

## **Border States**

**<http://civilwar150.longwood.edu>**

As the last week of April 1861 began, there was still great trepidation in Washington, D.C. as many residents feared imminent Confederate attack. The attack by a Baltimore mob on the Sixth Massachusetts as they traveled to Washington did not help alleviate the tension. Lincoln and others worried that if Maryland sided with the Confederates that the national capital would be surrounded by hostile states.

In 1861, Maryland was a fascinating mixture of cultures, with an abundance of both Union and Secessionist sympathizers. The settlement of Maryland had begun at St. Mary's at the mouth of the Potomac River. Southern Maryland was both a refuge for persecuted English Catholics and a source of rich tobacco farmland. However, by the time of the Civil War, both tobacco production and slavery in southern Maryland had decreased significantly.

The Eastern shore of Maryland was quite isolated from the rest of the state and tobacco production had largely given over to growing fruit by 1861. Many of the African-Americans there had been freed and had become an important part of the local economy. Western Maryland was mountainous and was largely free of slaves. Baltimore, one of the largest cities in the nation, was a highly industrialized port.

Despite the decreasing reliance on slaves throughout the state, the legacy of slavery and the proximity to Virginia caused many Marylanders to be strong supporters of the Confederate cause. Although the Maryland legislature voted on April 29 not to secede from the Union, they

did approve a resolution calling for the “peaceful and immediate recognition of the independence of the Confederate states.”

The complexities of Maryland were mirrored in two other important border states. Missouri had entered the Union as a slave state following the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The Missouri Compromise had stated that no state north of Missouri’s southern border could enter the state as a slave state. This was overturned by the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, which allowed residents of these two territories to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery. Because of federal law that allowed any slave reaching a free state to be free, many residents of Missouri became intent on making sure that Kansas entered as a slave state. These so-called Border Ruffians clashed for a number of years with Northern abolitionists in Kansas, creating such violence that the territory became known as bleeding Kansas. When Kansas finally entered the Union in January 1861 as a free state, there was great residual anger among many in Missouri. By the end of the war, Missouri would have supplied more than 100,000 men to Union armies and over 40,000 Confederate troops.

Kentucky was another critical border state. As in Missouri and Maryland, there were sizeable contingents of supporters for both sides of the coming conflict. While Kentucky did not secede from the Union, a group of Southern sympathizers formed a shadow state government called the Russellville Convention that was recognized by the Confederate government. When Lincoln requested by telegram that that state send four regiments to support his call to arms, Governor Beriah Magoffin replied “I will send not a man nor a dollar for the wicked purpose of subduing my sister Southern states.” Lincoln once said that he hoped to have God on his side, but he had to have Kentucky.

Lincoln fretted over the fate of these three states for most of the war. His concern that any action on his part would tip the balance extended to his decision to not have his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 apply to the border states.