

History 225
Re: Lecture/Outline # 1

And the War Came

I. State of the Union, 1860

A. Election of 1860

In this presidential election the turnout was one of the largest in the history of the United States. If participation was any sign of commitment to the political/constitutional process, then Americans in 1860 had demonstrated their commitment to that process.

In this four-sided election (there were four candidates) three of the candidates Lincoln, Douglas, and Bell, stood for the preservation of the Union.

Only Breckenridge (Southern wing of the Democratic party) threatened secession unless the slave South received what it wanted: basically a slave code for the territories that would guarantee protection for slavery in all the territories.

Lincoln won in 1860. (Republican party platform stood firm for the non-extension of slavery into the territories).

Lincoln carried all the northern states and received 180 electoral votes (all the other candidates received together 123). The rub was that while Lincoln won in the Electoral College handily he only received about 40% of the entire popular vote (in this he was a minority president). Moreover, he only carried 2 counties in the entire South. Of course he did not campaign in the South in 1860). Southerners only knew of him by his speeches and by newspaper coverage. They had never seen him in person.

The outcome of the election we know. As soon as his victory was made public six of the Gulf or Deep Southern states began the process of secession. By February 1861 some 7 Southern states had withdrawn from the Union.

See chart of secession dates.

CTF

History 225
Re: Lecture/Outline # 1

B. Lincoln's Qualifications:

He was not that prominent a politician. He had limited (almost no formal education as compared to Jefferson Davis for example). He was largely self-taught. He was a prudent and highly successful lawyer. In fact, he was one of the stellar corporation lawyers in the country. His personal wealth was somewhere under \$25,000.

Moreover, he lacked administrative experience. He never held any significant military command (only experience was in the Black Hawk war in the 1830s). He was a man who loved peace and despised war and all things military. (His anti-Jacksonian persuasion and distrust of military leaders who cased in their battlefield glories for the political office). He had spent only one term in the national Congress during the Mexican War in the late 1840s. He had not been trained to command. He was a decided outsider when it came to the Washington political scene and therefore was innocent about the political culture of the national capital. He was going to have to learn the presidency in the midst of its greatest crisis.

In conclusion, superficially, these were hardly promising personal and administrative qualities for a nation in crisis.

Key term here is superficially.

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C. Secession Movement

Why did the Deep South see Lincoln (and the Republican party) as a threat; an endangerment great enough to take undertake a revolution?

(We'll deal w/ Lincoln's Inaugural Address shortly)

1. Begin with a few facts:

--By 1860 70% of all whites lived outside the Slave South
--By 1860 70% of all whites living in the Slave South did not own slaves.

Point: Slaveholders were a definite minority in the Union and a decided minority in the South

2. The recognition by slaveholders that the South was not monolithic. By that I mean by the time of the Civil War there had developed at least "two Souths"--the Deep South and the Border States.

For exmple: 1790(first census) 60% of all slaves were held in two states--Virginia and Maryland. By 1860 Virginia and Maryland held on;y 18% of the almost 4 million slaves.

While the Deep South (Gulf States) held 60%.

This shift or drain of slaves from the so-called border states like Virginia and Maryland holds up for all of the Border States. For example, by 1860 all the Border States combined(Va., Md. Delewgard, No. Carolina, Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky only 12% or a litle more than one out of ten familiesin the Border States were part of the world the slavemasters made.

If you were a member of the slaveholding class in the South what might be your interpretation of this development over time?

When will come the time when the number of non-slaveholding state sin the Union reach a critical mass or more th an 3 free states to every slave state--possibility of a Constitutional Amendment outlawing slavery is very real

Add to this a Union under Lincoln, a Republican leader who is personally opposed to slavery and head of a party whose platform was to contain slavey; keep it out of the territories and what is the future of the South Peculiar Institution?

History 225
Re: Lecture/Outline #1
Page five

etf

II. Lincoln's Inaugural Address (This was assigned reading)

Points to Consider: Just about everything Lincoln touches on in this address he has either written about or spoke frequently about during the interregnum in speeches and letters.

1. Lincoln's view of the Union. He sees the history satisfying his belief that the Union was perpetual.

Sees the Union as older than the Constitution. A contract entered into by all the people and could only be broken if a majority of the people agreed. The American union existed prior to the Constitution, etc.

The seat of sovereignty in our constitutional/political process is in the consent of the governed and that consent in best expressed in the will of the majority.

2. Does the speech hold any threats to the South.

Appeal to the (silent majority/or loyal Union folk he believes make up the great weight of the South). He will not invade. He will not send "obnoxious strangers" amongst them. He will try to see that the mail gets delivered if the South wants it. he will not try to take back the hundreds of forts and former federal installations that the seceded states have sequestered.

He appeals to the commonly held ties--the "mystic cords of memory" and "patriots grave", etc.

3. But he does inform the South he will "hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government and collect the duties and impost."

4. Any thing about slavery in the address? There is just the one reference. (Implied here that he would be happy with restored Union with slavery)