Chapter 13
Broken Bonds
1855-1861

Collision Course

• The Slave states’ elite, motivated by the profits from trading in slaves and not merely using bondage as a means of cheap production, seek to expand slavery into the West.
• Abolitionists emboldened by the power of their moral argument and subsequent increasing political clout make it clear that slavery will not expand into new territories.

Franklin Pierce Presidency

• Fourteenth President-1853 to 1857
• New Hampshire politician, Senator & Congressman; nominated as “dark horse.”
• Compromise of 1850 buys a brief period where slavery issue seems settled.
• He tried to persuade Spain to sell Cuba.
• Buys additional territory from Mexico.
• Not re-nominated by Democrats.

Conflict in Kansas

• Commonly referred to as “Bleeding Kansas”
• Settlers from the South clash with Abolitionist settlers over the issue of allowing slavery.
• Missouri Compromise (1820) is repealed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854).
• Railroad developers wanted states governments in Nebraska and Kansas despite turmoil.
• Kansas had divided between pro & anti slavery.

Dred Scott Decision

• Dred Scott, a slave, had been kept as such in Illinois, a state which prohibited slavery.
• Scott petitions court for freedom when he is slave master returns to a slave state.
• The Supreme Court has Chief Justice and several slave owners as members.
• Unable to protect slavery through the Constitution they use a technicality.

Railroads Moving West

• Gradually the railroads are moving west.
• By 1850s rails make it to Saint Louis.
• At every level governments, both state & federal, are facilitating the endeavor.
• The governments are selling public land cheap to the railroads as a means of helping the railroads raise cash for building.
Financial Collapse, Again

- Begins on August 24, 1857 when it is learned the New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company are embezzled.
- Bankers freeze accounts causing a panic among consumers and account holders.
- Industrialization results in a concentration of wealth in an elite, when that elite is corrupt or inept, disproportionate impact on economy.

Financial Collapse Dynamic

- Speculation on a commodity which does not produce expected profits.
- Speculation fueled by easy credit given to financial elite or otherwise connected clients.
- A real, exaggerated or imagined, crisis leads to strict restraints on credit; overreaction.
- Lesson learned: Self-regulating market a myth.

Election of 1856

- Primary election issues were civil war in Kansas and a country split over slavery.
- Buchanan wins Democratic nomination promising no federal interference in slavery and supported finishing the building of the transcontinental railroad.
- Three major parties have candidates.

The Know-Nothing Party

- Also known as the “American Party.”
- A bigoted anti-Catholic movement achieves stature of a legitimate political party.
- Claimed they only campaigned against “Catholic influence,” what influence?
- Catholic immigrants were extremely poor and made up less than 5% of population.
- What influence did marginalized poor have?

President James Buchanan

- Had been out of the country as Ambassador to Great Britain; son of Irish immigrants.
- Life-long politician and public servant from Pennsylvania; served in House & Senate
- Benefits from three-way slit in vote.
- Support mostly from the South, Pennsylvania and border areas sympathetic to the South’s political perspective on slavery.

John Brown

- Born in Connecticut in 1800.
- Moved around, lived near Lake Placid, NY
- An Abolitionist activist, resorting to violence.
- Meets Frederick Douglas; both deeply moved
- Forms anti-slavery guerilla group in Kansas
- Brown believes he can spawn a slave revolt.
• Leads a violent insurrection in Virginia.
• He is captured and hanged for his actions.

Brown's Execution Speech
• . . . I believe to have interfered as I have done, . . . in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it be deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children, and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit: so let it be done."

Lincoln-Douglas Debate
• Debates between U.S. Senate candidates Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas.
• Douglas, a Democrat, was the incumbent Senator, first elected in 1847
• Douglas help craft Compromise of 1850.
• Lincoln was a political unknown.
• Douglas defends popular sovereignty
• Lincoln stated that the US could not survive as half-slave and half-free states.

Abraham Lincoln
• Publicity of debates makes him national figure.
• A self-educated lawyer who had served only one term in the House of Representatives.
• As a lawyer he had developed debating skills.
• Though self-taught his logic was often brilliant
• Personally believed that slavery should only limited to where it existed he becomes anti-slavery candidate of the Republican Party.

The Republicans
• Formed in the early 1850's by anti-slavery activists and individuals who believed that government should grant western lands to settlers free of charge without speculators.
• In essence, they were the progressives.
• The Whig party had collapsed because it was only an alliance of Jackson haters.

South Threatens Secession
• Using the logic of the Articles of Confederation southern leaders believe they can secede.
• President Zachary Taylor had threatened to hang southern leaders if they revolted.
• Other presidents, like Buchanan, had placated them, fearing the South would revolt.
• The slaveholding elite had such a stranglehold on politics in the South their interests ruled.
The Election of 1860
- Democrats produce two candidates; Senator Douglas of Illinois and V.P. Breckinridge.
- Southern Democrats believe Douglas not strong enough on issue of slavery.
- Southern Democrats nominate Kentuckian Vice President Breckinridge.
- Tennessee Senator John Bell nominated by the Constitutional Union Party; pro-slavery.

Lincoln Wins
- Lincoln had defeated William Seward for the Republican nomination.
- Democrats split in two, plus fourth major party results in Lincoln winning with 40% of popular vote; 59% of electoral vote.
- Republican platform opposed slavery in the territories but upheld the right of slavery in the South; a balance difficult to maintain.

Lincoln Wins Four-Way Race
- Lincoln wins with only 40% of popular vote.

South Carolina Secedes
- South Carolina had the largest proportion of slaves per capita of all states.
- South Carolina’s slaveholders were most powerful & most radical of the Southern states.
- Believing Lincoln represented a threat and that his inexperience would limit him, they secede.
- As an economic elite, their view of their powers was flawed, they believed they’d win.

Firing on Ft. Sumter
- Southern exaggerated notions of manhood believe Union forces must be shown resolve
- Union had intended to wait out this Southern act of political foolishness, impetuousness.
- Violent attack on Union facility was the first act of war and made U.S. response necessary.
- South needed the port to export cotton to England; secession poorly planned.

The Anaconda Plan
- North had planned to blockade South.
- If cotton growing slaveholders could not export products to England they’d collapse.
- The South had no navy whatsoever.
- Believed the English would help to keep raw cotton coming to English mills.
- England had outlawed slavery and was reluctant to affiliate with such racist regime.
Who Started the War

- It is part of Southern mythology that Yankee industrialists caused the war.
- The reason for this is that in retrospect the South was doomed from the very beginning.
- Lincoln had intended to allow slavery to exist where it already existed; to be phased out.
- Southern economy had grown accustomed to profits from slave trade through expansion.