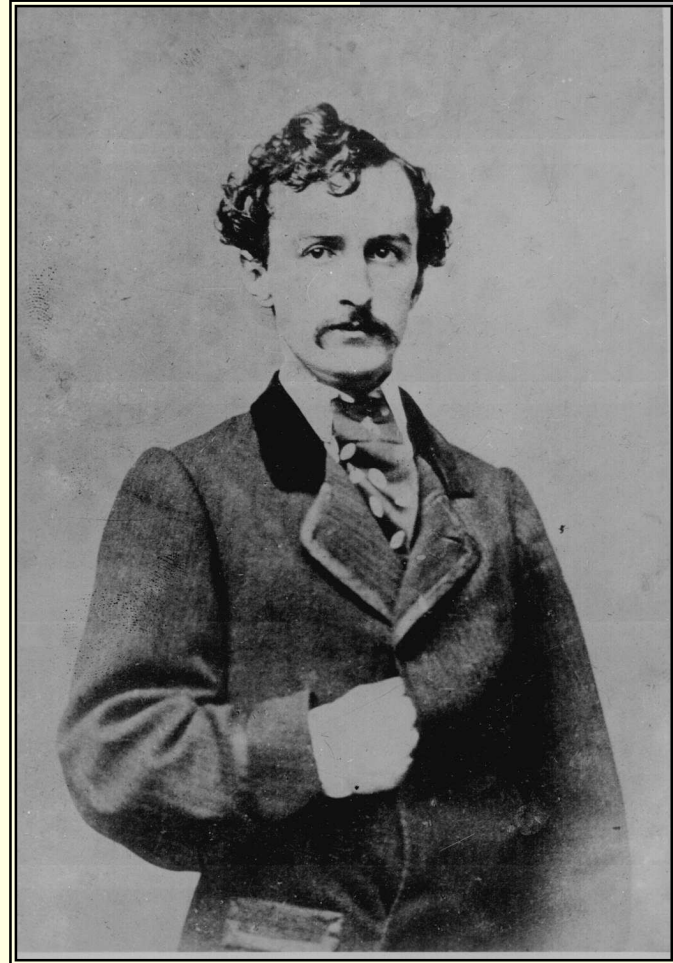
The Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863

- “Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure....”

-Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln Assassinated, April 14th, 1865

- John Wilkes Booth
- Ford Theater, 14 April 1865
- “Sic semper tyrannis!”



The End

