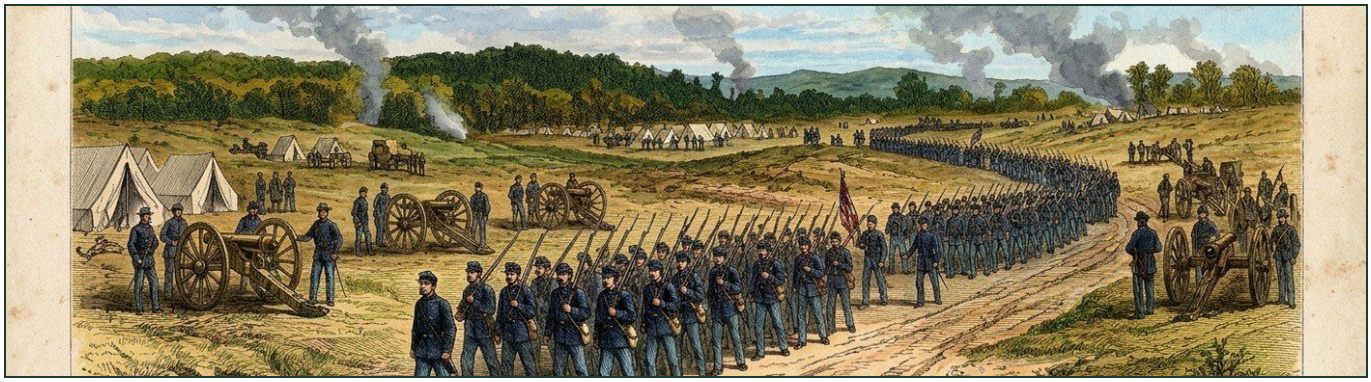


1860 – 1865

Civil War Timeline

The Civil War was the war between the Northern states (the Union) and the Southern states (the Confederacy) over slavery, states' rights, and whether states could leave the Union.

1860 — Lincoln Elected

Abraham Lincoln is elected president, alarming the slaveholding South.

> **Why it mattered:** *The South feared Lincoln would limit slavery, so his election pushed the Southern states toward leaving the Union.*

1861 — Southern States Secede

Eleven Southern states leave the Union and form the Confederacy.

> **Why it mattered:** *Splitting into two governments set the stage for war between the Union and the Confederacy.*

1861 — Fort Sumter

The war begins when Confederate forces fire on a U.S. fort in South Carolina on April 12.

> **Why it mattered:** *The attack turned the crisis into open war and rallied the North to fight to save the Union.*

1862 — Battle of Antietam

The bloodiest single day of the war, fought in Maryland.

> **Why it mattered:** *The narrow Union win gave Lincoln the moment he had been waiting for to announce the Emancipation Proclamation.*

Civil War Timeline *continued*

1863 ## Emancipation Proclamation

Lincoln declares enslaved people in the Confederate states to be free on January 1.

> **Why it mattered:** *It changed the war into a fight to end slavery and allowed Black soldiers to join the Union army.*

1863 ## Battle of Gettysburg

A major Union victory in Pennsylvania and a turning point of the war.

> **Why it mattered:** *It stopped the South's invasion of the North and shifted the momentum of the war to the Union.*

1863 ## Gettysburg Address

Lincoln gives a famous short speech honoring the fallen soldiers in November.

> **Why it mattered:** *In just a few sentences, Lincoln reminded the country the war was about freedom and keeping the nation whole.*

1865 ## Surrender at Appomattox

Confederate General Lee surrenders to Union General Grant on April 9.

> **Why it mattered:** *Lee's surrender effectively ended the fighting and the Confederacy.*

1865 ## Lincoln Assassinated

President Lincoln is killed just days after the war ends, on April 14.

> **Why it mattered:** *The nation lost its leader right as the hard work of rebuilding the South was beginning.*

1865 ## 13th Amendment

Slavery is abolished everywhere in the United States in December.

> **Why it mattered:** *It made the war's biggest change permanent, ending slavery across the whole country.*