

The Civil War Era 1853–1881

By the 1850s, the United States had expanded to fulfill the earliest dreams of Manifest Destiny. Although the nation was fewer than 100 years old, its landholdings now stretched from sea to shining sea. Even with vast new areas of farmland in the West and the Midwest, agriculture began to fall behind industry in moneymaking ability. The timber and mining industries, the fisheries and factories, and the rise of steel and steam outpaced the earning potential of farming even on a large scale.

At the beginning of this era, railroad lines already connected major eastern cities, such as New York and Baltimore, to the midwestern cities of Chicago and St. Louis. By 1860, the banking systems of industrial states—New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut—had more money than all the other banking systems in the nation combined.

Northern states wanted a strong federal government that could impose tariffs (taxes) and stop states from doing things that federal law prohibited. Southern states wanted the ability to govern themselves without interference from the federal government.

The political conflict between the northern and southern regions of the United States eventually became a clash between the two systems of industry and agriculture, and slavery was very important to the South because of its agricultural economy. The southern economy was tied to large farms and plantations that made large profits for the owners only because they had free labor.

In November 1860, Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected president on an anti-slavery platform. The slaveholders in the South thought it would be only a matter of time before the federal government would destroy their way of life. During the first few months after the election, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas seceded, or left, the Union. When the war began, the four upper southern states, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, also seceded. The new nation called itself the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis to serve as president. General Robert E. Lee was chosen to lead the Confederate Army.

Major Battles of the Civil War

1861	Attack by the South on Fort Sumter began the Civil War
1861	Confederate victory at the First Battle of Bull Run
1862	Battle of Shiloh
1862	Second Battle of Bull Run
1862	Battle of Antietam
1862	Battle of Fredericksburg
1863	Union victories at Gettysburg (50,000 died in 3 days) and Vicksburg

South	North
gray uniforms	blue uniforms
Confederate States of America; Confederacy; called "Rebels"	United States of America; Union; Called "Yankees"
Gen. Robert E. Lee Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston	Gen. Ulysses S. Grant Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman Gen. George McClellan

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