

One State Leaves, One State Joins **<http://civilwar150.longwood.edu>**

On January 21, 1861, as members of the U.S. Senate from several seceded states gave poignant farewell addresses to their former colleagues, and as Federal Government facilities in the south were occupied by state militia, yet another state prepared to leave the Union. Louisiana had voted for the southern Democratic candidate, John C. Breckinridge, in the election of 1860. In many respects it was a typical Deep South state, though in others it proved unique. Many of the state's wealthy sugar planters had belonged to the moderate Whig Party before its collapse in the mid-1850s, and in subsequent years they had not been ardent secessionists. As the south's leading financial center, New Orleans had strong ties with the north, and many in the state were concerned over the economic consequences of secession. In addition its varied ethnic make-up included many groups not necessarily supportive of disunion.

Despite Unionist sentiment from a segment of the convention delegates, and the belief of some that the state should delay leaving the Union in order to cooperate with the other slave states, the secessionist passions sparked by Lincoln's election overwhelmed arguments for caution. Ultimately on January 26, the delegates voted 113-17 for immediate secession, making Louisiana the sixth state to leave the Union. Within days state officials took control of two U.S. Revenue vessels, as well as the New Orleans Mint and Customs House. Shortly thereafter Louisiana's U.S. Senators Judah P. Benjamin and John Slidell resigned their seats; both soon held positions in the Confederate government, with the former serving in Jefferson Davis' cabinet.

Three days after Louisiana's secession, the rapidly diminishing number of states in the Union actually increased by one. On January 29, Kansas was admitted as the thirty-fourth state. Its future had been a major cause of conflict between north and south in the decade of the 1850s. Acquired as part of the Louisiana Purchase shortly after the turn of the century, the region that later became Kansas was designated a free territory as a result of the Missouri Compromise. That seemingly settled matter was reopened in the mid-1850s with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which through the process of popular sovereignty allowed for the possibility that slavery might in fact be allowed to exist in the two territories. For the next several years, the territory became a battleground between pro-slave and free state factions and was known as "Bleeding Kansas." President James Buchanan, reinforcing the belief that he was a "doughface," or a northerner sympathetic to the south, supported the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution, which was subsequently approved by the U.S. Senate but rejected by the House of Representatives. In another election the territory's voters rejected the Lecompton Constitution and it became evident that a majority supported an anti-slavery constitution. In 1859 they approved the new free state Wyandotte Constitution, though Buchanan stubbornly opposed the admission of Kansas into the Union as a free state. Like its predecessor, the U.S. Congress delayed passage of the Wyandotte Constitution until, following the secession of six southern states and the resignation of those states' representatives, the bill establishing Kansas as a free state passed in January 1861. For the next four years bloody guerrilla warfare engulfed the new state, along with a number of larger, conventional battles.

As January 1861 drew to a close, Americans had seen six southern states claim to have withdrawn from the Union, and a free state join. Southerners had taken control of U.S. facilities, both civilian and military, in the seceding states, and a convention was preparing to meet in

Montgomery, Alabama to organize a new government. Questions remained as to how many of the remaining slave states might secede, and whether the Federal government, either under lame-duck president James Buchanan or incoming president Abraham Lincoln might respond to the crisis.