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Fulcrum of the Union: The Border South and the Secession Crisis, 1859-1861

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FULCRUM OF THE UNION: THE BORDER SOUTH AND THE SECESSION CRISIS, 1859-
1861

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by
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B.S. North Carolina State University, 2001
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May 2013

For Katherine

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Abstract

The Border South states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri spurned secession in 1860-61, which has led scholars to conclude that these four slaveholding states were safely ensconced in the Union column from the beginning of the crisis that drew the other slaveholding states into the Confederacy. Historians have often simplified the secession crisis in the Border South, minimizing the likelihood that these states with smaller concentrations of enslaved persons and a more diversified economy and society than the Upper and Lower South would ever leave the Union. This work seeks to add contingency to the story of the Border South during the breakup of the Union and demonstrates that many of the region's inhabitants actually considered secession a viable option. The Border South remained in the Union not because the region's white citizenry shared an inherent attachment to the republic, but because conservatives exhaustively labored to beat back the disunionists in their midst and prevent the four states from joining in the secession experiment. This study chronicles the Unionist offensive that neutralized, offset, and frustrated Border South secessionists and by the beginning of 1862 placed the region on solid Union ground. It demonstrates that keeping the Border South in the Union was by no means a facile task or a foregone conclusion.

The Unionist offensive centered on protecting slavery, holding out hope that a compromise settlement might avert war, and on maintaining an intersectional conservative collaboration to counteract northern and southern radicals. This dissertation shows that although in terms of raw numbers the institution of slavery had experienced a slow decline in the Border South throughout the antebellum period, the region's commitment to slavery's perpetuity remained robust in 1860-61. Moderates pointed to the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Law to convince their neighbors that only by remaining in the Union could they preserve slavery.

The protection of the peculiar institution proved the most influential component of the Unionist offensive in the Border South, which demonstrates that even on the brink of the Civil War the region was no less committed to slavery than the eleven slaveholding states that seceded.

Introduction

“Where Is the Great Statesman?”: Henry Clay’s Republic

On Independence Day, 1857, sunshine splashed down on the enormous crowd gathered at the Lexington Cemetery, in the heart of Kentucky’s Bluegrass region. The cloudless blue sky cast a fitting air over the assemblage, which had congregated not to mourn, but to celebrate the life of Henry Clay, Kentucky’s famed statesman. Bunting draped from the windows of the town’s houses and businesses; flowers and flags adorned several homes. In mid-morning, militia companies and local fire brigades marched to the step of patriotic tunes from five separate brass bands and led the throng to a large stage near Clay’s spartan gravesite. On the platform sat Clay’s family and his political heirs. They had come to Lexington to lay the cornerstone of a monument that not only would commemorate the life of the Bluegrass State’s favorite son, but also provide the departed doyen with a resting place worthy of his lengthy and eminent political career.¹

Five years before Clay had been laid to rest in the cemetery after a lifetime of public service to a nation that he saw grow from a string of former British colonies hugging the Atlantic seaboard to a transcontinental colossus stretching to the Pacific Ocean. By the time of his death in 1852 he had indelibly left his mark on the republic. Clay occupied several major political positions, from speaker of the House of Representatives and long stints in the United States Senate to secretary of state, during his long career, though his ambition to become president went thrice unfulfilled. He had few equals as a political manager. As the architect of the Whig Party, the major opponent to Andrew Jackson’s Democrats, Clay used his political acumen to build a

¹ *Report of the Ceremonies on the Fourth of July, 1857, at the Laying of the Corner Stone of a National Monument, to be Erected near Lexington, Kentucky, to the Memory of Henry Clay; Together with the Oration Delivered on the Occasion, by the Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, D.D., L.L.D.* (Lexington, KY: Clay Monument Association, 1857), 3-6.

national organization that championed an improved American infrastructure, high tariffs to augment domestic production and consumption, and financial growth managed by a national bank. His conservative approach to America's mounting concern with the spread of slavery and his penchant for sectional compromise grew out of his unique geographic locus in the Border South state of Kentucky, situated on the boundary between freedom and slavery. During his career Clay witnessed a growing political estrangement between the northern free states and the southern slaveholding states; on three occasions he had contributed significantly to cobbling together sectional compromises that rescued the nation from the specter of division and possibly civil war. "I know no South, no North, no East, no West, to which I owe my allegiance," Clay remarked on the floor of the Senate during one of those sectional crises. "My allegiance is to this Union and to my own State." His countrymen labeled Clay the Great Compromiser, and scores of Border South conservatives considered his political outlook gospel.²

After laying the cornerstone, the crowd repaired to the Lexington fairgrounds where one of Clay's disciples, Robert Jefferson Breckinridge, delivered a stirring address in which he admonished his fellow border southerners to follow the Great Compromiser's example and strive for national unity and the preservation of the Union. "Let us preserve [Clay's republic] by every mutual concession, and every proof of exalted forbearance," Breckinridge intoned, "remembering how poor and how low are all secondary considerations, when compared with the peace, the freedom, the independence, the union, the glory of our country."³

The crowd listened intently to his words, for the name Breckinridge carried as much weight among Kentuckians as did Clay. Breckinridge's father, a confidant of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, had come to Kentucky in 1793, held various state offices during the 1790s,

² Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 740 (quote), 781-785.

³ *Report of the Ceremonies*, 47-48.

introduced the famed Kentucky Resolution to the state legislature in 1799, and parlayed his political success into a stint as Jefferson's attorney general before passing away in 1806. Robert inherited his father's passion for politics, but after one term in the state legislature he opted to enter the Presbyterian ministry. He rose to great heights in the denomination, pastoring a congregation in Baltimore before returning to Lexington in 1847 to head the city's First Presbyterian Church. During his career Breckinridge became a leader of the Old School Presbyterians and accrued a reputation for his eloquent sermons and his thoughtful writings. In 1853 he left his pastorate, founded the Danville Theological Seminary some thirty-five miles southwest of Lexington, and served the college as both a professor and a public intellectual. Political moderation became Breckinridge's watchword: he refused to believe that the Bible sanctioned American slavery and thus called for its gradual elimination but, paradoxically, he himself owned thirty-seven bondspersons in 1860. The cries for immediate abolition that emanated from northern rostrums and became louder throughout the antebellum period unnerved the conservative Breckinridge, who worried that such a program would endanger the Union and produce social anarchy in the South.⁴

Although few border southerners endorsed Breckinridge's cry for gradual emancipation, many agreed with two of his key political tenets which he had inherited from Henry Clay: his attachment to the moderating influence of the Union and his conservative racial outlook. By the time he delivered his oration in 1857, the widening sectional divide had left the Border South states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri in a most unenviable position. Most inhabitants of the northernmost outpost of slavery had throughout the antebellum period relied

⁴ James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 39-91; Harold D. Tallant, *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Luke E. Harlow, "Religion, Race, and Robert J. Breckinridge: The Ideology of an Antislavery Slaveholder, 1830-1860," *Ohio Valley History* 6 (Fall 2006), 1-24.

upon conservatives like Henry Clay to reach out to moderates across the nation, smother the fires of sectional discord, and preserve the Union and the South's peculiar institution. Since Clay's death, ominous signs of another crisis loomed. The Whig Party foundered shortly after its architect passed away; the Republican Party, a northern political organization devoted to strangling the peculiar institution by preventing its spread into the western territories, had arisen in its stead. The slavery question also placed inordinate strain on the Democratic Party, which by 1857 had split into sectional wings over the issue of slavery in Kansas. A South Carolinian had caned a Massachusetts politician on the floor of the Senate; on the plains of Kansas antislavery and proslavery forces literally battled for the future of the territory; and the Supreme Court only emboldened the Republicans when in an attempt to extinguish the major political issue plaguing the nation it decided that Congress could not legislate on slavery in the territories.⁵

Breckinridge, though enthusiastic about the future of Henry Clay's republic, knew the worsening political climate required statesmanship on par with that of the Great Compromiser. As he scanned the line of public functionaries who joined him in laying the cornerstone, Breckinridge assuredly believed that someone would step into the void left by the departure of Clay. On that Independence Day he shared the stage with several laudable candidates. Three

⁵ For works that have shaped my understanding of the turbulent 1850s, see Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942); Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); William J. Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978); Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, 2 volumes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990-2007); Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of the Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and John Ashworth, *The Republic in Crisis, 1848-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

stood out among the rest: his own nephew, John C. Breckinridge, vice president and a leader of the southern Democrats; James Guthrie, a Democratic railroad magnate and one-time secretary of the treasury; and, most eminently, John Jordan Crittenden, an aged statesman and devoted Whig whom Henry Clay had groomed to take on his role. “And where is the great statesman, for whom is now in store, the great glory of doing for us *once* what he *thrice* accomplished?” Breckinridge queried as he reached the crescendo of his speech. Nearly every border southerner pondered the same question in the late-1850s, albeit with varying degrees of optimism.⁶

Conditions in the United States rapidly deteriorated in the two years following the Lexington Independence Day ceremony honoring Henry Clay. By December of 1860, the nation had become enveloped in a full-fledged crisis. In the aftermath of Republican Abraham Lincoln’s election in November, South Carolina took the bold step of seceding from the Union; in the subsequent two months the other six slaveholding states of the Lower South joined the Palmetto State in the experiment of disunion and created their own government in Montgomery, Alabama. The rash decision of the Deep South states left the inhabitants of the other eight slaveholding states in a momentous predicament: should they too sever their ties to the Union and join the newly minted Confederate States of America, or should they work to secure a compromise that would produce a final settlement of the malignant slavery issue and bring the wayward states of the Cotton South back into the Union?⁷

⁶ *Report of the Ceremonies*, 4, 49 (quote).

⁷ The term Lower South refers to the seven states that seceded prior to Abraham Lincoln’s inauguration: South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. Throughout this work, the terms Deep South, Cotton South, and Gulf South are used interchangeably with Lower South and refer to the same seven states. The term Upper South refers to the four slaveholding states that seceded after the April 1861 firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s Proclamation for 75,000 troops to quell the rebellion: Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas. The term Border South refers to the four slaveholding states that remained in the Union: Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Contemporary observers often lumped the Upper South states with those of the Border South and labeled them the border states. For this reason I have chosen the label Border South and have

The strain of the fractured nation squeezed the people of the Border South. The overall percentage of enslaved persons to the total population in the Border South paled in comparison to the eleven states that eventually made up the Confederacy, yet the comparative frailty of the peculiar institution produced among border southerners anything but a willfulness to depart with their bondspersons. Unionists in the region exerted all of their energy during the months following Lincoln's election to convince their neighbors and colleagues that secession would place slavery on an accelerated route to extinction whereas maintaining an allegiance to the old flag, with all of the constitutional and legal protections it afforded to slaveholders, would best preserve the status quo. Time and again Border South Unionists pointed out that disunion would forfeit the Fugitive Slave Law, the authority of the Supreme Court, and southern power in Congress. Unionist Francis Thomas, a former governor of Maryland, announced to his fellow citizens that through secession the eleven states of the Lower and Upper South had "abandoned every position, every safeguard in the Government that had been thrown around this institution, by deserting their posts in the Senate and in the House of Representatives." "The very men who clamored against the contraction of the limits of slavery," Thomas continued, "have themselves destroyed all those safeguards."⁸

Border South Unionists viewed Henry Clay's conciliatory precedent as a blueprint for action in the secession crisis. They sought to preserve Clay's republic, where moderation and

throughout the narrative noted when an observer applied the term border states to more than the four states under study in this dissertation.

⁸ "Speech of Francis Thomas at the Front Street Theater, in Baltimore, Md., October 29, 1861," in Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.*, 11 volumes (New York: D. Van Nostrand Publisher, 1861-1868), 3:250. For a similar viewpoint from a transplanted Kentuckian, see William Clark to Dear Son [James Clark], Jan. 22, 1861, Clark-Strater-Watson Family Papers, 1850-1970, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. For the Union's protection of slavery, see Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*, completed and edited by Ward M. McAfee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); and George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholders' Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

sober reflection overawed extremism from either quarter. “We occupy the middle ground,” a Kentucky Unionist informed Abraham Lincoln in 1860, “and generally we are as much opposed to the fire eating southern disunion gang as we are to the Ultra abolitionists in the North[.]”⁹ For several generations conservative Unionism had been the foundation of Border South political thought, and during the crisis that began with John Brown’s October 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and culminated in a civil war of unforeseen proportions, Unionists employed every means available to convince their neighbors that Clay’s legacy would again rescue the nation from the brink of disaster.¹⁰ They worked assiduously to secure a compromise settlement; they called on the help of their conservative allies in the North; they utilized the stump, legislative legerdemain, and outright political chicanery when they deemed it essential. In sum, Border South Unionists by the end of 1861 had fought and won a pitched battle in which victory was neither preordained nor facile. As 1862 dawned the prospects of compromise had scattered, but border country Unionists had convinced a majority of the region’s populace that the federal government waged war to preserve the Union, not to “overthrow and destroy their domestic institutions upon which their very existence depends.”¹¹

Border South Unionists managed to link the perpetuity of the Union to the permanence of slavery, though often during the twenty-seven months from October 1859 to the end of 1861 the

⁹ Samuel Haycraft to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 26, 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C, available at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/alhome.html>, hereinafter cited as Lincoln Papers, LOC.

¹⁰ For the importance of this conservative brand of Unionism, see especially John V. Mering, “The Slave-State Constitutional Unionists and the Politics of Consensus,” *Journal of Southern History* 43 (August 1977), 395-410; George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979); Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union As It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003); William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and William J. Cooper, Jr., *We Have the War Upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War, November 1860 – April 1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

¹¹ Speech of Lazarus Powell, Jan. 22, 1861, *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, Appendix, 95. All references to the *Congressional Globe* hereinafter will be cited as *CG*.

likelihood of their success seemed dubious. Contemporaries from across America persistently observed that even with the strident efforts of moderate Unionists, the four states of the Border South stood on the verge of joining in the secession movement. “A strong conservative sentiment tends them [the Upper and Border South] to the Union; a natural sympathy with the seceding States draws them in an opposite direction,” Massachusetts intellectual Edward Everett discerned in February 1861. Everett claimed that “if the Border States are drawn into the Southern Confederacy the fate of the country is sealed.”¹² Some ardent secessionists across the Lower South felt assured that the four states of the Border South would add their names to the roster of the Confederacy. Judah Benjamin of Louisiana predicted in the spring of 1861 that by the end of the year tiny Delaware would sever its ties to the Union and join the Confederate States of America. Although Benjamin’s prophecy failed to materialize, many Confederates refused to give up on the secession of the Border South. Even in early 1862, after federal troops had occupied each of the four Border South states, a Lower South propagandist believed the region’s latent sympathy for the seceded states would with a gentle nudge from the Confederacy ferment into a powerful tonic of disunion. “Give to the loyal men of the border arms and munitions of war, give them material aid to repel the intervention of the invader,” he advised, “and we believe they will crush out the pestilent toryism now daily growing into more formidable proportions under the shadow of federal power.”¹³

¹² *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Feb. 9, 1861.

¹³ Judah Benjamin to James A. Bayard, Mar. 19, 1861, Callery Collection of Bayard Family Papers, Accession 78.25, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware; R.R. Welford, “The Loyalty of the Border States,” *DeBow’s Review* 32 (January – February 1862), 87. Confederate Robert A. Toombs shared Welford’s belief about latent sympathy for the Confederacy in the Border South; see Robert A. Toombs to Dear Stephens, July 5, 1861, Robert Augustus Toombs Correspondence, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. For a similar outlook from Delawarean Thomas F. Bayard, see Thomas F. Bayard to Rodmond Gibbons, Feb. 24, 1861, Rodmond Gibbons Papers, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware. Many Lower South secessionists hoped to achieve unity among all fifteen slave states during the disunion experiment and appealed to the Border South to join in their movement; see Robert E. Bonner, *Mastering America: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of American Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 231-236.

Contemporary onlookers compared the Border South to a fulcrum between the Union and the Confederacy which might very likely decide the fate of the fractured nation. Most politically attuned inhabitants of the once-United States well knew that the secession of the Border South would alter unquestionably the balance sheet of both of the warring factions. Nearly 2.6 million white persons lived in the four border country states in 1860, which equaled almost half of the white population of the eleven Confederate states. The region boasted the large cities of Baltimore and St. Louis, which operated as critical hubs of commerce, manufacturing, and industrial production, and served as a home to a heterogeneous population comprised of free blacks, enslaved persons, German and Irish Roman Catholics, and a large working class. Agricultural and mineral resources, including an abundance of grain and livestock, gave the Border South a more diverse economic complexion than its sister slave states to the south. Few policy makers in either American government failed to assess the value of the Border South.¹⁴

In spite of the grave concerns expressed about the future of the Border South by historical actors, historians of the secession crisis have rarely investigated the region as a corporate entity. Hindsight has reduced the importance of the region during the crisis of the Union in the eyes of some scholars. Looking backward from the vista of 1865, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri all eventually staved off secession and became essential contributors to the Union war effort. From the vantage point of 1859 through 1861, however, the future of the Border South appeared nebulous at best. Louisville editor George Prentice in late 1860 captured the palpable angst of border southerners: “Let the Border States but stand firm in this trial, and we believe the Union, fast anchored by their calm wisdom and unshaken patriotism, will ride out triumphantly

¹⁴ William E. Gienapp, “Abraham Lincoln and the Border States,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 13 (1992), 13-15; William W. Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23; Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2004), 8-9, 22.

the tempest of fanaticism and of treason now sweeping widely across the public mind. Let them falter, and the Union freighted not only with their happiness and glory but with the richest earthly hope of the race, will certainly go down, beyond the reach of diving-bell or plummet.”¹⁵

The voluminous historiography of the secession crisis does not include a study that focuses solely on the four states of the Border South. Edward Conrad Smith’s *The Borderland in the Civil War*, an outdated book published over eighty years ago, provides a decent synopsis of the secession movement and the call for armed neutrality in Missouri and Kentucky, but the study focuses upon the trans-Alleghany border country and does not include Maryland and Delaware. William C. Wright’s *The Secession Movement in the Middle Atlantic States* covers Maryland and Delaware, along with New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, but his work suffers from inexact definitions of Unionism, disunionism, and pro-southern sentiment, which prevents a thorough analysis of the subject.¹⁶ Two recent studies shed new light on the importance of the Border South in the larger framework of Civil War-era politics, though neither one centers solely on the secession crisis. Stanley Harrold’s *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* rightfully places enslaved persons and abolitionists along the sectional border at the forefront of the crisis leading to war in the decades before 1861, but his study devotes scant attention to the secession crisis. Moreover, in his attempt to illuminate the intermittent episodes of antebellum violence that border northerners and southerners witnessed, Harrold diminishes the strong desire for sectional cooperation and moderation that most of the region’s inhabitants shared. William C. Harris’s *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* also adds nuance to the story of the Border South, but his main concern is the sixteenth

¹⁵ *Louisville Daily Journal*, Dec. 24, 1860.

¹⁶ Edward Conrad Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York: MacMillan, 1927); William C. Wright, *The Secession Movement in the Middle Atlantic States* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973). See also James A. Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 9-45.

president's deft handling of the region throughout all four years of the Civil War, not simply the onset of the war.¹⁷

Daniel Crofts's impressive investigation of the secession crisis in the Upper South, entitled *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis*, provides an excellent formula for studying the Border South as a corporate whole. Written over twenty years ago, Crofts even suggests that a comparative study of the border region would fill a crucial void in the historiography of the secession crisis.¹⁸ The following study seeks to answer Crofts's call by weaving the response to the crisis of the Union in each of the four Border South states into a single narrative. A large body of work on each of the individual Border South states provides a useful backdrop for this study. A diverse array of scholarship offers numerous explications – including the legacy of Henry Clay's nationalism, vibrant two-party competition, economic and social ties with the North and Midwest, the beneficent appeal of armed neutrality, and extralegal maneuvering by Lincoln and the federal government – for each state's decision to remain in the Union.¹⁹ Viewing the secession crisis from a region-wide vista, however, illuminates the

¹⁷ Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).

¹⁸ Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, xx.

¹⁹ For Delaware, consult Harold Bell Hancock, *Delaware During the Civil War: A Political History* (Wilmington: Historical Society of Delaware, 1961) and Brion T. McClanahan, "A Lonely Opposition: James A. Bayard, Jr. and the American Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2006). For Kentucky, see E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926); Harry August Volz, III, "Party, State, and Nation: Kentucky and the Coming of the American Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1982); Christopher M. Paine, "'Kentucky Will Be the Last to Give Up the Union': Kentucky Politics, 1844-1861" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1998); John A. Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace: Kentucky and the Secession Crisis of 1861" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1999); and James A. Ramage and Andrea S. Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011). For Maryland, refer to Jean H. Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) and William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). Finally, for Missouri see Walter Harrington Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession* (Nashville, TN: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1931); William E. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861 – 1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963); Parrish, *Frank Blair: Lincoln's Conservative* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998); Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000);

importance of interstate cooperation among Unionists, the lengths to which those Unionists went to keep their states true to the federal government, and, most importantly, the vital importance of both the peculiar institution and compromise to the region's inhabitants. This work adds to the recent literature on slavery in the Border South which demonstrates that although the region's inhabitants did not generally operate large plantation units or accumulate massive slaveholdings as did their brethren in the Upper and Lower South, they actively sought ways to ensure the institution's longevity.²⁰ Moreover, the pages that follow will hopefully demonstrate that for a large contingent of Americans, and especially border southerners, compromise remained a very real, though extremely thorny, alternative in 1860-61.²¹

and Mark Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). In addition to these monographs, scholars have contributed scores of articles to journals in each state. See the Bibliography, below, for these works.

²⁰ See especially Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Max Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom: Free and Slave Labor along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery, Family Over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); and Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012). Three older works have served as keystones for understanding the complicated and nuanced nature of slavery in the Border South: Charles Lewis Wagandt, *The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862-1864* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); and Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

²¹ Scholars divide over whether compromise was even a reality during the secession winter. Works that see the efforts at compromise in 1860-61 as simple political maneuvering and devoid of morality or substance include Kenneth M. Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950); Stampp, *America in 1857*; Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union: The Improvised War, 1861-1862*, vol. 5 of *The Ordeal of the Union* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959); and Harold M. Hyman, "The Narrow Escape from a 'Compromise of 1860': Secession and the Constitution," in Hyman and Leonard W. Levy, eds., *Freedom and Reform: Essays in Honor of Henry Steele Commager* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 149-166. For works that consider compromise unlikely in 1860 because of conflicts between the free labor economy of the North and the slave labor economy of the South, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Levine, *Half Slave, Half Free*; Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); and Ashworth, *The Republic in Crisis*. Accounts that view the attempts at compromise as genuine and realistic include Mary Scrugham, *The Peaceable Americans of 1860-1861: A Study in Public Opinion* (1921; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1976); David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (1942; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Patrick M. Sowler, "The Conciliatory Republicans During the Winter of Secession" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1963); Daniel W. Crofts, "The Union Party of 1861 and the Secession Crisis," *Perspectives in American History* 11 (1977-1978), 327-376;

This study seeks to capture the pervasive apprehension that clouded over the Border South during the crucial interval from John Brown's raid in October 1859 through the end of 1861. The story proceeds chronologically and covers the political battles that unfolded across all four Border South states. In addition to political episodes within the region, particular attention is devoted to Congress, where conservative Unionists made an impressive, albeit fruitless, attempt to resurrect the ghost of Henry Clay and attain another sectional compromise. During the course of the period under scrutiny, Unionists employed an array of tactics to keep the Border South in the orbit of the old republic. Those tactics, some more successful than others, are investigated closely. The future of slavery in the West, sectional identity and allegiances, partisanship, urbanization, immigration, economic growth and diversification, and the modernization of the borderland's infrastructure had all become salient political issues during the 1850s and cropped up during the crisis of the Union. These forces tugged the Border South in contradictory directions during the secession predicament, but their argument for protecting the institution of slavery provides the critical key to understanding how Unionists finally triumphed over the region's disunionists.

The tacticians upon whom this examination focuses were overwhelmingly white, male, and elite in terms of property ownership. Politics, however, never occurs within a vacuum and thus offers a window into the social, economic, and cultural worlds that all Americans - white or black, slaveholder or nonslaveholder, planter or yeoman, farmer or mechanic, native- or foreign-born, free or enslaved, male or female – inhabited. The debate over the Border South's future operated within a political framework, but those political actors certainly understood that their choices affected every person in the region. Thus, the story that follows seeks to place political

Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*; Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); and Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*.

decisions within the context of the larger society. While following the blueprint of a traditional political study, the ensuing story blends census data and quantitative material with manuscript collections, newspapers, national and state government records, the voices of male and female participants, and the actions of both free and enslaved persons in an attempt to capture the complexity of the secession crisis in the Border South.²² A democratic political culture thrives upon debate, discussion, and dissent, and the crisis of the Union in the Border South illuminates both the positive and negative aspects of Civil War-era politics.²³

Many contemporaries considered Virginia one of the border states, and the course of the Old Dominion exerted a powerful influence over all of the Border and Upper South states. Unionists and secessionists in the Border South made many key alliances with Virginians; those coalitions receive a fair share of attention in the present work. Since many fine scholars have covered the secession crisis and intrastate divisions in the Old Dominion, however, the state has not been placed in extended comparative perspective with Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. The formation of West Virginia, which antedated the crisis of the Union and extended beyond 1861, has been covered elsewhere and serves as a point of reference rather than a topic of inquiry for this study.²⁴

²² Several recent works have proven that a traditional approach to antebellum politics still has value. See Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West*; Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005); McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*; and Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*.

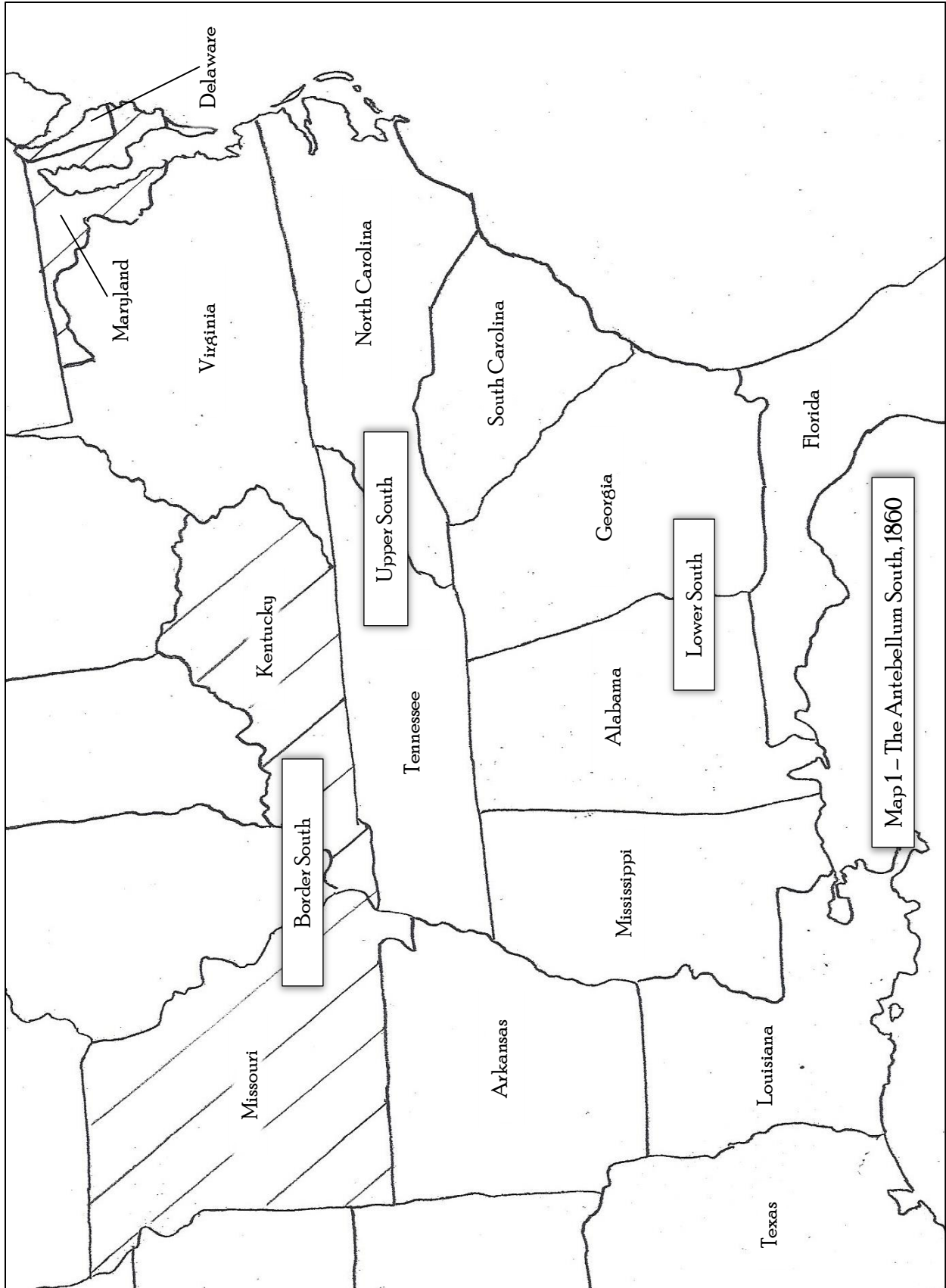
²³ My approach to antebellum southern politics has largely been shaped by the following works: William J. Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983); J. Mills Thornton, III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Link, *The Roots of Secession*. For alternate interpretations that portray antebellum politics and secession as undemocratic, see Michael P. Johnson, *Toward a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and Freehling, *Road to Disunion, Vol. II*.

²⁴ For Virginia, see Alison Goodyear Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*; William G.

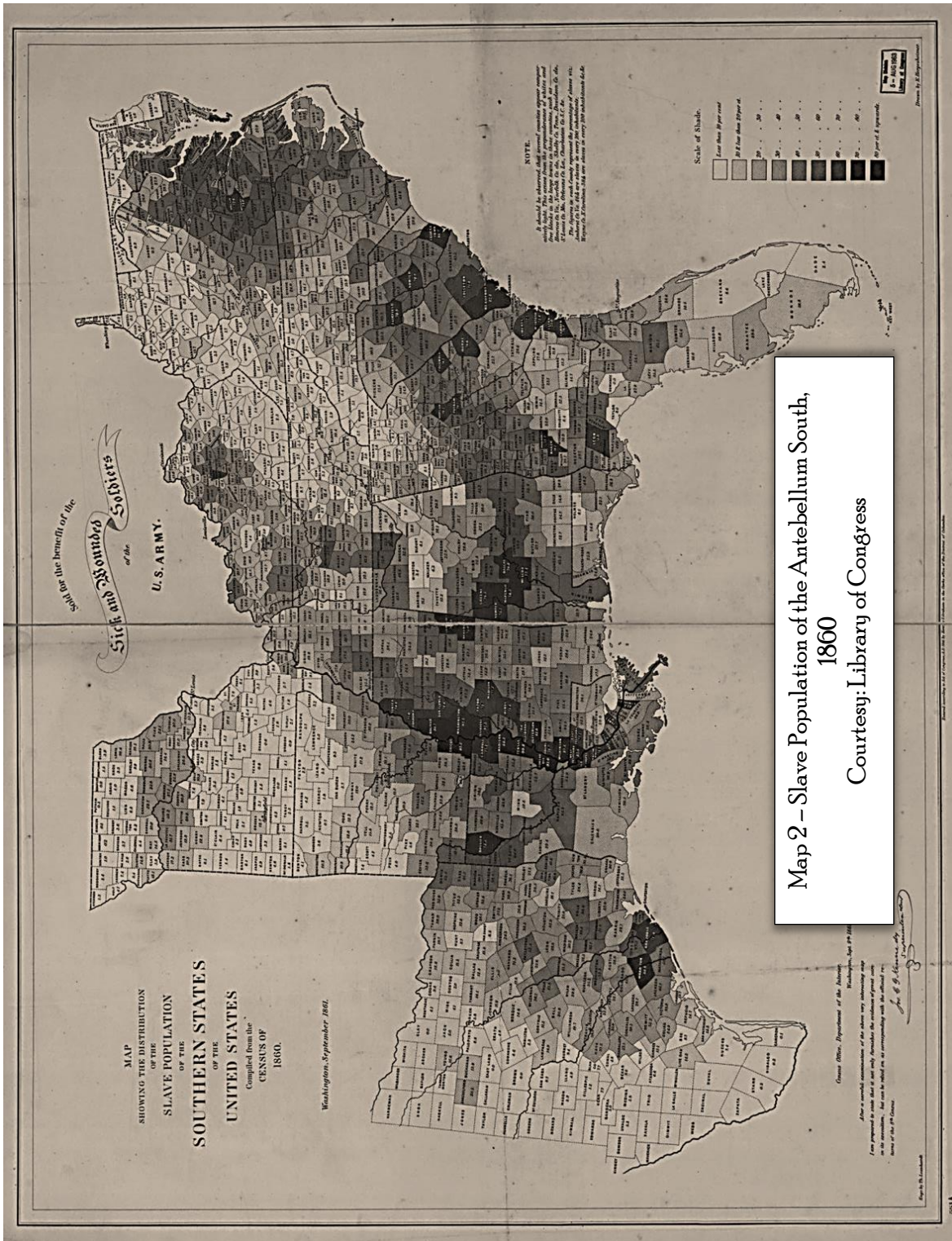
Finally, a word on terms used throughout the narrative. Radical, often freighted with multiple meanings and anything but impartiality, refers to contemporaries who sought to achieve political objectives outside of mainstream conventions of the period. Thus, those who advocated secession have been termed radicals, as have abolitionists who sought to eradicate slavery immediately and without compensation to slaveholders. It remains one of the great ironies of the secession crisis and the Civil War that by 1865 these two groups with radical objectives both accomplished their goals, albeit in a most divergent manner and with far different results than either one had envisioned before the outbreak of war. The term fire-eater refers to secessionists; not all fire-eaters prescribed the same means to bring about disunion, and the varying strands of fire-eater sentiment are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. Likewise, the term Unionist and Unionism had many different meanings, especially in the Border South. Unionists in the region expressed a desire for their state to stay in the old republic, but their degree of commitment to the Union varied along a spectrum that ranged from conditionalists, who would endorse secession in the absence of a compromise settlement or if the federal government attempted to coerce the seceded states back into the Union, to unconditionalists, who vowed to stand by the old flag at all costs. The spectrum of Border South Unionism also receives greater attention in Chapter Four. The term hardliner relates to political actors who rigidly refused to compromise during the session crisis. An influential group of Republicans adopted a hardline stance during the months after Lincoln's election, and their intractable approach had far-reaching implications for the inhabitants of the Border South. Lastly, the labels conservative and moderate are used interchangeably throughout the narrative and assigned to Americans from all

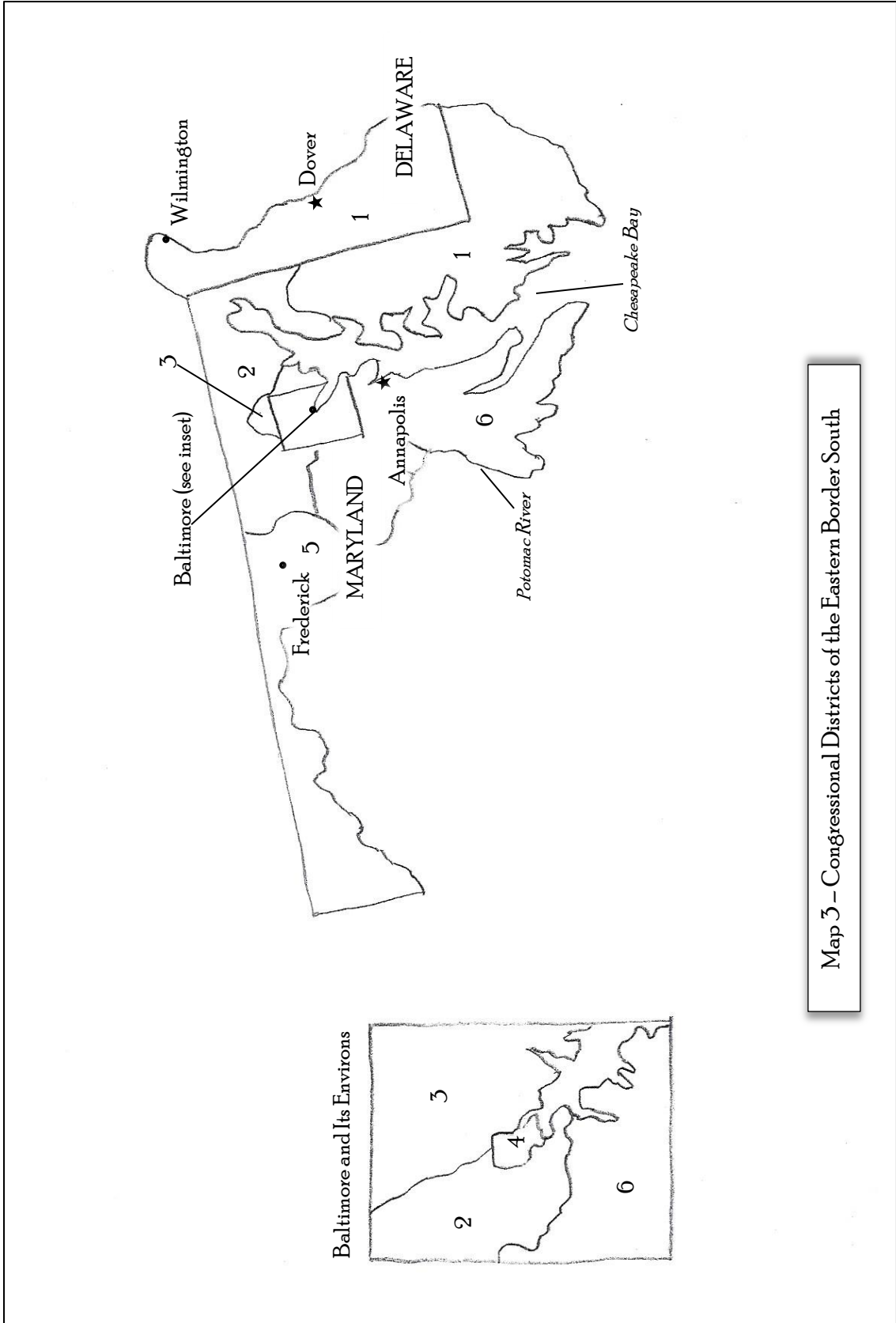
Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion: Virginia and the Second Party System, 1824-1861* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996); and Link, *Roots of Secession*. For the formation of West Virginia consult Richard Orr Curry, *A House Divided: A Study of Statehood Politics and the Copperhead Movement in West Virginia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964).

regional and partisan backgrounds who sought a compromise settlement during the crisis. In essence, conservatives and moderates operated as the antithesis of hardliners. Each of these groups shaped and shifted the contours of Henry Clay's republic from 1859 to 1861. The battles that occurred in the Border South illuminate the intricacy of antebellum American politics and are chronicled herein.

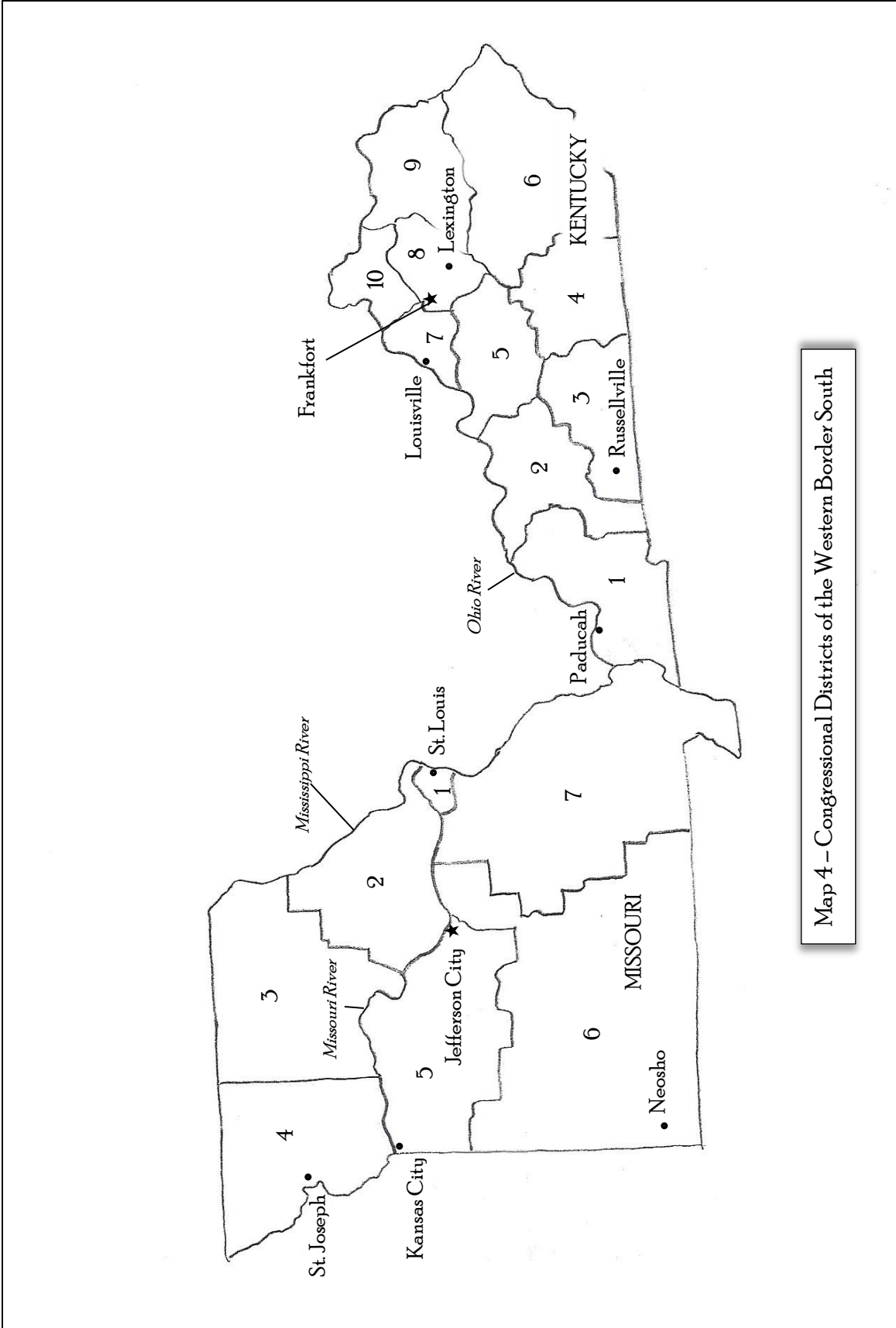


Map 1 - The Antebellum South, 1860





Map 3 - Congressional Districts of the Eastern Border South



Map 4 - Congressional Districts of the Western Border South

Chapter 1

“A Representation of Almost Every Interest and Pursuit in the Union”: The Border South on the Eve of the Secession Crisis

The election of Abraham Lincoln on November 6, 1860, provoked an array of spontaneous reactions across the United States. In the North, partisans of the Republican Party gathered in city streets and on the steps of sleepy country courthouses to celebrate their hour of triumph. As the telegraph tapped off the results of Lincoln’s victory, bands sounded patriotic airs and local electioneering clubs staffed with youthful male Republican adherents, known as Wide Awakes, marched with exuberant confidence. Caught up in the euphoria of victory, many Republicans believed the election of Lincoln had once and for all crushed the Slave Power that in their view had over the last thirty years consumed the Democratic Party and gnawed at the vitals of the federal government. “The space is now clear for the establishment of the policy of Freedom on safe & firm grounds,” Republican Salmon Chase forecasted. Sullen northern Democrats and Constitutional Unionists saw not an occasion for revelry, but one for great concern. Far from ascribing to Chase’s upbeat projection of solid ground, these conservatives predicted that the success of the purely sectional Republican organization would destabilize the republic. The cacophony of the Republican victors, however, muffled the foreboding of northern conservatives in the immediate aftermath of the election.¹

Far to the south, the election of 1860 produced a different type of merriment. Fire-eaters, who had labored unsuccessfully during the previous decade to push the South out of the Union, believed the electoral conquest of the Republicans actually tipped the balance in favor of the southern radicals. These disunionists crowed that the time for action had arrived. One needed

¹ Salmon P. Chase to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 7, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC. For a glimpse of the Republican euphoria in the days after the election, see Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election that Brought on the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 208-210.

only to study the election returns, they argued. Lincoln, whom the fire-eaters painted as the leader of a fanatical abolition organization, had captured but thirty-nine percent of the popular vote yet handily defeated his opponents in the electoral college. What future did the South have in a Union under the thumb of the Republicans, who would in no short time eradicate the institution of slavery? How could the long-venerated Union protect the South when northern numerical superiority ensured southern defeat in this and every subsequent presidential election? Did the voters of the South need any further evidence that they no longer had a voice in national politics? While the fire-eaters prognosticated doom from the stump, they inwardly smiled at the Republican victory because it forced many moderate southerners to concede that secession provided the only remedy to the boldest attack in a perceived abolitionist ambush.²

While Republicans in the North raised their glasses to the prospect of a new Union shorn of the Slave Power and fire-eaters in the Lower South toasted a bright future of autonomy and an escape from Yankee domination, millions of citizens in the middle section of the United States felt the arresting strain of these two countervailing forces. No other region of the country experienced as much tension as did the Border South states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. John Pendleton Kennedy, a former Whig politician and prolific writer from Baltimore, acted as did most Border South residents: although dismayed, he calmly and carefully deliberated the crisis. Five days after the contest Kennedy closeted himself in his study to make preparations for “a tract or discourse directed to the consideration of the present alarming state of affairs in the country.” Kennedy mused and scribbled for just over a month, taking the occasional break for a game of billiards or to entertain visitors to his parlor. In mid-December he sent his completed manuscript to three conservative newspapers, his political confidants John

² For a survey of some of the more prominent southern disunionists, see Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

Jordan Crittenden of Kentucky and Alexander Boteler of Virginia, and the governors of the border states.³

Kennedy's tract revealed the precarious position of the Border South, perched on the boundary between slavery and freedom and stretched thin by affiliations with both the North and the South. Kennedy, however, proclaimed that the Border South would not be cowed by the demagogues of the Republican Party or the fire-eating radicals in the Lower South. Like all Border South Unionists, Kennedy pleaded for all Union-loving persons across the nation to respond to the crisis with studied contemplation. Rather than falling victim to "the wickedness of Northern fanaticism, and the intemperate zeal of secession," the author advocated a convention of the Border South states to discuss possible terms of conciliation and compromise.⁴

While preparing his pamphlet Kennedy spent a great deal of time analyzing data about the Border South's economy and society. Unlike the Lower South, which he labeled "one vast cotton field," Kennedy presented the Border South as a region marked by great economic diversity. "The Border States exhibit within their area a representation of almost every interest and pursuit in the Union," Kennedy postulated. Commerce and industry flourished alongside agriculture because of rich mineral wealth, a vigorous population, and teeming urban areas. If a convention of the border states proved unable to settle past grievances between the North and the

³ Journal Entries for November 11, 1860 and December 15, 17, & 20, 1860, John Pendleton Kennedy Papers, George Peabody Department, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland (microfilm), hereafter cited as J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL. The Kennedy Papers are now housed at the Archives of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore.

⁴ John Pendleton Kennedy, "The Border States: Their Power and Duty in the Present Disordered Condition of the Country," in Jon Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession: November 1860-April 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 218, 220-221. Kennedy's pamphlet was published in December 1860, and he included the Upper South states of Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee under the umbrella of the border states.

South, Kennedy went so far as to proclaim his region had all the materials to create its own nation free from the “disorders and distractions of the time.”⁵

A brief investigation of the society, economy, and politics of the Border South in the 1850s illustrates a flaw in Kennedy’s logic. Although his essay accurately reflected the prevailing desire of many border southerners to stay aloof from the raging sectional crisis, Kennedy overstated the likelihood of noninvolvement and underestimated how the events of the past decade had inescapably sewn the region into the conflict. Despite sporting a diverse socioeconomic composition and a robust two-party political system, the presence of slavery in the Border South forged strong bonds with the rest of the slaveholding states. The cloud of slavery cast a shadow over the socioeconomic and political life of the Border South in the 1850s, albeit in a different fashion than the eleven states that eventually made up the Confederacy. Even in the four southern states with the lowest concentrations of persons held in bondage, the tentacles of slavery conditioned the way southerners on the border thought about politics and their response to the secession crisis. The very fact that Kennedy felt compelled to compose an essay designed to illuminate the merits of the Union for other border southerners indicates that by the winter of 1860-1861 a notable secessionist element had infiltrated this erstwhile bastion of Unionism.

Situated at the very heart of the nation, the four states of the Border South found themselves pitched into the middle of the sectional crisis during the turbulent 1850s. Throughout the heated political debates over the extension of slavery into the western territories and the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, however, most Border South citizens espoused a remarkably restrained approach to the deepening divide between the sections. Periodic

⁵ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

outbreaks of violence occurred along the great border that encompassed the Mason-Dixon Line, Ohio River, and the western border between Missouri and Kansas, an area where escaped slaves sought safe haven and masters and slave catchers hunted their fleeing chattel. Small-scale hostility at times erupted into significant violence in the region, which has led some scholars to paint the Border South as a crucible of unrelenting conflict during the 1850s. Historians searching for the roots of the Civil War point to the riot in Christiana, Pennsylvania, in September 1851, brought on when a Maryland slaveholder and federal agents attempted to reclaim a group of fugitive slaves, or the bloody clash along the Missouri-Kansas border provoked by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 and conflicting free- and slave-state visions for the future of the West, as evidence of the growing animus between the sections that led unalterably to armed conflict in April 1861.⁶

Despite the many documented cases of fugitive slaves escaping to the North and the occasional outbreak of armed hostilities in the 1850s, inhabitants of the Border South much more often than not experienced amicable relations with their neighbors across the Ohio River or Mason and Dixon's Line. Violent episodes received plenty of newspaper print because partisan editors could utilize them as political capital. Sensational accounts of violence often overstated or misrepresented daily life in most of the Border South. Of the entire Border South region, only Missouri's western border experienced almost continuous violence during the last five years of the 1850s. Scholars have shown that even along the Kansas-Missouri border newspaper editors often sensationalized or exaggerated their reports for political gain.⁷

⁶ For good treatments of the violence in America's sectional border region before the Civil War, see Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁷ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), 217-224. Nicole Etcheson demonstrates that many of Kansas' settlers

Family members, friends, and business associates often populated the northern bank of the Ohio River, southern Pennsylvania, or the portion of southern Illinois bounded by the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.⁸ Population figures from the 1860 census illustrate the ties between the Border South and the free states and territories adjoining them. By 1860, 3.59 percent of the native-born population in the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and the territory of Kansas had been born in one of the Border South states. This percentage may seem small, but one must consider that 61.08 percent of the population in the Lower North had been born in the state or territory which they currently resided. Therefore, 9.22 percent or nearly one out of every ten persons native to the United States but not born in the Lower North state in which they resided in 1860 had been born in one of the Border South states. Furthermore, it stands to reason that the more southerly counties in these free states included higher concentrations of natives of the Border South. According to the 1860 census natives of Delaware, Kentucky, and Maryland most often migrated to either the Lower North states or Missouri. Missourians usually moved farther westward to California or Texas, but the third largest group leaving the state in the 1850s went to Illinois. While the border witnessed violence during the decade preceding the Civil War, it also saw the building and strengthening of intersectional kinship and economic networks. The people of the Border South and the Lower North normally sought the construction of harmonious relationships, devoid of sensationalism and rife with the unspectacular normalcy of everyday life. At the end of the decade the editor of a strongly pro-southern newspaper, the *Louisville Daily Courier*, proclaimed

simply wanted a means to make a living and were drawn into conflict because they feared a potential loss of liberty. See Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 4-6, 37-45.

⁸ For the prevalence of amicable border relations prior to the Civil War, see Edward Conrad Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1927) & Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Edward L. Ayers traces similar pre-war relations between southern Pennsylvania and the Virginia Shenandoah Valley in his magnificent *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

that Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky “have really no conflicting interests. There should be no rivalry between them, but a generous emulation as to which shall outstrip [the others] in the race of glory and greatness, as to which shall excel in virtue and intelligence.”⁹

Commercial relationships helped to buttress the pervasive inclination toward amity between the Border South and the Lower North. The economic hinterland of large Border South cities such as Baltimore, Louisville, St. Louis, and Wilmington, stretched across the sectional divide. Baltimore drew in business from both central Maryland and southern Pennsylvania, and St. Louis attracted commerce from central Missouri and southern Illinois. Likewise, large cities in the Lower North such as Cincinnati and Philadelphia had a similar intersectional effect; both of these urban areas operated as economic sponges for Kentucky and Delaware. By 1860, several railroads connected the Border South to the Lower North, and both regions shared a resolute yearning to keep the Ohio and Mississippi rivers open to commercial traffic.¹⁰ One historian claims that the rail connections between the two adjacent regions produced a fundamental shift away from southerly river-borne commerce and reoriented the Border South’s export economy to the North and East. Though difficult to prove and no doubt overstated, the assertion does have some merit in that the transportation revolution energized trade relations between the Border South and the Lower North in the 1850s.¹¹

⁹ These figures were compiled from Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), xxxiv, 104, 130, 156, 166, 398, 439; *Louisville Daily Courier*, January 26, 1860.

¹⁰ On the importance of the transportation revolution and the creation of interregional economic networks, see Paul F. Paskoff, *Troubled Waters: Steamboat Disasters, River Improvements, and American Public Policy, 1821-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 69-73.

¹¹ For a stimulating discussion of Baltimore and St. Louis, see Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), especially Chapter 2. The bold claim about a reorientation of trade is found in Smith, *Borderland in the Civil War*, 22-24. Smith tends to underestimate the vitality of river trade and discounts one of the most important trade connections between the Border South and the rest of the South, the interstate slave trade.

Table 1 - Largest Cities in the Border South, Lower North, and Confederate South (1860)

	City	Population	Rank in United States	Average Population	
Border South	Baltimore, Maryland	212,418	4 [^]	Average for Border South	115,620.5
	St. Louis, Missouri	160,773	8		
	Louisville, Kentucky	68,033	12		
	Wilmington, Delaware	21,258	43		
Lower North	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	565,529	2	Average for Lower North	156,564.2
	Cincinnati, Ohio	161,044	7		
	Chicago, Illinois	109,260	9		
	Newark, New Jersey	71,941	11		
	Indianapolis, Indiana	18,611	48		
	Dubuque, Iowa	13,000	73		
Confederate South	New Orleans, Louisiana	168,675	6	Average for Confederate South	32,025.6
	Charleston, South Carolina	40,522	22		
	Richmond, Virginia	37,910	25		
	Mobile, Alabama	29,528	27		
	Memphis, Tennessee	22,623	38		
	Savannah, Georgia	22,292	41		
	Wilmington, North Carolina	9,522	100		
	San Antonio, Texas	8,235	not ranked		
	Natchez, Mississippi	6,612	not ranked		
	Little Rock, Arkansas	3,727	not ranked		
	Pensacola, Florida	2,876	not ranked		

Sources: US Census Bureau, "Rank by Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places, Listed Alphabetically by State: 1790-1990," <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab01.txt>; Kennedy, *Population of the US in 1860*, *passim*.

[^] These rankings delineated New York City & Brooklyn as separate cities; some historians combine the two and thus would rank Baltimore as the third largest city in the United States in 1860.

The metropolises of Baltimore and St. Louis, along with less populous Louisville and Wilmington, gave the Border South an urban complexion which on the surface made the region appear more like the Lower North than the rest of the South. Table 1 provides population data for the largest city in each state in three regions: the Border South, the Lower North, and the states that seceded and formed the Confederacy. The average population of the largest cities in the Border South, 115,621, dwarfs the mean population of 32,026 for the Confederate region and comes nearer to the Lower North in terms of metropolitan size. The Border South included the fourth and eighth largest cities in the entire Union, and the Lower North contained the second, seventh, and ninth largest cities in the United States. Aside from New Orleans, the sixth largest

municipality in the United States, the largest urban center in the future Confederate states, Charleston, South Carolina, ranked twenty-second on the list of most populous cities in 1860. These large cities in the Border South, however, should not distort the full panorama of the region's landscape. Frank Towers notes that the South's largest cities were "glaring multicultural and industrial contrasts to the homogeneity of rural life." He points out that fewer than 9,000 persons lived in the second most populous towns of Maryland and Missouri, whereas the secondary cities in the North often accommodated at least 20,000 inhabitants.¹²

Nonetheless, the presence of these immense metropolitan areas had an impact on the economies and societies of the Border South. While recent scholarship corrects the long standing assumption that the South experienced little industrial or commercial growth prior to the Civil War, as a whole the eleven states that formed the Confederacy lagged behind the rest of the nation in these categories.¹³ Baltimore and St. Louis, and to a lesser extent Louisville and Wilmington, provided the Border South with large hubs of industrial production and commerce, and supplied a more diverse labor pool than the rest of the South. By the onset of the Civil War, large-scale industry had become dominant in the large cities of the Border South. Baltimore's largest industrial concerns, in terms of numbers employed, included clothing enterprises, meat and seafood packers, and shoemakers. Machinery plants, brick making concerns, and clothing industries employed the most people in St. Louis. Clothing manufacturers, meatpackers, and

¹² Towers, *Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*, 22.

¹³ Scholarship that portrays a more dynamic antebellum southern economy than once conceded include David R. Goldfield, *Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism: Virginia, 1847-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Mary A. DeCredico, *Patriotism for Profit: Georgia's Urban Entrepreneurs and the Confederate War Effort* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class: 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, & Frank Towers, eds., *The Old South's Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

machinery plants hired the most workers in Louisville, while textile plants, shipbuilders, and carriage manufactories employed the most industrial laborers in Wilmington.¹⁴

Table 2 - Free Foreign Born Population			
Region	Year		% Increase/Decrease
	1850	1860	
Border South	164,474	307,304	87%
Upper South	32,690	63,182	93%
Lower South	116,148	170,273	47%
Entire South	313,312	540,489	73%
Entire North	1,921,290	3,537,557	84%
United States [^]	2,234,602	4,078,046	82%
Sources: Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser			
[^] The national data only includes information for the 33 states in 1860. The territories of 1860 are excluded from national data, and the 1850 Census had no data for Oregon.			

The existence of large-scale industrial concerns influenced the demographic composition of the Border South. The foreign-born population residing in the Border South numbered 307,034 in 1860, and natives of other countries comprised 9.79 percent of the total Border South population. The number of Border South inhabitants born outside of the United States nearly doubled in the decade of the 1850s, which placed the region in unison with national trends but ahead of the pace of increase in the rest of the South. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the demographic impact of the foreign-born in the South. Nearly 57 percent of all foreign-born residents in the entire South in 1860 lived in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri; of the eleven future Confederate states only Louisiana, with its cosmopolitan population in New Orleans and the southern portion of the state, came close to having a foreign-born element as sizable as the

¹⁴ Department of the Interior, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 53-54, 178-180, 220-222, 310-312.

Border South.¹⁵ Baltimore and St. Louis both attracted thousands of immigrants from Germany and Ireland during the antebellum period, and particularly in St. Louis German settlers carved out an important cultural and political space. The presence of these considerable blocs of German and Irish inhabitants, many of whom practiced Catholicism, resulted in an upsurge in nativist political thought and its antebellum handmaiden, mob violence. The Know Nothing or American Party had a strong and lasting presence in each Border South metropolis, and these cities, like urban areas across the North, seldom escaped election day violence when Democrats and Americans collided at the ballot box. Border South ethnic tensions boiled over in one of the deadliest political riots of the antebellum period when in August 1855 nativists, Germans, and Irish clashed in the streets of Louisville. After a vicious campaign in which Democrats and Americans relentlessly insulted one another, scattered altercations at the polls escalated into a full-scale riot which ended with considerable property destruction and twenty-two deaths. Baltimore and St. Louis endured similar, though not as destructive, disturbances in the 1850s, which set a dangerous precedent for the heated political atmosphere of the secession crisis.¹⁶ This resonant nativist impulse surely seemed quite unfamiliar to onlookers from areas further southward with more homogenous populations.¹⁷

¹⁵ Data compiled from the Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser, retrieved May 30, 2012, University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, Charlottesville, Virginia, available at <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.

¹⁶ David Grimstead, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 232-234; William Preston Johnston to Mrs. Susan P. Christy, Aug. 4, 1859, Preston Family Papers – Joyes Collection, 1780-1963, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

¹⁷ For the impact of the German and Irish populations on these Border South cities, see Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*; Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); & Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). The best studies of the political impact of nativism in the 1850s are Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978) & Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism & Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

State or Region	Year		10-Year Change
	1850	1860	
Delaware	5.74%	8.17%	2.43%
Kentucky	3.20%	5.17%	1.98%
Maryland	8.78%	11.28%	2.50%
Missouri	11.23%	13.58%	2.35%
Border South	7.03%	9.09%	2.76%
Upper South	0.93%	1.53%	0.60%
Lower South	3.08%	3.43%	0.35%
Entire South	3.26%	4.42%	1.16%
Entire North	14.29%	18.82%	4.52%
United States^	9.69%	13.14%	3.44%

Sources: Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser

^ The national data only includes information for the 33 states in 1860. The territories of 1860 are excluded from national data, and the 1850 Census had no data for Oregon.

In addition to attracting a sizable contingent of people born abroad, the Border South contained the largest proportions of free blacks in the nation. In the aftermath of the American Revolution the manumission of slaves occurred more frequently in the four Border South states than in areas farther south and provided a solid foundation for the large free black population that had settled in the region by the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Industrial trades and service occupations in these cities provided economic opportunity for free blacks, who faced bleak economic prospects in other areas of the South. While free blacks endured second-class status in the nation and especially in the South, where racial slavery stigmatized all non-white persons as social and political outcasts, the lure of available jobs and familial networks pointed to an increase in the total number of free blacks in the Border South during the decade preceding the Civil War. By the onset of the secession crisis 118,027 free blacks lived in the Border South; they accounted for 47 percent of all free blacks in the South and 25 percent of all free blacks in the United States. More free blacks lived in Maryland than in any other state in the Union, and

¹⁸ For this process see Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19-77.

free blacks comprised 17.7 percent of Delaware's total population and 12.2 percent of Maryland's total population.¹⁹

Over the decade of the 1850s the proportion of free blacks to the whole Border South population dipped by 0.7 percent, a figure that meshes with the general trend in the South. Free African Americans faced a proscriptive onslaught during the decade as white southerners tried to fortify their slave society. Even in the Border South, state legislatures flirted with the idea of expelling or enslaving free blacks, who white southerners feared might incite slaves to rebel or harbor and assist fugitive slaves. During the antebellum period the legislatures of Delaware and Maryland required free blacks to sign annual labor contracts in an effort to control the African American community. Some free African Americans fled northward only to find conditions no better than those they left behind, while others left the United States entirely. The overall proportion of free blacks saw a slight decline during the decade, yet the fact that more free blacks did not leave the Border South points to a striking reality. Legislation passed in several free states prevented African Americans from settling there or required them to post a bond before settlement and effectively left free blacks with no reasonable alternatives. Few African Americans had the financial means to go abroad and even though life in the Border South presented many difficulties for free blacks, it afforded a modest improvement over life in the eleven states that formed the Confederacy.²⁰

The vast majority of the Border South's free blacks were clustered in the Chesapeake states of Delaware and Maryland. Very few free blacks populated Kentucky and Missouri,

¹⁹ Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser.

²⁰ *Ibid*; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 225. For a fascinating account of the many hardships free blacks in the South faced, see Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984). The many obstacles free blacks had to overcome in the antebellum South are traced in Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). For the North, consult Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

where the proportion mirrored the rest of the South at less than one percent of the total population. The western border states of Kentucky and Missouri had been organized long after the initial settlement of the eastern seaboard and following the American Revolution. Thus, settlers brought slaves with them to these western outposts with the express intention of utilizing them in agricultural pursuits. The long process of manumission experienced in the Chesapeake Border South, where many farmers had long before transformed staple tobacco operations into cereal production requiring less slave labor, had not taken root on the western border. In the decade of the 1850s, acres of unimproved land in farms shrank by 2.1 percent in Delaware and 0.2 percent in Maryland, whereas unimproved acreage increased by 4.9 percent in Kentucky and an astonishing 102.2 percent in Missouri. These numbers indicate that a great deal of farmland remained untapped in the newer regions of the Border South, whereas agriculturalists in older areas of the Border South had for generations dealt with the prospects of exhausted lands by liquidating excess slaves, either through manumission or the interstate slave trade. Many of the manumitted slaves in Maryland and Delaware settled in Baltimore or Wilmington, but a similar process had not occurred in Kentucky or Missouri. Thus, St. Louis had yet to establish a free black community on the same scale as Baltimore. Legal proscriptions on free black settlement in Missouri also stalled the growth of a free African American community in the state.²¹

These teeming metropolises with polyglot populations certainly gave the Border South a northern feel, a fact that did not go unnoticed by some sectional zealots in the South. Sectional

²¹ Agricultural Schedules, Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Browser; Towers, *Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*, 46-47; Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 34-39; Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 106-118. My thinking on this point has been influenced largely by Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992); Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996); & Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

radicals like Georgia's Henry L. Benning called slavery a "doomed institution" in the Border South. He believed most Border South slaveholders, enduring the front-line of an abolitionist offensive from the North, wished to get rid of slavery as quickly as possible. In time, Benning feared, the Border South would fall into the orbit of the free states and place the remaining slave states in an even more subordinate position in the Union. These observations have led some scholars to conclude that the border slave states had undertaken a northward sectional trajectory during the late antebellum period. Before the outbreak of the Civil War, historian William Freehling contends, the conditions of location, climate, and economy guided the Border South down a path that he posits would ultimately end with a free labor society that mimicked the Lower North. The outbreak of the Civil War worked to quicken the pace of this process. Too often, however, historians have allowed the urban experience, the qualms of southern nationalists, and the Civil War's disruptive impact on slavery in the region to overshadow a more balanced view of the Border South.²²

Fire-eaters nervous about the loyalty of the Border South and arch-Unionist John Pendleton Kennedy together utilized similar regional stereotypes to make vastly dissimilar points. Kennedy sought to preserve the Union while fire-eaters plotted to dismantle it, but both characterized an enormous chasm that "divided [the Border South and the Lower South] from each other by nature and incompatible conditions." The Lower South represented an undiversified economy wholly dependent upon slavery and staple production for its wealth; the Border South, by contrast, extended "over a broad domain studded with flourishing inland

²² William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, Vol. 1, *Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 23-24. The slave drain theory is also a central component of Freehling's argument in both *Road to Disunion*, Vol. 2, *Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) & *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Georgia sent Henry L. Benning to speak at the Virginia Secession Convention on behalf of disunion in February 1861. For his observations on the Border South, see George H. Reese, ed., *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861*, 4 vols. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1965), 1:65-66.

towns” and included “the best indications of the progress of a State to wealth and power” because of its economic diversity. In short, Kennedy and the fire-eaters often disproportionately relied upon the urban experience when depicting the Border South. A gaze beyond the outskirts of Baltimore, St. Louis, Louisville, and Wilmington presents a region that appeared to differ very little from the rest of the Upper South. This suggests that many of the sectional radicals like Henry Benning who espoused fears about a withering South fell into the same trap as did Kennedy.²³

Most inhabitants of the Border South made their living off the land. Data culled from the federal census of 1860 indicates that 47.3 percent of all free persons in the Border South who provided occupational information listed farming (either as farmer, planter, or farm laborer) as their primary means of employment. The census takers did not include slaves and children in these calculations, but it stands to reason that had they been included the number would far exceed a majority of the working population in these states. Laborers comprised the second largest single occupational category in the Border South, and they accounted for 12.1 percent of the free working population.²⁴ Table 4, which provides figures for the percentage of the total area of the Border South taken up by both improved and unimproved farmland, further illustrates the overwhelmingly rural nature of the Border South. Total acreage has been converted to square mileage for this purpose. In a region that reached from the worn-out soil of the Chesapeake to the rocky hills of the Ozarks in southwestern Missouri and included pockets of especially fecund areas such as the Kentucky Bluegrass and Missouri’s Boon’s Lick in between, farmland comprised 58.6 percent of the Border South’s total square mileage. This percentage

²³ Kennedy, “The Border States,” in Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession*, 234, 230.

²⁴ Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 48-49, 186-187, 216-217, 302-303. Aggregate grouping of the data might lead to a category like professionals, comprised of doctors, lawyers, teachers, and so forth, surpassing the single category of laborer, but these groupings would not come close to the percentage of workers involved in agriculture.

meshes with figures for the rest of the South. If the data for Florida and Texas, two states with massive quantities of land that remained predominantly unsettled in 1860, are removed, southerners dedicated 61.3 percent of all land to farming. The similarity of these numbers implies that the Border South did not differ greatly from the rest of the South in terms of its rural complexion. In the decade of the 1850s, the number of farms in the Border South increased by 29.8 percent, a number that outstripped farm growth in the Upper South (17.8 percent) and the Lower South (23.0 percent). Only the Upper Midwest states of Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin witnessed a greater percentage increase in farms in a sub-region than the Upper South between 1850 and 1860.²⁵

Region	Sq. Mileage in Farms (Improved & Unimproved)	Total Area (Sq. Miles)	% of Total Area in Farms
Border South	70,293.65	119,883.64	58.6%
Upper South	133,004.49	205,416.59	64.7%
Lower South	180,239.80	543,203.16	33.2%
Lower South without Florida & Texas	136,076.90	228,346.69	59.6%
Entire South	383,537.94	868,503.39	44.2%
Entire South without Florida & Texas	339,375.04	553,646.92	61.3%

Sources: Agricultural Schedules, Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser; Square mileage attained from www.quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html

The variety of the crops produced and the size of farms in the Border South distinguished the region from the staple crop economies farther south. Farmers in the border country planted crops such as tobacco and hemp, but these staples did not dominate overall agricultural output. In 1860 Kentucky trailed only Virginia in pounds of tobacco produced, while Maryland placed fourth and Missouri seventh in terms of tobacco production in the nation. The Border South produced 39.5 percent of all the tobacco in the United States in 1860, which indicates the yellow

²⁵ Agricultural Schedules, Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser. The data for the Far West states of California and Oregon suggests a percentage increase for that region of over 2,000% but has been excluded since the Census of 1850 did not have any information for Oregon.

leaf's significance to the agricultural economy of these states.²⁶ Kentucky and Missouri farmers grew the most hemp in the United States, a crop normally manufactured into ropes and bagging. Farmers and planters in the Lower South often relied on hemp bagging to gather their cotton crop, which reinforced intraregional economic ties. The scale of hemp operations paled in comparison to the outfits of cotton barons in the Lower South, but it represented a major cog in the western Border South agricultural wheel.²⁷ In addition to tobacco and hemp, Border South farmers also cultivated a great deal of wheat and other cereal grains. Kentucky stood tenth and Maryland eleventh in terms of bushels of wheat produced, while Missouri followed closely at fifteenth. All four states of the Border South experienced an increase in the total number of bushels of wheat produced during the 1850s. Of all fifteen southern states, only Virginia produced more wheat than Kentucky.²⁸ Bounteous yields of corn, potatoes, and livestock supplemented tobacco, hemp, and cereal grain output and allowed for an agricultural base of greater diversity and stability in the Border South in comparison to the agricultural economies of the Lower South dominated by cotton, rice, and sugar cultivation.²⁹

Farmers operated on a smaller scale in the Border South than did their brethren in the Upper and Lower South. Table 5 provides the average size of farms in the South and shows that as one traveled northward from the Gulf of Mexico, the grip of large-scale staple agriculture relaxed and farm size decreased. Tobacco and hemp cultivation did not require enormous tracts

²⁶ Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), xcvi.

²⁷ Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie*, 100-102; E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 9; J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 42-44; Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 100.

²⁸ Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States*, xxix-xxx.

²⁹ The long-range implications of overreliance on a single staple crop is explored in Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978) and Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

of land as did sugar, rice, and large-scale cotton farming. The data suggests that the diverse agricultural output, accompanied by the labor demands of the crops grown, led to smaller farms in the Border South. On average, Border South farms were half as large as Lower South farms and one hundred acres smaller than those in the Upper South.

State/Region	Average Size of Farms (Acres)
Delaware	152.44
Kentucky	228.98
Maryland	191.55
Missouri	225.68
Border South	220.45
Upper South	321.92
Lower South	500.53
Entire South	351.19

Source: Agricultural Schedules, Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser

The people living and working on the land of the Border South overwhelmingly hailed from the South, which strengthened intraregional bonds. Tables 6 through 9 provide information on the place of birth for the free population of each of the four Border South states. An analysis of the data reveals that most free persons living in the Border South had been born in the South. Native southerners comprised 89.1 percent of Kentucky's free population and 88.4 percent of the Bluegrass State's inhabitants were born in the Border or Upper South. Missouri had the lowest percentage of native southerners; only 70.2 percent of its inhabitants hailed from the South and 68.8 percent were born in the Border or Upper South. The statistics for Delaware (81.7 percent born in the South; 81.5 percent born in Border or Upper South) and Maryland (82.4 percent born in the South; 82.3 percent born in the Border or Upper South) closely resembled one another. Kinship and business ties fortified the connections both within the region and between the Border South and the Upper South in much the same manner as those that fused the Border

South to the Lower North. Inhabitants of the Border South positively understood these important associations. A delegate to the state convention called in the spring of 1861 to consider Missouri's place in the Union employed familial imagery when he declared Kentucky "the mother of Missouri, and Virginia, her grandmother." Throughout the secession crisis, several border southerners commented on the powerful connections between the Border South and the Upper South and predicted their states would follow the course that Virginia and the rest of the Upper South pursued.³⁰

State	State/Region/Country of Birth	% of Total Free Population	% of Free Native Population not Born in Delaware
Delaware	Delaware	76.9%	
	Border South	81.5%	31.3%
	Upper South	0.2%	1.2%
	Lower South	0.0%	0.3%
	Total South	81.7%	32.8%
	Border North	9.4%	63.2%
	Upper Midwest	0.0%	0.1%
	New England	0.4%	2.4%
	Far West	0.0%	0.0%
	Total North	9.7%	65.7%
	Total Native Born	91.7%	
	Germany	1.1%	
	Ireland	5.3%	
	Total Foreign Born	8.3%	

Source: Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 48.

Note: Percentages for persons born in US Territories and federal property were not computed, but they represent a miniscule proportion of the total free population.

For Tables 6-9, regions are comprised of the following:

Border North: Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania

Upper Midwest: Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin

New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Far West: California, Oregon

³⁰ Speech of E.H. Norton, March 12, 1861, in *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City and St. Louis, March 1861* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Co., 1861), *Proceedings*, 78. For an example of the connections between the Border and Upper South, see Beckie Steuart to Charley Steuart, April 19, 1861, George Hume Steuart Papers, Perkins Library, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Table 7 - Nativity of the Free Population of Kentucky in 1860

State	State/Region/Country of Birth	% of Total Free Population	% of Free Native Population not Born in Kentucky
Kentucky	Kentucky	77.6%	
	Border South	78.4%	4.9%
	Upper South	10.0%	62.8%
	Lower South	0.7%	4.1%
	Total South	89.1%	71.8%
	Border North	4.1%	25.5%
	Upper Midwest	0.1%	0.6%
	New England	0.3%	1.6%
	Far West	0.0%	0.0%
	Total North	4.4%	27.7%
	Total Native Born	93.6%	
	Germany	2.9%	
	Ireland	2.4%	
	Total Foreign Born	6.4%	

Source: Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 185.

Note: Percentages for persons born in US Territories and federal property were not computed, but they represent a miniscule proportion of the total free population.

Table 8 - Nativity of the Free Population of Maryland in 1860

State	State/Region/Country of Birth	% of Total Free Population	% of Free Native Population not Born in Maryland
Maryland	Maryland	80.2%	
	Border South	81.0%	12.0%
	Upper South	1.3%	19.2%
	Lower South	0.1%	1.5%
	Total South	82.4%	32.7%
	Border North	3.8%	55.7%
	Upper Midwest	0.0%	0.2%
	New England	0.4%	5.4%
	Far West	0.0%	0.0%
	Total North	4.2%	61.3%
	Total Native Born	87.1%	
	Germany	7.3%	
	Ireland	4.1%	
	Total Foreign Born	12.9%	

Source: Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 215.

Note: Percentages for persons born in US Territories and federal property were not computed, but they represent a miniscule proportion of the total free population.

State	State/Region/Country of Birth	% of Total Free Population	% of Free Native Population not Born in Missouri
Missouri	Missouri	44.5%	
	Border South	54.5%	24.7%
	Upper South	14.3%	35.3%
	Lower South	1.4%	3.6%
	Total South	70.2%	63.6%
	Border North	12.2%	30.3%
	Upper Midwest	1.2%	3.1%
	New England	0.8%	1.9%
	Far West	0.0%	0.1%
	Total North	14.3%	35.3%
	Total Native Born	85.0%	
	Germany	8.3%	
	Ireland	4.1%	
	Total Foreign Born	15.0%	

Source: Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 301.

Note: Percentages for persons born in US Territories and federal property were not computed, but they represent a miniscule proportion of the total free population.

Deeper scrutiny of the nativity figures for the Border South reveals how the region found itself straddling the gulf between the North and the South. Large portions of the native born population in Delaware, Kentucky, and Maryland had been born in the state in which they currently resided, ranging from 76.9 percent of the free population in Delaware to 80.2 percent of the free population in Maryland. Missouri, the last Border South state admitted to the Union and the westernmost border slave state, demonstrates how the lure of the West attracted optimistic settlers born farther east. Only 44.5 percent of Missouri's free born population had been born there. Tables 6 through 9 also include percentages of the free native born population without including persons who had been born in each of the respective states. Removal of the in-state native born population unearths intriguing population trends. Under this formula, more persons born in the North, and especially the Border North states of Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, lived in Delaware (65.7 percent) and Maryland (61.3 percent) in

1860 than those born in the South. On the other hand, Kentucky (71.8 percent) and Missouri (63.6 percent) contained more people born in the South than in the North. This suggests a large flow of people from North to South in the eastern states of Delaware and Maryland and the opposite in the western states of Kentucky and Missouri. These figures shed light on the tangled skein of Unionism and southern sympathies that Border South natives tried to navigate during the secession crisis.

Regardless of the multifarious nativities of border country inhabitants, the institution of slavery generated a southern identity for the great majority of white people living in the Border South on the eve of the secession crisis. Slavery undergirded the society, economy, and culture of the Border South, and the peculiar institution conditioned the political climate of the southern border region up to and through the secession crisis. Although the Border South held fewer slaves than its more southerly neighbors, this made border southerners no less adamant than their southern brethren in the insistence that the federal government had to protect slavery and that the future of the institution lay in their own hands, not the hands of far-off abolitionists and sectional hotspots. In an observation about Kentucky that could apply equally to the rest of the Border South in 1860, the *Louisville Daily Courier* noted, “Kentucky is a slave state...Slavery is interwoven with all her institutions, and laws, and customs, and social habits. Her people could not do without it if they would, and they would not if it were practicable. Slave property is a leading element of wealth, as it is of the greatness, of Kentucky.”³¹

Table 10 provides data on slavery in the South during the decade of the 1850s. The slave population of the Border South increased by nearly 10 percent over the decade, which comes close to the 15.4 percent enlargement in the Upper South but lags far behind the 31.3 percent increase in the Lower South. Missouri saw the most significant gain in the number of slaves of

³¹ *Louisville Daily Courier*, January 25, 1860.

all the Border South states, but the figures for Delaware and Maryland sounded the alarm for southern nationalists who worried that abolitionism had made inroads in the exposed border region. Both of the Chesapeake states lost slaves during the 1850s; no other slave state in the entire South experienced an overall decline in slave population during the same interval. The influx of free persons far outpaced the growth of the slave population in the Border South, too. The overall percentage of slaves to the total population diminished more greatly in the Border South than the rest of the South, a fact not lost on nervous southern radicals.³²

Table 10 - Slave Population of the South

State/Region	Slave Population		% Increase/ Decrease	% of Total Population Enslaved		10-Year Change
	1850	1860		1850	1860	
Delaware	2,290	1,798	-21.5%	2.5%	1.6%	-0.9%
Kentucky	210,891	225,483	6.9%	21.5%	19.5%	-2.0%
Maryland	90,368	87,189	-3.5%	15.5%	12.7%	-2.8%
Missouri	87,422	114,931	31.5%	12.8%	9.7%	-3.1%
Border South	390,971	429,401	9.8%	16.7%	13.7%	-3.0%
Upper South	1,047,635	1,208,758	15.4%	29.9%	29.2%	-0.7%
Lower South	1,761,668	2,312,352	31.3%	46.7%	46.5%	-0.2%
Entire South	3,200,274	3,950,511	23.4%	33.3%	32.3%	-1.0%

Sources: Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser

No doubt, the development of anti-southernism in northern politics probably stoked the exaggerated fears of southern nationalists. The startling growth of the Republican Party in the 1850s, which promised to restrict slavery from entering the territories if it gained ascendancy, led some nervous southerners to conclude the enemy had crossed the Ohio River and infected the political thinking of the most northerly outposts of slavery. Historians have pointed to the fact that discussions about emancipation advanced further in the Border South than the eleven states that formed the Confederacy for evidence of slavery's shaky foundation in the border area. The Maryland legislature established a state-funded colonization experiment in the 1830s; members

³² Census of 1850 and 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser.

of the Kentucky Constitutional Convention of 1849 debated enacting provisions for phased emancipation; Missourians Thomas Hart Benton and Frank Blair Jr. in the 1850s called for free soil in the American territories; and a small but boisterous antislavery element led by Kentucky's Cassius Clay had established itself in the Border South.³³

These examples, arrayed against the deafening silence on manumission emanating from the Lower South, paints a picture worthy of southern radicals' apprehension. Yet just as the Border South urban experience blinded fire-eaters and scholars to the rural realities of the region, these debates have produced a similar effect on the actualities of the political trajectory of the slaveholding border states. The 1850s actually witnessed a period of political entrenchment on the peculiar institution in the Border South. A brief synopsis of how people inside each of the four Border South states handled the slavery issue in the 1850s exposes a region-wide inclination to shield the peculiar institution from external attacks.

Aside from Delaware and Maryland, no other slaveholding state experienced a loss in the number of enslaved persons during the 1850s. The trend seemed almost natural in Delaware, where the total slave population numbered fewer than 2,300 in 1850. The decline in Maryland, a state with more slaves than Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, and Texas in 1850, aroused the concern of proslavery sectional radicals. Marylanders, however, did not sit on their hands during the decade and allow this process to go unchallenged. Rather, politicians in the Old Line State sought ways to fortify and even perpetuate the peculiar institution during the 1850s. Prior to 1851, the state's constitution included a provision that allowed the legislature to enact a statewide emancipation program if both houses of the general assembly unanimously agreed to such a policy in two different sessions. Even this tangled path to emancipation seemed unsafe to

³³ Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 387-388; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 1:462-473, 537-544; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:222-250; Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 132-148.

the people of Maryland. A new state constitution written in 1851 and approved by 61 percent of Maryland's voters outright forbade the state legislature from abolishing slavery. The new constitution also counted slaves as whole persons for legislative apportionment, giving the densest slave areas more political power. The state's new constitution signaled a resolve to perpetuate, rather than extinguish, the institution of slavery in Maryland.³⁴

During the decade the conservative American Party, made up primarily of Old Whigs, faced stiff challenges from the resurgent Democrats in Maryland, some of whom sounded no less vociferous about protecting the peculiar institution and its racial protocol than strong-willed southern Democrats in the Gulf South. By the end of the decade Democrats had unseated the traditionally dominant American/Old Whig coalition and controlled both houses of the state legislature. Democrat Curtis W. Jacobs, who held twenty-one slaves on his substantial Worcester County farm and chaired the Committee on the Colored Population in the House of Delegates, in 1860 crafted legislation forbidding individual manumission and requiring the state's free blacks to hire themselves out on a renewable basis. All observers realized Jacobs' legislation would render Maryland's hefty free African American population virtual slaves. The House of Delegates debated the Jacobs Bill and altered it slightly: it kept the prohibition on personal manumission and replaced the blanket hiring out provision with terms that gave free blacks over eighteen years of age the alternative to return voluntarily to slavery rather than to sign an annual labor contract. The legislature also applied the bill to eleven counties in southern Maryland and on the Eastern Shore rather than the entire state and subjected its ratification to a popular referendum. The bill passed the House by a tally of 38-14, but failed miserably in the

³⁴ Census of 1850 & 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser; Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 20-21; Jean Harvey Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 4; William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 39-41.

popular vote. That such a measure could get through the state legislature so easily indicates a powerful proslavery element existed in Maryland politics on the eve of the secession crisis. The citizens of Maryland's densest slave counties refused to swallow medicine this strong, though, which signaled the Border South electorate's preference for more temperate responses to the slavery question than those advocated by proslavery politicians like Curtis Jacobs.³⁵

Kentuckians also took constitutional and legislative steps to protect the peculiar institution during the 1850s. The delegates to the Kentucky Constitutional Convention in late 1849 who hoped to place the state on an antislavery course found their wishes dashed. Contrary to the designs of those who desired to eliminate gradually the peculiar institution in the Bluegrass State, the convention instead included a provision that prevented the legislature from taking direct action on slavery. In effect, the new constitution made slavery a "permanent fixture" in Kentucky and according to historian Harold Tallant led to a near disappearance of "mainstream antislavery politics and public debate on emancipation" in the state during the 1850s. Prior to the meeting of the constitutional convention, the Kentucky legislature showed its hand when in February 1849 it overturned a law passed in 1833 that prohibited the importation of slaves into the state. This legislation attested to the desire of some Kentuckians to expand their slaveholdings through purchase rather than natural increase. Ever fearful of the deleterious influence recently freed slaves might have on the rest of the enslaved population, the legislature by 1851 mandated that all manumitted slaves had to leave the state. The actions of the legislature and the convention in the early 1850s suggest that politicians in Kentucky felt

³⁵ Michael J. Dubin, *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures: A Year by Year Summary, 1796-2006* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2007), 86-87; Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 76-82; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 102-105, 136-137. Information for Jacobs comes from 1860 US Census; 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, on-line database of Ancestry.com available at www.ancestry.com.

comfortable protecting and even nurturing slavery in the state.³⁶ As with Maryland, the Democratic party made inroads in Kentucky, a one-time bastion of Whig strength, in the 1850s. A newspaper noted that by the end of the decade Kentucky had become “thoroughly Democratic,” an almost unfathomable achievement in a state dominated by the legacy of arch-Whig Henry Clay. By the end of the decade Democrats had captured a majority in both houses of the legislature and elected a governor. Not all Democrats championed a hard-line proslavery stance, but some were willing to stake out a political approach that resembled their partisan brethren in the Lower South. Despite these Democratic inroads, the people of the state still preferred a placid response to heated sectional political issues. The conservative, Old Line Whig tradition proved durable even in the face of Democratic triumphs during the decade of the 1850s and would rise to the surface when the secession crisis exploded.³⁷

No other Border South state possessed as powerful an opposition to proslavery politics in the 1850s as did Missouri. Democratic giant Thomas Hart Benton dominated the Missouri political scene in the two decades prior to the 1850s. A proponent of hard money and the rapid settlement of the territories, Benton became the spokesperson of the West in Andrew Jackson’s powerful Democratic phalanx. In the 1840s Benton opposed the annexation of Texas and in 1847 publicly declared that slavery should not spread into the territories, which caused a major rift in the state’s Democratic Party. Despite Benton’s powerful appeal, state politics tilted in a proslavery direction in the decade preceding the secession crisis. On January 15, 1849, a former lieutenant of Old Bullion Benton rose in the Missouri state house and introduced a set of resolutions that declared Congress did not have the power to legislate on slavery in the

³⁶ Harry A. Volz III, “Party, State, and Nation: Kentucky and the Coming of the Civil War,” (Ph. D. diss., University of Virginia, 1982), 69-77; Harold D. Tallant, *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 158, 159, 95-97, 49.

³⁷ Dubin, *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures*, 71-72; *Louisville Daily Courier*, November 2, 1859.

territories. The Jackson Resolutions, named for Claiborne Fox Jackson, set the scene for the decade of the 1850s. Moderate Democrats, some of whom espoused free-soil principles, found their way into Benton's camp; proslavery and pro-South Democrats coalesced under the leadership of Jackson and David Rice Atchison; and a small but influential bloc of Whigs found themselves swimming in a sea infested with two breeds of Democratic sharks. Historians often use Benton's free-soil foray and his protégé Frank Blair's construction of a Republican organization in St. Louis as a sign of Missouri's apostasy on the slavery question. While these two factions fought tough battles during the decade of the 1850s, Jackson's coterie gained the upper-hand and placed the Bentonites on the defensive. Only in St. Louis did free-soilers achieve success, and even there on a limited basis. After taking his stand against slavery in the territories, the Missouri legislature in 1850 unceremoniously refused to send Benton back to his chair in the United States Senate which he had occupied for nearly thirty years. In his stead the legislature sent proslavery Whig Henry S. Geyer to Washington. Benton spent one term in the United States House of Representatives before making unsuccessful bids for both Congress and the Senate in 1854 and the governor's chair in 1856. The Missouri legislature steadfastly refused to permit a free-soiler to represent the state in the Senate.³⁸

Claiborne Jackson and his followers spent the rest of the decade vanquishing an opposition that consisted of former Democrats, Old Line Whigs and Americans, and the tiny Republican contingent in St. Louis. The state's proximity to Kansas added fuel to the fire of politics in the 1850s and kept the slavery question constantly before the electorate. Although Frank Blair became the only Border South Republican elected to the United States Congress in

³⁸ Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 150-153, 165-180, 170-171; William E. Parrish, *Frank Blair: Lincoln's Conservative* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 39-42, 45, 54-56; Walter Harrington Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession* (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1931), 65, 71-74, 99.

1860, his victory does not serve as a barometer of public opinion across Missouri. Most Missourians found the Republican Party repugnant because of its sectional nature and much preferred a moderate settlement of the slavery question. They asked the same question as did John D. Coalter, a delegate sent to the Washington Peace Conference in February 1861: “If [Republicans] abhor our institutions, how long a step will it be before you abhor us? If you abhor slavery, how long before you abhor slaveholders?” Even Thomas Hart Benton refused to endorse the Republicans in the presidential election of 1856 because he feared the organization might endanger the safety of the Union.³⁹ The majority of people in Missouri searched for restrained responses to the sectional conflict, but they absolutely demanded that outsiders not interfere with slavery in the state. Like the rest of the Border South, politicians in Missouri worked to ensure that the peculiar institution occupied safe ground during the decade of the 1850s. Some solons like Claiborne Jackson agonized over the ramifications of allowing Kansas to become a free state and sounded the tocsin of disunion. During the secession crisis these sectional hotspurs stubbornly learned that they had far overstepped the political boundaries most Missourians had drawn.

Antislavery thought found little fertile ground even in Delaware, a state with a miniscule contingent of slaves. The state legislature discussed enacting an emancipation plan several times in the 1840s but a bloc of Democrats from southern Delaware defeated these abolition efforts by narrow margins. After the defeat of an emancipation bill in 1849 politicians put the issue to rest and never seriously debated it again in the 1850s.⁴⁰ Unlike the rest of the Border South,

³⁹ Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 86-87; Address of John D. Coalter, March 5, 1861, *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, Proceedings, 26; Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession*, 103-104.

⁴⁰ In the last decade of the eighteenth century the Delaware legislature forbade the sale of enslaved persons outside of the state. Even with these restrictions on the statute books, slaves were still sold beyond Delaware’s borders and kidnappers operated with impunity by the 1820s; see Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 24-40.

Delaware did not require manumitted slaves to leave the state. In 1852, however, the legislature clamped down on free blacks, denying them the right to attend political meetings, to own and possess firearms, to vote or hold office, or to testify in criminal cases when at least one white person witnessed the crime. The Democratic Party controlled Delaware politics in the 1850s and several political luminaries, such as Senator James A. Bayard, embraced a strong pro-South position. “The lower portion of this state [Delaware]...is ultra Slavery, and Bayard panders to that feeling,” one spectator observed. The Republican Party gained strength in Wilmington during the second half of the 1850s, but it often prioritized the tariff issue and minimized the slavery problem in order to gain adherents in the smallest slave state.⁴¹

That antislavery politicians experienced a modicum of success in the Border South leads some scholars to view the region as open-minded on the possibility of emancipation. In reality, Border South antislavery politicians manufactured a buzz that far outweighed their limited political impact. Aside from St. Louis voters sending Frank Blair to Congress, the Border South electorate overwhelmingly demanded that their politicians protect the institution of slavery. Blair’s case appears exceptional when arrayed against the rest of the Border South. He successfully ran for Congress as a Democrat with free-soil proclivities in 1856 and once in Washington pushed for the compensated emancipation of Missouri’s slaves and the removal of freedpersons to Central America. Blair’s plan never came to a vote in the House, but his suggestion of such a plan contributed to his narrow defeat in a reelection bid in 1858. Blair claimed his opponents in Missouri’s First District used fraud and trickery to defeat him and actually won his case and was awarded his seat in Congress in June 1860. Nevertheless, his

⁴¹ Essah, *A House Divided*, 158-161; Harold Bell Hancock, *Delaware during the Civil War: A Political History* (Wilmington: Historical Society of Delaware, 1961), 2-3, 11-12, 18-20; Brion T. McClanahan, “A Lonely Opposition: James A. Bayard, Jr. and the American Civil War,” (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2006), 22-26; Sam Townsend to Stephen A. Douglas, March 28, 1860, quoted in Hancock, *Delaware during the Civil War*, 14.

August 1856 margin of victory of 3.5 percent had become a deficit of 2.2 percent in August 1858. Each election featured three candidates in the field; in 1856 Blair's opponents captured 56.2 percent of the vote and in 1858 they won 65.7 percent of the vote. In his victorious bid for the Thirty-seventh Congress in August 1860, Blair's two opponents combined tallied 55.9 percent of the total vote. In sum, Blair never won a majority in any of his elections, his plurality diminished immediately after he introduced his emancipation plan in Congress, and he benefitted from a large contingent of Germans in his congressional district who supported the Republican Party and its free-soil doctrine. His solution for the slavery question appeared radical in the South, but it actually built on the conservative tradition of colonization that many prominent Upper South politicians had toyed with in the early republic. Unconcerned with the moral implications of slavery, Blair hoped his colonization plan would free Missouri's white population from competition with slave labor, foster economic progress in the state, and build an unassailable political base from which he could rise to national prominence.⁴²

Blair's antebellum success must be labeled checkered at best, for he advocated a modest solution to the slavery problem that made the vast majority of the Border South population very uneasy. Political aspirants in the Border South who moved beyond colonization and suggested more radical solutions to removing slavery from the region had a negligible impact during the 1850s. The irascible Cassius Clay, who unlike Frank Blair advocated working with the abolitionists of the North, never sniffed electoral success in Kentucky. Clay's friend James Sidney Rollins reminded him, "Whatever the fact may be, you are regarded by the world as one

⁴² Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 63-64, 73; Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the Elections of the 1st through the 105th Congresses* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1998), 176, 182; Arenson, *Great Heart of the Republic*, 45, 59-60; Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 17-22, 124-126.

of the extreme men.”⁴³ Extremism would not play in the Border South, as Clay’s ally John Fee found out firsthand. Subjected to mob violence and even threatened with death for his denunciations of slavery from the pulpit in the 1850s, Fee defiantly continued to deliver his abolitionist message throughout Kentucky. He established an antislavery community at Berea, Kentucky, in 1854, and commenced distributing Bibles to slaves in the area. Kentuckians begrudgingly tolerated Fee’s activities until the aftermath of John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Two months later, in December 1859, an armed posse demanded that Fee’s followers leave the state permanently. The governor of Kentucky ignored the Bereans plea for protection, which prompted them to jettison their antislavery activities in the Bluegrass State and relocate to the free states. Fee’s case indeed shows Border South forbearance in comparison to the rest of the South, but it also indicates that Border South patience with antislavery extremism had worn thin by the end of the decade.⁴⁴

Thus, even in a region marked by smaller quantities of slaves and lesser slaveholdings than the eleven states that formed the Confederacy, discussion of ending slavery far more often invited scorn and contempt than compassion and approval. Table 11 illustrates the percentage of the white population involved with slavery and the concentration of slaveholdings by percentage. Just over 84 percent of all slaveholders in the Border South owned fewer than nine slaves, and the vast majority owned fewer than five slaves. In general, more of the white population in the Upper and Lower South was involved in slaveholding than in Border South, and slaveowners in the future Confederate States owned larger concentrations of slaves. But these figures should not lead to the conclusion that Border South slaveholders exercised apathy when it came to

⁴³ Harrold, *Abolitionists and the South*, 28-29; Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 120-121; James S. Rollins to Cassius M. Clay, January 19, 1861, James S. Rollins Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

⁴⁴ Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:230-235; Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 186-187.

protecting their property.⁴⁵ The muting of antislavery voices and the energy expended on constitutional and political protections for slavery across the region in the 1850s suggests just the opposite.

Table 11 - Slaveholdings in the South in 1860

State/Region	% of White Population Slaveholders ^	Slaves Owned by % of Slaveholders				
		<5	5-9	10-19	>20	>100
Delaware	3.24%	81.09%	14.65%	4.26%	0.00%	0.00%
Kentucky	21.01%	57.00%	25.34%	13.64%	4.02%	0.02%
Maryland	13.36%	60.75%	20.53%	12.46%	6.25%	0.12%
Missouri	11.43%	64.40%	23.51%	9.87%	2.22%	0.02%
Border South	14.93%	60.18%	23.83%	12.17%	3.82%	0.03%
Upper South	23.89%	50.22%	23.99%	16.39%	10.46%	0.27%
Lower South	34.65%	43.22%	22.50%	16.06%	16.64%	0.93%
Entire South	24.51%	48.95%	23.27%	15.41%	12.00%	0.53%

Source: Slave Schedules, Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser

^ Computed by multiplying the number of slaveholders by the average family size (5) and dividing by the total white population.

Border southerners recoiled at propositions that would bring about the demise of slavery. Many Border South residents held a strong economic stake in the peculiar institution's vitality, whether they owned slaves themselves, hired out enslaved persons, or relied upon skilled slave labor to perform functions such as blacksmithing or carpentry. Historian James L. Huston notes that slave labor proved quite flexible and on the verge of the secession crisis many slaveowners in the Border South had begun to use slaves in manufacturing and industrial concerns at a rate of return more advantageous than employing free labor. Huston posits that if not for the outbreak of the Civil War, the process of selling excess slaves from the Border South to the Lower South

⁴⁵ A couple of recent studies have emphasized the fact that smaller slaveholders sought to preserve their slaveholding society just as jealously as did slaveholders in the deeper South. See Burke, *On Slavery's Border* and Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012). Along with these two books James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982) has greatly influenced my thoughts on the smaller slaveholders of the Border South.

may have reversed itself.⁴⁶ While the slave trade itself removed enslaved persons from the region, it also provided a source of income for many border southerners. The harrowing practice of splitting up families often fattened the pockets of white border southerners, from slave traders and slaveowners to transportation outfits that carried out the trade. This industry also fostered additional economic ties between the Border South and the more southerly slave states that hungered for laborers.⁴⁷

Beyond the economic stake, whites in the Border South relied upon the peculiar institution to reinforce rigid racial barriers. The very prospect of removing slavery from the Border South invited all kinds of speculation about the place of free blacks in society. In terms of proportion more free African Americans lived in the Border South than in any other region of the country, and this sizable contingent would explode if some program of emancipation was enacted. Border southerners shared the paranoia of Lower South radicals when it came to envisioning a future without slavery. “[T]he black race will be in a large majority,” a Georgian warned his fellow southerners, “and then we will have black governors, black legislatures, black juries, black everything.” Without the institution of slavery to separate the South into two distinctions rooted in race and to mute potential class tensions, border whites inferred, their whole society would spin out of control. In such an offing free blacks would compete with whites for jobs and place and the racial divisions so integral to herrenvolk democracy would

⁴⁶ James L. Huston, “The Pregnant Economies of the Border South, 1840-1860: Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Possibilities of Slave-Labor Expansion,” in Barnes, Schoen, and Towers, eds., *The Old South’s Modern Worlds*, 120-141.

⁴⁷ See Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Aaron W. Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South: Pursuing Progress in a Slave Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Robert H. Gudmestad, *Steamboats and the Rise of the Cotton Kingdom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

quickly wash away. The white population of the Border South on the eve of the secession crisis could not fathom such a future, and longed to avoid this eventuality at all costs.⁴⁸

As a result of slavery's momentous social, cultural, economic, and political underpinnings, border country southerners searched for ways to sustain the peculiar institution rather than methods of expediting its demise. Whereas the number of people in the Lower and Upper South who condoned disunion multiplied as the 1850s progressed because of the anti-South and antislavery rhetoric of some northern politicians, many border southerners continued to believe the Union and the federal government represented the best safeguards to slavery. True, a growing number of border southerners beat the drum of disunion during the decade, but few people marched to their cadence. Not until the Harpers Ferry raid and the momentous election of 1860 would inhabitants of the Border South seriously begin to ruminate the prescriptions of the fire-eaters in their midst. Disunionists later found it impossible to relax the powerful grip of a potent Unionist mindset when the secession crisis reached full steam at the end of 1860.

The Border South Unionist mindset centered on the belief that remaining in the Union remained the best available option for preserving slavery. Throughout the 1850s, border southerners felt the crunch of heightened sectional tensions. The debate over the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the consequential dispute over the meaning of popular sovereignty, clashes over fugitive slaves and personal liberty laws, the Lecompton Constitution, and the Dred Scott decision had so thoroughly poisoned sectional relations that many Americans in the far reaches of the Upper North and Lower South by 1859 viewed one another as enemies

⁴⁸ Speech of Henry L. Benning, February 18, 1861, in Reese, ed., *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention*, 1:66. The preservation of racial mores as an explanation for Delaware's reluctance to countenance even compensated emancipation is a major theme in Essah, *A House Divided*. For the implications of herrenvolk democracy, see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), especially Ch. 2.

more so than fellow citizens.⁴⁹ Whereas more southerners in the future Confederacy equated disunion with the safety of slavery as the decade advanced, border country southerners reached a different conclusion. Two essential external components had helped border southerners in their internal quest to fortify the peculiar institution during the 1850s: a federal government that enforced the Fugitive Slave Law and protected the interstate slave trade, and an influential cadre of conservative northern allies who assisted in preventing sectional extremists from taking over the ship of state. In the Border South, preservation of this delicate status quo best sheltered the institution of slavery.

The 1850s taught Border South inhabitants that if vested in the proper hands, the federal government was the best instrument for protecting slavery. No part of the slaveholding South could claim as much vulnerability to permanent slave escapes as did the Border South, bounded by alluring free territory to the north, or in the case of Missouri, to the north, east, and possibly the west. Historians debate the reliability of census data for fugitive slaves, which in 1860 listed 803 fugitive slaves, a number that decreased from 1,011 in 1850; scholarly estimates of northward escapes range as high as 5,000 per year. Despite these disparate approximations, all historians agree that the Border South sustained more northward escapes than their more southerly neighbors.⁵⁰ While more slaves escaped from the northern tier of slaveholding states than elsewhere in the South, border southerners relied on the federal government to execute the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 in good faith. Kentucky Unionist Joseph Holt studied the census data and in 1861 acknowledged that the federal government had done just that as the 1850s progressed. “[I]t is this law, effective in its power of recapture, but infinitely more potent in its

⁴⁹ For the interpretation of an inevitable war between the free North and the slave South, see Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, xv-xvi; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 10; Harrold, *Border War*, 40-41; Freehling, *The South vs. the South*, 27.

moral agency in preventing the escape of slaves,” Holt declared, “that alone saves the institution in the Border States from utter extinction.” Secession meant forfeiture of this most effective piece of legislation and as a result the Border South would “virtually have Canada brought to her doors in the form of Free States.” “Under such influences,” Holt predicted, “slavery will perish rapidly away in Kentucky, as a ball of snow melts in a summer’s sun.” Thus, the federal government provided a vital lifeline to the institution of slavery in the Border South.⁵¹

Because federal legislation served as a key external element in sustaining slavery in the Border South, border southerners had to rely on alliances built with moderate politicians in the North to prevent radicals from steering the national government toward antislavery measures. What historian William J. Cooper labels the politics of slavery had remarkable staying power in the Border South. The politics of slavery, practiced by both the Democrats and Whigs until the 1850s, relied upon a national political coalition in which the northern wing acquiesced to southerners on questions related to slavery.⁵² After the demise of the Whig Party in the middle of the decade, border country members of the American Party sought the assistance of Old Line Whigs across the North, while Border South Democrats tried to maintain the conservative coalition with the northern wing of the party prior to its breakup at Charleston in 1860. While border southerners continued to look northward to retain old alliances in order to protect slavery and offset the ascendancy of the sectional Republican Party, other southerners adopted an opposite tack. By the end of the decade most people in the Lower South viewed the North as the unassailable domain of the Republican Party. After a decade of bickering over the political

⁵¹ “Joseph Holt’s Letter on the Pending Revolution,” May 31, 1861, in Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Events, Poetry, Etc.*, Volume 1 (New York: D. Van Nostrand Publisher, 1867), Document 197 ½, 288, 290.

⁵² William J. Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 197-198. See his *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) for a monograph-length treatment of this important facet of antebellum politics.

ramifications of slavery, many southerners in the states that made up the Confederacy refused to distinguish between Republicans and the rest of the northern electorate. Left with no allies in the North, these southerners envisioned but one alternative to protect slavery and the South: secession.⁵³ In the Border South, on the other hand, most people adhered to the conviction that moderate free state allies would continue to combat the Republicans and ensure that the federal government would not backslide on its obligation to protect the peculiar institution.

The resiliency of the politics of slavery in the Border South generated a strong aversion to extremism, whether it originated in the North or the South. For instance, a Maryland newspaper heaped scorn upon Republican Charles Sumner, who in March 1860 introduced a memorial from his Massachusetts constituents that called for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law and the eradication of the interstate slave trade. “The substantial quality of republicanism is its exclusive sectionalism,” the editor remarked, “and nothing can be more surely destructive of the Union than this.” The editor heaved a sigh of relief that the Senate tabled the memorial.⁵⁴ Only the maintenance of alliances with conservatives in the North who promised to respect the constitutional protections afforded slavery and the Dred Scott decision would stave off sectional extremists like Sumner, border southerners concluded. Likewise, the people of the Border South abhorred the rashness of southern fire-eaters who hoped to bully the other states into following their lead. For border southerners, these southern radicals could only help northern extremists in their quest to eradicate slavery in the United States. One Kentuckian noted that in reality secession “repeals the fugitive slave law, it makes personal liberty bills in the free states valid: it accomplishes just what the abolitionists desire, the exemption of the free states from any

⁵³ This process is expertly explained in Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society* and Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*.

⁵⁴ *Baltimore Sun*, March 23, 1860.

countenance to slavery.”⁵⁵ The people of the Border South shared the desire of other southerners to see slavery preserved, but they recommended a different solution to the problem. This powerful distaste for radicalism conditioned the Border South response to the secession crisis.

By the autumn of 1859, the Border South truly felt caught in the middle of the sectional conflict. The economy, society, and politics of the region fostered ties in both directions and imbued the Border South with a strong attachment to the Union. In general the Democratic Party enjoyed success across the Border South in the 1850s, but strong partisan competition remained a key facet of the political matrix in the region. Measures had been taken during the decade to provide the institution of slavery with a stable basis, which tethered the fortunes of the Border South to the future of slavery. Politicians and voters looked for allies as the country geared up for the presidential election of 1860. At the very least, those allies had to accept the Border South condition that the federal government would dependably execute the Fugitive Slave Law, protect the interstate slave trade, and leave all questions about the future of slavery to the individual states where it existed. Border southerners tried to avoid lengthy discussions about the extension of slavery into the territories, which they found detrimental to sectional accord. They felt these arguments had been rendered moot by the Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott decision, an opinion handed down by one of their own, Chief Justice Roger Taney of Maryland.⁵⁶ Some members of the American or Opposition Party even envisioned the possibility of rebuilding the old Whig coalition by uniting with conservative Republicans who would purge their organization of its radical sectional element in an effort to beat the Democrats in 1860. In

⁵⁵ W.S. Bodley to A. Burwell, November 22, 1860, Bodley Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

⁵⁶ The thirst for sectional accord is a major theme of Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) and Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union as It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

October 1859, however, John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, produced a political earthquake that tested this delicate Border South Unionist outlook forged during the antebellum period. Its tremors rumbled deep into the secession crisis and injected a Lower South-like militancy into political discussions that Border South Unionists found difficult to stifle. As the secession crisis gathered momentum many border southerners, moored to both the North and the South by the economic, social, and political realities of the 1850s, questioned whether the hallowed conservative Unionist impulse that John Pendleton Kennedy brilliantly captured in his essay could endure the towering breakers on the horizon.

Chapter 2

“We Are Approaching a Crisis Pregnant with Immense & Momentous Results”: The Long Shadow of John Brown’s Raid, October 1859 – April 1860

Edward Bates surveyed the political landscape in early 1859 and unlike many Americans, the St. Louis attorney remained optimistic about the future of the republic. Born in the last decade of the eighteenth century in Virginia, Bates came to Missouri in 1814, read law with the territory’s preeminent barrister, and established a successful practice in fledgling St. Louis. Through his successful law firm and his large family Bates built important connections and entered the cauldron of Jacksonian politics. During his long career he had helped to write Missouri’s state constitution in 1820, served in both houses of the state legislature, spent a single term in the United States House of Representatives, and in time became the unofficial leader of the state’s Whig Party. The Whigs endured countless defeats in Thomas Hart Benton’s Democratic stronghold of Missouri, but Bates clung to the principles of the party even after it crumbled in the middle of the 1850s. Throughout his professional career, the Missourian championed a system of internal improvements to augment national growth, cultivate prosperity, and strengthen intersectional bonds, and his Whiggish intuition nurtured an unceasing suspicion of the Democrats. He sported a full white beard that at the onset of the secession crisis reflected his sixty-five years and what many contemporaries considered an outmoded political philosophy. Bates privately opposed the extension of slavery into the territories but also fretted that the issue only undermined intersectional cooperation, the very lifeblood of political parties prior to the middle of the 1850s. In February 1859 he publicly declared his aversion to the effort of a coterie

of Democrats to bring in Kansas as a slave state under the Lecompton Constitution and admitted that “the only party I ever belonged to has ceased to exist as an organized and militant body.”¹

As the nation prepared for the presidential election in 1860, however, Bates held out hope that the many disparate political pieces in opposition to the Democrats could unite under one banner, defeat their common opponent, and forever remove the vexed question of slavery’s extension from the political matrix. His political allies in Missouri were even floating his name as a potential candidate to lead the Opposition in 1860. Bates, his backers insisted, had all the attributes of the perfect candidate: he hailed from a border state, the heart of the nation; he had carried himself in a dignified and upright manner throughout his career; and he championed a conservative, middle ground approach to the slavery extension controversy. Bates insisted that in time the institution of slavery would suffer a natural death if confined to the fifteen states where it existed. His plan for extinguishing slavery had none of the zealotry that so many southerners associated with abolitionism, which political strategists considered an enormous asset. He called for the compensation of slaveholders who emancipated their bondspersons, endorsed a colonization program to remove the racial problems brought on by manumission, and adamantly declared that the federal government had no right to interfere with slavery in the states.²

Influential Republicans, including editor of the *New York Tribune* Horace Greeley and party architect Francis Preston Blair and his sons Montgomery Blair of Maryland and Frank Blair Jr. of Missouri, enticed Bates to join their organization. Bates, however, shared with most

¹ “Edward Bates” in Allen Johnson, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928), 1:48; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 22-23; Edward Bates to J. Philips Phoenix, et. al, February 24, 1859, printed in the *New York Daily Tribune*, April 16, 1859.

² Marvin R. Cain, *Lincoln’s Attorney General Edward Bates of Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 99-100; Richard H. Abbott, *The Republican Party and the South, 1855-1877: The First Southern Strategy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 14.

border country southerners reservations about the designs and composition of the Republican Party. In a letter to a group of New York conservatives he declared that “the agitation of [the slavery question] has never done good to any party, section or class, and never can do good, unless it be accounted to stir up the angry passions of men, and exasperate the unreasonable jealousy of sections.” Bates found sectional radicals particularly repugnant, and he worried that an alliance with the Republicans would not only damage his political prospects in Missouri, but also subject him to the whims of the party’s abolitionist element. He confided to his diary his doubts about joining the Republicans, whom he feared would foist a legislative plan for emancipation upon the nation if they gained the ascendancy. Surely, he believed, Missouri had started down the path to freedom “by the irresistible [sic] force of circumstances, without any statute to help on the work.” Other states could follow her example, and avoid the deleterious effects caused by the politicization of the slavery question. Bates considered patience the ultimate virtue, and at this point he reasoned it far better to avoid commitment to the Republicans and instead build momentum for a fusion of conservatives to defeat the Democrats. In essence, Bates looked for a revival of the Whig Party, a national coalition of moderate men who could divert attention away from the slavery question by emphasizing economic issues, smothering sectional differences, and guiding the country out of the dangerous waters stirred by eight years of Democratic leadership.³

Bates favored a quintessentially Border South response to the sectional agitation that conditioned how many Americans would vote in 1860. His noncommittal stance in early 1859 foreshadowed the Border South’s vain attempt at neutrality once sectional tensions spilled over

³ Reinhard Luthin, “Organizing the Republican Party in the ‘Border Slave’ Regions: Edward Bates’s Presidential Candidacy in 1860,” *Missouri Historical Review* 38 (January 1944), 143; Edward Bates to J. Philips Phoenix, et. al., February 24, 1859, printed in the *New York Daily Tribune*, April 16, 1859; Cain, *Lincoln’s Attorney General*, 95-98; Entry for April 27, 1859, in Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 11-12.

into war in 1861. He hoped to protect slavery in the states where it existed, sought a solution to the slavery extension question amenable to both sections, and faithfully believed in the enduring power of the Union. Bates attempted to downplay the territorial problem, much to the chagrin of Republican hardliners in the North, because he understood that most inhabitants of the Border South would not vote for a candidate who made that issue the centerpiece of his campaign.⁴ Bates and his followers believed him the perfect presidential candidate because he could see beyond the slavery extension issue to a brighter tomorrow. Yet Bates actually cast his gaze to a fictional past free of political agitation on the subject of slavery, and this vision blinded the Missourian to the realities of the present. The slavery question proved unavoidable, even for a high-minded politician like Bates. In October 1859, the actions of a small band of men led by a radical abolitionist just one hundred and fifty miles from Edward Bates's birthplace in Goochland County, Virginia, ensured that all border country southerners would have to confront the issue they had strained to evade throughout the 1850s.

Politicians like Edward Bates, who endorsed a careful and cautious approach to restricting the spread of slavery, held no interest for a hardliner like John Brown, who also operated along the sectional border. In response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which in 1854 organized the territory immediately to the west of Missouri on the basis of popular sovereignty and resulted in a showdown over whether the West would become the domain of freedom or slavery, Brown in October 1855 settled in Kansas with five of his sons. The Connecticut-born Brown had failed in several business ventures during his life, no doubt distracted from his professional responsibilities by his unceasing determination to see slavery abolished in the United States. His religious convictions told him that God wanted to rid the republic of the

⁴ Entries of April 27, May 27, July 5, 1859, in Beale, ed., *Diary of Edward Bates*, 12, 19, 29-30.

peculiar institution, and over time he became convinced that he was an instrument for carrying out this divine charge.⁵

Brown, anything but a politician like Bates, cast tact and guile to the wind. He preferred swift enterprise, and he never pondered the consequences of his actions nor planned for all possible contingencies, as did most statesmen and their strategists. By the end of the 1850s Brown could no longer stomach ostensibly antislavery politicians who spoke in platitudes and brokered deals that seemed to perpetuate the life of the peculiar institution rather than bring about its demise. He fancied the sword, and in the autumn of 1859 prepared to unsheathe his weapon once again in an effort to punish American slaveholders for their sins of the last two and a half centuries. While he impatiently dismissed the tortured pace of the political process that conservatives like Edward Bates found soothing, John Brown's measures ironically influenced Border South politics to a great degree. His attempt to incite a slave insurrection at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, quickened the march toward secession, and in the Border South the raid damaged the region's normally amicable relationship with conservatives in the North. In this environment, the alternative of disunion became a distinct possibility even in the Border South, a region with fewer slaves than the eleven states that formed the Confederacy in early 1861. As one scholar notes, the raid "captured the attention even of the apathetic, shook the faith of unionists, and encouraged the disunionists" of the South.⁶ The raid injected a sectionalist bent into Border South politics that Unionists strained to withstand, and it made Edward Bates's

⁵ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 211-213.

⁶ Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 287-289. For a depiction of John Brown as more calculating than my interpretation, see Robert E. McGlone, *John Brown's War Against Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7-11, 111-112. Peter Wallenstein, "Incendiaries All: Southern Politics and the Harpers Ferry Raid," in Paul Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 166. Wallenstein's article focuses disproportionately on the response in the Upper and Lower South, rather than the Border South.

noncommittal political formula all the more infeasible as the nation approached the election of 1860.

During the antebellum period, the dilemma of the future of slavery in the world's most republican form of government operated as a roadblock to American greatness. Democrats upheld the principle of popular sovereignty, which took the issue of the extension of slavery into the territories out of the domain of Congress and vested it in western settlers, as the best means to remove the troublesome obstruction from America's path to perfection. Following the lead of Michigan Democrat Lewis Cass, Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois championed popular sovereignty as the most democratic option for settling the vexing issue of slavery's extension and clearing the way for Americans to push westward to the Pacific Ocean. Let the people who live in the territories render a decision on the fate of the peculiar institution, Douglas argued, not politicians in far off Washington. This leveled appeal for Americans to seize what they deemed their manifest destiny inadvertently provided an opportunity for sectional hotspurs to appropriate the settlement of the West for their own ends and directed the American journey to worldwide prominence on an agonizing detour.⁷

John Brown viewed the battle for Kansas as an opportunity to inflict divine retribution on American slaveholders. He drew national attention in May 1856 when he and his sons murdered several Kansas settlers who espoused even the slightest affiliation with proslavery forces in the territory. A Missouri newspaper labeled Brown's rampage "the legitimate fruits of the Abolition press and pulpit, who have stirred up the worst passions of a portion of their people against

⁷ Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), Ch. 5.

another portion of the country, and done [this] with a reckless or a willful knowledge of the dangerous consequences.”⁸

Brown’s reputation preceded him after the press broadcast his deeds in Kansas to a divided nation. Southerners and northern conservatives derided “Old Osawatimie Brown,” while some northern abolitionists applauded his rampage. Brown escaped prosecution for his involvement in what became known as the Pottawatomie Massacre, and by the late 1850s he had begun to solicit money, munitions, and men to strike a grand blow at slavery not in the territories, but in the slaveholding states. A handful of prominent abolitionists subsidized Brown’s ambitious scheme to incite a slave insurrection in the South, though the warrior found it difficult to attract many recruits to his army of emancipation. Brown rented a farmhouse in July 1859 on the Maryland side of the Potomac River, and three months later twenty-one recruits had assembled at his headquarters. He chose Harpers Ferry, Virginia, just five miles away from the Maryland farm, as his initial target. Nestled in the hills that dotted the intersection of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, Harpers Ferry housed a federal arsenal, and a major rail thoroughfare, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, ran through the town. Brown anticipated that once his band took the town, slaves from the surrounding countryside would flock to his standard. Thereafter he would distribute pikes that he had accumulated in the North and the cache of weapons stockpiled in the armory to the slaves; in time, Brown reasoned, his liberation army would swell from twenty-one to twenty thousand, and as his legion gained momentum the peculiar institution would crumble once and for all.⁹

⁸ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 211-213; St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, June 6, 1856.

⁹ McGlone, *John Brown’s War Against Slavery*, 239-245; Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 364-368; Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue to Civil War, 1859-1861* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950), 2:70-72.

On October 16, 1859, the impetuous John Brown led his outfit to Harpers Ferry, where they captured the federal arsenal and waited for the onrush of slaves who would join the fight. During the night, his men committed a colossal blunder when they stopped a train on the Baltimore and Ohio but later let it proceed on its course. The engineer alerted the president of the railroad company that some sort of insurrection had been inaugurated at Harpers Ferry and word quickly spread throughout the Maryland and Virginia countryside. When Brown and his men surveyed the town on October 17, they discovered no army of enslaved persons, but instead droves of local white militiamen bent on quelling the uprising in their midst. President James Buchanan ordered a federal force to the scene, which arrived by ten o'clock that night. The abolitionists barricaded themselves in the town's engine works and held out until the morning of October 18, when the federal contingent stormed the building after Brown refused to surrender. The insurrection ended nearly as quickly as it had begun. Federal troops captured Brown alive, though ten of his followers eventually died. Five of Brown's lieutenants managed to escape, and seven men were clapped in manacles along with their leader. Authorities soon after searched the Maryland farm and found a collection of letters that outlined Brown's scheme for a general slave insurrection and compromised his patrons. The worst fears of white southerners had been realized: an abolitionist attempted to upset the delicately ordered southern society by pitting slaves against their masters. The seemingly far-off violence of the Kansas frontier had been introduced in their own backyard, fewer than sixty miles from the nation's capital and eighty miles from the South's largest city, Baltimore. Most white southerners breathed a sigh of relief that Brown failed and boasted that no slaves had joined the nefarious plot, but a pall of anxiety lingered over the South. Brown and his deluded followers were undoubtedly "the victims of that

social and political error with which a large proportion of the northern mind is indoctrinated and imbued,” one Baltimore editor shuddered.¹⁰

Border South moderates often emphasized during the 1850s that abolitionists represented a tiny element of the northern population. Then governor of Kentucky John Crittenden, the leader of Border South conservatives by the end of the decade, visited Indiana in 1850 during the height of the sectional controversy over whether or not to allow the introduction of slavery in the land acquired as a result of the Mexican-American War. Welcomed in Indianapolis by large crowds, Crittenden took notice of the “particularly fraternal kindness & affection” exhibited for Kentucky, a most welcome sign in the midst of the charged sectional atmosphere. Crittenden assured a Kentucky associate that the people of Indiana sought “compromise & amicable settlement of all slavery questions.” While in Indianapolis, the Kentuckian did not miss an opportunity to “talk right plainly to them about Abolition, & the mischiefs that its meddling & false humanity had brought & was tending to bring upon the Country.”¹¹

Border country southerners had always been leery of abolitionists, but throughout the decade of the 1850s they placed their trust in moderate northerners like Crittenden’s Indianapolis audience, who helped to relegate northern radicals to the margins of the body politic. Nearly a decade later, John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry threatened to destroy the intersectional bridges of moderation that Crittenden and his allies had raised. Border southerners expected to hear a litany of denunciations of Brown’s course from their moderate friends in the North. Plenty of condemnation issued forth from northern conservatives: in the immediate aftermath of the raid an Ohio newspaper, for instance, called for “the people of the free States [to] put down the class

¹⁰ Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 369-371; Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln*, 2:71, 83-85; *Baltimore Sun*, October 19, 1859.

¹¹ John J. Crittenden to Orlando Brown, June 7, 1850, John Jordan Crittenden Letters, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Crittenden Letters, DU.

of politicians who belong to the school of Slavery Agitators,” and one of Crittenden’s associates in Boston commented on a large meeting at Faneuil Hall where the attendees universally voiced their “reprobation of the attempt of John Brown at Harpers Ferry.”¹² But as authorities revealed the details of the plot, many southerners became blinded in a fit of rage. Southerners ignored northern censure of Brown and focused instead on the voices condoning the actions of the crusading abolitionist. “Day after day, however, and week after week,” the editor of the *Baltimore Sun* lamented, “we have the cumulative evidence, furnished voluntarily by the press and the pulpit, that John Brown is in fact the representative man of a very large class of people of the North, and that he is the object of their constant concern and sympathy.”¹³ The raid, undertaken so close to the Border South, temporarily upset the intersectional fraternity that had become a hallmark of the 1850s along the sectional border. The absence of universal northern condemnation of the abolitionist’s deeds provoked some otherwise Border South moderates to reevaluate the safety of the peculiar institution in the Union.

While John Brown awaited his trial in a Virginia jail, border country southerners considered the ramifications of the plot. Hester Davis, the wife of a Maryland farmer and politician, termed the raid an “atrocious attempt” and regretted that a search of his headquarters not only turned up rifles and “javelins for the use of the negroes,” but also letters from northern women supporting his effort to inaugurate servile insurrection. She believed some of the correspondence came from Quakers and worried of the ominous consequences. If women, even pacifist Quaker females, in the North prescribed such violent measures, certainly the rest of the northern population condoned ending slavery through any means necessary. Fearful that the

¹² *Columbus Daily Ohio Statesman*, October 20, 1859; Nathan Appleton to John J. Crittenden, December 14, 1859, *The Papers of John Jordan Crittenden* (microfilm), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C, hereinafter cited as Crittenden Papers, LOC. See also Peter Knupfer, “A Crisis in Conservatism: Northern Unionism and the Harpers Ferry Raid,” in Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On*, 119-148.

¹³ *Baltimore Sun*, November 28, 1859.

attempt at Harpers Ferry was merely the beginning of an abolitionist assault, she demanded that her husband carry two loaded revolvers when he traveled to Baltimore on business. A neighbor's son slept at her Montgomery County house when her husband left home to protect the family in case of another attack.¹⁴ In January 1860 Virginia intellectual George Fitzhugh accurately gauged the lasting impact of the raid on Border South women like Hester Davis: "Our wives and our daughters will see in every new Yankee face an abolition missionary."¹⁵

A Missourian attending West Point admitted to his father that Brown's raid tested his faith in the ability of the Union to protect the peculiar institution. "Pa I am decidedly a conservative man...and am in favor of promoting the well fare and future prosperity of our whole Union," the cadet asserted. "But I am from a southern state and am not willing for these northern fanatics & pirates to come upon our southern soil and deprive us of our most valuable property."¹⁶ John Brown's actions clearly amplified Border South paranoia about slave insurrections and the ability of the federal government to guard against abolitionist invasions from the North. The raid set off a flurry of second-guessing the powerful conservative Unionist mindset that moderates constructed during the 1850s. How could so many northerners, their erstwhile allies in protecting the peculiar institution in the South, sympathize with John Brown?

The warnings of western Missourians, inhabitants of the only portion of the Border South to experience extended violence over the slavery issue during the 1850s, seemed more prescient

¹⁴ Entries for October 18, 24, and 25, 1859, Hester Ann [Wilkins] Davis Diary, 1859-1861, Allen Bowie Davis Papers, 1732-1845, MS 285, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. Her husband Allen Bowie Davis was a wealthy farmer and slaves made up nearly thirty percent of Montgomery County's population in 1860, but the slave schedule does not list him as a slaveowner in 1860. This seems to be an error, for Davis owned twenty-seven slaves in 1850. There is an Allen B. Dorsey listed in the 1860 Slave Schedules for Montgomery County, who owned thirty slaves. No Allen B. Dorsey is listed in the Slave Schedules for 1850, so perhaps the census taker erroneously recorded Davis's name in 1860. See US Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser; Manuscript US Census of 1860, 1850 US Census, Slave Schedules, 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, www.ancestry.com.

¹⁵ George Fitzhugh, "Disunion within the Union," *DeBow's Review* 28 (January 1860), 1.

¹⁶ James H. Rollins to Dear Father [James S. Rollins], December 3, 1859, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO. James S. Rollins was a staunch Unionist and the owner of thirty-four slaves in 1860. See 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, www.ancestry.com.

to border southerners in the aftermath of Harpers Ferry. During the decade slaveholders in western Missouri viewed Ohio-born James Montgomery, the leader of free-soil forces in Kansas, as a cold-blooded killer bent on toppling the social order of the westernmost outpost of the Border South. Western Missourians asked for and received funds from the state legislature half a year before the Harpers Ferry raid to defend against Montgomery's band of abolitionists, who often crossed the border, absconded with slaves, and destroyed property. Leaders of the state militia along with most Border South inhabitants, however, claimed in the spring of 1859 that the western Missourians had overreacted and let their paranoia get the best of them. The Harpers Ferry raid corroborated the worst fears of western Missourians, who had sounded the warning time and again during the 1850s. No longer did border country southerners ignore their doleful admonitions. Fearful that free blacks might serve as liaisons between northern interlopers and the enslaved population, the Missouri general assembly passed legislation that would force all free African Americans to enter slavery or leave the state. Governor Robert Stewart, a pro-Union Democrat who hailed from the western border town of St. Joseph, vetoed the bill. Stewart's executive overruling on the free black legislation should not diminish the reality that the Missouri legislature took extreme steps to safeguard the peculiar institution in the state after John Brown's failure at Harpers Ferry. While he felt the legislation designed to rid Missouri of free blacks too extreme, Stewart shared the legislature's belief that the people of the Border South could not remain idle and allow outsiders to topple slavery in the region. He signed a bill in December 1859 that reorganized the state militia in the hopes of more effectively defending the state from abolitionist incursions.¹⁷

¹⁷ Perry McCandless, *A History of Missouri: Volume II, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 286-287; William E. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 37-38.

In the aftermath of John Brown's actions at Harpers Ferry the palpable terror that western Missourians lived with made its way eastward. Mounting numbers of border country southerners believed the contention of a Virginian who explained, "The border States are the exposed frontier. Into them the underground railroad insinuates its emissaries, who steal a part of our slaves and poison the minds of the balance."¹⁸ Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin discussed the implications of northern abolitionist invasions into the Border South at length in his first message to the state legislature. In December 1859 he reminded his constituents that the Bluegrass State had "more cause of complaint than any other State in the Union" due to her exposed northern border that extended seven hundred miles and abutted three free states. Magoffin calculated that Kentuckians lost \$100,000 annually due to slave escapes, and he recommended the reorganization of the state militia, a prohibitive tax on out of state peddlers operating in Kentucky (who he feared might spread incendiary ideas to slaves), a repeal of the law that allowed free blacks to settle in the state, and the establishment of a program to relocate free black inhabitants outside of the state. The governor hinted that he would support legislation that remanded free African Americans to slavery if found guilty of minor infractions such as drunkenness, immorality, laziness, and misconduct, so-called crimes that would give the state judiciary considerable leeway to enslave free blacks.¹⁹ The legislature oversaw the reorganization of the state militia system, towns and cities in the state enhanced the manpower of local police forces, and county authorities supervised more rigorous slave patrolling.²⁰

¹⁸ Jeremy Neely, *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 60-63, 76-77; Fitzhugh, "Disunion within the Union," 1.

¹⁹ Beriah Magoffin, "Message of Governor Magoffin to the General Assembly of Kentucky, December Session, 1859," (Frankfort: John B. Major, Printer, 1859), 28, 30-31. This pamphlet was located in Governor's Correspondence, 1859-1861, Governor Beriah Magoffin, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, Frankfort, Kentucky, hereinafter cited as Magoffin Papers, KDLA.

²⁰ E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 82-83; Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 192.

Citizens in Kentucky exceeded the authorities in their response to the Harpers Ferry raid. In late October 1859 a mob in Newport, Kentucky, stormed the printing office of antislavery editor William S. Bailey, removed his presses, and hurled the type into the Ohio River. Bailey, who agitated his neighbors when he advocated a John Brown-like war against slavery in the states rather than on the frontier, defiantly resisted the mob's demand that he leave the state. Kentuckians responded by jailing him for publishing incendiary materials. While on a tour of the free states John Fee, who had established an antislavery community at Berea, Kentucky, made the bold claim that the nation needed "more John Browns – not in the manner of his action, but in his spirit of consecration." The Harpers Ferry raid and Fee's injudicious remarks "called into new life the suspicion with which [Fee and his nearly one hundred followers] had been viewed," and provoked the people of Madison County to expel the Berea abolitionists from the state. Other communities followed Madison County's lead and instructed abolitionists "to leave Kentucky terra firma instanter." "We can get along without foreign interlopers," the editor of the *Louisville Daily Courier* snapped, "and can manage our affairs in our own way without assistance from abroad."²¹

Marylanders also took action as a result of the Harpers Ferry raid. Militia units from Baltimore and eastern Maryland rushed to the western portion of the state once they received word of the invasion of Virginia. John Brown had established his headquarters in Washington County, which in the aftermath of the raid provoked western Marylanders to see abolitionists behind every bush. Enslaved persons comprised just 4.6 percent of Washington County's total population and western Maryland contained very few slaves in relation to the rest of the state,

²¹ James A. Ramage & Andrea S. Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 274-275; Fee quoted in Harrold, *Border War*, 193; New Lisbon, Ohio, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, January 14, 1860; J.M. Harris to T.F. Marshall, January 27, 1860, Magoffin Papers, KDLA; *Louisville Daily Courier*, January 6, 1860.

but the specter of a slave revolt energized the area's white population. Governor Thomas Hicks, a member of the American Party and no proslavery zealot, allowed sheriffs and county authorities in western Maryland to arrest and detain suspicious persons on the slightest pretext. Rumor and innuendo of a forthcoming slave revolt induced the people of Frederick, Maryland, to outfit an armed posse to patrol the town's streets. Although the attack never materialized, the Frederick company arrested one African American for possession of a firearm. Local officials in Hagerstown and Boonsboro were granted the authority to detain "all suspicious characters who may be prowling about or passing along" following the raid.²² The state legislature appropriated \$70,000 for the formation of additional militia companies to forestall future slave revolts and crafted legislation with the intent to restrict further the freedom of Maryland's large free black population.²³

Even Frank P. Blair, Jr., whose views on terminating slavery remained far in advance of the rest of the Border South population, considered Brown's plot "atrocious madness & malignity." He scorned John Brown not so much for the social chaos his raid may have caused, but for the political fallout it would create in the Border South. Blair feared that Brown's attempted insurrection "will recoil on us as a party in the border states."²⁴ Suddenly, the prospects for any type of partnership between former Whigs, Americans, and the sparse contingent of Republicans in the Border South had vanished. Before the Harpers Ferry raid some border country southerners held out hope that all political factions opposed to the Democrats might coalesce in order to beat their common opponent. Looking toward the

²² William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 126-127; 1860 US Census, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser; Baltimore *Sun*, October 22, November 2, 1859.

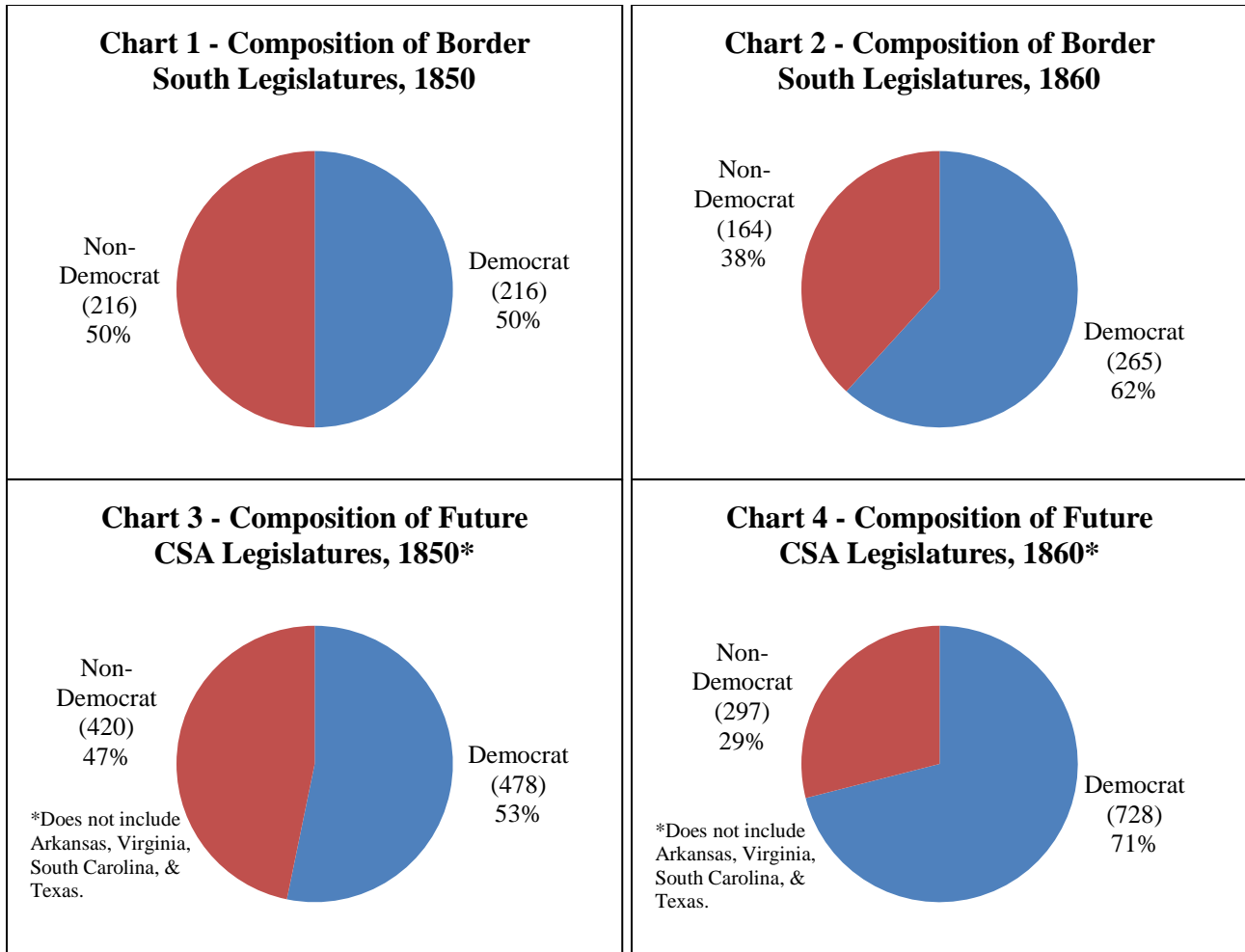
²³ Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2004), 171-172; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 267-269.

²⁴ Frank P. Blair, Jr., to Dear Judge [Montgomery Blair], October 20, 1859, The Papers of the Blair Family (microfilm), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

presidential election of 1860, men like Samuel S. Nicholas of Kentucky called for all the opponents of the Democrats to organize under one umbrella organization called the Opposition Party. Nicholas and likeminded Border South politicians presumed that abolitionists, who made up a small portion of the Republican Party, would abandon this collaborative association. Purged of the radical antislavery element, Nicholas calculated the Opposition “would become essentially national, and would easily put down the sham Democracy.” The raid at Harpers Ferry sealed the fate of Nicholas’s scheme, which probably only carried a remote chance of success in the Border South before John Brown led his men into Virginia, although a few supporters of Republican collaboration clung to the barren project. As Edward Bates learned more about the attempted insurrection, he noticed “the Democracy is turning every stone to make party capital out of it. Very probably, they will overdo the thing and produce a reaction.”²⁵

The Democrats of the Border South wasted no time turning over stones in search of political capital. John Brown’s actions at Harpers Ferry allowed Border South Democrats to claim that only they could best protect slavery in a region under attack from outside threats. Some Democrats framed all of their opponents, even conservative former Whigs and Americans, as proto-Republicans bent on carrying out emancipation through the legislative process. In effect, Democratic political posturing left former Whigs and Americans with no choice but to distance themselves from the Republicans. Throughout the 1850s the Democratic Party had made inroads in the four states of the Border South; aside from Missouri, which had long been associated with Democratic dominance, the growth of the Democratic Party in the 1850s marked a departure from Whig and American supremacy in the region. Charts 1 through 4 compare the composition of all four Border South state legislatures to those in the rest of the South in 1850 and 1860.

²⁵ Entries of May 27, October 25, 1859, Beale, ed., *Diary of Edward Bates*, 19, 51.



The Democratic Party's ascendancy in the Border South was not on par with that of the eleven states that formed the Confederacy, but the party of Andrew Jackson nevertheless made impressive gains throughout the decade. Party conflict and sectionalism battered non-Democratic elements on the state level within the region: Democrats held twelve percent more seats in Border South legislatures in 1860 as compared to 1850. Although gubernatorial elections had been held prior to the Harpers Ferry raid, the people of Delaware, Kentucky, and Maryland had sent Democrats to the governor's office. Only Maryland claimed a non-Democratic executive at the time of the raid: aided by the American Party's dominance of

Baltimore, Thomas Hicks had in November 1857 won the Maryland gubernatorial race by a wide margin.²⁶

John Brown struck Harpers Ferry at the apogee of antebellum Democratic success in the Border South. Nonetheless, the case of Maryland reveals that the Democratic triumph was in no way complete. Only Maryland held state elections in the immediate aftermath of the Harpers Ferry raid. The results suggest that the Democrats capitalized on the paranoia of the time. Overwhelming non-Democratic majorities in both houses of the legislature disappeared in November 1859; afterwards Democrats garnered a slim two-seat majority in the Senate and an impressive sixteen-seat advantage in the House.²⁷ Maryland also was the only Border South state to hold congressional elections directly following the raid; the state's delegation to the United States Congress remained split between three Democrats and three non-Democrats. A tabulation of the total votes in the Congressional elections in Maryland, however, indicates that non-Democrats outpolled Democrats by a margin of 11,712 votes in 1859. Thus, Marylanders cast almost 57 percent of their votes for non-Democratic candidates for Congress. This number actually increased from the non-Democratic tally of 55 percent of all votes in the 1857 elections.²⁸ The disparity between Democratic gains in Maryland's state government and a slight dip for Democrats in total votes cast for congressional candidates signals that non-Democrats remained a significant variable in the Border South political equation. In addition, the figures point toward a region-wide preference for a moderate response to political questions that played out on the national level and foreshadowed the establishment of a national organization that

²⁶ Michael J. Dubin, *United States Gubernatorial Elections, 1776-1860* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003), xli-xlii; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 100-105.

²⁷ Michael J. Dubin, *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures: A Year by Year Summary, 1796-2006* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 87. In the state legislature chosen in the 1857 Maryland elections, non-Democrats had an eight-seat majority in the Senate and a fourteen-seat majority in the House.

²⁸ Calculated from the returns in Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 178-179, 184. In the 1857 Congressional elections, non-Democrats outpolled Democrats by 8,985 votes.

would accommodate this conservative impulse. The raid battered non-Democrats in the Border South, but even a decade of mounting defeats and the slings and arrows of sectional hardliners in the fall of 1859 had not vanquished the legatees of Henry Clay.

Year	Democrats	% of Total	Non-Democrats	% of Total	Total Cast
1857	38,252	44.7%	47,237	55.3%	85,489
1859	37,658	43.3%	49,370	56.7%	87,028

Source: Dubin, *US Congressional Elections*, 178-179, 184.

Some Border South Democrats utilized scare tactics in the wake of the Harpers Ferry raid that closely resembled the machinations of fire-eaters in the Lower South. The response of Meriwether Jeff Thompson, the mayor of St. Joseph, Missouri, exceeded most of his fellow Border South Democrats. Thompson, a native of Harpers Ferry who had followed his ambition to Missouri in 1847, returned to his Virginia birthplace shortly after the raid and presented a hemp rope wrought by the slaves of a Missouri woman whose husband had been allegedly killed by John Brown to local authorities as a sign of solidarity between the Border and Upper South. While there Thompson bought several of the pikes that the captured abolitionist intended to place in the hands of liberated slaves and returned to the Missouri frontier with them in tow. He planned to use the pikes as visual aids to stir the people of western Missouri and show them their fate if they allowed the Republicans to succeed. Looking back on his efforts to awaken the people of the Border South while confined to a Union prison in 1864, Thompson proclaimed, “My Southern proclivities were well known, yet, I was not, nor am I now a secessionist, ‘per se,’ as the Fire Eaters were called. I was then, and I am now, an ‘irrepressible conflict’ man.”²⁹ Thompson split hairs when he assigned himself this label; his actions differed very little from

²⁹ Baltimore *Sun*, December 3, 1859; M. Jeff Thompson, “This is the Story of the War Experiences of Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson, written by Himself, and Edited by His Youngest Daughter, Marcie A. Bailey,” undated memoir, Meriwether Jeff Thompson Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. The manuscript has been transcribed and typed. The above references come from pp. 2, 11.

those of the better known fire-eater Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, who collected some of John Brown's pikes and sent them to southern politicians and governors after affixing a note that read "Samples of the favors designed for us by our Northern Brethren."³⁰ Sometime after the raid Thompson delivered a speech and warned the people of Missouri that John Brown and the Republicans intended "to massacre millions of the happiest and freest people in the world." He admonished the people of the Border South to "drive back the invading horde, before we are penned up in a few states on the Gulf coast, and the terrible consequences of a servile insurrection should burst upon us, and rapine, murder and incendiarism run riot through the land[.]" Although far fewer fire-eaters called the Border South home than the eleven states that formed the Confederacy, Thompson's invective and his vivid depictions of the consequences of a large-scale slave insurrection demonstrates that these sectional radicals sounded no less shrill than their peers farther to the south in the wake of the Harpers Ferry affray.³¹

A Virginia court found John Brown guilty of treason and sentenced him to hang on December 2, 1859. Border southerners overwhelmingly agreed with the sentence. "When he was ravaging Kansas and Missouri he gave no quarter – committing murder or robbery, or running off a dozen negro slaves, with equal indifference," the *Marshall Democrat* of Missouri commented, "and he ought to ask no quarter now that the law has him in its clutches and is likely to hold him fast." Some Border South newspapers speculated that Brown's sympathizers would

³⁰ Quoted in Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 259. Virginia Governor Henry A. Wise made sure that border southerners understood the gravity of the situation, too. He sent correspondence about the raid which an anonymous New Yorker happened upon to Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin. See A Traveller [sic] to Henry A. Wise, October 22, 1859, Mary Horner to Dear William, October 20, 1859, and Lawrence Thatcher to Capt'n J. Brown, October 3, 1859, in Magoffin Papers, KDLA.

³¹ M. Jeff Thompson, "An Address to the Citizens of the State of Missouri," (no date), in M. Jeff Thompson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. References within the speech, particularly his commentary on Abraham Lincoln, indicate that the address had been delivered after the Republican National Convention in May 1860 but before the outbreak of war in April 1861. For an interesting discussion of the impact of paranoia about slave insurrections on the secession of the Lower South see Donald E. Reynolds, *Texas Terror: The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1860 and the Secession of the Lower South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 18-21.

sweep into Virginia and rescue the abolitionist martyr, but no such attempt materialized. The region remained on high alert, and the political fallout from the raid continued to accumulate.³²

As Brown awaited the gallows, wire-pullers in the North realized that most southerners would equate Old Osawatomie with the Republican organization and damage the party's broader appeal. The weight of the attempted insurrection widened the breach between the sections, to the delight of hotspurs and the dismay of political realists who understood the necessity of intersectional amity. Observers discerned that the Harpers Ferry raid harmed northern presidential aspirants across the political spectrum, from Republicans to Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, who had broken with the southern wing of the Democrats in 1857 over the Lecompton Constitution. "Brown has run his race and his last act has been to deal a fatal blow at the political prospects of his friend [New York Republican Senator William H.] Seward and thrown a wet blanket over the shoulder of our friend Douglas and his backers," a Pennsylvanian confided to President James Buchanan.³³ Republicans who sought to expand the party southward fretted, while Democrats charged their opponents with provoking Brown to act through their dangerous partisan objectives. The St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, a Democratic sheet, noticed several Republican newspapers in the Union attempted to distance themselves from the deeds of John Brown. Unconvinced by the political maneuvering of these Republican editors, the *Daily Missouri Republican* offered sardonic praise to the German-language *Anzeiger Des Westens*, a Republican paper based in St. Louis, for its consistent stand in

³² Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 376-378; *Marshall (Missouri) Democrat*, November 4, 1859. For reports of rescues, see *Baltimore Sun*, November 5, 1859; *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, November 9, December 2, 1859; James H. Rollins to Dear Father [James S. Rollins], December 3, 1859, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; Journal Entry for December 2, 1859, William Canby Journal, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware.

³³ Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 70-72; William Bigler to James Buchanan, October 22, 1859, James Buchanan Papers (microfilm), Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For Stephen A. Douglas's break with the Lecompton supporters, see Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 581-597; Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 289-293.

support of Brown. Even after Brown had failed to carry out his plan that would have left the South “wrapped in flames and deluged in blood,” the *Anzeiger* refused to disown the crusading abolitionist as did most Republican journals. A Kentucky native and former Whig who had moved to Iowa reflected that he was raised to hate abolitionists while he lived in the Bluegrass State. Now, however, his abhorrence for the Democrats outstripped his loathing of abolitionists because the Democratic press, like the St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, used every possible tactic to attach John Brown’s actions to the Republican Party. “We are damnably exercised here about the effect of Old Brown’s wretched fiasco in Virginia,” a Chicagoan grouched. “The old idiot – The quicker they hang him and get him out of the way, the better.”³⁴

A stoic John Brown met the gallows in Charlestown, Virginia, in early December and received “a just retribution” according to Hester Davis of Maryland. “So old Brown has played out his tragedy to the 5th act, and the curtain has fallen,” John Pendleton Kennedy observed. “Hero or Devil? – that is the question.” Most border southerners emphatically answered Kennedy’s rhetorical question with the latter sobriquet; Kennedy himself came to the same conclusion after corresponding with an associate who witnessed the trial and hanging at Harpers Ferry. His unprejudiced spectator had conversed with the imprisoned Brown and described him as “a very bold reckless man, mean hypocritical and cunning – of a low order of intellect and still lower morals.” Brown’s “cant about religion was mere craft,” the informant explained; in truth, Old Osawatomie deserved the label “murderer, horse thief and robber” rather than martyr for the cause of freedom.³⁵ Border southerners convinced themselves of the veracity of the depictions

³⁴ St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, November 4, 1859; Charles H. Ray to Abraham Lincoln, October 31, 1859, Hawkins Taylor to Abraham Lincoln, November 8, 1859, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

³⁵ Entry for December 2, 1859, Hester Ann [Wilkins] Davis Diary, Allen Bowie Davis Papers; John Pendleton Kennedy to My Dear Uncle [P.C. Pendleton], December 4, 1859, Journal Entry for January 8, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL. Kennedy’s Harpers Ferry contact was David Hunter Strother, a journalist who wrote under the pseudonym Porte Crayon. Kennedy encouraged Strother to submit his account of Brown for publication; *Harper’s Weekly* turned down the submission. Strother held strong Unionist convictions and became a brigadier

of John Brown as the devil, a bandit, a bloodthirsty rogue, or all three. The outpouring of grief and mourning for Brown's death reported by newspapers puzzled the people of the Border South. Border country southerners wondered how, after a trial that even Brown himself deemed just, could anybody sympathize with a man bent on inciting a slave rebellion and endangering the entire white population of the South? Hester Davis concluded the "Tolling of Bells, firing minute guns, sermons, prayer meetings and incendiary speeches" in the North "are not the feelings of the majority." That even a minority in the North could empathize with Brown proved problematic for southern whites, though. The people of the Border South had always looked to the Union as the best means to preserve slavery. Now a sizable element within the Union condoned expunging the peculiar institution by the sword which put the nation "in great commotion." Whereas border southerners usually exhibited unwavering patience, the Harpers Ferry raid led some men to uncharacteristic verdicts. "They are discussing a disunion, North and South," a Maryland woman commented after visiting with friends in her neighbors parlor.³⁶

"The gallows is the proper end of a career that has been marked by blood and rapine," a Kentucky editor exhorted after Brown's execution. The paper expressed joy that the Union had endured its latest test "which was so heartily sympathized in by the Black Republican leaders of the North."³⁷ The editor relaxed after Brown met his doom, but his invective aimed at the Republicans underscored the long shadow cast by the Harpers Ferry raid. As the paranoia gradually receded in the wake of Brown's death many border southerners forgave conservative northerners, but they could not forget that a powerful radical element existed within the Union.

general in the Union Army during the Civil War. For information on Strother, see Charles Joyner, " 'Guilty of the Holiest Crime': The Passion of John Brown," in Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On*, 328-329, n. 1.

³⁶ Entry for December 5, 1859, Hester Ann [Wilkins] Davis Diary, Allen Bowie Davis Papers; Entry for December 12, 1859, in Kimberly Harrison, ed., *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 133.

³⁷ *Louisville Daily Courier*, December 2, 1859.

Maryland Democrats met in December 1859 and affirmed their state's steadfast commitment to the cause of the South and "their devotion to the institution guaranteed [sic] to us by the constitution, and their reprobation of the fanatical demonstrations at the North, so clearly pointing, as they do, to a determined purpose to destroy our domestic institutions, and with them the constitution and the Union."³⁸ Secession had entered the Border South political lexicon, and the probability of the region's non-Democrats aligning with the Republicans had been blasted. Some border country inhabitants, among them Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, James O. Broadhead and Charles Gibson of Missouri, and the Blair Family, continued to delude themselves into thinking that Edward Bates might head an opposition alliance between Republicans and Old Whigs.³⁹ Their plot to elevate Bates to the head of a coalition ticket faced trouble in the Border South, however; a Missouri newspaper remarked that the people of that state "will never walk into the net so gracefully set, by Greely [Horace Greeley, Republican editor of the *New York Tribune*] in the North, and Bates in the South."⁴⁰

Border South Unionists bent on combating the sectional upswing unleashed by John Brown's raid soon realized the difficult task at hand when Congress assembled on December 5, 1859. Table 13 provides a breakdown of the partisan makeup of Border South senators and representatives who sat in the Thirty-sixth Congress. Of these thirty-four politicians, 61.8 percent were affiliated with the Democratic Party and 35.3 percent with the Opposition bloc comprised of former Whigs and Americans. Only one congressman from the Border South, Frank Blair of Missouri, represented the Republicans. In reality Blair never sat in this session of

³⁸ Baltimore *Sun*, December 7, 1859.

³⁹ Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, December 19, 1859, Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, December 25, 1859, Samuel Francis Du Pont Papers, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, hereinafter cited as S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; James O. Broadhead to Wm. Newland, December 6, 1859, James O. Broadhead Papers, Missouri Museum of History, St. Louis, Missouri; C. Gibson to James S. Rollins, October 28, 1859, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

⁴⁰ *Marshall (Missouri) Democrat*, December 29, 1859.

Congress; he lost the congressional election held in August 1858 but charged his Democratic opponent with fraud, and the House subsequently granted him the seat. Blair resigned the post in June 1860 in order to vindicate his accusation of a voting swindle and put his name before his constituents in a fair contest, but a special election for the second session of the Thirty-sixth Congress held on August 6, 1860 resulted in his defeat.⁴¹

Border South Democrats in the Thirty-sixth Congress ranged across a broad political spectrum, from disunionists to unalloyed Unionists. Representatives Henry C. Burnett of Kentucky and John B. Clark of Missouri often sounded no different than Deep South fire-eaters when on the stump; after the commencement of the Civil War the House expelled both of these sectional radicals, who eventually rendered their services to the government of the Confederate States of America. Senator James A. Pearce of Maryland and Representative Thomas L. Anderson of Missouri, on the other hand, each espoused a strong brand of Unionism during the sectional crisis.⁴² Most Border South Democrats in this session of Congress fell somewhere between these two poles of political persuasion. Almost twice as many national-level politicians from the Border South came from the Democratic Party than from the Opposition, but the non-Democratic bloc included several eminent statesmen who exercised a great deal of political influence. Chief among these were Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden and Maryland congressmen Henry Winter Davis and J. Morrison Harris. Border South Democrats outnumbered Oppositionists three and a half to one in the Senate, a sure sign of the ascendancy of the Democratic Party in the region's state legislatures, who at the time elected United States senators. Many Border South Democrats in Washington looked to Vice President John C.

⁴¹ Dubin, *US Congressional Elections*, 182, 185. Blair was elected to the 37th Congress on the very same day. See *Ibid.*, 187.

⁴² Information derived from *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-present*, located online at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>. The House expelled Clark on July 13, 1861 and Burnett on Dec. 3, 1861.

Breckinridge of Kentucky for leadership. Though not a senator, Breckinridge presided over the upper chamber and played an active role during this session of Congress.⁴³

Table 13 - The Border South in the 36th Congress

	Democrats	Opposition/ American	Republican
Senate	7	2	0
House	14	10	1 [^]
Total	21	12	1
Percentage	61.8%	35.3%	2.9%

[^]Frank Blair, the only Border South Republican, lost his election but was awarded a seat in the House after an investigation unearthed significant fraud. He resigned in June 1860 to go before the people in August 1860, but lost that election.

Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>.

Table 14 - Composition of the 36th Congress

	Democrats	Opposition/ American	Republican
Senate	38	2	25
House	101 [^]	27	109
Total	139	29	134
Percentage	46.0%	9.6%	44.4%

[^] 13 of these Democrats had split with the Buchanan Administration and were known as Anti-Lecompton Democrats.

Source: James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States...*, 2:417-418.

In the Thirty-sixth Congress Democrats held an overall majority in the Senate, but no party controlled the House of Representatives. Table 14 indicates that both the Republicans and Democrats had captured nearly nine-tenths of the seats in the House. The organization of the House depended upon a majority vote for the speaker, however, which made the Opposition bloc the vital center that the Democrats or Republicans would have to win over to elect a presiding officer of their choosing. Twenty-three of the Oppositionists hailed from the South, and of that

⁴³ William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 167-168, 198-205.

number ten came from the Border South.⁴⁴ Thus, border country southerners made up around thirty-seven percent of the total Opposition bloc in the House; the two dominant parties highly prized these influential votes which would determine who held sway in the lower house of Congress. Once again the Border South found itself caught squarely in the middle of the sectional stress that threatened to destroy the republic.

The tense atmosphere at the Capitol proved anything but conducive to the normal Border South brand of politics that centered upon moderation, conciliation, and composure. From the start, Republicans and their opponents refused to budge on the speakership issue. The House witnessed a protracted struggle over the election of a speaker, a routine that rarely took more than a few meetings to settle. During the winter of 1859-1860, though, the balloting for speaker lasted through forty-four votes and choked the business of the government to a halt. Not until February 1, 1860, almost two months after the House convened, did the opposing sides settle on a presiding officer. During the interim, congressmen traded insults, challenged one another to duels, and brought pistols into the House chamber lest a physical altercation provide an opportunity to slay one's political adversary with more than oral vitriol. The sergeant-at-arms found it nearly impossible to keep the cantankerous congressmen and the boisterous crowds in the galleries at bay. Iowa Senator James Grimes remarked that on both sides of the aisle members "are mostly armed with deadly weapons, and it is said that the friends of each are armed in the galleries."⁴⁵

The House tallied its first vote for Speaker on the opening day of the session. The Border South congressmen scattered their votes among Democrat Thomas Boccock of Virginia, former

⁴⁴ James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to the Final Restoration of Home Rule in the South*, Vol. 2, 1854-1860 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 417-418.

⁴⁵ Ollinger Crenshaw, "The Speakership Contest of 1859-1860: John Sherman's Election a Cause of Disruption?" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 29 (December 1942), 323-328, 332-333; Grimes quoted in Rhodes, *History of the United States*, 2:424.

Whig Alexander Boteler of the Old Dominion, and Oppositionist John Gilmer of North Carolina. None of the names the Republicans put forward received a single vote from the Border South, an ominous sign for the party that held a plurality and needed to capture some of the swing votes from the Opposition group known as the South Americans.⁴⁶ After recording the first vote, Missouri Democrat John B. Clark fired a salvo aimed directly at the Republicans. Clark, who in 1858 had run unopposed in Missouri's Third Congressional District in the northeastern corner of the state, submitted a resolution which stipulated that no congressman who either endorsed or recommended Hinton R. Helper's book *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* should occupy the speaker's chair. The resolution, laden with sectional overtones, produced a mixture of applause and hisses among the partisans in the galleries. Hinton Helper, a nonslaveholding North Carolinian, had in 1857 published his screed, which blamed slavery for southern backwardness and his native section's inability to keep pace with the North and Midwest. "Slavery lies at the root of all the shame, poverty, ignorance, tyranny and imbecility of the South; slavery must be thoroughly eradicated; let this be done, and a glorious future will await us," Helper recommended. Southerners, so dependent upon the peculiar institution for social, economic, and racial stability, considered Helper the ultimate sectional traitor. Many Republicans erroneously believed Helper voiced the prevailing sentiment of poor whites in the South and saw in him an ally, whereas southerners beheld an apostate. Over sixty House Republicans had endorsed the book and signed a letter dated March 9, 1859, that outlined a program for abolishing slavery in the South. Moderate John Sherman of Ohio, the Republicans' top choice for speaker, had imprudently affixed his signature to the document without carefully reading the book. On the heels of the Harpers Ferry raid, southern congressmen classified all the

⁴⁶ Speaker Vote of December 5, 1859, *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 2, hereinafter referred to as *CG*.

Republican signers as John Browns or Hinton Helpers. Clark's resolution signaled that not even the northernmost tier of the South would assist the Republicans in electing a speaker if their ultimate intentions included the obliteration of the peculiar institution in the South.⁴⁷

Clark cloaked his attack on the Republicans in the language of Border South moderation. He hoped to have someone preside over the House who would respect the Constitution and act in a fair manner to both sections of the nation. The Constitution, Clark maintained, protected slavery, and its ultimate fate should remain in the hands of the South, not in those of a foreign political entity. "Whether it is sinful to hold slaves, whether slavery is a plague and a loss, and whether it will affect our future destiny, is our own business," Clark proclaimed. "We suffer for that, and not they." The Missouri Democrat worried that Republicans would not embrace the American political creed of conciliation and compromise, and he begged them not to "destroy the conservative sentiment – that great element which keeps the stars and stripes floating this day over this Capitol" by insisting upon a speaker who had sanctioned Helper's book.⁴⁸

Historians studying the sectional conflict often hurriedly mention Clark and his resolution before moving on to the political divisions that surfaced in the following months. His resolution, however, offers a window into the unique Border South approach to the deepening sectional divide. Clark understood that despite his fire-eating proclivities, most of his constituents in Missouri eagerly sought a moderate solution to the sectional crisis. Thus, he carefully crafted his speech as a measured plea for the perseverance of the Union. Yet it also included a veiled ultimatum to the Republicans which gave the speech and resolution a hard edge that Border South politics often lacked before October 1859. The management of the institution of slavery should be left to the people in the South who lived among enslaved persons; Clark nor any other

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3; Helper's prose is quoted in Avery O. Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 250; Crenshaw, "The Speakership Contest," 323-325.

⁴⁸ Speech of John B. Clark, December 6, 1859, *CG*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 17-18.

border country southerner would allow perceived political enemies to have dominion over the future of slavery. If the Republicans gained control of the government it would “raise a storm throughout this Union” and “put brother against brother, father against son.” Disunion, Clark implied, would be preferable to living under the reign of Republican leadership. The speech and resolution revealed that John Brown’s raid widened a crack in the levee that border southerners had built to keep sectional radicalism confined to the North and the South. Kentucky Congressman John White Stevenson astutely comprehended the political repercussions of the Harpers Ferry raid that produced Clark’s Resolution. “It is not to be disguised that we are approaching a crisis pregnant with immense & momentous results,” Stevenson confided to an associate. “It will require clear heads & patriotic hearts – to keep together.”⁴⁹

House Republicans ignored Clark’s admonition and stubbornly attempted to secure Sherman’s election. Border South representatives joined with other southern congressmen and refused to cast a vote for Sherman or any other Republican. Not until the twenty-fifth ballot, nearly a month into the session, did some border southerners direct their votes toward a northern candidate for speaker, the conservative Democrat John McClernand of Illinois. Time and again, however, partisan wrangling prevented the South Americans and Northern Democrats from settling on a candidate who could tally enough votes to defeat the Republicans. The impasse over the speakership afforded ample opportunity for political grandstanding, and Border South moderates worried that fire-eaters in the House were much more interested in using the speakership contest to make a plea for southern independence than to organize the government. D.H. Hamilton of South Carolina believed the people of the Palmetto State would “hail with delight any measures which the Southern Members [of Congress] may adopt to bring this contest

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 18; John White Stevenson to Lewis Sanders, December 15, 1859, Sanders Family Papers, 1804-1879, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

into some positive form of action – we are tired of guarding against secret attacks.” In the middle of December Martin Crawford of Georgia calculated that every member from the fifteen slaveholding states, excluding two Tennessee congressmen, condoned secession as a remedy if the Republicans elected John Sherman.⁵⁰

Crawford, whose vista of the Border South had likely been distorted by John B. Clark’s actions, overestimated the fire-eating vigor of his Border South colleagues. Most Border South congressmen reflected the conservative impulse of their constituency and strove for a solution that would help the Union endure, a marked contrast to southern hotheads who eclipsed the boundaries of civil discourse and berated their Republican enemies. “The Republicans keep mum – they regard that there is wisdom in silence - & I agree with them. I wish that some of our Southern friends would practice more of the maxim,” John White Stevenson scoffed. Missouri painter George Caleb Bingham likewise complained that radical southern congressmen only damaged sectional amity with their endless attacks on the intransigent Republicans. “The ‘nigger,’ John Brown, *Helpers* [sic] book, and the ‘irrepressible conflict’ are literally worn to tatters, without the slightest visible impression upon the ‘Black Republican’ ranks,” Bingham observed. Border country congressmen rejected the Republican candidate, but they also declined to walk down the path of disunion. In the cauldron of the speakership contest, most politicians from the Border South sought to revive the conservative Unionist formula that had served the region in the past.⁵¹

The Republicans finally relented and jettisoned John Sherman after the thirty-ninth ballot. They replaced Sherman with the conservative William Pennington of New Jersey, who had not

⁵⁰ Speakership Vote of January 4, 1861, *CG*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 338; D.H. Hamilton to William Porcher Miles, December 9, 1859, William Porcher Miles Papers (microfilm), SHC-UNC; Martin J. Crawford to Alexander Stephens, December 13, 1859, in Crenshaw, “The Speakership Contest,” 329, n. 18.

⁵¹ John White Stevenson to Lewis Sanders, December 15, 1859, Sanders Family Papers, FHS; George Caleb Bingham to James S. Rollins, January 9, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

signed the endorsement of the Helper book. The southern bloc deemed Pennington guilty by association, however, and spread their votes on other conservatives from the Democratic Party or the Opposition ranks. Henry Winter Davis, a three-term American Party congressman from Baltimore known for his fiery temper and unbounded political ambition, had throughout the session closeted with the Republicans and urged them to drop Sherman for someone less offensive to moderates. The replacement of Sherman with the conservative Pennington provided Davis with a pretext to modify his vote. On January 31, 1860, Winter Davis finally broke ranks and switched his vote from the American candidate to the Republican Pennington. Later that day New York Know Nothing George Briggs promised to follow the Marylander's lead if Winter Davis would not waver in his support for the Republican. Davis reassured Briggs of his commitment and on February 1, the two Know Nothings cast their vote for Pennington, giving the Republican candidate the requisite majority to become speaker. Davis certainly acted as a regional outlier during the speakership contest: the remainder of the Border South congressional delegation held fast to their repugnance for the Republicans and vainly tabbed Gilmer or McClelland on the forty-fourth and final ballot.⁵²

Southerners redirected their barrage of ridicule from the Republicans toward Davis for his defection. Mississippi Democrat William Barksdale ensured that posterity understood his contempt for Davis when he asked that the official record of Congress show that “the Representative of a slaveholding constituency...will be responsible for the election of the candidate of the Republican party as Speaker of this House.” In his own state of Maryland, citizens hanged Davis in effigy, and the House of Delegates voted sixty-two to one to censure the Baltimore congressman for his vote. Even his own party organ in Baltimore predicted that

⁵² Speakership Vote of January 30, 31, & February 1, 1860, *CG*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 634, 641, 650; *New York Herald*, Feb. 1, 1860; Gerald S. Henig, *Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), 120-125.

Davis's alliance with the Republicans effectively ended his political career in the Old Line State. Clearly, Henry Winter Davis overstepped the boundaries of Border South political culture when he assisted the Republicans in electing a speaker. Samuel Du Pont of Delaware, perhaps blinded by indignation over the treatment his friend Henry Winter Davis received at the hands of the southern press, moaned that other South Americans "had not the moral pluck to keep you from standing alone in this matter." After his lamentation Du Pont took a more objective view of Davis's decision and inquired if any of the other southern congressmen maintained social relations with him after he recorded his vote, a frank admission of the ostracism the Marylander suffered for his cooperation with the Republicans.⁵³

Henry Winter Davis's desertion of his border country colleagues, however, should not distort the overall picture of the Border South reaction to the speakership contest. The rest of the Border South congressmen towed the line with other southerners and refused to bend to the Republicans. Border southerners thought along the same lines as a Virginian who declared that although the "Republicans may not be abolitionists yet they [are] tadpole abolitionists and must in time become the genuine reptile." Yet the Border South members of the southern phalanx eschewed the radicalism of fire-eaters just as readily as they did the Republicans. George Pattison of Missouri believed that "there is a class of Southern fanatics, who would have been equally violent defenders of abolition had they been born in New England." During the speakership dispute Pattison yearned for a return to moderate politics and commented that most

⁵³ Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 123-126; *Baltimore American*, February 2, 1860; Explanation of William Barksdale's Vote, February 2, 1860, *CG*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 653; Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, February 4, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

Missouri Democrats “are of course the conservative portion of the people, who deplore the fanatical agitation of the slavery subject, particularly in Congress.”⁵⁴

Both the Harpers Ferry raid and the speakership contest demonstrated that even though sectional radicalism had become a variable in the Border South political matrix, moderation remained the region’s watchword. The region included people who thought along the same lines as John B. Clark or Henry Winter Davis, but most border country southerners’ political persuasion fell in between these two divergent outlooks. “I believe there is conservatism enough in our union to prevent a dissolution – the times a short time since looked somewhat alarming, but now the clouds are passing away & the political sky is clearing up,” a Bath County, Kentucky inhabitant acknowledged.⁵⁵ Conservative politicians in the Border South harbored a less sanguine view than this optimistic Kentuckian; they knew they would have to work in a vigilant manner to keep disunion sentiment from overawing the moderate impulse once the nation’s attention turned away from the House chamber and toward the presidential canvass of 1860.

Early in 1860, the major political parties remained in a great deal of flux. The only political organization remaining that considered itself a national party, the Democrats, limped toward the election of 1860 with two intraparty factions that held very different visions of slavery’s place in the American territories. One wing of the party marched behind Stephen Douglas of Illinois, who during his long tenure in the Senate championed westward expansion and the idea of popular sovereignty or non-intervention in the territories. The territory of Kansas

⁵⁴ William Burrell to Alexander Boteler, October 24, 1859, Alexander R. Boteler Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; George Pattison to Stephen A. Douglas, January 26, 1860, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois, hereinafter cited as Douglas Papers, UC.

⁵⁵ James Moffett to Dear Cousins James & Martha, December 29, 1859, James Moffett Letters, 1859-1878, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

operated as Douglas's laboratory for popular sovereignty; his experiment demonstrated that his plan worked far better as an ideological construct than it did as a tangible governing principle. Kansas fell into disarray in the 1850s as proponents of freedom and slavery wrangled over the future of the West. Southern Democrats warmly supported Douglas until 1857 when he repudiated the Lecompton Constitution, a charter for Kansas statehood designed to protect the institution of slavery in the new state. Lecompton, Douglas insisted, made a mockery of popular sovereignty because the constitution offered no real opportunity for the settlers to reject it and slavery. Democratic President James Buchanan backed the Lecompton Constitution and Douglas devoted all of his energy to defeating an enabling act for Kansas in Congress. Thus, by the presidential canvass of 1860, the Democrats functioned as a national organization only in name. The majority of southern Democrats, many of whom resolutely called for an affirmation of the Supreme Court's 1857 decision in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* which declared Congress had no right to restrict the spread of slavery into the territories, searched for any means possible to thwart Stephen Douglas's presidential ambitions.⁵⁶

Border South Democrats occupied the fault line between the two wings of the party. A resident of Lexington, Kentucky, described the party as "split all to peices [sic]" in the Border South. Democratic distinctions throughout Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri rested on an assortment of variables, such as patronage connections to Buchanan or Douglas and local political issues, especially in urban areas like Baltimore and St. Louis. Influential Border South Democrats, including Maryland's Reverdy Johnson and editor of the St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican* Nathaniel Paschall, championed Douglas for the party's presidential nomination. The few Douglas backers throughout the South viewed popular sovereignty as "the most able

⁵⁶ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 306-331; Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 516-523.

defense of our great Southern Institution, against Black Republicanism.” Whereas many Democrats in the states that formed the Confederacy spurned the Little Giant as a heretic for his stand against Lecompton, Border South Douglas Democrats regarded popular sovereignty as a moderate and safe approach to the territorial issue. “The conservative men of this Nation need a leader, one bold & fearless, not caring for the fire-eaters North or South, one who can proclaim truth on the house-top, Senate-chamber or any where else,” a Missouri Douglas supporter opined.⁵⁷

Douglas had plenty of Democratic detractors in the Border South as well, which underscores the balkanized nature of the region and the party. Vice President John C. Breckinridge and senators James S. Green and Trusten Polk of Missouri were a festering thorn in the side of the Little Giant, and the Missouri duo especially took advantage of every opportunity to denunciate Douglas and popular sovereignty. Green and likeminded Border South Democrats complained that popular sovereignty left open the possibility that a territorial legislature might try to prohibit the introduction of slavery, a direct contravention to the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision. “We ought to banish this question now and forever; we ought to hush these unnecessary issues on the subject of ‘squatter’ or ‘popular’ sovereignty,” Green barked on the Senate floor. “[W]e must strictly adhere to the decision of the Supreme Court. It is our only safety.” Douglas adherents realized that “some of our Democratic brethren are straining at Nats and if they don’t be careful they will defeat the Democratic Party at the next Presidential Election.” Douglas’s lieutenants throughout the Border South grumbled that his opponents took to the stump and misrepresented the conservative nature of popular sovereignty. Critics of the Little Giant, on the other hand, adhered to the logic of a Buchanan confidant who proclaimed, “I,

⁵⁷ James A.J. Frost to Mr. Burbridge, July 2, 1860, Frost Family Papers, Filson; Joseph C. Bradley to Stephen Douglas, November 10, 1859, Brutus to Stephen Douglas, December 14, 1859, both in Douglas Papers, UC.

for one, am for skinning and quartering this Demagogue...We must drive him from the Party or cut him in two with a platform [at the Democratic National Convention].” Buchanan’s friend Levi K. Bowen discerned a powerful hatred of Douglas in Maryland and credited it to “a strong southern sentiment which regards him as unsound and dangerous,” and a Missourian looked forward to defeating Douglas’s bid for the presidency in order to affirm his state’s southern proclivities and to demonstrate “that we desire hereafter not to be controlled by ‘Northern Men, with Southern principles.’ ”⁵⁸

Border South conservatives not affiliated with the Democratic Party began exploring their alternatives at about the same time as Congress convened in Washington. The tempestuous speakership contest convinced many former Whigs and Americans that they must create their own political organization independent of the Republicans and Democrats. A New Jersey politico informed a Virginian that members of the American Party in the North wanted “an independent Organisation [sic] all over the Union, and are looking with great anxiety to the brethren of the South, particularly to the South American members of Congress, who, it is believed have it in their power to inaugurate a great Union Party which will control the destinies of the Nation.” Border country southerners functioned as the linchpin and power base of this nascent independent organization. Kentucky Senator John Crittenden became the nominal leader of this third party, and he relied upon former Whigs such as John Pendleton Kennedy of Maryland, Joseph P. Comegys of Delaware, Leslie Combs and Laban Moore of Kentucky, Hamilton Gamble and James S. Rollins of Missouri, and Alexander Boteler and William C.

⁵⁸ William Preston to R.T. Durrett, December 22, 1858, Preston Family Papers – Davie Collection, Filson; Speech of James S. Green, January 10-11, 1860, *CG – Appendix*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, 74; Thomas Hand, et. al., to Stephen Douglas, November 27, 1859, Howard Everett to Stephen Douglas, December 14, 1859, James D. Eads to Stephen Douglas, January 15, 1860, all in Douglas Papers, UC; Robert Tyler to James Buchanan, March 20, 1860, Levi K. Bowen to James Buchanan, July 12, 1860, both in Buchanan Papers, HSP; Samuel Ralston to C.F. Jackson, April 24, 1860, John Sappington Papers, SHS-MO.

Rives of Virginia for assistance in organizing the movement. Crittenden asked John Pendleton Kennedy to draft an address in January 1860 which would set forth the principles of the new organization, known as the Constitutional Union Party. Kennedy admitted that the party hoped to adopt a nebulous platform that stood by the Constitution and the Union and turned back the clock to the “old times before slavery became the controlling ingredient in our politics.” George Fisher of Delaware believed the new organization “will exactly suit our latitude” if it stood as an opposition to the “ultra fire eating disunion democracy upon the one hand and the Republican fanatics upon the other.”⁵⁹

No other political entity captured the Border South political mentality like the Constitutional Union Party. The organization hoped that its appeals to moderation and devotion to the Constitution would place it above the dangerous partisan battleground that had served as a catalyst for extremism in the North and South. Constitutional Unionists found their inspiration in bygone political personalities such as George Washington, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster, all of whom served as symbols of nationalism triumphing over sectionalism. Moderates hoped to establish a “new party – constitutional and comprehensive – anti-all-the-isms” according to the description of a Maryland native, one that would vie with the Douglas Democrats for the conservative vote in the Border South. Some Constitutional Unionists even imagined that they could convert some of those Douglas Democrats to their standard. “If we can revive the Old Whig spirit and unite with the large body of the people who detest both of the predominant parties,” John Pendleton Kennedy contemplated, “we may disappoint them and put a sound old

⁵⁹ J.W. Bryce to Alexander Boteler, December 2, 1859, Boteler Papers, DU; Journal Entries for January 25, February 20, 1860, John Crittenden to John Pendleton Kennedy, January 24, 1860, John Pendleton Kennedy to R.C. Winthrop, January 18, 1860, all in Kennedy Papers, EPFL; George P. Fisher to John Crittenden, January 7, 1860, Crittenden Papers, LOC.

fashioned statesmen to the Presidency.”⁶⁰ The very qualities that these conservatives considered assets – non-partisanship, nationalism, and a non-committal stance on the slavery issue – in time emerged as liabilities. Despite of their best efforts, the Constitutional Unionists and the people of the Border South soon found it impossible to untangle partisanship from sectionalism; likewise, their reluctance to take a stand on the issues only plunged the party and the region deeper into the conflict as time passed. Border South conservatives who peered to the past for solutions just as Edward Bates had prior to John Brown’s raid could not derail the political locomotive that chugged toward disaster in 1860.

The long shadow of the Harpers Ferry raid made the nation’s most cohesive political entity the biggest loser in the Border South. With the Constitutional Unionists staking out an independent course, Republicans realized they could not count on many votes from the people of the Border South. A few defiant border country Americans warned their colleagues that a third party stood no chance and that fusion with the Republicans offered the only blueprint to foil the Democrats in the presidential election. At the same time that he worked behind the scenes with Republicans to elect a Speaker of the House, Henry Winter Davis attempted to launch an electoral combination between the antislavery party and the Americans of the Border South. Davis advised the Republicans to run an Old Whig from the Border South, preferably Edward Bates, in order to capture the vote of border country moderates. The collective votes of the Republicans and former Whigs and Americans presented a much more powerful challenge to the Democrats than an independent Opposition Party, Davis reasoned. He acidly dismissed

⁶⁰ William Schley to Crittenden, March 6, 1860, Crittenden Letters, DU; John Pendleton Kennedy to Sir Richard Pakenham, February 19, 1860, Kennedy Papers, EPFL. Many Virginia conservatives also looked to the formation of the Constitutional Union Party as beneficial for the upcoming national election. For example see Alexander H.H. Stuart to John Crittenden, Jan. 26, 1860, Alexander Hugh Holmes Stuart Letter, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Crittenden's third party movement as a "preposterous squad of antiques" that would actually benefit the Democrats by splitting the presidential vote.⁶¹

Some former Whigs, Americans, and Republicans in Missouri shared Davis's outlook in early 1860. The group held a convention in Jefferson City, Missouri, in late February 1860, nominated Bates for the presidency, and constructed a nebulous platform that assailed "the systematic reopening and dangerous agitation of the slavery question by ultra political leaders, for party purposes." The platform, however, took no particular stance on the territorial issue. Rather, it merely expressed opposition to Buchanan's endorsement of the Lecompton Constitution. The platform only explicitly addressed slavery by expressing repugnance toward reopening the African slave trade. A Democrat quipped that the delegates "fearing to commit their candidate to any kind of a platform had to deal in generalities – So of course they said nothing of interest to any one!" Herein lay the dilemma for a Border South fusion of Republicans and Americans: most border southerners could not swallow a platform that expressly forbade the expansion of slavery into the territories, while the Republicans of the North insisted upon the inclusion of the party's bedrock principle. Prior to the Jefferson City meeting, Bates confirmed this conundrum when he acknowledged that many Old Whigs and Americans in the interior of Missouri "go the length of saying that the[y] are anxious to support me, but cant [sic] do it if the 'Black' Republicans support me[.]" Most border southerners continued to equate Republicanism with the radicalism of John Brown, an ominous sign for a region-wide fusion movement in opposition to the Democrats.⁶²

⁶¹ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, December 20, 27, 1859, Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, January 13, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; J.W. Bryce to Alexander Boteler, December 2, 1859, Boteler Papers, DU; Lindy McConihaigh to James S. Rollins, Feb. 3, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO. For reservations about a third party in Missouri, see James S. Rollins to James Broadhead, February 1, 1860, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH.

⁶² St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, March 1, 1860; D.D. Mitchell to Stephen Douglas, March 2, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; Entry for February 28, 1860, in Beale, ed., *Diary of Edward Bates*, 104. For doubts that

The tepid platform of the Missouri Opposition movement more closely resembled the doctrine of the Constitutional Unionists than the Republican Party. The delegates to the Jefferson City Convention tried to occupy the middle ground, but found their scheme frustrated by Bates's clumsy handling of the nomination. Eastern Republicans, looking forward to the party's national convention scheduled to meet in Chicago in May 1860, demanded that Bates outline his attitude toward slavery and the territories before he could win their support. The Missourian initially avoided issuing a public exposition on slavery for fear that it might lead to "dissension, & possibly disruption among those who, for the general good, ought to be friends." Bates, however, finally relented and produced a public letter in which he explicitly declared his opposition to the extension of slavery into the territories, his aversion to the Supreme Court's ruling in the Dred Scott decision, and his preference for the colonization of free blacks. Bates had not substantially altered his conservative viewpoint on slavery, but it was no longer confined to private conversation or his diary. The Republican Party would not countenance an evasive stand on the slavery issue as did the Constitutional Unionists; once his inner thoughts about the restriction of slavery went public, the American-Republican fusion movement melted away in Missouri and the rest of the Border South. "Mr. Bates has cut his throat politically, at least in all the southern states," one Missourian confessed, while a Maryland conservative complained that "his opinions are too Northern & Eastern for us." A Republican in Indiana offered a similar opinion when he acknowledged that "not a man in his right mind would pretend to think that he [Bates] could carry his own State while standing on the Republican Platform." Aside from the followers of Frank Blair Jr. in St. Louis, the rest of the Missouri fusion movement eventually

northern Republicans would cast their votes for Edward Bates due to his unwillingness to take a stand on slavery, see Henry P.H. Bromwell to Abraham Lincoln, November 13, 1859, Mark W. Delahay to Abraham Lincoln, December 23, 1859, Hawkins Taylor to Abraham Lincoln, December 27, 1859, Samuel Galloway to Abraham Lincoln, March 15, 1860, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

abandoned the Republicans and either joined up with the Constitutional Union Party or put past differences aside and united with the Douglas Democrats. The movement for South American fusion with Republicans had been on life support ever since John Brown's raid. Bates's decision to endorse the Republican outlook on slavery in the territories finished off what Harpers Ferry and the speakership contest had started.⁶³

As the nation eyed the meeting of the national party conventions in the spring of 1860, Border South moderates breathed a momentary sigh of relief. The deeds of John Brown at Harpers Ferry had temporarily unleashed a form of extremism normally foreign to the Border South, but conservatives had managed to regain the upper hand by the spring of 1860. Those moderates could not neglect that the timing of Brown's incursion nearly proved disastrous. The raid, followed so closely by the speakership contest and the evolving campaign for the presidency, had injected additional venom into the already toxic national political scene. Most Americans now viewed the election of 1860 as an apocalyptic event. The various political coalitions prepared for battle, fully cognizant that many Americans tied the upcoming presidential contest to the destiny of the republic.

After surviving the trials of the last half year, an inexperienced politician might have declared victory: disunionist sentiment had receded after Brown's execution; even though a Republican had been chosen speaker of the House, a coalition that included Border South moderates had prevented the election of one who had publicly endorsed the extreme views of Hinton Helper; the formation of an extensive Republican organization in the region had been stymied; and conservatives had constructed their very own political organization with its nerve

⁶³ Cain, *Lincoln's Attorney General*, 103-105; Edward Bates to James S. Rollins, February 7, 1860, James H. Rollins to Dear Father [James S. Rollins], April 22, 1860, both in Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, March 22, 1860; A. Randall to John Pendleton Kennedy, April 7, 1860, Kennedy Papers, EPFL; F.M. Finch to Abraham Lincoln, April 16, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

center located in the Border South. With the presidential election looming, however, these shrewd conservatives knew better than to let down their guard. Most agreed with the prognosis of Lewis Sanders of Kentucky: “We are now a divided people – bad men have the control in most of [the] so called free States – they have passed offensive laws [and]...they disregard the decision of the Courts. All of these troubles grow out of the slavery question – it must be settled and agitation stopped – or separation must ensue.”⁶⁴ At any moment, extremists might once again jeopardize the region’s Unionist impulse. The people of the Border South gazed toward the presidential contest of 1860 and prepared themselves for yet another political clash freighted with momentous consequences.

⁶⁴ Lewis Sanders to J.H. Harney, February 4, 1860, Sanders Family Papers, Filson.

Chapter 3

“The Wolf Is Really Upon Us Now”: The Presidential Canvass, April – November 1860

The Thirty-Sixth Congress convened in December 1859 while John Brown’s failed raid at Harpers Ferry and his subsequent execution loomed ominously over Capitol Hill. In the midst of this turmoil, James Asheton Bayard sat uncomfortably at his desk in the Senate chamber and watched his colleagues widen the sectional breach. After erstwhile Democratic colleagues Robert Toombs of Georgia and Andrew Johnson of Tennessee bickered about slavery’s safety in the Union and traded insults on the floor of the Senate, he sighed that “Reproach & abuse never yet convinced any man of error no matter how strong the argument.” Bayard had represented Delaware in the United States Senate since 1851, and he lamented that the explosive political issue of slavery’s extension into the territories threatened to destroy not only his cherished Democratic Party, but the entire Union. He shuddered at the thought of a broken Union, which he considered a likely outcome if intraparty disagreements over popular sovereignty demolished the last truly national political organization. Bayard confided to his son Thomas that “there never was a time, when the harmony & unity of the Democratic Party was so essential to the preservation of the Union.”¹

Sixty-years old in early 1860, Bayard was no stranger to political controversy. His father, James Bayard, Sr., had also represented Delaware in the nation’s capital. The elder Bayard endured scathing rebukes from his fellow Federalists when he brokered a deal as a member of the House of Representatives that propelled Republican Thomas Jefferson to the executive office in the stormy election of 1800. Even though Federalists cursed him as a traitor,

¹ James A. Bayard to Thomas Bayard, Feb. 22, 1860, Nov. 6, 1859, Papers of Thomas F. Bayard, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C, hereinafter cited as T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC. For the Bayard family’s concerns about Democratic unity, see also Thomas Bayard to James A. Bayard, Jan. 15, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC.

Bayard Sr. carved out a long career in the Senate, helped negotiate the Treaty of Ghent that ended the War of 1812, and often exhibited a willingness to work across partisan lines.² The younger Bayard established a successful law practice in Wilmington, Delaware, and in the 1820s followed his father's footsteps into politics. Unlike his father, though, the younger Bayard displayed no willingness to cooperate with other political organizations during his career. He convinced himself that the Democratic Party represented the only vehicle to preserve the Union and stifle the dispute over the extension of slavery into the territories. Bayard viewed the abolitionists and later the Republican Party as a band of reckless agitators who sought to tear the nation apart with their antislavery crusade. During the 1850s Bayard had unsuccessfully pushed for a new constitution in Delaware that would in his eyes forever remove the slavery issue from his native state. He supported a constitutional provision that forbade the state legislature from enacting any plan for emancipation and one that barred free blacks from settling in Delaware. Once the convention stripped the new constitution of these measures, along with Bayard's proposal to reallocate representation in the state legislature to favor his power base of Wilmington, he changed course and worked for its defeat. The people of Delaware soundly rejected the new constitution and to Bayard's dismay the sectional controversy reached new heights in the middle of the decade.³

Blinded by his political convictions, Bayard refused to concede that his own actions had contributed to the rupture in the Democratic Party. He found Stephen Douglas's territorial panacea of popular sovereignty particularly repugnant because under that formula all Americans,

² John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 185-195; Marshall Smelser, *The Democratic Republic, 1801-1815* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 301-311.

³ "James Asheton Bayard," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson, Vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 66; John A. Munroe, *History of Delaware*, 2nd ed. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 122-123.

slaveholder and nonslaveholder alike, might not enjoy equal access to the territories. Moreover, he viewed Douglas's formula as a means to bring about slavery's eventual termination in America. Bayard in 1856 worked in collusion with fellow senators Judah Benjamin and John Slidell of Louisiana and Jesse Bright of Indiana to block Stephen Douglas's nomination on the Democratic ticket. These four senators won the battle against Douglas in 1856, but the war within the party continued. Douglas's rift with President James Buchanan over the Lecompton Constitution in Kansas exacerbated intraparty divisions on the national and local level. In Delaware the Democrats split into two camps, with Bayard and the state's lone congressman William Whiteley supporting Buchanan and influential wire-puller Samuel Townsend advancing the cause of Douglas. Willard Saulsbury, Delaware's junior senator, a lukewarm supporter of the Little Giant, and Bayard's rival for control of the state Democracy, distanced himself from Douglas as the presidential election neared. The Harpers Ferry raid awakened Delaware Democrats to the dangers of intraparty divisions, but as the presidential election of 1860 approached each wing continued to harbor suspicion of the other. Townsend in early 1860 managed to secure a set of resolutions at a Democratic meeting in New Castle County which advocated a rapprochement between the Buchanan and Douglas factions in Delaware in order to "help stay the action of all fanatics, from whatever quarter, who seek to weaken the bonds of Union in these United States of America." He hoped a united Delaware Democracy would pledge its support to Stephen Douglas for the presidency because the Little Giant's national appeal gave the party the best chance of defeating the despised Republicans.⁴

⁴ Brion T. McClanahan, "A Lonely Opposition: James A. Bayard, Jr. and the American Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2006), 18, 22-23; Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), Ch.1; Harold Hancock, *Delaware during the Civil War: A Political History* (Wilmington: Historical Society of Delaware, 1961), 13-14; Samuel Townsend to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 2, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; *Delaware Inquirer*, Jan. 20, 1860.

Cognizant of the dangers of a split in the Democratic Party, however, neither of the Delaware camps could set aside past differences. Bayard saw in Townsend's efforts subterfuge; he believed his adversary would try to foist popular sovereignty on the Delaware Democracy and rebuffed his plea for cooperation. "We will not any longer put up with the tyranny of administration men," Townsend fumed once he learned of Bayard's uncooperative stance. "We was willing if we could do so, without sacrafice [sic] of principles, [to] unite with them to fight against Republicans, but we find we cannot do so." Bayard had developed the impression that little difference existed "between western & north western Democrats & Republicans" and thus could not condone Townsend's plan to heal the Democratic divisions in the state. Popular sovereignty, he believed, opened the door to slavery's slow death by restricting its spread into the West. Once implemented, popular sovereignty would confine the peculiar institution to the fifteen slaveholding states and speed the pace of its demise along the southern periphery, especially in Delaware. "I am sick of Del politics & mean to stand above them," Bayard told his son in March 1860. He promised to exert all his energy "to see that the State does not become abolitionized or squatter-sovereignized."⁵

The divisions in the Delaware Democracy highlight several of the problems the people of the Border South confronted as the presidential election of 1860 neared. Even in the Border South, where Douglas and his supporters hoped to tap into a strong conservative tradition, the sectional controversy plagued the Democratic Party. Samuel Townsend noticed that intraparty differences were so great in Delaware that Bayard and the administration supporters would rather "see the opposition elected than a popular sovereignty Democrat." The case of Delaware was not unique; similar Democratic tensions existed in the other three border slave states. The rift in

⁵ Samuel Townsend to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 20, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; James A. Bayard to Thomas Bayard, Feb. 27, Mar. 24, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC.

the party, along with the establishment of the Constitutional Union Party in early 1860, threatened to split the moderate vote that the Democrats coveted. A divided vote in the overwhelmingly conservative Border South actually increased the likelihood that a Republican might capture the presidency in November. Bayard's defiant hostility toward popular sovereignty illustrates that many border southerners would only cast their votes for a candidate whom they regarded as safe on the question of slavery. Bayard owned none of the fewer than 1,800 enslaved persons in Delaware in 1860, but he vehemently demanded the protection of the peculiar institution. He, like many other border country southerners, feared that restricting the spread of slavery in the territories represented the first step to a program of abolition in the states. While the Border South's economy did not rely on slavery to the same extent as the eleven slaveholding states that formed the Confederacy, the peculiar institution ordered the society of the region. Bayard also knew full well that the other slaveholding states would not countenance any attack on the peculiar institution. If tiny Delaware endorsed the obstinate position of Bayard, what about the rest of the South? A Republican victory in 1860 would doubtlessly unleash radical forces in the North and the South and place the border slave states in a sectional vise. In short, secession and even war loomed if a Republican won the presidency and did not respect the Constitution, which Bayard adamantly believed defended the institution of slavery. Extremely fearful of a breakup of the Union but also intractable in his partisan convictions, Bayard and border southerners occupied a dangerous middle ground. Just as his father had been thrust into a political quagmire in 1800, James Bayard stumbled into one sixty years later when in the spring the nation cast its eyes toward Charleston, South Carolina, the site of the Democratic Party's national convention.⁶

⁶ Samuel Townsend to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 20, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, www.ancestry.com; James A. Bayard to Thomas Bayard, Jan. 21, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC. For

The Border South became a major concern for party managers of all three major political organizations when the presidential campaign shifted into high gear in the spring of 1860. A glance back at the presidential election of 1856 convinced these wire pullers that both the slaveholding and nonslaveholding border states held the key to victory in 1860. In 1856 the Democrats, yet unsullied by doctrinal disagreement on slavery in the territories, defeated the nascent Republican Party and the moribund American Party by carrying fourteen of the slaveholding states and the Lower North states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, and Illinois. The Democrats won Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri that year; Maryland was the only slaveholding state not to go for Buchanan, opting instead for American Millard Fillmore. By no means did the Democrats trample their main competitors, the Americans, in the Border South. The narrow margin of the Democratic victory in Kentucky and the loss in Maryland in 1856 signaled a tough fight ahead in these traditional Whig strongholds, while the split in the Democracy placed the more comfortable victories in Delaware and Missouri in jeopardy. Constitutional Unionists, Democrats, and Republicans all believed the great border would determine the election of 1860 and thus expended abundant energy in the region during the canvass. Each organization seriously considered candidates from the border states, and the Border South in particular, in order to strengthen their respective chances in the region. The Republicans, aware that nearly every southerner eschewed the party's antislavery program, focused their canvass on the Lower North but still contemplated running a candidate from the

an excellent depiction of Bayard's strong belief that slavery ordered Delaware's society, see Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 166, 168-170.

Border South, while the Democrats and Constitutional Unionists made strident efforts to win not only the Lower North, but also the Border South.⁷

The Democratic Party kicked off the campaign of 1860 with its national convention in one of the most inauspicious cities for a political organization suffering from yawning sectional divisions. The supporters of Stephen Douglas expected a vicious fight at the party's April meeting in Charleston, South Carolina. Many Democrats from the South hoped to scuttle the Little Giant's candidacy and his principle of popular sovereignty in one fell swoop. The southern hardliners wanted a platform that affirmed the Supreme Court's ruling in the Dred Scott case, which opened all the territories to slavery, and they hungered for a candidate who would acquiesce to such a territorial stance. The Douglas backers faced the onerous task of pushing through a popular sovereignty platform and securing their candidate's nomination in a city that served as an intellectual hub for disunionists and southern radicals. As late as one month before the convention met in South Carolina, some Douglas supporters even floated the impracticable suggestion to change the venue from Charleston to the more hospitable city of Baltimore.⁸

The delegations from the Border South prepared for their journey to Charleston no less disquieted about the future of the party than those from the rest of the country. In the Border South the Democrats suffered from petty jealousies, sharp disagreements on policy, and divided

⁷ Michael J. Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections, 1788-1860: The Official Results by County and State* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002), 135; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 161-162; Richard H. Abbot, *The Republican Party and the South, 1855-1877: The First Southern Strategy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), Ch. 1; Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 14-23.

⁸ The best narrative of the deep divisions of the Democratic Party remains Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*. For the change of venue rumor, see E.M. Huntington to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 18, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC. Charleston's position as a center for radical sectionalist thought is discussed in several monographs. See especially William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); John Barnwell, *Love of Order: South Carolina's First Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); Manisha Sinha, *The Counter-Revolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); & Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

loyalty to each wing of the discordant national organization, which resulted in a great deal of confusion on the eve of the Charleston meeting. The Border South Democracy represented a microcosm of the national party, and the problems facing the organization also illustrate how the unfolding events of 1859 through 1861 propelled a region that often preferred impartiality on sectional questions toward a position where the postponement of important decisions no longer sufficed.

Delaware sent a delegation that included Bayard and Whiteley, warm opponents of Douglas and popular sovereignty. Bayard privately wished for Robert M.T. Hunter of Virginia to secure the party's presidential nomination, but figured that the Douglas opposition would likely coalesce on current Vice President John C. Breckinridge. He found Breckinridge's youth and ambition to be serious liabilities, but still considered the Kentuckian a better option than Douglas. Both Breckinridge and Hunter endorsed the ultra-southern position on slavery in the territories, which pleased Delaware Democrats who thought along the same lines as Bayard.⁹ Although the Delaware Democratic State Convention had cast Douglas supporter Sam Townsend aside when it named its slate of delegates, the irascible herald of the Little Giant continued to make his presence felt. Townsend pressed delegate Willard Saulsbury to support Douglas and claimed the Wilmington-based *Delaware Inquirer* switched its endorsement from Breckinridge to the Little Giant due to his efforts. Saulsbury and his two brothers together had built an impressive Democratic machine in Sussex County, though their detractors charged that the family only achieved political prominence through vote-buying and corrupt practices. Bayard, aware of Saulsbury's reputation, feared that Townsend might influence how the easily swayed junior senator acted at Charleston. Although Saulsbury told other Delaware Democrats he

⁹ Jno. Merritt to Thomas F. Bayard, Feb. 26, 1860, James A. Bayard to Thomas Bayard, Mar. 12, 1860, both in T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC. Some people even considered James Bayard a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination; see James C. Van Dyke to James Buchanan, Nov. 10, 1859, Buchanan Papers, HSP.

opposed Douglas, Bayard believed his colleague merely followed the winds of political opportunity and did not act on conviction. Bayard, who served on the Charleston Convention's Platform Committee, hoped to negate the influence of Townsend and bring the rest of the state's delegation into line with his views.¹⁰

The divisions in the Kentucky Democracy went beyond territorial policy. As early as 1858 the Democratic opponents of Stephen Douglas had begun to consider candidates who could supplant the Little Giant as the party's nominee in 1860. Two of those potential candidates hailed from the Bluegrass State: Breckinridge and James Guthrie, former secretary of the treasury under Franklin Pierce. After serving in Pierce's cabinet, Guthrie returned to Louisville and served as president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Breckinridge had used his family connections to climb the political ladder, while Guthrie exploited his business and finance background to ascend to the elite ranks of the Democratic Party. Guthrie's backers contended that two facts made him the best candidate in 1860: he was not associated with the Buchanan Administration, and he often spoke with a more moderate political tone than did other aspirants like Breckinridge and Hunter. Beginning in October 1859, the *Louisville Daily Courier* initiated a campaign for James Guthrie and in the following months the paper ran a plethora of editorials explaining why the Charleston Convention should place the railroad promoter at the head of its ticket. Some Kentucky Democrats, especially the supporters of Stephen Douglas, worried that the candidacy of two native sons naturally led to petty jealousies and obscured the real issues at play in the presidential contest. "Every state proposing its favorite son is very much like every delegate voting for himself," Lewis Sanders complained. Breckinridge and Guthrie had not built

¹⁰ Samuel Townsend to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 28, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; James A. Bayard to Thomas Bayard, Mar. 24, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; Hancock, *Delaware during the Civil War*, 13; William B. Hesseltine, ed., *Three Against Lincoln: Murat Halstead Reports the Caucuses of 1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), Appendix A, 282.

up enough of a national following to win the contest in 1860, Sanders presumed, and thus he hoped the Kentucky delegation to Charleston would acquiesce in Douglas.¹¹

The Kentucky State Democratic Convention, which assembled in January 1860, requested that the state's delegates to the Charleston Convention cast their nominating votes for James Guthrie, and the meeting's majority report also included a plank that repudiated popular sovereignty. Supporters of Breckinridge and Douglas pointed out that the state platform did not instruct the delegates to vote for Guthrie but merely asked them to do this. The elements of the Kentucky Democracy opposed to Guthrie also complained that the railroad promoter had used patronage promises to pack the convention in his favor. One Douglasite claimed that the people of Kentucky really preferred Breckinridge or the Little Giant and thus the state's delegates to Charleston would vote for Guthrie on the first ballot out of respect and then transfer their votes to another candidate.¹² Nevertheless, the Kentucky delegation arrived in Charleston without a domineering personality like James A. Bayard and with no clear plan of action in place. Of the state's twenty-four delegates in Charleston, only two had signaled to one of Douglas's intermediaries that they would support the Little Giant.¹³

The cleavages within the Democratic Party impacted the organization in Maryland as well. Supporters of James Buchanan occupied influential leadership positions within the Maryland Democracy and controlled the party machinery in the state, yet the powerful Reverdy

¹¹ For Guthrie's potential candidacy, see James Guthrie to P.G. Washington, Dec. 22, 1858, Feb. 4, 1859, & Sept. 24, 1859, all in James Guthrie Letters, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, hereinafter cited as Guthrie Letters, SHC; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Oct. 20, 22, Nov. 26, Dec. 1, Dec. 3, 1859; William Preston to Dear Susan, Preston Family Papers – Davie Collection, 1658-1896, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Lewis Sanders to Beriah Magoffin, Feb. 4, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; Lewis Sanders to J.H. Harney, Feb. 4, 1860, Sanders Family Papers, 1804-1879, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

¹² *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jan. 11, 1860; E.F. Holloway to Stephen Douglas, Jan. 18, 1860, William W. Bush to Stephen Douglas, Jan. 25, 1860, Robert M. Baird to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 27, 1860, all in Douglas Papers, UC.

¹³ William W. Bush to Douglas, Jan. 25, 1860, R.R. Bolling to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 15, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, Appendix A, 283.

Johnson, a former Whig who now headed the state's Douglas wing, made matters difficult for the opponents of popular sovereignty.¹⁴ Johnson put his sharp legal mind to work for Douglas when in 1859 he anonymously composed a lengthy pamphlet and argued that popular sovereignty represented the best safeguard to southern rights. Johnson maintained that the Harpers Ferry raid and the startling growth of the Republican Party made Democratic harmony a necessity, and he appealed to his fellow Democrats to set aside their internal grievances and nominate Douglas at Charleston. If the party continued down its destructive path it would ensure that the Republicans would taste victory in 1860. "The success of the Republicans will be a calamity, it is feared, beyond remedy, perpetual and fatal," Johnson reminded his readers, and in that event the institution of slavery would surely meet its doom in the near future.¹⁵ Johnson's philippic underscores the mainstream Border South inclination to shield the peculiar institution from external political attacks. As the campaign evolved the major political organizations operating in the Border South attempted to situate themselves as the best guarantor of slavery's perpetuity, though in a more moderate tone than many of the proslavery defenders in the Lower South. For the most part these partisans in the Border South played up the potential strength of southern solidarity within the Union and attempted to mute secessionist ultimatums. Johnson's pamphlet, however, also tapped into the prevailing Border South paranoia about the motives and intentions of the Republican Party. The moderate attitude of border country southerners which

¹⁴ George P. Kane to James A. Pearce, Nov. 19, 1859, James Alfred Pearce Papers, MS 1384, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland, hereinafter referred to as J.A. Pearce Papers, MDHS; Jean Harvey Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 40; William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 144.

¹⁵ A Southern Citizen [Reverdy Johnson], *Remarks on Popular Sovereignty, as Maintained and Denied Respectively by Judge Douglas, and Attorney-General Black* (Baltimore: Murphy & Co., 1859), 47.

had endured an attack by fire-eaters in the aftermath of John Brown's raid would once again meet a stern test should the Republicans win the election, Johnson warned.¹⁶

Reverdy Johnson's appeal for Douglas and Democratic unity went unheeded in the Old Line State. The Democratic-controlled legislature in March 1860 reelected James A. Pearce, who had abandoned the Whig Party in the 1850s and enlisted with the Buchanan wing of the Democracy, to the United States Senate. Pearce normally exercised a moderate approach to sectional politics, but administration men viewed his reelection as a victory over the Douglas forces.¹⁷ The Maryland Democratic Convention met in late March 1860 and issued a platform that highlighted the divisions that plagued the party in the Border South. The first resolution proclaimed the people of Maryland "are most vitally interested in the protection of slave property and in the faithful observance of all the guaranties of the federal constitution" and labeled antislavery agitation "wicked and treasonable." The convention also promised to "unite with our Southern brethren in asserting and maintaining our constitutional rights at every hazard and to the last extremity." The third and fourth resolutions, conversely, called for the Democratic Party to hold fast to the organization's platform in 1856 which included popular sovereignty as its centerpiece. The strongly worded first two resolutions revealed that Buchanan men controlled the Maryland convention, but a surprised Reverdy Johnson informed Douglas that ten of the state's sixteen delegates to Charleston expressed some measure of kindness toward the Little

¹⁶ See William J. Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) & Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983) for this important aspect of southern politics.

¹⁷ Baltimore *Sun*, March 3, 1860; Robert M. Magraw to James Buchanan, Feb. 7, Feb. 24, 1860, Buchanan Papers, HSP; John Carroll Jr. to James A. Pearce, Mar. 1, 1860, John H.B. Latrobe to James A. Pearce, Mar. 4, 1860, John Lee to James A. Pearce, Mar. 8, 1860, all in J.A. Pearce Papers, MDHS. Pearce took an active part in a slaveholders' convention in July 1859 that discussed possible means for expelling free blacks in Maryland and took a hardline stance in defiance of antislavery agitation, which no doubt comforted the ultra Democrats in the state; see Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 65-66 & Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 25.

Giant.¹⁸ Douglas supporters advised their preferred candidate that in order to win the confidence of the Maryland delegates and people, he must appear “a friend to the rights of the South - & not opposed to slavery.”¹⁹ Like the Kentuckians, the Maryland contingent arrived in Charleston fully cognizant of the dangers of Democratic discord, but with no clear idea of how to proceed.

The Missouri Democracy confronted more internal bickering than did the organization in any of the other Border South states. The fissure in the Missouri Democratic Party centered on the territorial issue but predated the national organization’s split over Lecompton in 1857. Ten years prior to Lecompton, when the nation endured a fervid dispute over whether to allow the spread of slavery into territory acquired in the West as a result of the Mexican-American War, the Missouri Democracy began to splinter into two factions. Thomas Hart Benton, one of the architects of the national Democratic Party, came out in opposition to the spread of slavery into the territories, while a group of Democrats centered in the Boon’s Lick, a region that abutted the Missouri River in the central part of the state and depended heavily on slaves to cultivate hemp and tobacco, insisted that Congress lacked the power to legislate on slavery in the territories. Claiborne Fox Jackson became the leader of the Boon’s Lick faction and during the 1850s he, William B. Napton, and David Rice Atchison cobbled together a powerful statewide coalition in opposition to Benton. Jackson and the proslavery Democrats gained control of the state organization in 1856 and wielded a great deal of power for the remainder of the decade. In time some of Benton’s followers attached themselves to Frank Blair Jr., who sought to create a

¹⁸ Baltimore *Sun*, Mar. 24, 1860; Levi K. Bowen to James Buchanan, Mar. 21, 22, 23, 1860, all in Buchanan Papers, HSP; Reverdy Johnson to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 24, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC.

¹⁹ Thomas Devecmon to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 24, 1860, Henry May to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 24, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC. Devecmon informed Douglas that he had engineered the selection of John J. Morrison, who he believed was the largest slaveholder in western Maryland, as a delegate to Charleston. He felt that Morrison’s support of Douglas and his large slaveholdings would “carry more weight” with the people of western Maryland “than that of any other person in our county.” Thus, even in a region sparsely populated with slaves like western Maryland, the people were concerned about the future of the institution. Morrison owned fourteen slaves in 1860; see 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, www.ancestry.com.

Republican organization in St. Louis, but the overwhelming majority of conservative Democrats clung to the party and lent their support to Stephen A. Douglas. The Douglas supporters in Missouri considered popular sovereignty a moderate alternative to the radical courses of the proslavery Democrats and the antislavery Republicans. George Caleb Bingham aptly captured the spirit of Border South conservatism in 1857: “The ultraists of the South will soon discover that in their attempt to grasp all, they have endangered that which they already possessed.” Bingham was no Democrat, but his line of thinking meshed well with the conservative Democrats who placed fire-eaters like Claiborne Fox Jackson in the same category as intransigent abolitionists in the North.²⁰ Douglas supporters assured the Little Giant that the rank and file of the Missouri Democracy embraced popular sovereignty, yet “wire working and trading politicians” like Jackson had obtained control of the party and would try to silence their voice.²¹

The Missouri Democrats in 1860 could only agree on one thing – their hatred and fear of the Republican Party. “I would not trust one of them [Republicans] in my meat house after dark,” a Douglas Democrat quipped, “much less on the slavery question.”²² Beyond this shared antipathy to the Republicans, all agreements on policy towards slavery ceased. Of all the Border South states, only Missouri held a gubernatorial contest in 1860, which further exacerbated the rift in the state’s Democratic organization. The governor’s election, scheduled for August,

²⁰ Christopher Phillips, *Missouri’s Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 165-180; Walter Harrington Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession* (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1931), 88-94, 99-10; R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri’s Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 100-102; Perry McCandless, *A History of Missouri: Volume II, 1820 to 1860* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), Ch. 9; George Caleb Bingham to James S. Rollins, June 3, 1857, in Lynn Wolf Gentzler, ed., *“But I Forget That I Am a Painter and Not a Politician: The Letters of George Caleb Bingham* (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 2011), 186. Bingham showed some interest in the Republican Party in 1857, but he soured on the organization as the decade progressed and the election of 1860 approached.

²¹ Thomas Allin to Stephen Douglas, Jan. 16, 1860, James D. Eads to Stephen Douglas, Nov. 21, 1859, Howard Everett to Stephen Douglas, Nov. 25, 1859, L.A. Lowe to Stephen Douglas, Jan. 7, 1860, all in Douglas Papers, UC.

²² N.W. Letton to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 8, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC.

injected more acrimony into the equation when the Democratic Party on April 9 held its state convention in Jefferson City. A tongue-in-cheek broadside observed “the big democrats in the State are all trying to cut each others [sic] throats, so as to show that none of them are any account, which the people are about ready to believe.” The public letter, written in frontier Missouri dialect, carped that none of the probable Democratic candidates for governor possessed the requisite skill needed to patch up the divisions in the party. The writer painted Claiborne Jackson, the frontrunner of the proslavery wing of the organization, as a money-grabbing politician in the pocket of the state’s railroad interests. He attacked other candidates as pawns of Frank Blair, James Buchanan, or Stephen Douglas, contended one prospect could not stay sober long enough to govern effectively, and charged that one unfortunate aspirant was so weak that Missourians would “knock his trotters from under him so high that his mustnotmention’ems will get damp.”²³ The broadside certainly reflected the rough-and-tumble political culture of antebellum America in which party organizers found hyperbole a most effective tool, but it also underscored Waldo P. Johnson’s observation that “our state, and especially the Democratic party, are in a state of indescribable confusion, and the man who escapes being dashed away upon the breakers upon the right or the left will be truly fortunate.”²⁴

After three days of deliberation, the convention adopted a decidedly pro-South platform which declared neither Congress nor a territorial government held the power to abolish slavery in the territories, called for the annexation of Cuba, linked the Harpers Ferry raid to the Republicans, and scorned northern personal liberty laws as unconstitutional and “revolutionary in their effect.” The convention also settled on Claiborne Fox Jackson as its gubernatorial

²³ Michael J. Dubin, *United States Gubernatorial Elections, 1776-1860: The Official Results by State and County* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2003), xlii; Samiville Weller to the Democrats in the Legislature in Particular and of the State in General, No Date [c. early 1860], Samiville Weller Letter, 1860, SHS-MO.

²⁴ Waldo P. Johnson to Brother Mortimer, July 28, 1860, Waldo P. Johnson Letters, SHS-MO.

candidate. One proslavery Democrat believed Jackson's selection would "blot out the base insinuation that Missouri is preparing to desert her Southern Sisters," and he hoped that his nomination would once and for all crush the other wing of the party which had fallen under the sway of Stephen Douglas.²⁵

Once the convention settled into the business of selecting delegates to attend the national meeting, the divided party squabbled over whether to harness its Charleston proxies with voting instructions for the Democracy's presidential nominee. The proslavery wing favored directing the delegates to vote for Daniel S. Dickinson, Douglas's enemy from New York whom they anticipated would grant concessions to the South on the slavery issue and fill the doughface executive role played so well by Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan. The scheme to tether the delegates with instructions failed, however, with a large majority of the delegates in opposition to the plan. The convention eventually chose a delegation to Charleston that revealed the resiliency of the Douglasites in Missouri. Douglas manager James Eads and the Democratic *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican* agreed that a majority of the delegates supported the nomination of the Little Giant.²⁶ Thus as the Missouri delegates packed their bags for Charleston, the party suffered from political schizophrenia: the platform and the gubernatorial candidate both signaled a radical streak within the Missouri Democracy that made it appear little different from state organizations in the Lower South, while the state's delegation to the national convention demonstrated the persistence of Border South moderation within the party.

²⁵ *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, April 10, 11, 12, 1860; Samuel Ralston to C.F. Jackson, Apr. 24, 1860, John Sappington Papers, SHS-MO.

²⁶ *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, April 13, 1860; Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 738, 743-744; James D. Eads to Stephen Douglas, Apr. 13, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC. The term doughface became a derisive label attached to northern politicians who bowed to the wants of the South; see Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 85-86.

Delegates arrived in Charleston in mid-April, and soon the town's sultry streets and hotels teemed with men "perspiring and smoking, and engaged in mysterious conversations concerning caucus stratagems of intense interest to themselves." A great deal of attention centered on Bayard, who hoped to repeat his performance of 1856 and once again engineer Douglas's defeat. The night before the convention, Bayard and his old anti-Douglas Senate colleagues Jesse Bright, William Bigler, and John Slidell caroused in the pro-Administration headquarters on King Street. In between meditative draws on his cigar, Bayard told reporter Murat Halstead that based on his conversations with the various state delegations, Douglas would fall far short of the requisite two-thirds majority needed for the presidential nomination. Bayard and his cabal, dubbed the Senatorial Clique, hoped the party could settle on a candidate like Hunter, Guthrie, Dickinson, or Breckinridge, and they even expressed a willingness to accept the Cincinnati Platform if one of their men secured the nomination. In true Border South fashion Bayard believed that such a medial plan might check the dangerous presence of fire-eaters such as William Lowndes Yancey, who came to South Carolina bearing the Alabama Platform, a document that instructed the state's delegates to withdraw from the Charleston Convention if the party did not settle on a national platform which expressly requested the federal protection of slavery in the territories.²⁷ Bayard's optimistic tone sounded much different than his private forebodings to his son a couple of months earlier. Perhaps his victory over Townsend and the Douglasites in Delaware, combined with his discussions with other delegates from the North and the South, increased his confidence that the party could jettison Douglas and maintain its unity, or the Delaware senator may have filled his cup one too many times and

²⁷ Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 9, 16-18; Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 294; *New York Herald*, April 23, 1860; William M. Browne to James Buchanan, Apr. 22, 1860, Levi K. Bowen to James Buchanan, Apr. 23, 1860, both in Buchanan Papers, HSP; Eric Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 237-238.

exuded a spirituous self-assurance. Either way, Bayard momentarily overlooked the deep divisions and the obstinacy that wracked the party at Charleston. The same day that Bayard confidently puffed away at his cigar on King Street, Yancey complicated matters when he convinced portions of the Lower South delegations to withdraw from the convention “unless a resolution is adopted before the nomination of a candidate declaring in favor of Congressional protection of slavery in the Territories.”²⁸

Bayard’s optimism wore away once the convention officially opened in Charleston’s Institute Hall. The conclave voted to construct the party platform before selecting a presidential nominee, which played into the hands of Yancey’s followers. The platform committee convened on the night of April 25 and quickly discovered that the “irreconcilable difference” of opinion about slavery in the territories made their task anything but envious. “We hear hourly that a crisis involving the fate of the country is at hand,” Halstead announced. The committee on Friday, April 27, indicated the depth of the crisis: unable to agree on a single platform, the group submitted three to the convention. Bayard played an instrumental part in drafting the majority report, which included a declaration that neither Congress nor a territorial legislature could abolish slavery in the territories and called for the federal government’s protection of the peculiar institution in that domain. Bayard’s plank undermined popular sovereignty, but William W. Avery of North Carolina conceded to the convention that the two planks related to slavery “were adopted by a bare majority of the committee.” The Douglasites on the committee resubmitted the 1856 platform with an added pledge that the party would adhere to any decisions made by the Supreme Court on the territorial issue, while a third proposal simply submitted an unaltered Cincinnati Platform.²⁹

²⁸ *New York Herald*, April 23, 1860.

²⁹ Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 297-299; Hessline, *Three Against Lincoln*, 45-46.

The Border South attendees faced the uncomfortable reality that they would have to choose sides, but nothing close to unanimity existed within the individual delegations. Bayard and William Whiteley of Delaware, for instance, gave the majority report their undivided support. John B. Clark of Missouri, on the other hand, had endorsed the majority report but announced to the convention that he refused to vote for the declaratory resolution that denied Congress and territorial legislatures the power to abolish slavery in the territories. His Missouri colleague, Austin A. King, “made an ultra-Douglas speech, indorsing the Northern Democracy in the most unqualified manner,” and rebuked the southern delegates for insisting on the protection of slavery in the territories. King pleaded for Democratic unity, and he asked his southern colleagues “not to drive the Northern Democracy to the wall, and alienate them, and thereby secure the election of [the presumed Republican candidate William Henry] Seward to the Presidency.”³⁰

The Border South delegates’ thoughts about the platform encompassed a wide spectrum, ranging from the ultra-southern position to absolute support for popular sovereignty, which worried southern hardliners. Southern radicals struggled to grasp why the border slaveholding states might not jump at the opportunity to join the Lower South in a walkout. Charleston fire-eater D.H. Hamilton complained that even if Yancey got the Lower South delegations to follow him out of the convention, the Upper and Border South would drag their feet. For the fire-eaters, the Border South’s timeworn formula of moderation no longer held any value. Unable to comprehend the vexed position the Border South shouldered, he scoffed at “the rascals and gulls of the South” like Austin King who would likely stay in the convention, help nominate Douglas,

³⁰ Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 48, 51-52. New Yorker George N. Sanders, a Douglas lieutenant born in Kentucky and in attendance at the Charleston Convention, even went so far as to make the hopeless appeal for James Buchanan to put aside past differences, call off Slidell and Bright who worked in favor of the majority report, and support the Little Giant to create Democratic harmony; see George N. Sanders to James Buchanan, April 27, 1860 (telegram), Buchanan Papers, HSP.

and clinch his election in the fall. The impatient Hamilton now equated restraint with an abandonment of the South.³¹ The impetuosity of southern radicals coupled with their subterranean mistrust of the Border South, which the Charleston Convention brought to the surface, worked in tandem throughout the secession crisis to impede the possibility of a concerted pan-southern disunion movement. As the Charleston fiasco proved, much to the dismay of fire-eaters, most politicians in the Border South sought solutions to preserve rather than destroy the Union.³²

On Saturday, April 28 the convention endured more squabbling on the various reports before adjourning until Monday. Sunday was no day of rest for the delegates; the several factions closeted with one another and tried to broker some deal to save the party. The Kentucky delegation's parlor in the Charleston Hotel assumed the familiar Border South middle ground position. It became "a grand center of attraction, where genial spirits from the different sections meet to compare votes, and occasionally to test the quality of some Old Bourbon." Nothing came of the weekend negotiations, however, and many Democrats began to consider the possibility that the party could not reconcile its differences. A Kentucky newspaper considered the potential breakup of the Democratic Party disastrous. "The National Democratic party may dissolve," the editor ruefully speculated, "and if it does the safeguard of our institutions may be destroyed, and the palladium of our Union removed from its sacred guardianship."³³ As the weekend closed, the flustered delegates now looked to see if William Lowndes Yancey would make good on his promise to bolt.

³¹ D.H. Hamilton to William Porcher Miles, April 26, Feb. 2, 1860, both in William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC-UNC.

³² The dissimilar views about secession and the Union throughout the different regions of the South is a major theme in the work of William W. Freehling. See Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990-2007) & Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³³ Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 301-303; *Louisville Daily Courier*, April 28, May 1, 1860.

On Monday, April 30, the Virginia delegation put more pressure on the Border South when they joined with the Lower South and requested a plank which called for the federal protection of slavery in the territories. A showdown ensued, and Douglas's floor managers successfully substituted their minority platform for the majority report. Shortly after, Douglas supporter Charles E. Stuart of Michigan threw down the gauntlet with "a very irritating speech, exceedingly ill-timed, unless he intended to drive out the Gulf States." The Lower South accepted his challenge; Alabama delegate Leroy Pope Walker issued his state's protest and the delegation withdrew from the convention. Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, and Texas followed in quick order, while South Carolinians in the galleries applauded the Lower South stampede. After this cavalcade, Bayard announced his withdrawal. William Whiteley accompanied Bayard, but the remaining Delaware delegates stared at one another in bewilderment. The Upper and Border South delegates who stayed in the convention reacted in a similar fashion to the disheartened and disheveled Willard Saulsbury, who confessed that he did not know what he should do. The following day a majority of the Georgia and Arkansas delegations retired from the convention, while the Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Maryland men contemplated their next step.³⁴

The raging waters of sectionalism had finally burst through the patchwork dam the Democratic Party had erected during the 1850s. "I have seen never more of human folly[,] imbecility[,] selfishness, and rascality than in all the rest of my life – I will never again be an actor in such conventions," an indignant Bayard promised his son. He characteristically blamed the machinations of Douglas men from the New York delegation for the party's disruption at Charleston. The seceding delegates assembled in Charleston's Military Hall on May 1 and

³⁴ Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 303-305; Hesselstine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 72-77, 82-85, 88. The quote regarding Stuart's speech is found on p. 73.

named Bayard president of their convention. Three of Missouri delegates joined the two Delaware men to represent the Border South among the bolters, but the rest of the region's delegates either chose to remain in the Institute Hall convention or returned home.³⁵

Confusion still reigned for the delegates in Institute Hall. Douglas's handlers thought that the convention, shorn of the southern hardliners, could now proceed with nominating the Little Giant. Chairman Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts dashed their hopes when he ruled that the candidate must secure a two-thirds vote of all the Democrats who had been seated when the convention opened on Monday, April 23. The convention voted fifty-seven times over two days, but Douglas never came close to acquiring the requisite two-thirds majority. The first ballot indicated the fragmented nature of the remaining Border South Democrats: Delaware cast its two votes for Robert M.T. Hunter; the Maryland delegates scattered their votes among Hunter, Daniel Dickinson, and Douglas; the Missouri delegation split its tally between Douglas and James Guthrie; and Kentucky unanimously went for native son Guthrie. Hopelessly divided and at a loss for how to proceed, the convention finally decided to reconvene in Baltimore on June 18 before it adjourned without selecting a nominee.³⁶

The proceedings in Military Hall left Bayard in a state of discomfiture. All along he had hoped for Democratic unity, and he later explained that he withdrew from the Institute Hall meeting because he first wanted that body to elect a presidential nominee and then write the

³⁵ James A. Bayard to Thomas Bayard, May 2, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 111-112; *New York Herald*, May 3, 1860. A portion of the Delaware delegation refused to take part in either convention and returned home; see *Louisville Daily Courier*, May 1, 1861.

³⁶ Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election that Brought On the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 79; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 99, 108-109. The scattering of Border South remained for the most part unchanged on the nineteenth ballot; see *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 1860. A breakdown of the Border South vote on the nineteenth ballot reveals the split:

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Votes from Border South</u>
Guthrie	17
Douglas	8
Hunter	6

platform. Such a course would have helped the convention check the power of the proponents of popular sovereignty, he argued.³⁷ In hindsight, however, his rationale seems weak. After all, Bayard while on the platform committee played an instrumental part in writing the majority report that most northerners found offensive, and he seemed fully prepared to go to any distance to defeat the Little Giant just as he had in Cincinnati four years earlier. Bayard's abhorrence of Douglas and popular sovereignty provoked his rash decision to bolt, and upon reflection he realized that the overwhelming majority of the Border South delegates eschewed such an impulsive approach. As he looked out onto the Military Hall floor from the president's chair, he saw that few of his border country colleagues had followed him out of the other convention. The lack of Border South delegates in Military Hall coupled with the votes for the presidential nominee cast by the delegates who remained in Institute Hall revealed a key facet of the Border South mindset: although several of these politicians loathed Douglas and his territorial principle, they would rather work within the confines of the national organization than enter a convention dominated by hotheads like William Lowndes Yancey. A few months after the Charleston breakup a well-placed Delaware native observed that Bayard and his fellow bolter Whiteley had through their impulsive decision to bolt "killed themselves in this State."³⁸

Perhaps Bayard hoped that the secession of the southern delegates would convince the Douglas handlers to drop the Little Giant, install a plank in the platform that called for the

³⁷ Hancock, *Delaware during the Civil War*, 16. Upon retiring from the Institute Hall convention on April 30, Bayard explained that he was leaving because "I do not consider it within the scope of my authority to fetter my constituents by the decision of a Convention which no longer is a unit; which is broken by the secession of six, eight, or nine States of this Union." See National Democratic Executive Committee, *Proceedings of the Conventions at Charleston and Baltimore* (Washington: National Democratic Executive Committee, 1860), 127.

³⁸ Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, July 12, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley. Some Delawareans appreciated Bayard's stand; see for example M.G. Kinlock to James A. Bayard, May 5, 1860, Callery Collection of Bayard Family Papers, Delaware Historical Society, Manuscripts Division, Wilmington, Delaware.

federal protection of slavery in the territories, and invite the bolters back to Institute Hall.³⁹ Bayard hinted at such a policy when on May 1 he advised the Military Hall convention that lacking a two-thirds majority of the entire Democracy they could not make a nomination, but only a recommendation for one. If this was Bayard's strategy, the northern wing of the Democracy refused to take the bait. Without a full contingent from the Border South and with the northern element at Institute Hall unwilling to forge a rapprochement, he became more uncertain about the path he had chosen. On the evening of May 3 Bayard professed his desire for Democratic harmony and "spoke for two hours very eloquently against disunion," and thereafter tendered his resignation from the convention. "The gentleman said they had come here to save the Union," an Alabamian sneered in reply to Bayard's speech and resignation. "They had not – they had come here to save the Constitution." The rejoinder invoked applause, and before it adjourned the convention agreed to meet in Richmond, Virginia on June 11 rather than heeding Bayard's counsel for the delegates to reclaim their seats in a restored Democratic Convention at Baltimore.⁴⁰

The proceedings at Charleston alarmed many Border South Democrats who looked to the party as a stronghold of conservatism. A divided Democracy effectively handed the White House to the Republicans, border southerners feared. No longer could they scotch the influence of northern and southern radicals who might endanger the safety of the Union and the peculiar institution. Moderate border country Democrats desired for the organization to rally behind the Little Giant in the upcoming contest in order to stave off their premonitions. Oscar Potter, who lived in the heart of Missouri's Boon's Lick, gave voice to that apprehension. "I am a Southern

³⁹ Eric Walther argues that this is precisely what William Lowndes Yancey hoped for at Charleston; see Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey and the Coming of the Civil War*, 243-244.

⁴⁰ *New York Herald*, May 2, 4, 1860; *Baltimore Sun*, May 4, 1860; Hesselstine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 115; Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 308-309; Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 81.

man in feeling and residence, have been raised in a Slave State fully imbued with all those warm and long cherished attachments for the institution of slavery,” he wrote. Potter figured that a vote for Stephen Douglas would best preserve the Union and protect slavery, and after the outcome at Charleston he acknowledged “I am now truly in greater dread from Southern fire eaters than from Northern fanatics.” Other moderates across the Border South calculated that the rash course of southern extremists actually made the Little Giant more appealing to residents of their section, and they hoped the Democrats would patch up their differences and nominate him at Baltimore.⁴¹

While the Democrats tried to make sense of the breakup at Charleston, the other national organizations recognized that the split in the party of Andrew Jackson aided their chances for victory in the presidential contest. The Constitutional Union Party held its national convention in Baltimore, a city conveniently located in the organization’s Border South power base. William C. Rives of Virginia contended “that the late events at Charleston have added immensely to the importance of [the Constitutional Union Party’s] action & the prospect of its usefulness.” John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, the elderly figurehead of the new organization, agreed with Rives. After reading about the fiasco at Charleston, Crittenden noted that the Constitutional Union Party would benefit from its “experienced & distinguished statesmen, and they will be our security against any foolish or undesired course.” Crittenden and his colleagues hoped the new party might corner the vote of Americans who preferred “great moderation & wisdom.”⁴²

⁴¹ Oscar F. Potter to Stephen Douglas, May 8, 1860, S.S. English to Stephen Douglas, May 5, 1860, Frank Walers to Stephen Douglas, May 14, 1860, James Monaghan to Stephen Douglas, May 26, 1860, all in Douglas Papers, UC.

⁴² William C. Rives to John Crittenden, May 5, 1860, John Crittenden to Washington Hunt, April 25, 1860, both in Crittenden Papers, LOC.

In the Border South, the Douglas wing of the Democracy and the Constitutional Union Party vied for the nation's vital center. Despite their constituency's mutual fondness for moderation, the appearance of these two organizations in the canvass of 1860 actually fractured the crucial middle ground and played into the hands of the extremists. Henry Winter Davis had prophesied this likelihood in early 1860 when he pushed for an Opposition fusion between the Republicans and the remnants of the American Party. As Davis and Edward Bates discovered, the preponderance of Border South conservatives spurned any combination with the hated Republicans in the aftermath of the Harpers Ferry raid and the speakership contest, and strong partisan identification precluded cooperation between most Democrats and former Whigs.⁴³ Davis in the spring of 1860 temporarily set aside his Republican-American fusion plan and halfheartedly campaigned for the Constitutional Unionists in Maryland, but he too could not relinquish the familiar partisan odium that he had nurtured in the 1850s. He labored not so much to secure a Constitutional Union victory, but to prevent any Democrat from winning the contest. He spurned cooperation with conservative Democrats, whom he had battled for so long in Baltimore and in the House of Representatives, and cared little to convert his enemies to the Constitutional Union standard. A congressman joked that Henry Winter Davis's "religion consists [of] hatred to democracy." His religious abhorrence of the Democrats in time pushed Davis ever closer to the Republicans, and ever farther out of the Border South mainstream.⁴⁴

⁴³ For the power of partisan identification in the political culture of the antebellum United States, see Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); William E. Gienapp, " 'Politics Seem to Enter into Everything': Political Culture in the North, 1840-1860," in Stephen E. Maizlish and John J. Kushma, *Essays on American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 15-69; Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Boundaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁴⁴ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Sept. 1860 [no specific day provided], Samuel Barron to Samuel F. Du Pont, March 21, 1861, both in S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley. Davis maintained close relations with the Republicans throughout the campaign of 1860, and many Constitutional Unionists suspected him of duplicity; see Gerald S. Henig, *Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland* (New York: Twayne

The fledgling party experienced an infinitely more harmonious national meeting than had the Democrats at Charleston, and the great bulk of its attendees unlike Winter Davis exercised a genuine confidence in the success of the Constitutional Union Party. The meeting at Baltimore saw no unhealthy debates about territorial policy, and the new organization unlike the Democracy did not have to shoulder the weight of half a decade's worth of divisiveness and personal vendettas. The elderly leaders of the conservative organization, imbued with a strong sense of the dangers of sectional discord, planned to attract a national following by "frowning upon every form of sectionalism & showing a catholic & equal regard for the rights & interests of every portion of the confederacy, to restore health & harmony & happiness to the Republic."⁴⁵ The dogma of the Constitutional Union Party matched the prevailing sentiment in the Border South: it sought to situate itself on the middle ground between sectional extremes; the party looked to the heralds of compromise throughout American history for inspiration; and in true Border South fashion the organization opted for a nebulous program that might delay taking decisive action in the sectional conflict.

The Constitutional Unionists, nevertheless, faced an onerous task. While they courted the nation's conservative vote, deep partisan attachments made it extremely difficult to proselytize lifelong moderate Democrats who harbored reservations about their erstwhile political adversaries. The Constitutional Unionists looked to resurrect the spirit of the Whig Party, but they had to chart a cautious course in order not to offend potential Democratic

Publishers, 1973), 131-134; W.L. Marshall to Montgomery Blair, May 27, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC. Even Baltimore Republicans were wary of Davis's machinations; see for instance Worthington Snethen to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 31, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁴⁵ William C. Rives to John Crittenden, May 4, 1860, William C. Rives Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., hereinafter cited as Rives Papers, LOC.

converts.⁴⁶ Edward Everett of Massachusetts summarized the difficulties facing the new party in a political environment infused with profound partisan affiliations. To attract votes the Constitutional Unionists had to “seek to conciliate & not to irritate,” Everett cautioned. “I think that both in the democratic & republican ranks there are good men, - and a good many of them, - who without any change of theoretical views are of opinions that the sectional strife has reached a dangerous length & that it is time to pause,” he noted. “Why should we annoy them by dwelling upon the wrongs they have committed as members of the respective organizations[?]”⁴⁷

John Pendleton Kennedy confronted a major conundrum when the party charged him with the task of writing an address to the American people that asked for their vote in the upcoming contest. In his first draft Kennedy blamed the Democrats and Republicans for the sectional crisis, but the party’s executive committee removed his partisan censure and left the document with nothing “but a little incoherent declamation and some watery dictations which are interpolated to save the feelings of the parties it is our intention to demolish.” A dismayed Kennedy snapped off a letter of protest to Crittenden but upon reflection decided against sending it.⁴⁸ The party’s determination not to offend potential voters exposed its greatest liability. Political organizations in antebellum America had to solicit every possible vote and utilize all means to win the next election. Although some historians view the late 1850s and early 1860s as the high-tide of nonpartisan spirit in American electoral history, they often minimize the fact that purported nonpartisan organizations such as the Know Nothings or the Constitutional Unionists had a distinctively partisan goal: to defeat the other parties in the field. The Constitutional Union leaders might employ antipartisan rhetoric on the stump, but their ultimate objective differed

⁴⁶ John Crittenden to John Pendleton Kennedy, Feb. 8, 9, & 28, 1860, John Pendleton Kennedy to Sir Richard Pakenham, Feb. 19, 1860, all in J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; Washington Hunt to John Crittenden, April 9, 1860, Logan Hunton to John Crittenden, April 10, 1860, both in Crittenden Letters, DU.

⁴⁷ Edward Everett to John Pendleton Kennedy, May 7, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

⁴⁸ Diary Entry for Feb. 20, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

very little from that of the Democrats or Republicans. As Kennedy observed, they intended to “demolish” their opponents; rosewater campaign tactics actually worked against this end, he correctly feared.⁴⁹ The initial campaign preference for ambiguity placed the Constitutional Unionists at a distinct disadvantage in the election of 1860.

The Constitutional Unionists also confronted an age gap as they prepared for the campaign of 1860. In a society that celebrated spirited youthfulness, the Constitutional Unionists appeared to some Americans as doddering patricians who looked backward rather than forward.⁵⁰ Of the six men the party seriously considered as its presidential nominee, only John Minor Botts had been born in the nineteenth century (1802). The birth of two aspirants antedated the Constitution, and George Washington sat in the executive office when the other three were born. One observer noted that although an impressive array of politicians assembled at Baltimore, “most of them are somewhat stale in politics,” and a Democratic newspaper mocked the convention’s delegates as “fossilized members of the defunct Whig party.”⁵¹ Some of the potential candidates themselves complained of the enervating effect of long careers in public service. John Crittenden, whom many onlookers considered the party’s best presidential

⁴⁹ For various explications of the non-partisan thesis, see Jack Kelly, “John J. Crittenden and the Constitutional Union Party,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 48 (July 1974), 265-276; Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party: Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics before the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); and Richard Franklin Bensel, *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). My interpretation of the partisan aims of the Constitutional Unionists meshes with John V. Mering, “The Slave-State Constitutional Unionists and the Politics of Consensus,” *Journal of Southern History* 43 (August 1977), 395-410.

⁵⁰ For the antebellum infatuation with youthfulness, see George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), Ch. 3. This infatuation with youthfulness had political ramifications, such as the Democratic Young America movement and the Republican Wide Awakes; see Edward Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Jon Grinspan, “‘Young Men for War’: The Wide Awakes and Lincoln’s 1860 Presidential Campaign,” *Journal of American History* 96 (September 2009), 357-378.

⁵¹ These potential candidates included from oldest to youngest John McLean, John Crittenden, Sam Houston, Edward Everett, John Bell, and John Minor Botts; see Hesselstine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 121, 123. *Louisville Daily Courier*, May 18, 1860.

aspirant, instructed his associates to leave his name off the ticket. “I am tired of the life I am yet leading...[and] am quite prepared to retire to private life & look forward to that repose with much gratification,” he intoned. Although disgusted with the direction of national politics and hopeful that the Constitutional Unionists would win the election of 1860, Crittenden preferred to operate as a party manager rather than its public figurehead. Edward Everett echoed Crittenden when he declared that his superannuated status and already prolonged retirement from public life made him a most ineffectual candidate for executive office.⁵²

Whereas the Charleston Convention dragged on for days, the Constitutional Unionists took only two days at Baltimore to settle on a platform and a candidate. The party even went so far as to drop the label of platform, considered a symbol of partisan warfare, and instead issued a declaration of principles. The declaration underscored the party’s wish to avoid the entangling issues that had fired the sectional crisis. With spartan simplicity it called for the recognition of “the Constitution of the country, the Union of the States, and the enforcement of the laws.” This manifesto of ambiguity evaded the question of slavery in the territories and dodged issues like the annexation of Cuba, the call for a transcontinental railroad, and the proper rate of tariff schedules. The delegates in effect asked the American people to trust the nation’s future to the party of experience, which they promised would govern with the country’s best interest in mind. On the second ballot for the party’s presidential nominee the convention gave the requisite majority to John Bell of Tennessee. The Border South delegations originally ignored Crittenden’s wishes and split their votes on him and a few other candidates before the convention

⁵² John Crittenden to Logan Hunton, April 15, 1860, Crittenden Letters, DU; Edward Everett to John Pendleton Kennedy, May 17, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

decided to nominate Bell unanimously. The party balanced the ticket by selecting Everett of Massachusetts for vice president.⁵³

Before the convention adjourned, several delegates offered speeches on behalf of the Union. Leslie Coombs of Kentucky, who had not taken an active part in politics since Henry Clay died in 1852, accentuated both the party's antiquated image and its unflinching devotion to the longevity of the republic. He remarked that "since the tocsin of disunion had been sounded North and South, he had thought it his duty to come up out of his political grave and join the throng of the living, and enter into the campaign for the Union." Murat Halstead, impressed with the accord on display in Baltimore that had been so foreign to the delegates at Charleston, scribbled that upon adjournment the Constitutional Unionists believed they had a monopoly on "harmony, fraternity, compromise, conciliation, peace, good will, common glory, national brotherhood, [and] preservation of the confederacy."⁵⁴

Six days after the Constitutional Unionists wrapped up their meeting, the Republicans assembled in Chicago, Illinois. Most Republicans looked toward the election with great optimism, especially after the split in the Democratic Party at Charleston. The party's managers placed great emphasis on winning the Lower North, which had given the election of 1856 to the Democrats. In order to do so, Republicans reasoned, they had to run a candidate free from the taint of radicalism, which would not play well along the sectional borderland. This was a bad omen for William Henry Seward, the Republican favorite entering the canvass of 1860. Although he practiced a pragmatic brand of politics, Seward drew the ire of many conservatives

⁵³ Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 130-137. Edward Everett initially told the leaders of the party that he would not accept the vice presidential nomination, but they convinced him otherwise. For this see Edward Everett to John Crittenden, May 28, 1860, John Crittenden to Edward Everett, May 30, 1860, both in Crittenden Papers, LOC; Diary entries of May 19, 20, 21, 23, 1860, and John Pendleton Kennedy to Edward Everett, May 23, 1860, all in J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

⁵⁴ Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 135, 139.

when he claimed in 1858 that an irrepressible conflict simmered between slavery and freedom. The New York senator moderated his tone on the slavery issue as the election season neared and especially in the aftermath of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, but many conservatives suspected that he only did so with an eye toward capturing the Republican presidential nomination. A Missourian claimed that if one looked at Seward's deeds "when he is not fishing for the presidency [then] his every action will go to prove that he is a sectional man clothed in the most brilliant colors."⁵⁵ Party managers searched for a nominee who could assuage the fears of conservatives in the nation's heartland. Many moderates had strong reservations about voting for a candidate like Seward, who might upset sectional harmony by taking a strong stand on slavery. On the eve of the Chicago Convention, Seward's prospects for the nomination waned while those of Abraham Lincoln, a moderate from Illinois, intensified. Lincoln enjoyed newfound national prominence in the aftermath of his failed 1858 bid to defeat Stephen Douglas for a seat in the US Senate. Though he lost the contest, Lincoln battled the Little Giant with great eloquence on the stump. At the behest of party managers Lincoln in early 1860 gave a series of speeches on the East Coast, which added to the momentum for his nomination.⁵⁶

Edward Bates's close associates clung to the notion that he might win the Republican nomination at Chicago, but outside of Missouri support for Bates had fizzled. The Missouri backers of Bates doggedly maintained that if the Republicans hoped to have a chance in the Border South, they had to choose a native son. Only Bates could "steer the vessel safely between Scylla & Charabides [sic] – northern fanaticism on the one hand [and] Southern Treason

⁵⁵ Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 193-194; James H. Rollins to James S. Rollins, Mar. 25, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

⁵⁶ For Lincoln's candidacy, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Harold Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech that Made Abraham Lincoln President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004); William C. Harris, *Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

and Disunion on the other,” James S. Rollins urged.⁵⁷ Few people took heed of Rollins’s advice, especially with Harpers Ferry and the speakership contest fresh upon the minds of southerners. Republican hardliners questioned Bates’s antislavery bona fides, while Border South moderates worried that if elected president the Missourian might pander to the abolitionist element within the party. A Kentuckian lamented that the opponents of the Republicans had assailed the antislavery stance of the party with such vigor and effectiveness that Border South moderates “will support no man however pure whom the Republicans nominate.”⁵⁸

Once the Republicans gathered in the Wigwam, a hastily constructed wooden convention hall, they forever put to rest any notion of a Bates candidacy. In fact, the course of the convention exposed the insuperable challenges that confronted the feeble outposts of Republicanism within the Border South. All four of the Border South states sent delegations to Chicago, but some northern attendees objected to them taking their seats. David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, whose name was forever linked to the antislavery cause when in 1846 he introduced a proviso in Congress that stipulated slavery would not be introduced into any territory acquired during the Mexican-American War, questioned the plausibility of seating southern delegates who represented states without full-fledged Republican organizations. He feared that southerners had come to the convention “to demoralize a party, and to break it up.” The Border South delegates disputed Wilmot’s challenge, and Maryland delegate Charles Lee Armour asked how anyone could doubt his sincerity when he had been burned in effigy in his

⁵⁷ James S. Rollins to James Broadhead, Feb. 1, 1860, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH.

⁵⁸ C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, Feb. 14, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO. For Border South fears of Bates falling under the influence of abolitionists, see Nathaniel Albertson to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 13, 1860, D.A. Veitch to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 29, 1860, both in Douglas Papers, UC. For the persistent hopes of Missourians that Bates could win the Republican nomination, see James Broadhead to James S. Rollins, Jan. 29, 1860 [misdated as 1861], Frank P. Blair Jr. to James S. Rollins, Apr. 7, 1860, both in Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; James S. Rollins to James Broadhead, Feb. 17, 1860, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH. Murat Halstead stated that the push for Bates had “gone down like lead in the mighty waters” on the eve of the Republican Convention; see Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 144.

state and literally risked his life while promoting the Republican cause in Baltimore. Several northern delegates came to the aid of the Border South delegates and begged the convention to seat them so as not to appear as a purely sectional organization. After a debate “full of fire” the convention spurned Wilmot’s objection and allowed all of the southern delegations other than that of Texas to take their seats.⁵⁹

Although the Border South delegations retained their seats, the convention marginalized their influence. The Republicans offered a sop to the Border South by including a plank in the platform that declared a state had the exclusive right “to order and control its own domestic institutions,” and the convention rebuked the actions of men like John Brown who invaded sovereign states for any purpose. The seventh and eighth planks of the platform, however, sealed the fate of the party in the Border South. This portion of the platform expressed the Republican Party’s plan to defy the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision and keep all the territories free from slavery.⁶⁰ A Missourian immediately realized the damage done by including such an explicit denunciation of slavery in the territories. “If they had been content to say that they were opposed to the extension of slavery into free territories and to the dogma that the constitution carried slavery any where [sic], they could have made a lodgment in the border slave states,” Jonathan Richardson grumbled, “but the Chicago platform completely sectionalizes the party and is almost insulting to the South.” Even Bates fretted that the platform “is exclusive and defiant, not attracting but repelling assistance from without.” Some Border South moderates wished the party had at least introduced a plank which condoned the colonization of freed slaves “to ward

⁵⁹ Charles W. Johnson, ed., *Proceedings of the First Three Republican National Conventions of 1856, 1860, and 1864, including Proceedings of the Antecedent National Convention Held at Pittsburg, in February, 1856, as Reported by Horace Greeley* (Minneapolis: Harrison & Smith, 1893), 111, 113; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 150-151; Abbott, *The Republican Party and the South*, 14-15; Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 133.

⁶⁰ Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 156-157.

off the attacks made upon us about negro equality,” but the convention neglected to consider this option.⁶¹

On May 18 the Republicans proceeded to nominate their candidate for the presidency. The result of the first ballot revealed Bates’s flagging prospects; he placed fifth, and the second-place nominee, Abraham Lincoln, had over twice as many votes as did Bates. Of the forty-eight votes Bates received on the first ballot, 66 percent came from the four Border South states. The large accumulation of votes for Seward and Lincoln clearly signaled a two-man race. Bates’s total continued to slide on the next two ballots, and only the Missouri delegation remained wholly committed to him. The convention nominated Lincoln on the third ballot. The Republicans seriously considered placing Kentuckian Cassius Clay on the ticket as vice president, but instead settled on Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. “The mistake of putting no Southern man on the ticket will weaken our efforts in the Cause here immensely,” a thwarted Clay acknowledged.⁶²

Clay’s premonition rang true, especially in Missouri. Several of Bates’s supporters looked elsewhere for a political home after the Chicago Convention bypassed their favorite and released an unsatisfactory platform. James Rollins led an exodus of Bates conservatives into the Constitutional Union camp. Less than three weeks after the Republicans adjourned at Chicago, the Constitutional Unionists in Missouri’s second district asked Rollins to run for Congress on their ticket in the August election. He agreed and took to the stump in support of John Bell. “In the south this is all we can do, under the circumstances,” Rollins confessed in reference to the

⁶¹ Jno. Richardson to Abiel Leonard, May 24, 1860, Abiel Leonard Papers, SHS-MO; Entry for May 19, 1860, in Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 129; Francis P. Blair, Sr. to Abraham Lincoln, May 26, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁶² Hesselstine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 167-171, 175-176; Cassius Clay to Abraham Lincoln, May 21, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC. The Border South delegations cast 32 votes for Bates on the first ballot; Delaware and Missouri unanimously voted for Bates. Clay placed second on the two ballots for vice president; on the second ballot Hamlin captured nearly three hundred more votes than did Clay.

Republican decision to disregard the wants and needs of Border South moderates.⁶³ Stung by the defection of Rollins, Bates struggled to comprehend the objectives of the Constitutional Unionists. He asked his friend if the new organization was a genuine political organization, “Or is it only (as a Baltimore paper irreverently called it) a ‘Democratic Aid Society,’ to serve the present emergency?” Rollins responded that Constitutional Unionists planned “to furnish a resting place, for the truly conservative elements of the country – Old Line Whigs [&] Americans – moderate men of all parties; - rather than allow them to be overrun” by the overly sectionalized Republicans and Democrats.⁶⁴ Rollins temporarily suffered strained relations with some of his former allies who steadfastly stood behind Bates, but the voters in his central Missouri district vindicated his decision to join the Constitutional Unionists in August when they elected him to Congress.⁶⁵

While the Republicans and Constitutional Unionists enjoyed relatively painless conventions, the Democrats attempted to clean up the mess they had made at Charleston. James Bayard initially believed that the two wings of the party might reconcile with one another and reunite in Baltimore, but as the summer dragged on he began to doubt that the Lower South delegations would return to the mainstream party fold.⁶⁶ Democrats in Bayard’s New Castle County called a meeting in late May 1860 to consider whether to send their original delegation to Baltimore or to declare their seats vacated. After an appearance from Whiteley and Bayard’s son

⁶³ C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, May 22, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; James S. Rollins to James Broadhead, June 5, 1860, Broadhead Papers, MH-MO.

⁶⁴ Edward Bates to James S. Rollins, June 2, 1860, James S. Rollins to Edward Bates, June 6, 1860, both in Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

⁶⁵ Entries for June 16, 22, 1860, in Beale, ed., *Diary of Edward Bates*, 136-138; James O. Broadhead to James S. Rollins, June 26, July 8, 1860, both in Rollins Papers, SHS-MO. Rollins defeated his Democratic opponent in a narrow contest; the margin of victory was only 253 votes. Of Missouri’s seven congressional districts, only two non-Democrats won in the August 1860 race: Rollins and Frank Blair Jr.; for these results see Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the Elections of the 1st through 105th Congresses* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 187-188.

⁶⁶ James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, May 8, June 8, 1860, both in T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC.

Thomas the county convention allowed the two bolters to represent them in Baltimore. A separate New Castle meeting packed with Douglasites sent Bayard's old enemy Samuel Townsend and James A. Montgomery to the national convention. The infighting in the state and national party took its toll on Bayard, whose cries for party unity soon lapsed back into contempt for Douglas and his minions.⁶⁷

After an attempt at compromise between the two wings of the party failed, Douglas operators across the Lower South decided to send new delegations to Baltimore in the hopes that they would clinch the Little Giant's nomination. Before the Baltimore meeting convened, the delegates who walked out of the Charleston Convention met in Richmond, Virginia, and decided to repair to Maryland and press for reentry into the national meeting. The proceedings at Baltimore proved just as tense as at Charleston. The two competing New Castle County, Delaware delegations went before the committee on credentials to plead for their seats, but the hearing devolved into a fistfight between Townsend and Whiteley. Unsatisfied, Whiteley later confronted Townsend at his hotel and received a pair of black eyes for his effort. During the second altercation a pistol fell from Whiteley's pocket, which demonstrated the depth of the resentment that festered within the Delaware Democracy.⁶⁸

A showdown commenced and on June 21 a majority of the committee on credentials called for the readmission of bolting delegates from Delaware, Texas, and Mississippi and the seating of the new Douglas delegates from Alabama and Louisiana. The convention voted the following day to accept the majority report, but Douglas's managers insisted that the Little Giant

⁶⁷ James A. Bayard to My Dear Child, June 9, 1860, James A. Bayard, Jr., Family Letters, Delaware Historical Society, Manuscripts Division, Wilmington, Delaware; James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, June 8, 19, 1860, both in T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; Hancock, *Delaware During the Civil War*, 16.

⁶⁸ Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 311-314; William G. Whiteley to Thomas Bayard, June 28, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; Samuel Townsend to Stephen Douglas, July 2, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; Hancock, *Delaware During the Civil War*, 16-17.

receive the party's nomination. This proved too much for most of Douglas's southern opponents, who conditioned their participation in a reunited convention upon the replacement of the Little Giant on the ticket. Virginia led the exodus from the meeting in Baltimore; half of Maryland's delegation walked out with the Old Dominion, as did the representatives from North Carolina, Tennessee, California, and Oregon. On Saturday, June 23, 1860, most of the Kentucky, Missouri, and Arkansas delegations bolted. For all the fuss they kicked up over reentry, Bayard and Whiteley again walked out. W.B. Reed, a Kentucky delegate who stayed put, received a roaring applause from the pro-Douglas audience when he maintained that he and the remaining Bluegrass State Democrats "will stand with you as a wall of fire in opposing both extremes." Reed argued that Stephen Douglas and popular sovereignty best protected the South, and he claimed that "Gentlemen who own a hundred slaves each say I am right." The convention finally nominated the Little Giant, while the bolters met at Baltimore's Institute Hall and selected John C. Breckinridge to head their ticket. An incensed Bayard, who after his second walkout returned to the Senate in Washington, grouched that "the only real Democratic Convention" had nominated Breckinridge.⁶⁹

The presidential field was set by the end of June. The choice in the Border South revolved around three candidates: Stephen Douglas and John C. Breckinridge of the northern and southern wings of the Democracy, and John Bell of the Constitutional Unionists. Some border country southerners felt more comfortable with Republican Abraham Lincoln, a native of Kentucky, than they did with a perceived radical like William Henry Seward, but only a tiny fraction of the region's electorate showed any inclination to vote for the relatively unfamiliar

⁶⁹ Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 316-322; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 242, 267; James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, June 24, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC.

Illinois lawyer.⁷⁰ Many more inhabitants of the Border South distrusted Lincoln and the Republicans. “The abolition element of the [Republican] party will keep it sectional,” J.C. Richardson of Missouri told an associate, “and I am afraid to trust them on the Fugitive Slave act and slavery in the district.” Although Richardson had a decent opinion of Lincoln, he conveyed the fears of many border country southerners when he exhorted, “he can’t control his [abolitionist] friends.”⁷¹ Sophie M. Du Pont captured the prevailing sentiment of people in the Border South who felt stuck between two sectional extremes:

I deprecate sectionalism, but I deprecate southern sectionalism quite as much as northern – and there is as much of one as the other & perhaps more of the former. The abolitionists are but a small fraction of our people, a noisy & intemperate & intolerant & intolerable one, I grant you – but the South does a great wrong in classing all the temperate & conservative North; all the men who hold the views of Washington & Jefferson & Clay &c, with them.⁷²

While the overwhelming majority of Border South voters eschewed extremism from either direction, the presence of two moderate candidates in the field and the likelihood of a split vote dimmed the conservatives’ chances for success in November. This placed moderates in a predicament, because the triumph of either Lincoln or Breckinridge might amplify the disunionist shrieks in the Border South that had been unloosed in the aftermath of the Harpers Ferry raid and the speakership contest.

The August gubernatorial election in Missouri suggested that the radical pro-southern element had garnered enough strength to place one of their own in the highest state office in at least one Border South state. The race included four candidates: Democrat Claiborne Fox

⁷⁰ Leslie Combs to Abraham Lincoln, May 22, 1860, William B. Todd to Abraham Lincoln, June 27, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁷¹ J.C. Richardson to Abiel Leonard, July 10, 1860, Abiel Leonard Papers, SHS-MO.

⁷² Sophie M. Du Pont to Dear Henry, May 21, 1860, Sophie Madeleine Du Pont Papers, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, hereinafter cited as Sophie Du Pont Papers, Hagley. For similar sentiments from a Kentuckian, see Samuel Haycraft to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 26, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

Jackson; Democrat Hancock Jackson; Constitutional Unionist Sample Orr; and Republican James B. Gardenhire. Claiborne Jackson edged out the other contestants with 47 percent of the vote. Orr lost by less than 8,000 votes, a sign that the embryonic Constitutional Union Party would play a major role in electoral politics in the Border South. Hancock Jackson and Gardenhire both trailed the front-runners by a wide margin.⁷³

Candidate	Party	Votes	Percentage
Claiborne Jackson	Democrat	74,239	46.9%
Sample Orr	Constitutional Union	66,460	42.0%
Hancock Jackson	Breckinridge Democrat	11,305	7.1%
James Gardenhire	Republican	6,134	3.9%

Source: Dubin, *US Gubernatorial Elections*, 146.

Ever since the late 1840s when he broke with Thomas Hart Benton, Claiborne Jackson had taken a strong proslavery position and built a powerful network in Missouri. Casual observers might consider Jackson's victory the triumph of Democratic radicalism in the westernmost reaches of the Border South. Deeper scrutiny, however, illustrates the complexity of politics in the Border South and the remarkable resiliency of the region's moderate impulse in the late antebellum period. Without a doubt, Claiborne Jackson favored the Charleston bolters' stance on slavery in the territories - the struggle in Kansas implanted doubts into his mind as to whether popular sovereignty could adequately protect slavery in the West - and his political creed resembled that of William Lowndes Yancey more so than Stephen Douglas. Fearful that pro-Southern rhetoric might alienate him from many of the state's conservative voters, however, Jackson initially attempted to duck presidential endorsements while on the campaign trail. His evasive stance on the presidential contest, coupled with a promise to support state aid to railroads, had in May 1860 earned him the endorsement of Nathaniel Paschall, the powerful

⁷³ Dubin, *United States Gubernatorial Elections*, 146.

editor of the Democratic St. Louis *Missouri Republican*. Paschall, an ardent proponent of Douglas, and the radical Jackson made strange bedfellows, but the endorsement boosted Jackson's fortunes in St. Louis, where his proslavery stance had little appeal to metropolitan voters. After the split at Charleston, Paschall forced Jackson's hand with an ultimatum: support Douglas on the campaign trail or lose the endorsement of his paper. Cognizant of the editor's influence, Jackson caved and agreed to advocate for the Little Giant. The proslavery element of the Missouri Democrats felt betrayed by one of their principal architects and ran their own candidate, Hancock Jackson, who came out for John C. Breckinridge. While on the stump, Claiborne Jackson rather disingenuously told several audiences that he preferred Breckinridge but now championed Douglas in order to sustain the health of the Missouri Democracy. "Poor Claib! I pity him," one Missouri Democrat remarked. "I saw him at Jefferson City when there the other day, and he looked like he had lost all his friends."⁷⁴

Thus, the triumph of Claiborne Jackson represented no revolution in Missouri politics. While the contest did place a dangerous sectional radical in the state executive office, he had achieved his victory not with secessionist diatribes, but with the timeworn political formula to which Border South voters best responded: moderation and temperateness. The conservative Paschall handcuffed Jackson, who knew he needed his support to win the race, with his July ultimatum. Jackson received nearly 10,000 votes in St. Louis whereas the Breckinridge Democrat candidate collected just over 200 votes; without Paschall's assistance it seems unlikely that Jackson would have held much sway in the state's largest city. Missouri held congressional elections the same day, which confirmed the staying power of the moderate mindset. Douglas Democrats carried four of the state's seven congressional districts, while the remaining three

⁷⁴ Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate*, 227-228; Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession*, 143-152; Waldo P. Johnson to Brother Mortimer, July 28, 1860, Waldo P. Johnson Letters, SHS-MO.

were each won by a Constitutional Unionist, a Republican, and a Democrat who ran on a Breckinridge-Douglas coalition ticket.⁷⁵

County	% of Population Enslaved	% of Vote			
		C. Jackson (D)	S. Orr (CU)	H. Jackson (BD)	J. Gardenhire (Rep)
Howard	36.9%	58.7%	39.7%	1.5%	0.1%
Saline	33.2%	47.7%	51.3%	1.0%	0.0%
Lafayette	31.7%	38.4%	60.6%	1.1%	0.0%
New Madrid	31.4%	34.5%	38.2%	24.8%	0.0%
Clay	26.5%	37.5%	53.9%	8.6%	0.0%
Callaway	25.9%	43.3%	52.9%	3.8%	0.0%
Boone	25.8%	40.1%	57.3%	2.6%	0.0%
Total		43.6%	52.9%	3.5%	0.0%

Sources: University of Virginia Historical Census Browser; Dubin, *US Gubernatorial Elections*, 144-146.

As Table 16 reveals above, the heaviest slaveholding counties in Missouri cast 52.9 percent of their vote for Constitutional Unionist Sample Orr, while Jackson tallied 43.6 percent of the vote. Of the seven counties with at least 25 percent of the population enslaved, Claiborne Jackson won only one and polled no more than 47.7 percent of the vote in the rest. This indicates that many Missouri slaveholders saw through Jackson’s ploy to pander to the state’s Douglasites.⁷⁶ Fearful that his radical past might provoke Jackson to endanger the institution of slavery by taking a reckless course as governor, voters in the densest slave counties opted for Sample Orr, who represented “the advance guard of the Union army of the nation” according to one Missouri editor.⁷⁷ Outwardly radical candidates Hancock Jackson and James Gardenhire received only a handful of votes in these counties. The 1860 Missouri gubernatorial election

⁷⁵ Dubin, *United States Gubernatorial Elections*, 145; Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession*, 155.

⁷⁶ Even an observer in Louisville, Kentucky recognized Jackson’s double game; he noted Jackson’s victory “is not a Douglas triumph in any sense – it is an indorsement of Mr. Breckinridge’s principles.” See *Louisville Daily Journal*, Aug. 17, 1860.

⁷⁷ *Liberty (Missouri) Weekly Tribune*, Aug. 3, 1860. Kentucky also held an election for Clerk of the Court of Appeals in August 1860 in which the Constitutional Union candidate Leslie Combs won the race; see *Louisville Daily Courier*, Aug. 3, 7, 8, 1860.

confirmed the Border South judgment that the Union, rather than radical options like secession, best protected the peculiar institution.

Nevertheless, the Border South should not be thought of as insulated from disunion sentiment. The strong reaction to perceived northern outrages, from Harpers Ferry to the speakership contest, demonstrated the subterranean nature of disunionist sentiment in the Border South. Humphrey Marshall, a former Whig congressman from Kentucky who threw his support to Breckinridge during the canvass of 1860, exclaimed that the people of the Border South would not sit idly by and allow the Republicans or the Douglas Democrats to jeopardize the institution of slavery. In a campaign speech he used the analogy of abolitionist wolves that prowled outside the peaceful homes of Kentuckians. If the wolves appeared in his neighborhood he would not park in front of the fireplace and trade stories with old farmers like Constitutional Unionist candidate John Bell, but instead “follow to the field the young, vigorous, brave leader, whose energies and known character afforded me the hope that he would protect my property and have a proper care for my interests.” Border southerners hoped they would not be forced to decide between the two extremes of North and South, but a Republican victory in the presidential election might obligate them to do so. Marshall concluded his speech with the frank forewarning that he loved the Union, but he would rather see his family turned out of Kentucky if the state acquiesced in “the surrender and sacrifice of the constitutional rights of our people.”⁷⁸ Marshall’s cautionary language underscores that some moderates had been attracted to the radical camp on the eve of the election, and more would likely follow if Lincoln won.

⁷⁸ “Speech of Hon. Humphrey Marshall, of Ky.,” in National Democratic Executive Committee, *Speeches of Hon. Humphrey Marshall & Hon. B.F. Hallett, in the City of Washington, on the Nomination of Breckinridge and Lane* (Washington: National Democratic Executive Committee, 1860), 3, 4. Marshall’s abandonment of his former Whig allies was well noticed; see Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, July 12, 1860, Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, July 1860 [no day], both in S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

All three of the political organizations that had a realistic chance of winning the presidential election in the Border South positioned their candidate as the strongest guardian of slavery, and even the Republicans promised that if elected Lincoln would not interfere with the peculiar institution in the states or with the Fugitive Slave Law. The two Democratic organizations and the Constitutional Unionists doubted the veracity of the Republican pledge. They opened a hardy attack on the Republicans for their stance on slavery in the territories, and each of these organizations argued that their respective candidate could best defeat Lincoln. In Maryland the Constitutional Unionists tried to get the upper hand on their Democratic opponents with “violent tirades against the Republicans,” while in Kentucky the three anti-Republican parties colored all Republicans as abolitionists. Anti-Republican campaigners stepped up their appeals in the aftermath of October state elections in Indiana and Pennsylvania, where Republicans won each state’s gubernatorial race. These Republican victories in the Lower North served as a harbinger of the party’s success in that key region in November, and the anti-Republican organizations escalated their assaults on Lincoln and his party in the hopes of winning last-second converts.⁷⁹ A pro-Breckinridge paper warned its readers that “a vote against Breckinridge is a half vote for Lincoln.” Missourians also complained that Republican opponents misrepresented the party in an effort to attract voters. “Fanatical abolition addresses, and distorted paragraphs from the writings and speeches of ultra partizans are quoted in return to show that an onslaught is designed against the South,” a group of St. Louis Republicans grumbled. The small Republican contingent in Baltimore witnessed first-hand the results of the

⁷⁹ Henry Winter Davis to David Davis, Sept. 1860 [no day], Jeremiah Snider to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 3, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 79-81. Stephen Douglas even made an unprecedented campaign tour throughout the nation in the hopes of drumming up support for his candidacy; see Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 778-803. Appeals for Douglas to tour the South came from all quarters; see for example J.H.N. Cundiff to Stephen Douglas, Sept. 1, 1860, James T. Donaldson to Stephen Douglas, Sept. 1, 1860, Alexander H. Stephens to Stephen Douglas, Sept. 20, 1860, A.W. Simpson to Stephen Douglas, Oct. 9, 1860, all in Douglas Papers, UC.

smear campaign. They attempted to hold a series of campaign rallies just days before the election but time and again unruly opponents broke them up with “showers of eggs, brick-bats and injurious epithets.”⁸⁰

In spite of their mutual awareness that a Republican victory might fan the flames of disunion across the South, a powerful loyalty to each individual organization precluded any cooperative movement to defeat Lincoln. The political culture of the period nourished strong partisan attachments among the members of these parties which proved nearly impossible to unbind. Stubbornness and political machinations also made the likelihood of fusion all the more difficult.⁸¹ In the hopes of clinching victory, the anti-Republican elements in the Border South committed themselves to a heedless campaign of fear mongering that seriously jeopardized the safety of the Union in the aftermath of the election.

Voters of all political persuasions trekked to their local polling place on November 6 with assorted feelings of optimism and unease. The arduous canvass, the rancorous political infighting, and the apocalyptic auguring of the fire-eaters had by election day unnerved many Americans. “Thank the lord the great political struggle is at a close,” a Kentuckian sighed on the night before the election. “I believe that nothing but a fight will save the South. The sooner the better.” The tone of the Kentuckian’s prognostication implies that some border country

⁸⁰ *Louisville Daily Courier*, Nov. 6, 1860; Frank P. Blair, Jr., et. al. to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 31, 1860, George W. Howard to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 2, 1860, Worthington G. Snethen to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 3, 1860, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC. Even the normally restrained John Crittenden blasted the Republicans on the stump; see Entry for Oct. 22, 1860 in Beale, ed., *Diary of Edward Bates*, 155. For an excellent contemporary explication of southern paranoia about the Republican Party’s intentions in regard to slavery, see A. Roane, “The South, In the Union or Out of It,” *DeBow’s Review* 29 (Oct. 1860): 452-454. This paranoia is a central theme in Channing, *Crisis of Fear*; J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); & Donald E. Reynolds, *Texas Terror: The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1860 and the Secession of the Lower South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

⁸¹ Correspondents of Lincoln often discussed the possibility and problems of fusion movements; see Richard W. Thompson to Abraham Lincoln, June 12, 1860, David Davis to Abraham Lincoln, Aug. 14, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 787-788.

southerners concluded southern defiance represented the next logical step in the deepening crisis even before casting their ballots. Other Border South inhabitants were equally resigned to the probability of Lincoln's election, but spoke of the result in more measured, yet similarly concerned, language. Charles Gibson of St. Louis advised that Lincoln should tread lightly on the slavery issue once in the White House to prevent a possible dissolution of the Union. "Should [Lincoln] prove to be mild & conservative the negro question would be settled," Gibson predicted. "Should he prove the contrary, no man can tell the consequences." "The Wolf is really upon us now, and even in this old conservative State, a feeling of uneasiness and distrust is gradually growing up," a Maryland moderate admitted. "The people of the border states will be greatly agitated [by Lincoln's election], and the secessionists further South will be in a perfect frenzy."⁸²

The Republican strategy to convert the Lower North, a redoubt of Democratic strength in the previous two presidential elections, to their column in 1860 paid dividends. Although he won less than forty percent of the popular vote, Lincoln easily defeated his opponents in the Electoral College. He swept every free state except for New Jersey, which split its electoral votes between Lincoln and Douglas. The Little Giant finished second in the popular vote but dead last in the Electoral College; in addition to three electoral votes in New Jersey he won Missouri. Breckinridge took every southern state except Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia, which Bell captured. The Republicans opted for a sectional approach to the election, and it

⁸² W.T.H. to J. Warren Grigsby, Nov. 5, 1860, Grigsby Collection, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Charles Gibson to Orville H. Browning, Oct. 28, 1860, S.W. Spencer to Thomas Corwin, Oct. 29, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC. For the early optimism of the Constitutional Unionists, see John Bell to Alexander Boteler, July 2 & 30, 1860, Boteler Papers, DU; Patrick Henry to J. Morrison Harris, Aug. 6, 1860, J. Morrison Harris Papers, 1817-1898, MS 2739, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

showed: only in the slave states of the Border South and Virginia did Lincoln's name even appear on a ticket. In those five states, Lincoln tallied less than five percent of the total vote.⁸³

Candidate	Popular Vote	Electoral Vote
Lincoln (Rep.)	1,855,276 (39.67%)	180
Douglas (Dem.)	1,004,042 (21.47%)	12
Breckinridge (Dem.)	672,601 (14.38%)	72
Bell (CU)	590,980 (12.64%)	39

Source: Dubin, *US Presidential Elections*, 159.

The results of the election in the Border South, displayed in Table 18, demonstrate the region was anything but a monolith. The outcome of state and national political divisions in the 1850s presented circumstances that party managers in each of the four Border South states had to contend with during the presidential campaign. The Breckinridge forces achieved victory in Delaware and Maryland, Bell won Kentucky, and Douglas carried Missouri. Closer scrutiny of the election returns, however, reveals that although political allegiances and preexisting conditions prevented a region-wide consensus on a single candidate, the Border South preference for moderation on sectional issues retained its vitality. Breckinridge, who campaigned on behalf of the ultra-southern position on slavery in the territories, won Delaware and Maryland with a plurality, and in his home state of Kentucky he captured just over a third of the entire vote. In Missouri he could not muster one-fifth of the total vote. In all four states combined, he received just under thirty-two percent of all votes cast. The other perceived radical, Lincoln, fared miserably in the Border South. Although the Republicans attained more votes in the Border South than anywhere else in the slave states, they still received less than six percent of the border country's total vote.

⁸³ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 231-233; Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections*, 159; Ollinger Crenshaw, *The Slave States in the Presidential Election of 1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945), 193-197.

State	Bell (CU)	Douglas (Dem)	Breckinridge (Dem)	Lincoln (Rep)
Delaware	3,886 (24.12%)	1,066 (6.62%)	7,339 (45.55%)	3,822 (23.72%)
Kentucky	66,058 (45.18%)	25,641 (17.54%)	53,143 (36.35%)	1,364 (0.93%)
Maryland	41,768 (45.08%)	6,080 (6.56%)	42,505 (45.88%)	2,296 (2.48%)
Missouri	58,261 (35.22%)	58,804 (35.55%)	31,312 (18.93%)	17,029 (10.30%)
Total	169,973 (40.43%)	91,591 (21.79%)	134,299 (31.95%)	24,511 (5.83%)
Combined Bell & Douglas Vote	261,564 (62.22%)			

Source: Dubin, *US Presidential Elections*, 159.

A conservative impulse, the foundation of Border South politics in the 1850s, still existed within the region. The two candidates presented to the people as moderates on sectional issues in the Border South actually trounced their competition if their votes are combined. Together Bell and Douglas obtained sixty-two percent of the Border South vote. Moderates learned a hard lesson as a result of the contest: the potent influence of partisanship worked to divide the mandate for conservatism in the region and helped to propel a sectional candidate into the executive office. A combined conservative ticket in the Border South alone would not have prevented Lincoln's election, but if the forces of moderation had promoted cooperation across the nation the results may have differed greatly. Those who cherished a careful approach to the sectional crisis discovered that in order to check the crippling influence of radicalism, they must set aside party prejudice and work together. A Kentuckian predicted after the election that a collaborative effort on behalf of conservative principles could salve the nation's wounds by expurgating fanaticism: "It [the conservative movement] will be for the Constitution and the Union, and the overgrown children, the political charlatans, North and South, who have been engaged in destroying our noble government, will be driven so far into political damnation, that a sun beam would not reach them in an age."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ W.H. Sutton to Orlando Brown, Dec. 20, 1860, Papers of Orlando Brown, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Border South conservatism hinged on the idea that the Union, not secession, best protected the institution of slavery. Disunion would surrender the federal government's obligation to protect slavery in the states through the Fugitive Slave Law, abrogate key decisions of the Supreme Court, and relinquish constitutional provisions like the three-fifths clause which actually enhanced the South's leverage in Congress. Most border country southerners concurred with Abiel Leonard, owner of fifteen slaves in Missouri's Boon's Lick, who proclaimed the Union "the sure bulwark of our slave property." Table 19 below confirms the link between the moderate impulse and slaveholding in the Border South. The electorate in the forty-two densest slaveholding counties in the region cast nearly two-thirds of its vote for either Bell or Douglas. Breckinridge attracted the vote of nearly all of the remaining third of the electorate and Lincoln amassed just over 250 votes in these counties. A vote for Breckinridge was not an outright sanction of secession, but it did indicate a preference for a position on slavery that the region's slaveholders considered extremely hazardous. "The strongest pro-slavery men in [Kentucky] are those who do not own one dollar of slave property," one Breckinridge Democrat proclaimed just before the election. "We would rather trust them than a thousand John Bells."⁸⁵

Delaware's densest slave county, Sussex, deviated from the general Border South trend. Sussex inhabitants cast 47.7 percent of their votes for Breckinridge. The moderate candidates tallied only 38 percent of the total, and Lincoln surprisingly garnered nearly one-sixth of the overall vote.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Abiel Leonard to Robert Wilson, Jan. 21, 1861 [typescript], Abiel Leonard Papers, SHS-MO; Lexington *Kentucky Statesman*, Oct. 5, 1860, in Dwight Lowell Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession* (New York: The Century Company, 1931), 175. John C. Breckinridge made a similar observation during the August 1860 state elections in Kentucky; see John C. Breckinridge to A. Dudley Mann, Aug. 8, 1860, John Cabell Breckinridge Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. For the shaky contention that in Missouri no correlation existed between a vote for Breckinridge in 1860 and a preference for secession, see William Roed, "Secessionist Strength in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 4 (July 1978), 412-423. Roed does not grapple with slaveholding in his article.

⁸⁶ Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections*, 161.

Table 19 -Vote for President in Border South Counties with at Least 25% of Population Enslaved (1860)

	County	% of Population Enslaved	Lincoln (Rep)	Douglas (Dem)	Breckinridge (Dem)	Bell (CU)	Total Cast
Kentucky	Bourbon	45.5%	3	29	755	966	1,753
	Boyle	35.2%	3	52	331	697	1,083
	Caldwell	25.8%	3	48	618	446	1,115
	Christian	46.0%	1	467	411	954	1,833
	Clark	41.5%	1	60	391	959	1,411
	Fayette	44.3%	5	99	1,051	1,411	2,566
	Franklin	26.7%	-	37	907	790	1,734
	Garrard	34.0%	21	145	195	730	1,091
	Green	26.9%	2	188	367	420	977
	Henderson	40.4%	5	211	498	846	1,560
	Henry	27.7%	2	390	773	672	1,837
	Jessamine	39.1%	3	37	559	603	1,202
	Lincoln	32.2%	4	72	380	743	1,199
	Logan	33.4%	3	342	169	1,490	2,004
	Madison	35.1%	85	56	914	1,038	2,093
	Marion	27.6%	-	904	281	475	1,660
	Montgomery	35.0%	-	49	489	540	1,078
	Nelson	35.0%	-	641	333	609	1,583
	Oldham	33.4%	2	263	299	372	936
	Scott	39.8%	-	44	1,176	734	1,954
	Shelby	40.4%	-	228	594	1,176	1,998
	Simpson	28.3%	-	194	319	404	917
	Spencer	35.6%	-	304	94	334	732
	Todd	41.9%	4	147	274	642	1,067
Trigg	31.2%	1	177	646	623	1,447	
Warren	30.7%	3	615	182	1,126	1,926	
Woodford	52.0%	-	16	547	633	1,196	
Maryland	Anne Arundel	30.7%	3	98	1,017	1,041	2,159
	Calvert	44.1%	1	43	387	399	830
	Charles	58.4%	6	38	723	430	1,197
	Montgomery	29.6%	50	99	1,125	1,155	2,429
	Prince George's	53.5%	1	43	1,048	885	1,977
	Queen Anne's	26.2%	-	87	879	908	1,874
	St. Mary's	43.0%	1	190	920	261	1,372
	Talbot	25.2%	2	98	898	793	1,791
Missouri	Boone	25.8%	12	578	652	1,671	2,913
	Callaway	25.9%	15	839	472	1,306	2,632
	Clay	26.5%	-	528	305	1,045	1,878
	Howard	36.9%	1	939	247	920	2,107
	Lafayette	31.7%	24	774	371	1,577	2,746
	New Madrid	31.4%	-	117	160	223	500
	Saline	33.2%	-	563	366	1,035	1,964
	Total		267	10,849	23,123	34,082	68,321
	% of Vote		0.4%	15.9%	33.8%	49.9%	
	% of Vote for Bell & Douglas		65.8%				

Sources: University of Virginia Historical Census Browser; Dubin, *US Presidential Elections*, 167-171, 174-175.

Even with a strong mandate for moderation in the Border South's densest slave counties, conservatives grasped that a tough fight lay ahead. Fire-eaters clamored for the entire South to secede, and normally moderate men might trade their loyalty to the Union for that of their southern brethren in the disquieted political landscape brought on by Lincoln's election. James A. Bayard represented just one example of a Border South statesman who reassessed his state's place in the Union shortly after Lincoln's election. His consternation had not abated since December 1859, and misgivings about the Union he so cherished had multiplied. After the Democratic Party's second breakup in Baltimore he took a much needed vacation in New York and Rhode Island before returning to Delaware to campaign on behalf of Breckinridge. The election results confirmed his worst fears. "I have no hope left for the Union," he told his son, "& all we can do now is to separate peaceably if possible."⁸⁷ While they studied the results of the election and calculated the best way to offset the radicalism it would provoke from sectional hardliners, conservatives prayed that all of their fellow border country southerners had not like Bayard thrown up the white flag and surrendered to the inevitability of disunion.

⁸⁷ James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Aug. 5, 17, 1860, William Lowndes Yancey to James A. Bayard, Sept. 23, 1860, James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Dec. 4, 1860, all in T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC.

Chapter 4

“What Ought Patriots To Do?”: The Unionist Offensive in the Border South, November 1860 – Mid-January 1861

John Crittenden normally relished the opportunity to sequester himself in his Frankfort, Kentucky home whenever his calendar provided a rare opening to escape the bustle of the American political scene. The septuagenarian Crittenden had built an impressive political portfolio over his long career, occupying many important state and national posts: speaker of the House in the Kentucky legislature, governor of the Bluegrass State, Millard Fillmore’s attorney general, and intermittent stints in the United States Senate, which began during James Madison’s presidency. With the presidential campaign completed and the Senate not due to convene until early December, the weary solon in November 1860 returned home for some much-needed rest. His “straggling, old-fashioned house” stood at the corner of Main and Washington streets, and Crittenden delighted in sitting on the front steps during the evening to spend time with his family and close friends. “First in the order of the day or night, on these occasions,” his daughter recollected, “were family news, kind inquiries for the sick and absent, [and] little narratives of the wonderful children everybody had or supposed themselves to have.” During these periods of repose, Crittenden captivated family and visitors with amusing anecdotes, a sympathetic ear, and long conversations about his beloved poplar trees that lined the promenade in front of the house. Try as he might, though, the old Kentuckian’s thoughts never ventured far from politics. Even while enjoying the tranquility of his Frankfort home, by the end of the night the conversation normally turned to public affairs. The deepening political impasse tinged his usually cheerful visage with a gloomy sense of foreboding on this particular trip home.¹

¹ Mrs. Chapman Coleman, ed., *The Life of John J. Crittenden, with Selections from His Correspondence and Speeches*, 2 volumes (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1871), 1:42-43.

By the autumn of 1860 the years of political toil had taken its toll on Kentucky's elder statesman. Edward Bates remarked that his old Whig associate looked "older and feebler than I ever knew him," and to his close friends Crittenden expressed a desire to retire from public life and enjoy the solace of his home and family in Kentucky on a permanent basis. Frustrated with the highly sectionalized atmosphere that plagued Washington, he looked forward to freeing himself from the "low party politics of the day, and the miserable scramble for place and plunder." His efforts on behalf of the Constitutional Union Party during the presidential canvass had left him exhausted. During the late summer and fall of 1860 a torrent of invitations to speak from all corners of the country crammed his mailbag. Constitutional Unionists swept him from one end of the Bluegrass State to the other, and he traveled from Massachusetts to Missouri to campaign for John Bell. Despite all his labors, the principal architect of the Constitutional Union movement saw his worst fears about the direction of American politics confirmed when the nation's voters placed Abraham Lincoln in the White House.²

News of Lincoln's election whipped many southerners into a frenzy, and political operatives in each of the Lower South states had initiated preparations for special conventions charged with deliberating whether or not to carry their states out of the Union. "A strictly sectional political organization has been formed, and its success has sent alarm throughout nearly half the States of the Union and stricken with fear the honest patriots of the whole country," one Kentucky editor blazoned. A Georgia paper reflected the depth of alarm in the South when it forthrightly declared that the election of a Republican president meant "the Union has failed of

² Entry for Oct. 22, 1860, in Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 154; John J. Crittenden to Logan Hunton, April 15, 1860, Crittenden Letters, DU; Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 360-363.

the objects for which it was formed.”³ Crittenden shared the unease of his fellow southerners, but unlike the Georgia editor he showed no inclination to capitulate to disunionists. After all, he had witnessed firsthand his mentor Henry Clay rescue the Union from the brink of ruin on three occasions. Clay played an instrumental role in resolving the sectional dispute over the admission of Missouri in 1820, orchestrated a compromise to prevent a showdown between the federal government and South Carolina in the Nullification Crisis of 1832-1833, and in 1850 laid the groundwork for a wide-ranging solution to the vexed question of the introduction of slavery into territory acquired from Mexico.⁴ At each turn the American political custom of compromise had triumphed over secession.

In the crisis of 1860, the nation turned to Crittenden to fill the role of Clay, who had died in 1852. Despite his deep longing to walk away from politics, his sense of duty and love for the Union drew him once more into the fray. Rest and retirement would have to wait. Crittenden and other Unionists responded to the query of George Prentice, editor of the pro-Union *Louisville Daily Journal*, who asked his readers, “What ought patriots to do?” Prentice recommended that they spurn the entreaties of fire-eaters and instead “stand loyally and patiently in the Union under the Constitution and wield the might of the one and the checks and balances of the other to protect both.” In the following months, Crittenden labored to uphold Prentice’s definition of patriot and became a beacon of Unionism in the Border South and across the nation. He and likeminded Unionists worked assiduously to confine the secession movement to the Deep

³ William J. Cooper, Jr., *We Have the War Upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War, November 1860-April 1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 125; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Nov. 8, 1860; Augusta, *Georgia Daily Chronicle and Sentinel*, Nov. 13, 1860, quoted in Dwight Lowell Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession* (New York: The Century Company, 1931), 232.

⁴ For Clay’s role in these crises, see Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991).

South and to find some settlement that would restore sectional harmony and forever remove the explosive issue of slavery from the political equation.⁵

Lincoln's election produced "a perfect tempest of wrath" in the Lower South, where fire-eaters set the wheels of secession in motion shortly after learning that a Republican would control the executive branch of the federal government.⁶ A powerful cadre of disunionists in South Carolina pushed for their legislature, which had convened a day before the presidential election, to call a state convention at the earliest possible moment. Ever since the Nullification Crisis in 1832-1833, a burgeoning group of South Carolina radicals had searched for some way to pull their state out of the Union. Carolina disunionists nervously watched the antislavery movement grow during the two decades prior to Lincoln's election and in each passing year they became more convinced that the people of the North had only one political objective: to destroy slavery, the very foundation of southern society. Rebuffed in their disunionist scheme in 1850, Carolina radicals saw in the Republican triumph at the polls a golden opportunity to strike. They knew they had to initiate a rapid offensive to prevent a Unionist reverberation, which had stymied their earlier disunion plots, from overtaking their momentum. They employed the rhetoric of fear, shame, honor, and revolution to secure the meeting of a state convention on December 17, a month in advance of the scheduled conventions in other Lower South states. Fire-eaters trusted that if they withdrew the Palmetto State, the rest of the slaveholding states would have no choice but to follow their lead.⁷

⁵ *Louisville Daily Journal*, Nov. 8, 1860, quoted in Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession*, 218; J.C. Riffe to Alexander Stephens, Dec. 14, 1860, Alexander H. Stephens Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

⁶ Journal Entry for Nov. 9, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

⁷ See William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, Volume 2: *Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ch. 25, for an excellent discussion of the motivations and machinations of the Carolina fire-eaters. See also Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: Simon

Experience taught the Carolina radicals that their slave state brethren often got cold feet when it came to following through on promises of secession, and 1860 proved no different. Several strands of thought existed throughout the South about how best to respond to Lincoln's election. Fire-eaters pursued the most expeditious course to clinch their long-sought-after goal. As in South Carolina they advocated for each slaveholding state to call its own convention at the earliest possible moment, preferably before Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, and then proceed with the work of pulling their respective states out of the Union. This course, labeled separate state action, gave fire-eaters the advantage of speed. Separatists plowed forward and wished to negate the appeals of their neighbors who called for sober second thought about so radical a course. If they could complete the process of secession in quick order, those who advocated a careful approach to the crisis or who broached the idea of compromise would have no leg on which to stand. A Missourian rightfully estimated in November that the Deep South separatists "are more urgent than ever, taking every means to get their followers pledged to extreme measures, and to draw in and commit the timid and the doubtful, without allowing time to look to the consequences and reflect upon the bottomless pit that lies before them."⁸

Separatists planned to neutralize the cooperationists and Unionists in their midst. Cooperationists promoted southern unity; they preferred that all the slaveholding states meet in a convention, discuss their grievances, and then decide on the best response to Lincoln's election. In cooperationist eyes, only cohesive southern action could convince the North of their earnestness and simultaneously present a front that the federal government could not easily crush. They believed in the strength of numbers and often pointed to the Nullification Crisis,

and Schuster, 1970), 252-293; Manisha Sinha, *The Counter-Revolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Ch. 8.

⁸ One of the best explications of the varying degrees of southern thought about secession remains Dwight Lowell Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860-1861* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), 113-121; Entry for Nov. 22, 1861, in Beale, ed., *Diary of Edward Bates*, 157.

where the federal government cowed a defiant but isolated South Carolina, as precedent for the folly of separate state action. “Having the same rights and interests at stake,” a Mississippi cooperationist concluded, “I think it would be wrong in any one state to take such a position as would force others against their wishes to join her, without at least first consulting them on the propriety of the course.” Separatists saw three major problems with the tactics of the cooperationists. First, a pan-southern convention would take precious time to organize. Once it met, the delegates might deliberate for weeks or months, sapping the wind out of the fire-eaters’ sails. The separatists also worried that the cooperationist course might not even result in disunion. After careful deliberation, unsound delegates might once again back away from secession as they had throughout the antebellum period. Finally, history informed separatists that the cooperation method simply did not work. In the crisis of 1850 a convention of southern states held in Nashville, Tennessee, snubbed disunion, and in the aftermath of John Brown’s raid South Carolinians received little support from the rest of the South for a slave state convention to discuss the region’s place in the Union.⁹

Unionists also posed problems for the supporters of separate state action. These southerners saw no immediate need for secession and preferred that their states remain in the Union. Many southern Unionists loathed the impulsive nature of fire-eaters, especially the radicals in South Carolina. One Tennessee Unionist utilized a folksy analogy when he assessed South Carolina’s actions: “She reminds of the bull that undertook to but [sic] the Locomotive off the track – courage admirable – discretion small!”¹⁰ A wide spectrum of Unionism existed

⁹ *Ibid.*, 121-131; W.H. Johnson to George Johnson, Dec. 2, 1860, George W. Johnson Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 486-489.

¹⁰ Nelson to William Porcher Miles, Nov. 18, 1860, W.P. Miles Papers, SHC-UNC. This letter, headed simply “Nelson,” and composed in Washington D.C., is most likely from Thomas A.R. Nelson of Tennessee. A strong Unionist, Nelson was a colleague of Miles’s in Congress and opened the letter with an inquiry into his friend’s health.

throughout the South, though historians have for the sake of clarity identified two major camps of Unionists. Unconditional Unionists vowed never to abandon the federal government and often labeled secessionists in their midst as traitors. Very few southerners adopted such a hardline Unionist approach, but greater numbers of unconditional Unionists called the Border South home than in the states that formed the Confederacy. Conditional Unionists were far more prevalent throughout the South, and they comprised a large segment of the population in the Border and Upper South. Conditionalists argued that Lincoln's election served as no pretext for secession and begged their southern brethren to wait and see how the first Republican president would respond to the crisis. Conditional Unionists pledged their faith to the federal government as long as it did not try to force the states that opted to secede back into the Union. A policy of coercion, they warned, would in all likelihood convert them to the secessionist standard. In addition to demanding that the federal government keep its hands off of any state that seceded, the conditional Unionists pled for concessions from the North to settle the political imbroglio over slavery. If they felt the North acted disingenuously on compromise or spurned it altogether, conditionalists promised to jettison the Union. For conditional Unionists, secession equaled the last resort in the crisis spawned by Lincoln's election. The large contingent of Border and Upper South Unionists frustrated the separatists, who viewed them as southern apostates.¹¹

Separatists often operated in a world of black and white – to them all Republicans endorsed abolitionism and all non-immediate secessionists did not have the best interest of the South at heart – while cooperationists and Unionists viewed the crisis through a more realistic prism. Non-separatists realized that not all Republicans sought the immediate abolition of

¹¹ For a superb analysis of southern Unionism, see Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), Ch. 5. For a dire warning about the likely results of Republican intransigence, see Frank Steel to My Dear Sister, Dec. 8, 1860, Frank F. Steel Letters, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

slavery; they hoped that a national conservative impulse might overcome radicals North and South; and many of them displayed a willingness once again to make an attempt at sectional reconciliation. Although there were separatists in the Border South, the overwhelming majority of border southerners fell into the cooperationist or Unionist camp. Still, this non-separatist majority in the Border South should not lead one to the conclusion that the region faced a crisis any less potent than in the eleven states that eventually made up the Confederacy. The Border South, straddled along the boundary between slavery and freedom, occupied a most precarious position, and even the slightest incident could imperil the region's non-separatist majority.

The election of Lincoln and the precipitous action of the South Carolina legislature left many border southerners feeling strangled by two very different extremes. George B. Kinhead of Lexington, Kentucky, captured the precarious position of the Border South in the aftermath of the election: "They [Kentuckians and border southerners] are excessively provoked at the obstinacy and folly and malingering of the North and are utterly disgusted with South Carolina."¹² The fear-mongering campaign tactics of non-Republicans in the Border South made Lincoln's election a cause for grave concern, but the geographic position of the region's populace and their well-tested but longstanding amicable relations with conservatives in the Lower North meant immediate separatists had few adherents along the border. "Dis Union [sic] I have not ever dreamed of, it would be the hight [sic] of folly, as well as treason," John P. Gillis remarked in response to his son's query about what Delaware should do in response to Lincoln's election. Across the Border South, persons of all political stripes complained that South Carolina's rush toward disunion forced the hand of the rest of the slaveholding states. W.S. Bodley, a native of Louisville, interpreted the rash action of the Carolina radicals as the consummation of a plot thirty years in the making. Fire-eaters in South Carolina exaggerated

¹² George B. Kinhead to John Pendleton Kennedy, Dec. 31, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

every wrong committed by the people of the North while they camouflaged every southern iniquity in order to convert fretful southerners to their column, he complained. Bodley charged that the Carolina radicals ignored or disregarded the needs of the Border South by pushing ahead with secession. Kentucky and the rest of the Border South did not have the luxury of South Carolina's insulation from the free states, and the region depended upon the federal government for slavery's protection to a much greater degree than did the states further south. The secession of the Border South would invalidate the Fugitive Slave Law and empower the personal liberty legislation of the free states. Such a course played into the hands of abolitionists who sought to rid the United States of slavery, he noted, "and it leaves the Southern States under the cost and hazard of defending slavery as best they can with hostile neighbors and a diminished union, exposed to all ills, internal & external, which now exist and innumerable other superadded."¹³

The hasty progress of disunion in South Carolina and the Lower South revealed a major disconnect between the two geographic extremities of the slaveholding states. Southerners along the border agreed with their Cotton South brethren that several grievances surrounding the issue of slavery existed, but most border southerners sought redress within the Union. Border southerners chafed at the Deep South fire-eaters who tried to dictate their approach to the crisis. Some even charged that immediate separatists in the Lower South plotted to secede hurriedly in order to create a Border South buffer that would "serve as a rampart against Northern crusaders." These border southerners protested that Lower South radicals cared little for the welfare of the slaveholding states to their north and instead wanted the exposed Border South to act as a shield against the federal government. Fire-eaters, on the other hand, lamented the hand-wringing of border southerners. James M. Mason of Virginia sneered that "some of the Southern States will

¹³ John P. Gillis to My Dear Son, Nov. 6, 1860, John P. Gillis Papers, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware; John Pendleton Kennedy to Robert C. Winthrop, Oct. 20, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; J.W.S. Bodley to A. Burwell, Nov. 22, 1860, Bodley Family Papers, FHS.

be tardy, & others recusant” on the issue of secession, while a South Carolinian was aghast when he heard a rumor that John C. Breckinridge intended to undertake a tour of the South in support of the Union.¹⁴ Internal southern political divisions, which had haunted the proponents of a unified South for decades, had not vanished with the election of a Republican president. Southern radicals and moderates continued to harbor doubts about one another, which made the contradictory goals of each camp all the more difficult to attain and in the long run played into the hands of northern politicians who had no inclination to consider any compromise on the slavery issue.¹⁵

Even more egregious to southern radicals, many border southerners expressed a willingness to allow Lincoln to enter the oval office before they made any decisions about their future in the Union. John Brown’s raid and the speakership contest of 1859-1860 had buried the Republican Party’s chances of building a viable organization in the Border South for the election of 1860, but many border southerners still discerned varying strands of Republicanism. The powerful tonic of a strong Unionist tradition and their experience with Lower North moderates who had joined the Republicans as a last resort convinced many border southerners that they should at least see how Lincoln would govern the nation before they took any action. As long as perceived moderates such as Edward Bates of Missouri, Francis Preston Blair, Sr. of Maryland, Thomas Corwin and Thomas Ewing of Ohio, and Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania exerted a temperate influence over the party, some border southerners were willing to give the Republicans a trial run. After all, Bates, Corwin, and Ewing had been key allies of Border South Whig

¹⁴ “George N. Sanders on the Sequences of Southern Secession,” Oct. 30, 1860, Sanders Family Papers, FHS; W.S. Bodley to A. Burwell, Nov. 26, 1860, Bodley Family Papers, FHS; James M. Mason to William Porcher Miles, Nov. 9, 1860, William E. Martin to William Porcher Miles, Nov. 14, 1860, both in W.P. Miles Papers, SHC-UNC.

¹⁵ Internal divisions are a major theme in Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) & William W. Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

moderates, while Blair and Cameron worked with Democrats from the border area in the days before the advent of the Republican Party. The party's decision to abandon the contentious herald of the irrepressible conflict, William Henry Seward, in the election of 1860 demonstrated to some Border South moderates that conservatives within the Republican Party had at least some sway.¹⁶

Some Border South Unionists tried to paint Lincoln as a conservative, and to make their case they often arrayed the president-elect against the more extreme members of the Republican Party. These Unionists pointed out that Lincoln's political record and views toward slavery were far removed from pariahs like Charles Sumner or Henry Wilson, Massachusetts senators known for their abolitionist tendencies. Several moderates, including Crittenden and Green Adams of Kentucky, asked Lincoln to make a public statement of his conservative intentions toward slavery in order to fend off secessionists and empower southern Unionists. Other conservative Unionists familiar with Lincoln assured their friends and colleagues that the president-elect had no intention of interfering with slavery in the states.¹⁷

George Prentice, a former Whig and editor of the *Louisville Daily Journal*, and Nathaniel Paschall, publisher of the Democratic St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, opened a dialog with the president-elect around the time of the election in the hopes that Lincoln might confirm their beliefs about his conservative stance toward the slavery issue. Both men candidly told Lincoln that they had opposed him during the canvass, but had since become reconciled to his victory. Rather than engage in a campaign of condemnation against the Republicans, both editors instead

¹⁶ Worthington G. Snethen to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 26, 1860, W.T. Early to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 30, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; R.W. Thompson to J. Morrison Harris, Aug. 12, 1860, J. Morrison Harris Papers, MDHS.

¹⁷ James Porter to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 2, 1860, Samuel Haycraft to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 13, 1860, Nathaniel P. Paschall to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 18, 1860, Thomas Corwin to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 10, 1860, Isaac Newton to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 13, 1860, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Blanton Duncan to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 6, 1861, Douglas Papers, UC; Edward Bates to James S. Rollins, Oct. 25, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

displayed a readiness to treat Lincoln fairly in their papers if he would only publish a letter in which he promised to uphold the Fugitive Slave Law and ask for the free states to repeal their personal liberty laws. Prentice calculated that such a letter would “take from the disunionists every excuse or pretext for treason,” while Paschall believed it would “keep down the excitement now pervading the South.”¹⁸ Lincoln, however, rejected their overtures and instead directed the editors to the Chicago Platform and his many speeches already in print for his stance on slavery. The president-elect even suggested that if southern papers like Paschall’s, “which heretofore have persistently garbled, and misrepresented what I have said, will now fully and fairly place it before their readers, there can be no further misunderstanding.”¹⁹ Lincoln claimed he meant no harm by his words, but they surely sounded anything but soothing to Paschall and Prentice.

No one can measure the effect of the public letter Lincoln never wrote, but it does seem that he missed an opportunity to quell the fears of unmoved southern moderates at this early interval. Paschall and Prentice wanted to portray Lincoln in the best light in order to ameliorate otherwise unimpressed neighbors who sat on the fence between Union and secession. A public statement straight from Lincoln’s pen might have convinced some skeptical southerners that their moderate neighbors accurately interpreted the president-elect’s intentions toward slavery. With the support of Paschall and Prentice and a public avowal from Lincoln, the impulse for disunion may have once again been confined to the borders of the Palmetto State. Yet the blame cannot wholly fall at Lincoln’s feet, for these Border South editors asked a great deal from the president-elect, who had much on his mind. Lincoln correctly observed that time and again southern radicals had misrepresented his words for their own political advantage. If he issued a

¹⁸ George D. Prentice to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 26, 1860, Nathaniel P. Paschall to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 18, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

¹⁹ Abraham Lincoln to George D. Prentice, Oct. 29, 1860, Abraham Lincoln to Nathaniel Paschall, Nov. 16, 1860, both in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 8 volumes & Index (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), 4:134-135, 139-140, hereinafter cited as *CWL*.

statement in November it opened the door to more distortion and skullduggery. The president-elect also faced the ominous task of sorting out patronage requests and cabinet appointments, which added to his busy schedule, tried his patience, and probably contributed to his terse response.²⁰

Other Border South moderates continually harped on the fact that although the Republicans had captured the White House, the legislative and judicial branches of the federal government remained in the hands of conservatives. Upon Lincoln's election several states had yet to hold elections for the Thirty-seventh Congress, scheduled to convene in December 1861, but prognosticators estimated that the Republicans would fall short of a majority in both the House and the Senate. Without a majority in Congress the Republicans could not pass legislation offensive to the South, nor could Lincoln make objectionable appointments to his cabinet or the Supreme Court. With a non-Republican legislative majority, the new president also faced serious obstacles if he attempted to dole out patronage to unsuitable candidates in the South. Moreover, only one Republican sat on the Supreme Court in 1860, and four of the justices hailed from southern states. Southern Unionists pointed out that Chief Justice Roger B. Taney's court gave judicial imprimatur to slavery in the territories with the Dred Scott decision in 1857, effectively nullifying the centerpiece of the Chicago Platform. Only a drastic alteration in the composition of the justices could lead the Supreme Court away from its position on slavery in the territories, and the likelihood of such a change remained remote as long as Republicans could not carry a majority in the Senate. As a Maryland Unionist observed,

²⁰ William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 19-21; Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 75-76.

“[Lincoln] is therefore utterly powerless; not one of his antislavery ideas can be engrafted into the legislation of the Country.”²¹

Some moderates within the Border South called for the region to remain in the Union because they believed the Republican Party teetered on the verge of destruction. The Republicans operated much better as political aspirants than as officeholders, Isaac Sturgeon of St. Louis reasoned. Their purpose had been to capture the White House, and now that they had accomplished that object the disparate wings of the organization would bicker over what policies they should prioritize. He considered the Republican coalition too wieldy for it to govern effectively and please all its adherents. Sturgeon speculated that “within two years the Republican party will be broken to pieces & that the fragments can not [sic] be glued together for a canvass in ’64.” He and likeminded border southerners contended that secession would forfeit an opportunity for the Democrats or some other conservative party to overtake the splintered Republicans in the future.²²

²¹ Robert C. Winthrop to John Pendleton Kennedy, Nov. 14, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 17, 87; Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 284, 574; www.supremecourt.gov/about/members.aspx; John Crisfield to Henry Page, Nov. 11, 1860, Henry Page Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The composition of the Supreme Court had changed slightly since the Dred Scott decision. Benjamin Curtis of Massachusetts resigned in 1858 and Peter V. Daniel of Virginia passed away in May 1860. Both seats were filled after Lincoln was president and after the secession of eleven southern states provided his party with the Senate numbers needed to get more Republicans appointed to the bench.

²² John Pendleton Kennedy to George S. Bryan, Dec. 27, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; Isaac H. Sturgeon to James Buchanan, Nov. 19, 1860, James Buchanan Papers, HSP. For the disparate elements that made up the Republican Party, see William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Patrick M. Sowler, “The Conciliatory Republicans During the Winter of Secession,” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1963); Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978); Joel H. Silbey, “The Surge of Republican Power’: Partisan Antipathy, American Social Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War,” in Silbey, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 166-189; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*; Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*. For the argument that the overriding issue of antislavery smoothed over Republican differences, see Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Bruce Levine, “‘The Vital Element of the Republican Party’: Antislavery, Nativism, and Abraham Lincoln,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 (December 2011), 481-505. For the view that the secession crisis actually demonstrated that the Republicans operated as a more cohesive unit than some contemporaries and scholars have acknowledged, see Michael D. Robinson, “William Henry Seward and the Onset of the Secession Crisis,” *Civil War History* 59 (March 2013), 32-66.

The moderate Unionist outlook had a strong foothold in the Border South immediately after Lincoln's election, which provided some comfort to otherwise worried conservatives and deceived Republicans who argued that the party need not grant concessions to the South in its hour of victory. Most moderates understood the contingent nature of southern Unionist thought, while Republicans could discern only one variety of Unionism – unconditional. Lincoln's refusal to issue a public statement to mollify southern Unionists illustrates how many Republicans discounted the veracity of reports that the disunion movement might spread beyond the confines of a few pockets of radicalism in the Deep South. The son of Congressman Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts reminisced that during this important interval he and other Republicans "dwelt in a fool's Paradise." "We knew nothing of the South, had no realizing sense of the intensity of feeling which there prevailed; we fully believed it would all end in gasconade," he recalled.²³ Conservatives, on the other hand, comprehended the extremely brittle nature of southern Unionism. In the event that radicals within the Republican Party gained the upper hand, or if Lincoln tried to undermine the constitutional guarantees to protect slavery, or if their moderate allies in the North allowed the Republicans to achieve a majority in Congress, border southerners warned that they would reevaluate their place in the Union. A Missourian who voted for Lincoln reflected this stance when he admitted "there is much about the Republican party I dont [sic] like – those who advocate the abominable personal liberty bills – and the abolition element embraced in this." He felt as though Lincoln did not belong to this

²³ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 69-70. For good treatments of the Republicans during the secession crisis, see especially David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (1942; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Soble, "Conciliatory Republicans"; Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); and Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*. For a thoughtful explication of the Republican misunderstanding of southern Unionism see David M. Potter, "Why the Republicans Rejected Both Compromise and Secession," in Potter, *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 243-262.

abolition element, but hinted that if the new president proved otherwise or failed to respect the Fugitive Slave Law, he would reconsider his support of the administration.²⁴

A more urgent problem existed for Border South moderates and Unionists. Southern Unionists prayed that Congress would secure a permanent settlement on the volatile slavery issue in order to isolate secession fervor. If the Republicans refused to consider some sort of compromise on slavery, however, moderates could not promise to keep their constituents in line. A Republican refusal to retreat from the Chicago Platform kept afloat the possibility that all fifteen slaveholding states would leave the Union.²⁵ The legislatures of Delaware and Missouri were scheduled to meet around the start of the new year, while the governors of Kentucky and Maryland toyed with the idea of calling their legislative bodies into special session.²⁶ If the Republicans balked on the issue of conciliation in Congress, the Border South legislatures might very well follow the Lower South blueprint and call state conventions to consider secession.

Before Congress met, rumors and innuendo complicated matters for Border South moderates. Mob violence and slave stealing resumed along the Kansas-Missouri border in November 1860 and resulted in several murders; most Missourians blamed the notorious James Montgomery, a one-time ally of John Brown in Kansas, for the unrest on the heels of the Republican victory. The lame-duck Missouri governor dispatched General Daniel Frost and a portion of the state militia to the western border and instructed the units to repel all invasions from Kansas. Frost reported that the recent incursions from Kansas had provoked many Missourians to move elsewhere because they feared for their lives and wanted to protect their

²⁴ James O. Broadhead to My Dear Tom, Dec. 2, 1860, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH.

²⁵ George S. Bryan to John Pendleton Kennedy, Jan. 25, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

²⁶ Thomas H. Hicks to James L. Dorsey, Dec. 15, 1860, Thomas H. Hicks Papers, 1821-1881, (MS 1263), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland; Stephen S. Nicholas to John Crittenden, Dec. 27, 1860, Crittenden Papers, LOC.

slaves from theft.²⁷ Frost's men encountered no opposition once they reached the border, but the mere fact that the governor found it necessary to send a portion of the militia westward heightened the anxiety of many Missourians. David M. Fox, a resident of eastern Missouri, questioned how anyone in the state could claim they wanted to wait and see what the Lincoln administration would do in the aftermath of the outbreak of violence. "There is yet no cause for us to move – [Lincoln] is going to do justice to all sections of the Country, Bah!!" Fox sarcastically wrote. "The justice which he is about to deal out will be such as views portrayed by him in speeches two years ago."²⁸ He equated the actions of the Kansans with the president-elect's famous House Divided speech, in which Lincoln utilized Biblical imagery to predict that a showdown between slavery and freedom awaited the United States in the near future. The outbreak of violence along the Missouri-Kansas line literally raised the ghost of John Brown for some border southerners. Montgomery denied involvement with the killings, but he reportedly promised to commence a campaign against slavery in western Missouri at the first opportunity. As long as Lincoln remained in the White House and preached the rhetoric of a House Divided, some fretted, the Border South would endure constant attacks from outsiders. Fox considered the resumption of violence on the western border the tangible consummation of the Republican program to destroy slavery, and the South added to its own endangerment with every passing moment it remained in the Union. Years of Republican anti-southern and antislavery rhetoric, he

²⁷ Jeremy Neely, *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 91-94; Robert M. Stewart to J.F. Snyder, Nov. 20, 1860, Petition of Citizens of Henry Township, Vernon County, to Governor Robert M. Stewart, Nov. 21, 1860, Petition of Citizens of Jackson County, [no date], Daniel M. Frost to Robert M. Stewart, Nov. 27, 1860, all in Missouri-Kansas Border War Collection, 1858-1862, Office of the Secretary of State, Record Group 5, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri.

²⁸ David M. Fox to Robert M. Stewart, Nov. 27, 1860, Missouri-Kansas Border War Collection, Missouri State Archives.

gathered, had provoked zealots like Montgomery to raise the sword against the peculiar institution and now secession remained the only alternative for aggrieved southerners.²⁹

Rumors of an abolitionist intrusion into Kentucky also undermined the Border South Unionist position. After the election a citizen in Felicity, Ohio, anonymously sent a warning to the clerk of court in Augusta, Kentucky, situated on the southern bank of the Ohio River approximately forty miles southeast of Cincinnati, that a band of Ohio abolitionists planned to invade Bracken County and free any slaves they found. Two concerned Augusta natives forwarded the warning to Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin. Although they acknowledged the likelihood of a hoax, the men still asked Magoffin if the state would provide arms to repel any invasion. The writers reminded the governor that exiled abolitionist John G. Fee currently resided in Felicity, and they surmised that the Republican victory may have motivated him to take action against slavery in the Bluegrass State.³⁰

The Border South wobbled between the North and the South during these heady days, and Unionists across the region comprehended both the scope of the fight on their hands and the need for immediate combat against secessionists in their midst. George Prentice's newspaper became the voice of Unionists throughout the Border South. He counseled border southerners to set aside partisan differences and work for the preservation of the Union, and advised moderates to hold public meetings in order to engage in "political worship around the altar of their country." Prentice acknowledged that Kentucky and the Border South should take on the position of mediator in the conflict, for these states represented the true middle ground of the nation. "Instead of being a satellite to be dragged at the tail and to follow the fortunes of some distant and eccentric State, she [Kentucky] is the firm centre to which they must be attracted.

²⁹ Neely, *The Border Between Them*, 93-94. For the House Divided speech, see David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 206-209.

³⁰ Thornton Marshall & L.J. Bradford to Beriah Magoffin, Dec. 17, 1860, Magoffin Papers, KDLA.

Massachusetts and South Carolina may fly off like excited sparks from the solid iron,” Prentice intoned, “But Kentucky is not going to follow the sparks.”³¹

Just like Lower South fire-eaters, Border South moderates mobilized in November 1860. In the following months, Unionists organized a plethora of meetings and rallies across the region in order to dull the appeals of disunionists in their midst. John Pendleton Kennedy began composing an influential Unionist pamphlet addressed to the people of the Border South just five days after the election. After reading secessionist sermons delivered by his Presbyterian colleagues Reverend Benjamin Morgan Palmer and Reverend James Henley Thornwell, Danville, Kentucky, minister Robert J. Breckinridge threw his services to the Union cause. Over the following months Breckinridge delivered Unionist speeches, traded oratorical blows with his Presbyterian friends who now advocated the dismemberment of the nation, and oversaw the dissemination of tracts outlining his pro-Union position.³²

The Unionist campaign had great effect throughout the region, and Border South conservatives initially overawed the proponents of secession with their onslaught. Moderates utilized the resources at their disposal to bombard border country southerners with their plea for a measured response to the crisis of the Union. Several major themes emerged in the Unionist assault and exerted a powerful hold over border southerners throughout the crisis. First, conservatives underscored the need for the states of the Border South to stick together in the unfolding predicament. The definition of the Border South remained in flux at this early interval, for most Union polemicists assigned the label to Virginia and some attached it to North

³¹ *Louisville Daily Journal*, Nov. 9, 10, 16, 20, & 21, 1860; the first quote comes from the Nov. 10 issue, while the second can be found in the Nov. 21 edition.

³² *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jan. 9, 1861; Journal Entry for Nov. 11, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; B.T. Lacy to Robert J. Breckinridge, Dec. 22, 1860, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC; James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 79-81. For a brief discussion of Kennedy’s pamphlet, see Chapter 1 above.

Carolina and Tennessee. Nonetheless, Unionists time and again reiterated the power of these slaveholding states and charged them with the task of holding the line against sectional extremism from both directions. Kennedy argued that the “firmness, justice, and dignified bearing” of the Border South states would make them “the authoritative and controlling power to devise and establish the foundations of a secure and durable settlement, with every provision for the preservation of Southern rights which the seceding States themselves could reasonably demand.”³³ A divided Border South would sap the strength for a permanent settlement of the slavery issue and provide aid to the secessionists of the Lower South, moderates feared.

Several suggestions about how to maintain Border South unity entered into public discourse in the months following Lincoln’s election. Because by the end of 1860 all seven of the Lower South states had initiated the process of calling state conventions to consider secession, some moderates entertained the idea to call a convention of the eight states that comprised the Border and Upper South. A Tennessee Unionist predicted that upon meeting these states could “fix upon a line of policy, saying to the North & South, this far shalt thou go, & no farther.”³⁴ Other southern Unionists proclaimed that both the free and slave states along the border should meet in convention in order to receive input from moderates in both the Upper South and the Lower North. This convention would then present some political settlement to the rest of the nation in the hopes of silencing sectional radicals and reconstructing the Union. Some Unionists, including John Pendleton Kennedy, Thomas Hicks, William C. Rives of Virginia, and Willard Saulsbury of Delaware, hoped to add strength to this proposal by adding an essential

³³ John Pendleton Kennedy, “The Border States: Their Power and Duty in the Present Disordered Condition of the Country,” in John Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession, November 1860-April 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 246.

³⁴ R.B. Brabson to Alexander Boteler, Oct. 15, 1860, Boteler Papers, DU; N.W. Watkins to James S. Rollins, Jan. 9, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO. For the process of state legislatures calling state conventions in the Lower South, see Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 14, 28, 51, 68, 82, 103, 123-124.

rider: if the states of the Lower South or the Upper North spurned the border compromise, then the free and slave border states would create their own middle confederacy. A middle confederacy, shorn of sectional radicals in the Upper North and Lower South, “would obviate the only difficulty in the way of settling this matter of slavery relations on a proper basis and forever.”³⁵

As a corollary to the appeal for Border South unity, moderates played upon the strong desire for intersectional unity that had been a key feature of the region throughout the antebellum period. During the 1850s the people of the Border South regarded the inhabitants of the Lower North as conservative allies who would blunt the thrust of sectionalists who used the slavery issue for political advantage. Once again, border country moderates called on their neighbors to trust Lower North moderates. Whether staking out ground for a settlement on the slavery issue or even building a new middle confederacy, Border South Unionists stressed that the conservative sentiment in this region could overwhelm the Republicans and fire-eaters throughout the nation. They pointed to the results of the presidential election, where Lincoln amassed less than forty percent of the popular vote, as evidence of a bi-sectional conservative groundswell, and John Pendleton Kennedy projected that seventy-five to ninety percent of the northern population would not countenance any infringement upon the constitutional rights of the South. Secession instantly forfeited the northern component that had been so instrumental in keeping radical elements at bay in the turbulent 1850s. “Nothing, therefore, can be more suicidal,” Robert J. Breckinridge roared, “than for the border slave States to adopt any line of

³⁵ Kennedy, “The Border States,” in Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession*, 227-229; Harold Bell Hancock, *Delaware During the Civil War: A Political History* (Wilmington: Historical Society of Delaware, 1961), 42; James F. Noble to John Crittenden, Dec. 3, 1860, Crittenden Papers, LOC; William C. Rives to Alexander Botler, Dec. 8, 1860, Boteler Papers, DU; Jno. H.B. Latrobe to William C. Rives, Dec. 15, 1860; Rives Papers, LOC.

conduct which can justly deprive them of the sympathy and confidence of the border free States.”³⁶

Second, Border South moderates stressed that the people of their region would not tolerate northern or southern extremists dictating policy to them. In effect, border southerners proclaimed that they would resist fanatical abolitionists or radical fire-eaters bullying them into a hurried decision about their future place in the Union. “We are down on both the secessionists and abolitionists believing in our humble opinions they are working for the same end but in a different manner,” a Marylander intoned.³⁷ Border South conservatives reminded their constituents that they should not blindly follow disunionists nor react precipitously to the taunts of northern radicals because doing so would only lead to a fractured nation. Rather, the people of the region should confine these extremists to the margins and follow a trail with their own self-interest in mind. Unionists and moderates claimed that path had been cut over the previous eighty years by conservatives who had labored for conciliation and compromise, such as Henry Clay. Maryland governor Thomas Hicks reminded Crittenden that in this crisis he represented the “forlorn hope” of the Border South because he must imitate the “Immortal Clay.” Other border moderates looked to Stephen Douglas to take on the mantle of conservative leadership, while some hoped that partisan differences might fall by the wayside in order for the two

³⁶ Nathaniel Pitcher Tallmadge to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 17, 1860, Crittenden Papers, LOC; John Pendleton Kennedy, “The Border States,” & Robert J. Breckinridge, “Discourse Delivered on the Day of National Humiliation, January 4, 1861, at Lexington, Kentucky,” both in Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession*, 244, 259. My view of intersectional amity along the border is at variance with that of Stanley Harrold, who portrays the region as a site of never-ending conflict during the decades before the war. In my opinion, Harrold underestimates the tremendous staying power of intersectional accord, even in the face of the violence and dissonance upon which he focuses; see Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

³⁷ C.B. Jones to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 11, 1861, Douglas Papers, UC; Thomas H. Hicks to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 13, 1860, Thomas H. Hicks Papers, 1860-1865, (MS 2104), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

political giants to unite on behalf of compromise when the new session of Congress opened in early December.³⁸

Many Border South Unionists had argued that the Republicans represented the greatest threat to the safety of the Union during the canvass of 1860, but in the aftermath of the election they aimed their wrath at the fire-eaters of the Lower South. With Lincoln elected by a legal vote, border country moderates had to switch gears. Now moderates stressed that fire-eaters would greatly endanger the Border South if they pulled the rest of the slaveholding states out of the Union. The secession of the Border South would expose the region to inestimable dangers while insulating the Gulf South from abolitionist excursions, slave escapes, and in the event of war, the brunt of the conflict. A Kentuckian complained that Deep South disunionists “do not stay to fight the battle but desert, & leave inestimable treasures & priceless blessings to perish behind them.” “The cry of disunion comes, not from those who suffer most from northern outrage,” Kentuckian Amos Kendall observed, “but from those who suffer least.” South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama lost one slave to every one hundred in the Border South, Kendall argued, where the enticements of free soil lay just across the Ohio River, the northern border of Maryland and Delaware, and on three sides of Missouri. Some bold Unionists went so far to declare that the Border South had a completely different destiny than did the cotton states and welcomed the idea of a permanent separation between their own region and the Lower South.³⁹

³⁸ Thomas H. Hicks to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 13, 1860, Hicks Papers, 1860-1865 (MS 2104), MDHS; D.P. Henderson to Stephen Douglas, Jan. 30, 1860, Joe V. Meigs to Stephen Douglas & John Crittenden, Jan. 17, 1861, both in Douglas Papers, UC; Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, Dec. 12, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

³⁹ Jno. S. Bransford to W.C.P. Breckinridge, Dec. 7, 1860, B.T. Lacy to Robert J. Breckinridge, Dec. 22, 1860, both in Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC; Amos Kendall to James L. Orr, Sept. 17, 1860, in Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.*, 11 volumes (New York: D. Van Nostrand Publisher, 1861-1868), 2:131; Jno. H. Latrobe to William C. Rives, Dec. 28, 1860, Rives Papers, LOC.

Historians have often pointed out that fire-eaters exploited the southern code of honor to convert their wavering neighbors to the disunionist standard. The code of honor was built upon the contradictory concepts of liberty and slavery. A truly honorable man enjoyed unencumbered liberty, while a person without honor submitted to the will of others, as did an enslaved person. Although the code of honor had receded in other parts of the nation by the middle of the nineteenth century, it remained vibrant in the South, where the omnipresence of enslaved persons provided white southerners with a corporeal reminder of the antithesis of liberty. White southerners jealously protected their honor and would resort to violence if they felt another had attempted to trespass upon their liberty. Southern radicals in the Deep South whipped up secession sentiment in late 1860 by proclaiming that anyone who submitted to Republican rule lacked honor.⁴⁰ Border South moderates, however, also employed the rhetoric of honor when building their case for the Union. During their Unionist offensive these moderates constantly painted Lower South radicals as cowards who simply wanted to use the Border South “as a barrier to protect them from the fierce abolition [element] of the North that they are arousing, but utterly impotent to avert.” A truly honorable southerner would never shirk his duty as the fire-eaters attempted to do, moderates argued, and allow someone else to fight for him. Handing one’s destiny over to sectional radicals equaled a forfeiture of the border southerner’s liberty and also imbued a sense of dishonor. An Elkton, Kentucky, native noticed that Unionists in his town had confronted some townspeople who favored disunion, and these secessionists no longer sported their secession cockades when out in public. “I hope that the wearers have become

⁴⁰ Many works have emphasized the role honor played in southern politics in general and the secession crisis in particular. For general studies on the relationship of southern honor to southern politics see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); William J. Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983); Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). For the direct link between southern honor and the secessionist campaign, see Christopher J. Olsen, *Political Culture and Secession in Mississippi: Masculinity, Honor, and the Antiparty Tradition, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

ashamed of their disunion badges,” he remarked. The words honor, shame, impotency, and cowardice had a powerful meaning even in the Border South, and Unionists made good use of it, albeit in a much different fashion than did the fire-eaters of the Lower South. They wielded honor against both the radicals in their midst and those in the North and South who would jeopardize the safety of the Union. “While [Kentucky] disdains to assume the offensive, vaunting, blustering style of South Carolina, she is no less jealous of her honor,” one Border South inhabitant insisted, “and with dignity and firmness demands of the North that redress which she regards as her due.”⁴¹

Perhaps more than any other element in the nation, Border South moderates realized the potential for war if secession became a reality. Moreover, they perceived that the scope of the conflict would far surpass what many Americans imagined. A writer in *DeBow's Review*, a New Orleans-based commercial and agricultural magazine that supported disunion, considered war unlikely in the event that all fifteen slaveholding states seceded, but also made the Janus-faced concession that all great nations had endured civil wars. This proponent of secession fed the fears of Border South moderates when he blithely stated that if the more northerly slave states opted to remain in the Union and war commenced, they could serve as “a barrier to the access of abolition emissaries.” Lower South editors in favor of secession dismissed the prospect of war or estimated that a conflict would result in few casualties, and one South Carolina fire-eater reputedly announced that all the blood shed as a result of secession would hardly fill up a thimble.⁴² Time and again fire-eaters promised that their course provided safety to the

⁴¹ Abiel Leonard to Robert Wilson, Jan. 21, 1861, typescript copy, Abiel Leonard Papers, SHS-MO; Uncle Billie to J.W. Duncan, Jan. 1, 1861, Uncle Billie Letter, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

⁴² A. Roane, “The South, In the Union or Out of It,” *DeBow's Review* 29 (October 1860), 457, 461. For the initial confidence of fire-eaters, see Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), Ch. 8. Senator James Chesnut of South Carolina made the prediction about blood filling a lady's thimble; see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 238.

slaveholding states, but those who inhabited the exposed frontier of slavery questioned such assurances. Although the Border South usually enjoyed harmonious relations with the Lower North in the preceding decades, the region had endured periodic episodes of violence. The conflict on Missouri's western border, episodic confrontations over the reclamation of fugitive slaves, and the specter of slave revolts brought on by zealots like John Brown conditioned border southerners to expect much worse if a full-scale conflict erupted, and nothing could more quickly bring about such a clash than secession. Moderates were mindful that nearly all northerners exalted the Union and would likely condone an armed conflict to preserve it. John Pendleton Kennedy vividly portrayed the outcome for the Border South should they opt to secede. He predicted "the sack of cities, the brutal and indiscriminate murder of old and young of either sex, the rape and rapine, the conflagration, the shriek of surprised families, [and] the midnight flight of mothers and children tracking their way with bleeding feet."⁴³

Secession, moderates argued, produced instability and desolation for the border rather than safety and contentment as fire-eaters prophesied. Suffused with realism about war that other Americans lacked, border country moderates took to the stump to push for mediation, a course that best protected the Border South, rather than confrontation in the aftermath of Lincoln's election. In a public letter in support of a sober approach to the crisis Kentuckian Amos Kendall howled that the states of the Border South "do not intend that their peaceful channels of commerce shall become rivers of blood to gratify the ambition of South Carolina and Alabama."⁴⁴

⁴³ John Pendleton Kennedy, "An Appeal to Maryland," in Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record*, 1:368. For the sanctity of the Union among the northern populace, see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁴⁴ Amos Kendall to James L. Orr, Sept. 17, 1860, in Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record*, 2:131.

The third major theme of the moderates' campaign built on the first two. Border South conservatives insisted that the Union provided the best shelter for the institution of slavery, while secession endangered the long-term viability of the region's social, economic, and political foundation. Moderates argued that if the states of the Border South seceded, they would put the peculiar institution in their region on the fast track to extinction. They cited a surfeit of reasons for their contention. Most importantly, secession meant the Border South surrendered the many protections the federal government offered to the institution of slavery. For a region that suffered more escaped slaves than any other part of the South, relinquishing the federal government's power to capture fugitive slaves would place the institution on extremely shaky ground. The Fugitive Slave Law, which one Kentucky Unionist deemed "effective in its power of recapture but infinitely more potent in its moral agency preventing the escape of slaves," had for the most part been faithfully enforced since its inception in 1850. Secession nullified this law and brought the boundary of Canada down to the northern edge of the Border South.⁴⁵ Conservatives admitted that the power of recapture would be lost because the United States would function as a foreign nation, but they seemed far more distressed that secession would serve as an invitation for enslaved persons to escape. "What are a hundred slaves – or twenty – or more or less – worth within twenty miles of a foreign country?" a Baltimore native rhetorically queried. Their fear of the flood gates opening for escapes underscores how enslaved persons utilized any leverage available to them in the master-slave relationship for their own ends. The mere exercise of flight operated as a potent form of slave resistance and in the case of the Border South it contained a sharp political edge. Moderates acknowledged that Border South

⁴⁵ Joseph Holt, "Joseph Holt's Letter on the Pending Revolution," May 31, 1861, in Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record*, 1:290; Thomas P. Fitzpatrick to William C. Rives, Feb. 11, 1861, Rives Papers, LOC; Raney Ward to Dear Father, Brothers and Sisters, Feb. 10, 1861, Shadrach Ward Correspondence, Perkins Library, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

slaves would easily comprehend the ramifications of secession and use the absence of the Fugitive Slave Law to their advantage, and they argued that remaining in the Union would prevent a northward slave drain and the depression of slave prices.⁴⁶

The secession of the Border South would convert northern allies who pledged to uphold the Fugitive Slave Law into enemies. The realistic outlook about armed conflict in the event of secession troubled border moderates because they recognized that the Border South would become the seat of war. “I would affectionately ask – will not your slaves be less secure, and their labor less profitable under the new order of things than under the old?” Winfield Scott questioned. If plunged into war, the Border South could no longer devote the proper resources needed to maintain the peculiar institution. Invading armies would solicit the escape of enslaved persons, and white Border South males would have to choose between protecting their families and enlisting in the southern cause and fighting in far-off theaters. More harrowing than anything else, the outbreak of war unloosed all restraint and set the stage for a servile insurrection on par with the Haitian Revolution. The specter of a massive slave revolt had long concerned southerners, and Border South moderates claimed secession would make this nightmare a reality. The recent spate of violence on Missouri’s western border and the rumors of abolitionist incursions into the Border South gave their prediction some credence.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ S. Guiteau to Robert J. Breckinridge, Dec. 10, 1860, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC. For the power of slaves and slave flight, see John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); John Ashworth, *The Republic in Crisis, 1848-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁷ “Views of Winfield Scott,” Memorandum dated Oct. 29, 1860, Winfield Scott to John J. Crittenden, Nov. 12, 1860, F.A. Rice to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 22, 1860, all in Crittenden Papers, LOC; W.S. Bodley to A. Burwell, Nov. 22, 1860, Bodley Family Papers, Filson; Francis P. Blair, Sr., to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 30, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

Border country moderates also pointed to the fact that if the region seceded and joined the Lower South in a slaveholding republic, the Cotton South would dominate the new government. In that case, the Border South's interests would be subordinate to those of the Gulf South. John Pendleton Kennedy predicted that the states of the Lower South would push for the reopening of the African slave trade, disagree with the Border South about economic policy, and move to acquire additional territory in the Caribbean and Latin America. Each of these initiatives would depress the price of enslaved persons in the Border South and along with the massive numbers of northward slave escapes expedite the destruction of slavery in the region, Kennedy reasoned. Robert J. Breckinridge echoed Kennedy's warnings and bluntly asserted that if the Border South seceded "we will have taken the most effectual means of extinguishing [slavery]; and that in the most disastrous of all possible ways."⁴⁸

Moderates and Unionists in the Border South certainly did not understate the magnitude of the crisis that confronted their region. They recognized the enormous stakes at risk if the Union broke apart, and they hoped to avoid such a calamity at all costs. The final theme of the conservative offensive accentuated this reality. Moderates argued that the federal government must not attempt to use force to bring any state that seceded back into the Union, and that if a state did leave the Union its inhabitants should not attack federal troops or officials in their midst. The emergent cold war between the Lower South and the federal government must not become a hot one, Unionists contended; such a circumstance would ruin the chances of a mediated settlement. Across the nation people realized that the geographic position of the Border South, along with its political heritage, placed the region in the vanguard of conciliation. "The Middle States must be the mediators of this terrible strife," Robert C. Winthrop wrote to

⁴⁸ Kennedy, "The Border States," & Breckinridge, "Discourse," both in Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession*, 229-230, 258.

Kennedy. “If they will only assert their prerogative & assume the umpire, we shall all fall in with their decision.”⁴⁹ Any attempts at coercion jeopardized the Unionist initiative, and moderates pled for both the federal government and the secessionists of the Lower South to keep their weapons holstered.

The Unionist campaign helped to keep secessionists at bay in the Border and Upper South in November and the following months. Had moderates and conservatives in these eight states simply thrown up their hands and let events unfold on their own, the seeds of disunion sentiment may have blossomed in mid-winter and led politicians in the Border and Upper South to call conventions merely as a response to Lincoln’s election as had the legislatures of the Lower South. To the frustration of fire-eaters, Unionists immediately took the initiative and prostrated the secession movement in the Border South. They preached the value of the Union and the possibility of attaining some settlement on the slavery issue, which left disunionists disappointed and on the defensive. The campaign forced fire-eaters in the Border South to rely upon some outside event – such as coercion on the part of the federal government, the inability of Congress to agree to terms on a settlement satisfactory to southerners, or the secession of Virginia, the crown jewel of the South - to spur their neighbors into action.⁵⁰

Progress toward a compromise served as the fuel of the Border South Unionist offensive. Conservatives cast their eyes toward Washington, where the second session of the Thirty-Sixth

⁴⁹ Robert C. Winthrop to John Pendleton Kennedy, Dec. 22, 1860, Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

⁵⁰ Thomas C. Reynolds to William Porcher Miles, Dec. 15, 1860, Howell Cobb to William Porcher Miles, Jan. 10, [1861], both in William Porcher Miles Papers, SHC-UNC; *New Orleans Bee*, Nov. 23, 1860, in Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession*, 264-265. Daniel Crofts argues that Unionists in the Upper South states of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia were on the defensive in the early stages of the crisis and took the offensive in January 1861. In the Border South, however, the Unionist offensive opened in November 1860 and gathered steam over the following five months. Many Unionists and conservatives from the Border and Upper South were in contact with one another during this interval. This disparity indicates that fewer fire-eaters called the Border South home than in the Upper South, but it makes their threat to the border slaveholding states no less significant. Events in April 1861 demonstrated just how quickly secession sentiment could spread in the Upper South, and the Border South proved to be just as vulnerable to the proliferation of disunionist passions. See Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 90-163.

Congress assembled on December 3, 1860, two weeks before South Carolina's delegates were scheduled to meet and decide the fate of the Palmetto State. Moderates hoped that the momentum of the Unionist campaign would carry over to Capitol Hill and result in a permanent settlement of the slavery issue which might isolate South Carolina extremists, incapacitate fire-eaters across the South, neutralize northern radicals who sought an abolitionist political agenda, and relieve the intersectional tension that threatened to yield a civil war. Crittenden traveled to Washington cognizant that his curtain call in the Senate required his greatest effort yet.

Upon reaching the national capital, Crittenden sensed that many of his colleagues had returned to Washington with a defiant mindset. Democrats, Republicans, and moderates alike assigned the blame for the crisis on their partisan foes; southern politicians clamoring for secession claimed that Lincoln's election sealed the fate of the South; and fire-eaters and northern radicals stared one another down in the streets of Washington. President James Buchanan's mouthpiece in the capital announced that the Republicans had to initiate the process of conciliation in order to satisfy the South. The pro-Buchanan editor asked whether the Republicans would step back from the Chicago Platform and open the door to the preservation of the Union, "or will they let it go unchecked along the path to destruction, whither all their efforts for years past have tended to impel it?" The Republican newspaper in the capital, on the other hand, laid all responsibility for the salvation of the Union at Buchanan's feet. The fate of the nation depended upon whether or not the lame duck president would "*concede* the right of a State to go out of the Union, and nullify all Federal laws, and take possession of all Federal property within her jurisdiction, at pleasure."⁵¹ These two approaches differed immensely. The pro-Buchanan penman called for Republicans to retreat from the party's keystone tenet in their hour of triumph, while the Republican scribe made no mention of compromise as a key to saving

⁵¹ Washington, D.C. *Constitution*, Dec. 4, 1860; Washington, D.C. *National Republican*, Dec. 3, 1860.

the Union. Crittenden and his followers had to strike some middle ground in order to build a coalition in favor of conciliation.

Nearly all border southerners believed that any effective settlement relied upon Republican acquiescence. Crittenden and other Unionists sought a permanent settlement of the slavery issue and thus needed at least a portion of the Republican Party on board. Without Republican cooperation, the political battle over slavery might continue in perpetuity. Not all Republicans took as intransigent a stance as did the publishers of the *National Republican*, which gave Border South moderates some hope. Influential Republican editor Thurlow Weed, who had long served as New York Senator William Seward's political manager, had in late November proposed a settlement of the slavery issue on the basis of the Missouri Compromise. Weed suggested restoring the 1820 Missouri Compromise line, at 36°30' north latitude, which had been repealed in 1854 by the Kanas-Nebraska Act, to the territories; slavery would be allowed in all territory south of the line and forbidden in all territory north of the line. Weed's close relationship with Seward, who nearly all Americans viewed as the leader of the Republican Party, offered to moderates a glimmer of hope that some Republicans would at least consider some form of compromise.⁵²

Congress heard Buchanan's annual message on Tuesday, December 4, 1860, and it did little to assuage the apprehension of Border South moderates who yearned for a settlement. Detractors had long considered Buchanan a doughface politician who bent to every whim of the South; his support of the Lecompton Constitution in 1857 and subsequent break with Stephen

⁵² James Guthrie to P.G. Washington, Dec. 9, 1860, Guthrie Letters, SHC-UNC; James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Dec. 14, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; C.S. Jones to Stephen Douglas, Dec. 29, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; *Albany Evening Journal*, Nov. 24, 1860. Seward acutely dodged any association with Weed's proposal during the secession crisis. For discussions of the Weed compromise proposition, see Sowle, "Conciliatory Republicans," 18-21; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 217-219; McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*, 57-58; & Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 56-60.

Douglas had contributed to the fracture of the Democratic Party and confirmed the suspicions of his enemies. The nation needed leadership during early December, but Buchanan's term expired in just three months and his message indicated his ardent desire to leave office without the crisis escalating into a full-blown war. In proper partisan fashion, Buchanan charged that the abolitionists of the North had brought the sectional controversy to its present state and chastised the Republican Party for politicizing the slavery issue and feeding the uncertainty of southerners. Although Buchanan understood the dread of the southern people, he contended that the legal election of Lincoln served as no impetus for disunion. The lame duck president forcefully affirmed that the Constitution denied the right of secession, yet in the same breath he deflected all responsibility for dealing with South Carolina to Congress. Furthermore, Buchanan insisted that the federal government possessed no power to keep South Carolina in the Union by force. Beyond a recommendation that each northern state repeal any personal liberty laws on its statute books, he advised Congress to call a national convention for the purpose of passing a constitutional amendment that recognized the right of slavery in the states, protected slavery in the territories, and affirmed the right of masters to retrieve fugitive slaves.⁵³

Few people found solace in Buchanan's wavering position toward secession. Some charged the president with ineptitude; others alleged he had shirked his executive duty. A Douglas Democratic paper found Buchanan's logic "simply absurd" and concluded that the North would never acquiesce to his suggestion of protecting slavery in the territories. "Mr. Buchanan's disastrous administration began by disappointing the friends of peace," a Republican editor thundered in response to the message, "and it was fitting that it should close in a like manner." A New Orleans paper in favor of secession regarded Buchanan's proposal for a

⁵³ *CG - Appendix*, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, 1-4. All references to the *Congressional Globe* in this chapter refer to the 36th Congress, 2nd Session, unless otherwise noted.

constitutional amendment nothing more than “a filmy cover of an ulcerous surface” which left the cancer, northern fanaticism, intact. Crittenden considered the message “a vile mass of cowardly verbiage to colour over his base surrender of the Union,” and immediately began drafting a series of compromise resolutions to submit to the Senate.⁵⁴

Partisanship drove antebellum politics, and Crittenden understood that it might serve as an obstacle to a settlement. Partisan passions, after all, had forestalled a collaborative effort of anti-Republican forces during the canvass of 1860 with disastrous results. In order to find some solution, politicians would have to set aside party goals and work for the preservation of the Union. Crittenden apparently made overtures for Democrats to assist him in his quest for compromise. Francis P. Blair, Sr., a consummate Washington insider, surmised that Crittenden and Stephen Douglas, the leader of the northern Democrats, were “in cahoot.” Douglas told the Senate he would “act with any individual of any party” who sought to save the nation, and he appealed to the rest of his colleagues to “lay aside all party grievances, party feuds, [and] partisan jealousies” so they may work toward that end. Crittenden also reached out to fellow Kentuckian Lazarus Powell, a Democrat, who on December 6 introduced a resolution in the Senate in which he recommended the creation of a committee comprised of thirteen senators from all sectional and partisan backgrounds. In order to remove the “disease in the body-politic,” Powell called for the committee to craft legislation or constitutional amendments to “give permanent security, and restore harmony, concord, and fraternal feeling, between the people North and South, and save the Union from speedy dissolution.” Over the next couple of weeks fire-eaters and hardline Republicans, both of whom sought to obstruct any avenue that led

⁵⁴ *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, Dec. 6, 1860, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 7, 1860, both in Howard Cecil Perkins, ed., *Northern Editorials on Secession*, 2 volumes (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942), 1:141-142, 147; *New Orleans Bee*, Dec. 10, 1860, in Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession*, 317; John J. Crittenden to Orlando Brown, Dec. 6, 1860, Orlando Brown Papers, Filson; John J. Crittenden to Thomas Hicks, Dec. 15, 1860, Crittenden Letters, DU.

to a possible compromise, delivered speeches and utilized stall tactics in an effort to prevent the formation of the committee. Attention swung over to the House of Representatives, where moderates hoped to make more headway.⁵⁵

Two days prior to the introduction of Powell's proposition, Virginian Alexander Boteler had secured passage of a similar resolution in the House that created a committee of one congressman from each state to consider the issue of compromise. Unlike in the Senate, Speaker of the House William Pennington wasted little time appointing members to the House committee. Henry Winter Davis of Maryland, William Whiteley of Delaware, Francis Bristow of Kentucky, and John Phelps of Missouri represented the Border South on the Committee of Thirty-three. Whiteley and Phelps belonged to the Democratic Party, while Bristow, a former Whig, allied with the southern Opposition. Davis called himself a member of the Opposition, but his maneuvers in the speakership contest and during the election of 1860 demonstrated that he had nearly completed his transformation to the Republican Party. Although Pennington moved quickly to make appointments, his decision ruffled the feathers of some congressmen. George Hawkins of Florida and William Boyce of South Carolina, both of whom insisted Congress could do nothing to save the Union at this point, asked Pennington to remove them from the committee. The House subsequently voted that neither Boyce nor Hawkins could recuse themselves from service on the panel; despite this ruling the two congressmen rarely attended the committee's meetings. Northern Democrats also complained that the Republican speaker had purposely kept members of their wing of the party off the committee because they would actively work with moderate southerners in pursuit of a settlement. The northern Democrats' criticism had merit. Pennington placed sixteen Republicans on the committee; the only two Democrats from free states hailed from California and Oregon. With one master

⁵⁵ Francis P. Blair, Sr., to Frank Blair, Jr., Jan. 2, [1861], Blair Family Papers, LOC; CG, 28, 19, 24.

stroke, Pennington had effectively silenced the voice of conservatism in the Northeast and Midwest. The rest of the Democrats represented each southern state except for Kentucky, Maryland, and Tennessee, from which Pennington assigned Americans to the committee. The speaker named Republican Thomas Corwin of Ohio chairman. The moderate Republican Corwin faced an uphill battle due to the polarized partisan nature of his committee. If Henry Winter Davis, who privately considered the body a “humbug,” voted with the Republicans and any southerners abstained from participation, the Republicans held a decisive majority on the panel and thus could easily kill any compromise proposal.⁵⁶

Despite the Republican effort to pack the Committee of Thirty-three in their favor, the establishment of a special commission to deal with the issue of compromise added up to a small victory for conservatives. Corwin moved quickly and convened the committee on December 11, which demonstrated his earnest desire to find some solution to the national crisis. The creation of the committee buoyed the hopes of Border South moderates who longed for Congress to reach a settlement. George Prentice predicted the House committee “will be the dove to pluck the olive branch and place it within the ark of our constitutional liberty and glory and independence.” As long as the committee advanced toward compromise, border moderates could hold off the overtures of secessionists. Early signs indicated that numerous congressmen were receptive to conciliation: the House referred a plethora of compromise proposals to the committee in early December, and Thomas A.R. Nelson of Tennessee introduced a comprehensive settlement to the panel during its second meeting. Nelson aimed his compromise package directly at the grievances of the people living in the Border and Upper South and

⁵⁶ *CG*, 6, 22. 36-37, 38, 39-40; *Journal of the Committee of Thirty-three*, in *Report of the Select Committee of Thirty-three on the Disturbed Condition of the Country*, in *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives*, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. I, No. 31, 1-2, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Committee of 33*; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Dec. 10, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

probably consulted Crittenden because his proposal closely resembled the package that the Kentuckian later introduced to the Senate. It consisted of three constitutional amendments which reintroduced the Missouri Compromise line as a boundary between slavery and freedom in the territories; prohibited Congress from interfering with the interstate slave trade, abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and reinstating the international slave trade; gave constitutional imprimatur to the capture of fugitive slaves and the compensation of slaveholders who could not reclaim their property; and set up a system by which presidential electors would have to split their votes between northern and southern candidates.⁵⁷

The prospects of the committee finding some solution brightened when on December 13 Henry Winter Davis entered a resolution that called for the revision of personal liberty laws in the North. Davis, whose initial poor opinion of the committee and the prospect of compromise had changed, also submitted legislation that would allow fugitive slaves a trial by jury and granted magistrates hearing these cases a single fee for their services. Davis aimed his suggestions squarely at the border states. His resolution and recommended revisions of the Fugitive Slave Law addressed the complaints of border country conservatives in each section. Border southerners felt that personal liberty laws impinged upon their property rights, protected by the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution. Border northerners, on the other hand, had long protested that the Fugitive Slave Law unfairly stacked the system against alleged escaped slaves. The fate of a prisoner rested in the hands of a single federal official who received ten dollars if he ruled to return the person to slavery and five dollars if he found the captured individual entitled to freedom. Published slave narratives and the testimony of African Americans confirmed that the Fugitive Slave Law had indeed resulted in innocent free blacks being placed

⁵⁷ Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 52-55; *Louisville Daily Journal*, Dec. 10, 1860; CG, 76-79, 96, 105-111; *Journal of the Committee of 33*, 3-4. For Nelson's relationship to and support of Crittenden, see Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis*, 100; and Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 197-200.

in shackles and sent southward. A trial by jury and a flat fee for magistrates would ostensibly add objectivity to fugitive slave cases. With this proposition Davis intended to capitalize on the intersectional amity that border southerners found absolutely essential to the preservation of slavery in their states.⁵⁸

Southern firebrands in Washington realized that as long as moderates dangled the possibility of compromise before the voters, the South's electorate might once again waver on disunion. The same day Winter Davis offered his proposal to the committee, Albert Rust of Arkansas submitted a resolution that affirmed the legitimacy of southern grievances and implied that if the committee could not reach a settlement on these complaints, the South would likely secede. William McKee Dunn of Indiana introduced a substitute for Rust's resolution which upheld the Arkansan's claim of southern grievances and the need for adjustment, but dropped the language that hinted at disunion. The Dunn resolution passed twenty two to eight, with all of the negative votes coming from Republicans. Fire-eaters, hungry for any sign of Republican intransigence, conveniently ignored the fact that eight members of Lincoln's party also voted in favor of Dunn's conciliatory resolution. Reuben Davis, Mississippi's representative on the Committee of Thirty-three, saw the Republican negative votes as a means to fan the flames of disunion sentiment. That night at a caucus of southern congressmen and senators he presented a document with the bold proclamation that "all hope of relief in the Union...is extinguished" due

⁵⁸ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Dec. 18, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *Journal of the Committee of 33*, 5-6. For the northern response to the Fugitive Slave Law, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*, completed and edited by Ward M. McAfee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 282; & Steven Lubet, *Fugitive Justice: Runaways, Rescuers, and Slavery on Trial* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 50-52. It should be noted that far more northerners chafed at the provision in the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 that allowed magistrates to compel any citizen to help in the capture of an alleged fugitive than did those who complained of an infringement on African American civil liberties. Still, advocates of the slave power thesis could play up the unfair treatment of free blacks in order to make their case even among northern whites disinterested in the fate of African Americans. For this point, see especially Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

to Republican obduracy. Twenty-nine southern politicians signed Davis's "Southern Manifesto," which also recommended immediate separate state secession for the South. None of the signatories, however, hailed from the Border South, and only three Upper South politicians affixed their name to the document. The introduction of conciliatory measures on the Committee of Thirty-three deepened the wedge between the various sub-regions within the South.⁵⁹

While the Committee of Thirty-three debated Winter Davis's proposal, Crittenden on December 18 finally revealed his compromise package to the Senate. The old Kentuckian remarked that he had studied the sectional controversy with great care and now wished to submit a proposal that would please all aggrieved parties and permanently end political agitation over slavery. He begged all political partisans, especially the Republicans, to place the nation above party platforms and work for a solution. "I fear [secession] may swallow up even old Kentucky in its vortex," Crittenden warned, unless Congress accomplished something in the next three months. If politicians allowed partisanship and petty jealousies to clog any advancement toward a settlement, he predicted that "anarchy and war" would follow disunion within half a year. Although several conservatives offered their own proposals for a settlement both prior to and after December 18, the Crittenden plan served as the polestar for moderates in both houses of Congress.⁶⁰

The centerpiece of the Crittenden Compromise dealt with the thorny territorial issue. Crittenden offered a constitutional amendment that reintroduced the Missouri Compromise line

⁵⁹ *Journal of the Committee of Thirty-three*, 7-8; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 17, 1860. Divisions between the Border South and Lower South were also apparent in the Senate, where Missouri Senator James Green presented a proposal for an armed federal police force which would be responsible for patrolling the boundary between free and slave states. Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi laughed off Green's scheme, which he feared would only expand the power of the federal government. Green, himself no conservative Democrat, retorted that the people of the Deep South had lived without fear of slave escapes while slaveholders in the Border South had seen thousands of fugitives escape. Green even went so far as to claim he would prefer a "military despotism than anarchy and confusion." For this exchange, see *CG*, 8, 29-31, 53.

⁶⁰ *CG*, 112-114.

as a division between slavery and freedom in the territories. His first amendment forbade the introduction of slavery in all territory north of 36°30' then in the possession of the federal government. Furthermore, the amendment provided that slavery could not be introduced to any territory subsequently acquired north of the line. South of the line, however, slavery “is hereby recognized as existing, and shall not be interfered with by Congress, but shall be protected as property by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance.” When the people of these territories applied for statehood, they could enter the Union as a free or slave state depending upon their choice.⁶¹

Crittenden carefully worded his territorial amendment to appease northerners worried about southern expansion and filibustering. His stipulation for slavery south of the line omitted mentioning any territory acquired at a later date, so in effect it applied only to the currently held portions of present-day Arizona and New Mexico. The original wording of the amendment boxed slavery into a territorial cage, and it freed the federal government from the responsibility of protecting the peculiar institution therein. The latter provision undercut Breckinridge Democrats who had clamored for the federal government to oversee the protection of slavery in the West. Furthermore, it closely resembled the suggestion made by Republican Thurlow Weed in the *Albany Evening Journal*. Historians have often overlooked the cautious verbiage of Crittenden’s original territorial amendment, but contemporary fire-eaters took notice. Henry Winter Davis chuckled that the lack of a hereafter acquired clause for territory south of the line frustrated disunionists, whose “ultimatum is a right to carry slavery to the South pole & a bribe to filibustering in Mexico to expand the institution!” Conservative southerners and proponents of popular sovereignty, on the other hand, appreciated that Crittenden included language that

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

undercut the Wilmot Proviso and explicitly forbade Congress from interfering with slavery in the territories.⁶²

The other five amendments of the Crittenden plan also dealt with the political issue of slavery: Congress could not interfere with slavery in areas under its exclusive jurisdiction, such as federal forts and dockyards in southern states; Congress could not abolish slavery in the District of Columbia so long as the institution existed in Virginia and Maryland, and any emancipation scheme must be with the consent of and include compensation to the district's slaveholders; Congress could not obstruct the interstate slave trade; slaveholders who encountered abolitionist obfuscation in the free states while attempting to reclaim a fugitive slave would be allowed to sue the northern county where the interference took place for just compensation; and, finally, no future amendment to the Constitution could overturn the five preceding amendments, nor could any forthcoming amendment grant Congress the power to abolish slavery in any of the states where it existed. Crittenden also attached four resolutions to his package which stated the constitutional legitimacy of the Fugitive Slave Law, asked for the repeal of northern personal liberty laws, called for the amendment of the Fugitive Slave Law to allow for equal fees for commissioners and stripped the legislation of its repugnant feature that allowed federal marshals to enlist private citizens to assist in the capture of escaped slaves, and requested the everlasting cessation of the African slave trade to American shores.⁶³

Crittenden's panacea clearly offered more concessions to the South, but he and many contemporary Americans viewed that region as the aggrieved party in the crisis. Both Democrats and former Whigs from the North indicated their satisfaction with his compromise

⁶² Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Dec. 18, 1860, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Dec. 22, 1860, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; James L. Pugh to William Porcher Miles, Jan. 24, 1861, W.P. Miles Papers, SHC-UNC.

⁶³ CG, 114.

measures. Favorable letters from Border South moderates poured in thanking Crittenden for his efforts, and as the weeks passed citizens from all points of the Union flooded Congress with memorials and petitions begging for the plan's adoption.⁶⁴ Scholars studying the crisis have attacked the Crittenden Compromise, so warmly received by many Americans, from a variety of angles. Some historians have labeled the package infeasible and unwieldy; others have suggested no compromise could patch the sectional divide at this point; while still others have lambasted Crittenden for his lack of moral certitude in giving the institution of slavery a lifeline in the states and territories.⁶⁵ Overly dependent upon hindsight, these views obscure the reality of the situation. First, Stephen Douglas chopped Henry Clay's original cumbersome compromise proposals into several pieces of legislation to secure the Compromise of 1850, and nothing precluded similar surgical repairs to Crittenden's package in 1860. The groundswell of support for the Crittenden Compromise which reached Washington during the winter indicates that many Americans still found compromise a reasonable alternative. Finally, aside from a small cadre of abolitionists and the nation's African American population, few Americans viewed the extension of slavery through a moral lens. As reprehensible as it seems to modern sensibilities, the plight of the republic, not of four million African Americans held in bondage, concerned most of antebellum white America. Furthermore, Crittenden had not tethered slavery onto the Union in perpetuity as some historians have charged. The final amendment only forbade Congress from abolishing slavery; if the peculiar institution became moribund, a state

⁶⁴ A sampling of the letters, petitions, and memorials are included in Coleman, ed., *The Life of John Crittenden*, 2:237-249.

⁶⁵ For scholarly attacks on the plan, see Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, vol. 2, *Prologue to Civil War, 1859-1861* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), Ch. 13; Kenneth M. Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950); Harold M. Hyman, "The Narrow Escape from a 'Compromise of 1860': Secession and the Constitution," in Harold M. Hyman and Leonard W. Levy, eds., *Freedom and Reform: Essays in Honor of Henry Steele Commager* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 149-166; Patsy S. Ledbetter, "John J. Crittenden and the Compromise Debacle," *Filson Club History Quarterly* 51 (April 1977), 125-142; and Frank Towers, "Another Look at Inevitability: The Upper South and the Limits of Compromise in the Secession Crisis," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 70 (Summer 2011), 108-125.

still had the power to eradicate slavery within its borders. That his compromise would have extended the life of slavery far beyond its American death in the final three years of the Civil War is unassailable, but no one at the time could guarantee that an armed conflict would bring the peculiar institution to its knees, nor did most Americans feel a great deal of guilt about perpetuating slavery in the states where it existed. Border country moderates, therefore, had every reason to remain optimistic that the introduction of Crittenden's plan offered a realistic solution to the sectional impasse.

His object centered on forever removing the cause of sectional strife, the agitation of the slavery issue, from the political matrix. Unfortunately, Crittenden and other moderates asked the Republicans to acquiesce in a settlement that undermined the very *raison d'être* of their party. Several elements combined to create the Republican coalition in the middle of the 1850s, but the keystone principle of the party centered upon the limitation of slavery's extension into the West. Although some Republicans entertained the notion of compromise during the crisis, this formative precept of the party had not changed. From Springfield Lincoln admonished his colleagues to stand by the cardinal tenet of Republicanism. "There is no possible compromise upon [the extension of slavery]," he told Illinois Congressman Elihu Washburne, "but which puts us under again, and leaves all our work to do over again." He advised all Republicans in Washington to "hold firm, as with a chain of steel."⁶⁶

Partisanship wielded its commanding influence as it had for the previous thirty years in American politics. The Republican Party had been conceived at the height of sectional tensions and unlike the Whigs or Democrats, each of whose founding centered on economic issues in the 1830s, its partisan edge was designed to prevent the introduction of slavery into the territories and wean the political power of the South. Compromise had always been a major component of

⁶⁶ Abraham Lincoln to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 13, 1860, Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:151.

antebellum political culture, but no settlement in the past had required a mainstream party to abandon its core principle. At this critical juncture the Republicans reacted as all good partisans had before them – they dug in their heels and stood by the party’s bedrock value. Crittenden and his colleagues expressed exasperation at Republican intransigence as the crisis deepened, but they had made an almost impossible entreaty in the eyes of most of the party’s adherents. Moderate Republican John Sherman admitted that conciliatory measures “demand of Conservative Republicans a surrender of this House – their manhood – their religious & moral convictions,” which most of his colleagues could not swallow.⁶⁷ If border country moderates wished to secure some form of compromise, they would have to cobble together a coalition of conservatives from various partisan backgrounds, a most difficult enterprise when placed in the context of antebellum political culture.

The same day that Crittenden presented his conciliatory measures, Lazarus Powell, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, and Stephen Douglas pressed the Senate to create its committee on compromise. The resolution passed, and on December 20 Vice President John Breckinridge announced his appointments to the Committee of Thirteen. The vice president struck a balance between partisan and sectional backgrounds in order to give voice to every political component. He selected Republicans William Seward, Jacob Collamer of Vermont, James Doolittle of Wisconsin, James Grimes of Iowa, and Benjamin Wade of Ohio. Northern Democrats included Stephen Douglas, William Bigler of Pennsylvania, and Henry Rice of Minnesota. Jefferson Davis, Robert M.T. Hunter of Virginia, Lazarus Powell, and Robert Toombs of Georgia represented the Southern Democrats. Crittenden, the only member of the Opposition, rounded out the panel of eminent senators. Although Powell chaired the committee because he

⁶⁷ John Sherman to Charles Devens, Dec. 26, 1860, John Sherman Papers, 1860-1880, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

introduced the legislation calling for its establishment, Crittenden was the nominal leader of the body.⁶⁸ Unlike the House compromise committee, the Senate version included the voice of three members of the northern Democracy. Breckinridge had arrayed five Republicans, ranging from the hardliner Wade to the moderate Collamer, against four southern Democrats who covered the broad spectrum of southern political thought, from the fire-eater Toombs to the conservative Powell.

At about the same time the Senate formed the Committee of Thirteen, fire-eaters from the Deep South made a direct appeal for the Border South to join them in their disunion crusade. Even before the Southern Manifesto fell on deaf ears along the border, Alabama and Mississippi arranged to send emissaries northward to preach the virtue of secession. Alexander Hamilton Handy of Mississippi arrived in Maryland in mid-December and began a dialogue with some friends of secession in the Old Line State. Handy told George Hume Steuart, Sr., that he planned to convince Governor Thomas Hicks to call a special session of the legislature so it might make preparations for the state to secede. Steuart, cognizant of the Unionists' impact on the state, grouched that the "frog Hicks" would probably spurn his overture. Indeed, Hicks had privately vowed to resist convening the legislature. Handy met with Hicks on the morning of December 19 and came away disappointed. The governor agreed that the two states shared the same habits and institutions, but he declared that Maryland "is also conservative, and above all things, devoted to the Union." Not until all hope for compromise had been exhausted would Hicks even consider convening the legislature, and he indicated that he would only do so after consultation with the executives of the other Border South states. "Let us show moderation as well as

⁶⁸ CG, 116-117, 158.

firmness,” Hicks admonished Handy, “and be unwilling to resort to extreme measures, until necessity shall leave us no choice.”⁶⁹

The undeterred Mississippian addressed a large crowd at Baltimore’s Hall of the Maryland Institute the night of his meeting with Hicks, whereupon he framed his state’s intent to secede as a matter to preserve the constitutional rights of the South. During the course of his speech Hamilton berated Lincoln and the Republicans, rebuked Henry Winter Davis, and argued that Congress would find no solution to the crisis. Handy made several more speeches across the state, but eventually came to the conclusion that Hicks’s intransigence and the “peculiar local situation” of Maryland, sandwiched between Pennsylvania and the national capital, forestalled any immediate action by the proponents of disunion he encountered.⁷⁰

Commissioners sent from Alabama to each of the Border South states had a similar experience to Handy’s. They quickly realized that the earnestly begun Unionist campaign had neutralized the secession movement along the border. Not even South Carolina’s official exit from the Union on December 20 could sway most border southerners as long as Crittenden kept the hopes of compromise afloat in Washington D.C. Stephen Hale wrote to Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin on December 27 and beseeched him to call the legislature into special session. Although he agreed that the South had endured the taunts and insults of the Republicans, Magoffin advocated a convention of all the slaveholding states to present their demands to the nation. The Kentucky governor, who took a more receptive posture towards secession than

⁶⁹ Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 22-23; George Hume Steuart, Sr., to W.J. Steuart, Dec. 18, 1860, Steuart Papers, DU; Thomas H. Hicks to Beriah Magoffin, Dec. 10, 1860, Hicks Papers, 1860-1865 (MS 2104), MDHS; Thomas H. Hicks to James L. Dorsey, Dec. 15, 1860, Hicks Papers, 1821-1881 (MS 1263), MDHS; Thomas H. Hicks to A.H. Handy, Dec. 19, 1860, in *Journal of the [Mississippi] State Convention and Ordinances and Resolutions, Adopted in January 1861, with an Appendix* (Jackson, MS: E. Barksdale State Printer, 1861), 181-183.

⁷⁰ *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 20, 1860; A.H. Handy to John J. Pettus, Jan. 10, 1861, in *Journal of the Mississippi State Convention*, 180-181.

Hicks, responded in true Border South fashion. He replied that he still had hope that conservatives in the North, the longstanding allies of moderates in the Border South, would work with southerners to find a settlement. “You have no hope of a redress in the Union,” Magoffin granted. “We yet look hopefully to assurances that a powerful reaction is going on at the North.” Magoffin did issue a call to convene the legislature on January 17, but for the present he would wait patiently for the outcome of Crittenden’s efforts in Washington.⁷¹

Two days before the scheduled convocation of the Missouri General Assembly, William Cooper of Alabama spoke on behalf of disunion at a banquet in Jefferson City. A local correspondent estimated that about half of the state legislators had arrived in Missouri’s capital when Cooper delivered his oration; it is unknown how many sat in the audience the night of December 29. Cooper predicted that Republican rule would inevitably lead to slave insurrections on the scale of Haiti if Missouri remained in the Union, but his plea for secession generated little enthusiasm among the crowd. “Missouri feels and realizes her critical situation, being a border State...She will move with slow and cautious steps,” Cooper reported to the governor of Alabama. After the speech state Senator Mosby M. Parsons and Representative Samuel Hyer, Jr., both of whom sympathized with Cooper’s request, held a meeting to discuss a plan of action. Representative D.C. Ballou rebuffed an invitation from Parsons to act as secretary of the meeting. According to a newspaper report, Ballou told his colleagues that “there was yet hope that matters might be amicably adjusted,” and thus he preferred that Missouri

⁷¹ S.F. Hale to B. Magoffin, Dec. 27, 1860, B. Magoffin to S.F. Hale, Dec. 28, 1860, both in *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and the Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series IV, 1: 4-11, 11-15, hereinafter cited as *OR*; Magoffin’s quote is found on p. 14. Dwight Dumond contends that Hale’s letter prompted Magoffin to call the legislature into special session, but Magoffin’s reply suggests that he had made the decision prior to receiving the Alabaman’s letter; see Dumond, *Secession Movement*, 224.

remain in the Union at present. Parsons and Hyer promised to bring Cooper's suggestions before the General Assembly when it convened the following Monday.⁷²

David Clopton of Alabama traveled to Delaware and on January 1 met with Governor William Burton. Clopton, who had to cut his trip short due to an illness in his family, returned to Alabama with the understanding that although many citizens in Delaware sympathized with the Lower South, the great majority favored a convention of either the slaveholding states or the entire nation to "adjust and compromise, if possible, existing difficulties." His conversations with Burton and state legislators convinced him that some of the state's politicians would try to call a state convention during the ongoing session of the General Assembly.⁷³

While the Lower South secession commissioners made their fruitless journeys to the border, the Committee of Thirteen convened for its initial meeting. Mindful that any functional settlement relied upon Republican consent, Jefferson Davis laid out an important ground rule to which both sides assented: the committee would not report any compromise package to the Senate unless a majority of Republicans and the rest of the panel's members voted in favor of the measures. Crittenden faced a setback on December 22 when he laid his plan before the committee. The panel voted to defeat each of his six proposed amendments in piecemeal fashion. The proposal to extend the Missouri Compromise line lost with six members in favor and seven opposed. The three northern Democrats, Hunter, and Powell joined Crittenden in voting for the territorial amendment, but Davis and Toombs cast negative votes along with all five Republicans. The territorial amendment was the only portion of Crittenden's compromise

⁷² St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, Dec. 31, 1860; W. Cooper to A.B. Moore, Jan. 7, 1861, in William R. Smith, *The History and the Debates of the Convention of the People of Alabama, Begun and Held in the City of Montgomery, on the Seventh Day of January, 1861, In Which is Preserved the Speeches of the Secret Sessions, and Many Valuable State Papers* (Montgomery: Atlanta, White, Pfister, & Co., 1861), 405-406; Dwight H. Brown, *State of Missouri: Official Manual for Years Nineteen-Thirty-Five and Nineteen-Thirty-Six* (Jefferson City: Midland Printing Company, no date), 204-205.

⁷³ David Clopton to A.B. Moore, Jan. 1, [1861], in Smith, *History and Debates of Alabama*, 436-437.

defeated by a simple majority; the remaining five amendments went down to defeat because the Republicans unanimously registered a negative. Both Davis and Toombs believed that all of the territories should remain open to slavery and that restricting the peculiar institution's spread lay outside the purview of Congress. Moreover, Crittenden's territorial proposal still lacked a hereafter acquired phrase for southern territory, which in effect cordoned off the peculiar institution to the Southwest, an area where slavery would probably have difficulty taking root. The two Lower South senators initially indicated a willingness to accept the basic terms of Crittenden's settlement, but their hesitancy to sanction the territorial amendment revealed a major obstacle to compromise. With neither the Republicans nor the Lower South senators bending on their territorial stance, the committee faced an uphill battle.⁷⁴

The panel next considered the four resolutions Crittenden included in his settlement package. Republicans blocked Crittenden's first two resolutions dealing with the legitimacy of the Fugitive Slave Act and the repeal of personal liberty laws, but the committee agreed unanimously to adopt the final two resolutions that called for amendment of the Fugitive Slave Act and a permanent restriction on the African slave trade. In response to the defeat of the Crittenden plan, Toombs wired his constituents and advised the secession of Georgia.⁷⁵

On Christmas Eve Stephen Douglas offered a compromise package to the committee that included two comprehensive constitutional amendments. The first amendment applied popular

⁷⁴ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Special Committee under the Resolution of the Senate of the 18th of December, 1860*, in *Report of the Select Committee of Thirteen on the Disturbed Condition of the Country*, in *Reports of Committees of the Senate*, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 288, 1-8, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Committee of Thirteen*. The vote on the territorial portion of the amendment can be found on p. 5. Davis and Toombs voted in favor of all the remaining Crittenden amendments, but registered a negative on this one key provision. For indications that the Lower South senators were prepared to acquiesce in the settlement, see Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 105-106; and William J. Cooper, Jr., *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 319-320. William Henry Seward was absent from the committee on Dec. 22; upon his return on Dec. 24 he registered his negative vote with the rest of the Republicans.

⁷⁵ *Journal of the Committee of Thirteen*, 7; Robert Toombs to the People of Georgia, telegram, Dec. 23, 1860, in Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1911*, Vol. 2: *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 525.

sovereignty to the territories and specifically stated that only when applying for statehood could the people residing therein vote to keep or disallow slavery. Other facets of Douglas's first amendment regulated the acquisition of new territory and applied the process for reclaiming fugitive slaves to all new territories and states. His second amendment barred all African Americans from participating in elections and holding office, made preparations for the colonization of free blacks, and encapsulated all features of the Crittenden plan aside from his territorial scheme. The committee defeated Douglas's first amendment by a large margin, with only the Little Giant and Crittenden voting in favor of the popular sovereignty panacea. As for the second amendment, the Republicans only agreed to the section that outlined a plan for the colonization of free blacks. Once again they spurned the features of the Crittenden Compromise that Douglas had incorporated into his plan.⁷⁶

Over the next few days the committee considered several other compromise proposals yet reached no agreement. During the proceedings the Republicans made their own proposal for a constitutional amendment that prohibited Congress from abolishing slavery in the states where it existed, amended the Fugitive Slave Law by allowing jury trials for detainees, and asked the free states to modify or repeal their personal liberty laws. Seward, whose political intercessor Thurlow Weed had earlier in December met personally with Lincoln in Springfield and relayed the president-elect's views on compromise to his friend, offered the Republican suggestion on Christmas Eve. The panel agreed only to the portion of the plan that prevented congressional interference with slavery in the states. The Republican proposal, which did not address the territorial issue, underscored the limits to which the party would accede. Up to this point Seward had not indicated whether or not he would endorse conciliation, and many moderates and Unionists in the Border South hoped the influential New Yorker would throw his substantial

⁷⁶ *Journal of the Committee of Thirteen*, 8-10, 16-17.

political weight behind the Crittenden plan. Even Seward, who most people viewed as amenable to territorial compromise, would not overstep the party line.⁷⁷

With the rejection of each compromise proposal by the Committee of Thirteen, Crittenden became dismayed. He somberly told a circle of friends that the panel's rejection of his plan resulted in the "darkest day of my whole life." The prospects of a settlement emerging from the House committee also looked gloomy toward the end of December. The representatives from Florida, Mississippi, and South Carolina had stopped attending the panel's meetings; Winter Davis's revisions of the Fugitive Slave Law had become ensnared in a subcommittee of five; and no agreement had emerged on the territorial question. Moreover, Albert Rust of Arkansas pointed out that Thomas A.R. Nelson's compromise proposal, which closely resembled the Crittenden plan, contained no hereafter acquired clause for southern territory. Rust proposed adding the clause into the Nelson settlement, which set off further disagreement among the committee members. Finally, on December 27, the Committee of Thirty-three voted thirteen to sixteen against incorporating the clause. Every Republican in attendance plus Henry Winter Davis voted against including the hereafter acquired clause in the territorial proposal; the other three Border South representatives on the committee voted in favor of its insertion. Conditions worsened on the Committee of Thirty-three when Nelson asked to substitute Crittenden's plan for his own. Winter Davis again voted with the Republicans to remove the hereafter acquired clause, which technically applied to northern territory, from Crittenden's first amendment. In response Miles Taylor of Louisiana charged the Republicans on the committee

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 10-11. For Seward's actions, see McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*, 91-95, 103-104; Robinson, "Seward and the Onset of the Secession Crisis," 55-59.

with bad faith and indicated he would take no part in further deliberations. Moderates across the country implored Crittenden not to give in to his despair and to keep up the fight.⁷⁸

The bleak outlook for a settlement emerging from either official congressional committee dampened Crittenden's spirits, but he kept up the Unionist offensive. He called together the senators and congressmen from both the free and slaveholding border states on December 28. The border country men closeted at Willard's Hotel, and at the behest of J. Morrison Harris of Maryland established a committee of one representative from each of the fourteen border states in attendance and scheduled a meeting shortly after the start of the new year. Crittenden and Douglas also snapped off a telegram designed to keep the Unionist campaign alive. They emphatically insisted that the rights of the South would be protected in the Union. "Don't give up the Ship. Don't despair of the Republic. Let all good men rally bravely to the struggle," the two conciliators counseled.⁷⁹

Hopelessly divided, the Committee of Thirteen dampened the New Year's Eve spirit when it reported to the Senate that it had reached no settlement. Undeterred, Crittenden on January 3 submitted a resolution to the Senate calling for a national referendum on compromise. The Kentuckian observed that too many of his congressional colleagues had become entranced by party politics for conciliatory measures to go far. He hoped to take the issue of compromise out of the hands of politicians who merely cared about their own political future and vest it in the American people. The correspondence, petitions, and memorials flooding his mailbox convinced

⁷⁸ *Louisville Daily Journal*, Dec. 28, 1860; Martin Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams, 1807-1886* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 233-234; *Journal of the Committee of 33*, 11-21; Daniel Lord to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 29, 1860, F.R. Farrar to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 31, 1860, J. Hulme to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 31, 1860, all in Crittenden Papers, LOC.

⁷⁹ Call for a Meeting of Congressmen and Senators of the Border States, Dec. 27, 1860, Minutes of the Border State Committee, Dec. 28, 1860, both in J. Morrison Harris Papers, MDHS; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 201; John J. Crittenden and Stephen Douglas, Telegram Draft, Dec. 29, 1860, Douglas Papers, UC; Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 818. Although the telegram was sent to Georgia, newspapers across the nation reprinted it; see J.W. Paine to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 5, 1861, Crittenden Papers, LOC.

him that a mandate for settlement existed. He recommended that Douglas's compromise package introduced in the Committee of Thirteen go before the nation. The Little Giant endorsed Crittenden's suggestion for a national plebiscite. He estimated that if the Senate submitted any serious plan to the electorate, they would ratify them in an expeditious manner "in order to take this slavery agitation out of Congress, and restore peace to the country, and insure the perpetuity of the Union."⁸⁰

Crittenden and Douglas's efforts to sustain the hopes for a settlement paid dividends in Delaware, where the general assembly gathered on New Year's Day. In his message to the legislature, Governor William Burton expressed an ardent desire for a settlement along the lines of the Crittenden Compromise, but he laid the blame for the crisis on fanatics in the North who had taught "the sentiment that slavery is a crime and a sin, until it has become the received opinion of a very large portion of one section of our country." Burton advised the free states to repeal their personal liberty laws and to agree on a compromise package that settled the question of slavery in the territories.⁸¹ The following day Burton notified the legislature that H. Dickinson of Mississippi had visited him and wished to give a speech to the general assembly. The Mississippian must have had some impact on the governor, for Burton also recommended that the legislature call a state convention to consider Delaware's place in the Union. The Senate unanimously adopted a resolution in favor of hearing Dickinson speak, while the House narrowly passed a similar resolution. The Mississippian addressed the legislature in the early afternoon of January 3 and asked Delaware to join with the Lower South in the disunion movement. The

⁸⁰ *Journal of the Committee of 13*, 19; *CG*, 211, 237; *CG - Appendix*, 42.

⁸¹ Message of Governor William Burton, Read Jan. 2, 1861, in Delaware General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Delaware, at a Session of the General Assembly, Convened and Held at Dover, On Tuesday, the First of January, in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-One, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-Fifth* (Wilmington: Henry Eckel Printer, 1861), 15, 17-18, hereinafter cited as *Delaware House Journal*.

response of the legislators revealed the impact of the Unionist offensive. The House unanimously passed a joint resolution that expressed its “unqualified disapproval” of secession. Two senators who espoused strong feelings for the course of the Lower South attempted to stall discussion of the joint resolution in the Senate to no avail; the upper house concurred in the joint resolution by a vote of five to three. Even in the wake of the Committee of Thirteen’s breakup, the Unionist campaign helped Delaware moderates maintain a resilient attitude toward secession. Members of the House of Representatives crafted a resolution in support of the Crittenden Compromise, which passed the lower chamber by a vote of nineteen to two and the Senate by a tally of eight to one.⁸²

Far off in Jefferson City, the Unionist offensive in the Border South received its first serious counterattack. The state legislature convened on December 31, 1860, and although Alabama secession commissioner William Cooper found tepid support for secession among most of the legislators, he considered new governor Claiborne Fox Jackson a warm advocate of disunion. Prior to his inauguration on January 3, Jackson privately remarked that Lincoln’s election represented the culmination of thirty years of antislavery agitation. All ties between the North and South had been severed by the Republican victory, a triumph he considered “a declaration of war upon the whole slave property of all the Southern States.” A proponent of cooperation among all the slave states, Jackson deemed the calling of a state sovereignty convention a primary objective upon taking office. His inaugural address did not disappoint the fire-eaters. He roundly criticized Lincoln and the Republicans, defended the course of South

⁸² *Ibid.*, 83-84, 98-99, 101-103, 105, 141-142; Delaware General Assembly, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Delaware, at a Session of the General Assembly, Commenced and Held at Dover, on Tuesday, The First Day of January, in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-One, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-Fifth* (Dover: James Kirk Printer, 1861), 42, 44-45, 65, hereinafter cited as *Delaware Senate Journal*. Representative William S. Phillips attempted to get the legislature to call a state convention to write a new constitution or amend the present one, but was rebuffed. Apparently any state convention at this critical juncture might be viewed as an impetus for secession, and Unionists in the House postponed the Phillips Resolution and later buried it in committee. See *Delaware House Journal*, 80, 96, 132.

Carolina, and forcefully affirmed that Missouri would stand with the South. Furthermore, he warned the federal government that a coercive policy toward South Carolina would seal the fate of the nation. “The first drop of blood shed in a war of aggression upon a sovereign State will arouse a spirit which must result in the overthrow of our entire Federal system, and which this generation will never see quelled,” Jackson fulminated. He beseeched the legislature to pass measures immediately for a state convention and endorsed a convention of all the slaveholding states to present an ultimatum to the North. If it repulsed the demands of the South, then the slaveholding states should operate as a unit and leave the Union.⁸³

Missouri presented a conundrum for Crittenden and other Border South Unionists. Jackson, who hardly denied his radical southern proclivities, had built an impressive following in the state during the 1850s. Lieutenant Governor Thomas C. Reynolds, an admitted secessionist, presided over the Senate, while the House elected Breckinridge Democrat John McAfee to the speaker’s chair. While Douglas Democrats and Constitutional Unionists controlled nearly fifty-five percent of the seats in the legislature, this trio of leaders could easily twist the arms of their colleagues and endanger the state’s position in the Union.⁸⁴ Reynolds had spent most of the month in Washington D.C. and became convinced that no compromise would materialize in Congress. Therefore he urged Missouri to prepare its state militia in case the Republicans opted for a policy of coercion, and like Jackson he desired that all of the slaveholding states meet in

⁸³ W. Cooper to A.B. Moore, Jan. 7, 1861, C.F. Jackson to Dear Shields, [December 1860], both in *OR*, Series IV, 1:23, 26-28; Inaugural Address of Claiborne Fox Jackson, Jan. 3, 1861, in Buel Leopard and Floyd C. Shoemaker, eds., *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri*, Vol. 3 (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922), 328-339; Jackson’s quote is found on p. 336.

⁸⁴ Walter Harrington Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession* (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1931), 176-177. I have relied on Ryle’s tabulations of seats in the Missouri legislature for my calculations. They are as follows:

<u>Political Affiliation</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Percentage of Legislature</u>
Breckinridge Democrats	62	37.6%
Douglas Democrats	46	27.9%
Constitutional Unionists	44	26.6%
Republicans	13	7.9%

convention in order to issue an ultimatum to the North. The lieutenant governor also closeted with avowed secessionists and planned to conquer Frank Blair's Unionist bastion of St. Louis. Early in the legislative session the allies of Jackson and Reynolds introduced a bill to give the governor unfettered control of the state militia as well as legislation to organize a police force in St. Louis to undercut the city's Unionists.⁸⁵

Moderates and conservatives in the Missouri legislature did not back down. The early stages of the session featured several vitriolic exchanges between Unionist members and legislators in favor of secession.⁸⁶ On January 8 the legislature recessed to observe and celebrate Andrew Jackson's 1815 victory in the Battle of New Orleans. This annual tradition afforded politicians of all persuasions a moment to celebrate one of America's greatest national triumphs, the defeat of the British in the War of 1812. In the previous legislative session, the Missouri general assembly had commissioned famed artist George Caleb Bingham to paint large portraits of Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay for display in the statehouse. Bingham had come of age in Missouri's Boon's Lick, attached himself to the Whig Party, and developed an enduring Unionism during a brief stint as a state legislator. He found greater success as an artist, but he never veered far from the political arena; many of his most well-known paintings offer a vivid portrayal of Missouri's rough-hewn antebellum political culture. Bingham supported the Constitutional Union Party during the election of 1860 and emphatically despised the notion of disunion. The general assembly had unwittingly placed the limelight on one of the state's most combative Unionists.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Thomas C. Reynolds to N. Paschall, Dec. 31, 1860, printed in *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 1, 1861; Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession*, 181-182.

⁸⁶ For these exchanges, see *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 6, 7, 8, 1861.

⁸⁷ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 165-174; Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Roger E. Robinson, eds., *"But I Forget That I Am a Painter and Not a Politician": The Letters of George Caleb Bingham* (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 2011), 1-31; George Caleb Bingham to James S. Rollins, Dec. 9, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

Bingham on January 8 unveiled his renderings of Jackson and Clay in the House Chamber in front of a crowd of dignitaries, including many state legislators and officials. Called to the podium that morning for an impromptu speech, the artist delivered a rousing homily in defense of the Union. The former Whig read excerpts of Andrew Jackson's farewell address and praised Old Hickory for his defiance of South Carolina during the Nullification Crisis. The festive atmosphere in the statehouse soured in the aftermath of Bingham's speech. Shortly after the artist concluded his remarks, Reynolds rebuked Bingham and mocked the "meddlesome outsiders and disappointed office-seekers" who used the ceremony as an opportunity to discredit the course of South Carolina. Not to be outdone, that afternoon Bingham responded to Reynolds in a harsh tone, and the confrontation nearly escalated into physical violence. "I cared nothing about his assumption of dictatorial airs," Bingham later crowed in the *Daily Missouri Republican*. "But I regarded him as desecrating the temple in which he stood, by lauding, as a virtue, treason against my Government." In private, the painter labeled Reynolds "a fool, as you would say a d—ned fool."⁸⁸

The Bingham-Reynolds exchange nicely illustrates the passions unleashed by the secession crisis and serves as another example of the Unionist offensive in the Border South. A former arch-Whig, Bingham easily dropped his partisan bias and lauded Andrew Jackson, whom many Whigs once considered the devil's next of kin, for his strong Unionist stance in the Nullification Crisis. He even advocated cooperation with former Democratic enemies in this time of peril. "I trust the genuine remnant of the Old Whig party united with the Douglas Democrats and Republicans will be strong enough in the Legislature to keep our state in its true position of loyalty to the Union," he predicted to his patron James S. Rollins. The willingness of

⁸⁸ St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 9, 14, 1861; George Caleb Bingham to James S. Rollins, Jan. 12, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

moderates to unite with old political adversaries to preserve the Union became a hallmark of the Unionist offensive in the Border South. The confrontation also demonstrates that Border South conservatives would not rest on their laurels and allow fire-eaters to gain the upper hand. The painter did not let the renderings of Jackson and Clay, strong symbols of the Union in their own right, speak for themselves. Rather, he used the unveiling as an opportunity to check the counterattack of Missouri secessionists. Finally, Bingham emphasized the Unionist position that secession jeopardized both peace and the future of the peculiar institution. Follow Claiborne Jackson and Reynolds, Bingham warned, and all Missourians could count on desolation and the destruction of their property. Edward Bates echoed Bingham's thoughts about slavery and the Union. "Disunion," he predicted, "though it may not at once destroy slavery everywhere, will weaken it everywhere, and depreciate its value everywhere, and very probably culminate in bloody abolition."⁸⁹

Jackson and Reynolds claimed victory on January 9 when George Vest introduced in the House a bill for a state convention. The triumph proved short-lived, however, because Unionists in the general assembly attached to the bill a stipulation that the actions of the convention would be subject to the approval of the Missouri electorate. Fire-eaters in the assembly lamented that the Unionists had obstructed their path to disunion, while Unionists considered the popular referendum stipulation a success. One conservative representative who voted in favor of the convention with a referendum commented that since the House "had pared the nails and drawn the fangs of the tiger, he was willing to let it loose." The convention bill passed the House by a

⁸⁹ George Caleb Bingham to James S. Rollins, Nov. 27, 1860, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 14, 1861; Edward Bates to Robert Wilson, Jan. 16, 1861, typescript copy, Abiel Leonard Papers, SHS-MO. The Bingham episode resonated in the legislature for a few days afterwards. Proponents of secession tried to prevent the legislature from accepting the portraits and paying Bingham, though the body finally passed an appropriation bill for Bingham's service on Jan. 16; see Rash, *Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham*, 173.

margin of 105-18 and made it through the Senate by a tally of 30-2. Jackson and Reynolds had their convention, but the people of the state would have the final say on any decision that came out of the meeting.⁹⁰

While Unionists battled secessionists in Dover and Jefferson City, Crittenden and his colleagues kept jockeying for compromise in Washington. The border state committee, comprised of five Republicans, five Democrats, and five members of the southern Opposition, assembled on January 3 and 4 to discuss possible conciliatory measures to introduce to Congress. Unlike the compromise panels in the Senate and House, the border state committee represented only the great heart of the nation and included Republicans and Democrats who had shown some interest in a settlement. Members from the Border South considered these men from the Lower North their integral allies during the sectional tempest of the preceding thirty years. After two meetings marked by “long & anxious consultations,” the committee produced a compromise package on the basis of the Crittenden plan. The panel made a few key alterations to Crittenden’s package. First, the border state plan included only one constitutional amendment which forbade Congress from interfering with slavery in the states; the remaining features of the package emerged as legislation. Second, the Republicans agreed to a division of the territories on the basis of the Missouri Compromise line, but they stripped the Crittenden plan of its stipulations calling for territorial governments to protect slavery south of the line. Thus, if the residents of a territory south of the line opted to bar slavery prior to applying for statehood, they could do so. Furthermore, the committee removed all reference to territory hereafter acquired in this section of the package. The border state plan also called for revision of the Fugitive Slave Law, requested the repeal of all personal liberty laws, and declared that the abolition of slavery

⁹⁰ St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 10, 13, 16, 18, 19, 1861; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, at the First Session of the Twenty-First General Assembly* (Jefferson City: W.G. Cheeny, 1861), 106-107; Ryle, *Missouri: Union or Secession*, 182-183.

in Washington D.C. could not take place without the consent of the inhabitants of the district and Maryland.⁹¹

	Position	Party	State
John J. Crittenden	Senator	Opposition	Kentucky
J. Morrison Harris	Representative	Opposition	Maryland
Robert Hatton	Representative	Opposition	Tennessee
John Gilmer	Representative	Opposition	North Carolina
James Hale	Representative	Republican	Pennsylvania
John Nixon	Representative	Republican	New Jersey
John Pettit	Representative	Republican	Indiana
John Sherman	Representative	Republican	Ohio
William Vandever	Representative	Republican	Iowa
John Barret	Representative	Democrat	Missouri
John Harris	Representative	Independent Democrat	Virginia
John McClelland	Representative	Democrat	Illinois
Willard Saulsbury	Senator	Democrat	Delaware
William Sebastian	Senator	Democrat	Arkansas

Republicans on the border state committee presented the plan to a party caucus on the night of January 5. James T. Hale reported that the members of the Border South signaled a willingness to agree to the plan, and he recommended its acceptance because continued Republican intransigence would “precipitate the country into war.” Hale found few converts to conciliation at the meeting, however. Several Republican hardliners blasted the notion of compromise and even Sherman, a member of the committee, admitted he could not vote for the settlement.⁹² A disappointed Hale complained of the obduracy of these hardliners, who he considered as dangerous as the fire-eaters in the South. He wrote the president-elect and suggested that the party should consent to a settlement to prevent the Border South from “drifting into the vortex.” Lincoln remained unconvinced that conciliation would satiate the

⁹¹ Minutes of the Border State Committee, Jan. 3 & 4, 1861, J. Morrison Harris Papers, MDHS; James T. Hale to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 6, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Sowle, “Conciliatory Republicans,” 223-224; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 201-204.

⁹² *New York Herald*, Jan. 6 & 7, 1861.

southern demand for more slave territory and affirmed that he could not condone any compromise outside of a ban on the acquisition of more American land. “If we surrender,” Lincoln avowed, “it is the end of us, and of the government.”⁹³

With conciliation efforts ostensibly at a dead end in each of the compromise committees, Crittenden labored to bring his package directly before the Senate. On January 7, he moved for its consideration and appealed to all members of the Senate to set aside their partisan convictions and save the country. “When the fate of my country is on the one side and my dogma on the other, let the dogma go rather than the country be prostrated,” he explained. He admitted that his settlement had been designed to assuage southern fears about Republican intentions toward slavery, but his intentions had the best interest of the Union at heart.⁹⁴ The same day Emerson Etheridge of Tennessee attempted to present a modified version of the border state plan to the House. Etheridge had combined elements of both the Crittenden and border state plan into a series of eight constitutional amendments. William Barksdale of Mississippi objected to their introduction and Etheridge could not secure the necessary two-thirds vote to outflank the Mississippian and suspend the rules. The inability to get the compromise package before the House alarmed some border southerners. “Etheridge-Crittenden bill voted down. All hopes lost. Disunion inevitable,” a troubled Kentuckian telegraphed home to Paducah.⁹⁵

Border South moderates in Congress worked with a greater sense of urgency in early January. The possibility of war between the federal government and South Carolina had increased since the Palmetto State left the Union on December 20. A garrison of federal troops had on December 26 moved from vulnerable Fort Moultrie to the more defensible Fort Sumter,

⁹³ James T. Hale to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 6, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Abraham Lincoln to James T. Hale, Jan. 11, 1861, Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:172.

⁹⁴ *CG*, 265-267.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 279-280; A.L. Saunders to Cole Saunders, Jan. 7, 1861, *OR*, Series I, 52, Part 2:3. The House voted 83-78 in favor of suspending the rules, short of the necessary two-thirds needed.

situated on an island in the middle of Charleston Harbor. South Carolina leaders now considered the state an independent republic, demanded the evacuation of Fort Sumter, and amassed militia units along the shore of the harbor. Under the command of Major Robert Anderson, the federal troops ensconced at Fort Sumter became a symbolic lightning rod. To unbending Unionists in the North, they represented defiance of South Carolina's crackpot venture; to South Carolinians and proponents of secession across the South, the garrison represented an affront to disunion. Border South moderates viewed Anderson's men and the Carolinians ringing them as a live fuse that threatened to explode their hopes for compromise. An attack from either side would surely jeopardize the national mandate for conciliation and might throw wavering border country moderates into the disunionist column. Thus Crittenden reiterated the Border South position that the Republicans must not take a coercive stance toward South Carolina. "If the sword is to be the only weapon relied upon," he intoned, "then woe to your Administration! Your victory will be turned to blood and ashes."⁹⁶

Four events on January 9 complicated matters for Crittenden's forces. Mississippi ensured that this crisis of the Union would not mirror the Nullification Crisis or the impasse of 1850 when its convention adopted an ordinance of secession by a vote of eighty-four to fifteen. This time around, South Carolina had a partner in its disunion project, which certainly allayed the reservations of radicals in other Lower South states. Second, Republican Daniel Clark of New Hampshire dampened the slim prospects for Republican cooperation when he entered a substitute resolution for the Crittenden package which declared compromise unnecessary at present and called for abidance to the Constitution rather than its alteration. The hardliner Clark

⁹⁶ Richard N. Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 23-24; *CG*, 267.

had fired a salvo across the bow of the moderates, though the Senate postponed the matter for the present.⁹⁷

Third, Lazarus Powell on January 9 proposed an amendment to Crittenden's territorial amendment that has often gone unnoticed. The Kentucky Democrat added a hereafter acquired clause to the sentence in the amendment that dealt with territory south of the Missouri Compromise line. Powell told the Senate that Crittenden accepted the amendment and later remarked that his colleague had intended to include the phrase when he initially submitted his package back in December. Northern Democrat George Pugh doubted the propriety of including the clause because it might damage the plan's chance for passage, but Powell insisted its inclusion made the territorial feature "clear and distinct." The Senate postponed consideration of Powell's amendment on January 9, but it passed by a vote of twenty-nine to twenty-four one week later. All but one of the negative votes came from Republicans, while a solitary Republican, Edward Baker of Oregon, joined the southern contingent and Northern Democrats who voted in favor of the change. All eight Border South senators voted in favor of the alteration.⁹⁸

One cannot understate the impact of Powell's modification of the territorial amendment. The inclusion of the phrase explicitly contradicted the cornerstone of Republican doctrine and doomed the likelihood of garnering any support for his settlement among the members of Lincoln's party. Whereas Republicans might construe Crittenden's original wording as a means to confine slavery to present-day New Mexico and Arizona, the new phraseology invited expansion into the tropics, an area much more conducive to slave labor than the arid plains and mountains of the Southwest. No evidence suggests why Crittenden acquiesced on the phrase's

⁹⁷ Wooster, *Secession Conventions of the South*, 36-37; CG, 283, 289-290.

⁹⁸ CG, 290, 403-404.

inclusion. More than likely senators from the Lower South had pressed Crittenden and Powell to clarify the territorial portion of the amendment. Perhaps Crittenden submitted to their demands out of his growing frustration with Republican inflexibility. Powell's contention that Crittenden had intended the original proposition to include the hereafter acquired clause for southern territory seems flawed. After all, the Kentuckian had not altered the wording of his package when it had been introduced to the various compromise committees for consideration. Moreover, he left the original wording intact when the Committee of Thirteen deliberated the proposal, which prompted Jefferson Davis and Robert Toombs to reject that portion of the package on principle. Davis and Toombs agreed to every other facet of Crittenden's proposal and signaled a willingness to accede to the first article if the committee's Republicans agreed to it, which did not occur.⁹⁹ Surely the wording of the amendment came up in the committee room when the two Lower South senators spurned it, but Crittenden did not alter the phrasing of his package when he brought it before the Senate over two weeks later.

Finally, the standoff at Charleston nearly escalated into war when at dawn on January 9 the Carolinians opened fire on the merchant steamer *Star of the West*, which Buchanan had ordered southward to reinforce Anderson's garrison at Fort Sumter. The ship retreated to the Atlantic and the guns in Charleston Harbor remained silent, but the salvo severely tested the patience of most northerners. "South Carolina has fired the first gun at the Union of the states...Now is the time in which the government is to be maintained in all the vigor of its supremacy, or fall in weakness and contempt," a Connecticut paper screeched. Samuel F. Du Pont observed that the incident had "greatly exasperated the North & coercion views are

⁹⁹ In a January 22, 1861 speech before the Senate, Lazarus Powell claimed that Toombs and Davis voted against the first article of the compromise package only after stating that if the Republicans voted for it, they would too; see *CG - Appendix*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 95.

spreading.” Crittenden scrambled to offset the ill-effect of the news by inviting some thirty proponents of compromise to a dinner party at his residence that night.¹⁰⁰

In this tense atmosphere the Unionist battle continued in Washington, yet Congress remained paralyzed. Republican William Henry Seward delivered a speech on January 12 which brought Crittenden to tears. In it Seward waxed eloquent about the value of the Union, but he offered no tangible concessions to the Border South. “It is obvious that his inclination is towards a satisfactory settlement, but he cannot arrive at the magnanimity of proposing it himself, lest he might offend his party,” John Pendleton Kennedy observed.¹⁰¹ Once again, the Republicans balked when it came to a territorial settlement, a fact that most Border South moderates noticed. Anything but unanimity reigned in the House Committee of Thirty-three, which ended its deliberations on January 14. Unlike the Senate panel, the House committee did have proposals to bring to the lower chamber. Unfortunately, the lack of accord on the committee forced chairman Thomas Corwin to bring several proposals to the floor of the House. These various suggestions represented the views of moderates, southern fire-eaters, and Republican hardliners. The House temporarily shelved the work of the Committee of Thirty-three so as to allow time for congressmen to sort out the numerous reports.¹⁰²

With his patience wearing thin, Crittenden continually pressed for a vote on his compromise measures. Northern Democrats and senators from the Upper and Border South condemned the Republicans for avoiding a vote on the conciliatory measures. Anthony Kennedy of Maryland insisted that the Republicans register a vote “to see whether those gentlemen now

¹⁰⁰ McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*, 117-118; *New Haven Daily Palladium*, Jan. 16, 1861, in Perkins, ed., *Northern Editorials on Secession*, 1:220-221; Samuel F. Du Pont to William Whetten, Feb. 4, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *New York Herald*, Jan. 10, 1861. William Henry Seward also held a dinner party that night and many of the same people attended.

¹⁰¹ Journal Entry for Jan. 14, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

¹⁰² *CG*, 378.

representing the dominant party in the country are willing to meet us in the spirit of compromise.” Kennedy got his wish on January 16. After the Senate voted to add the Powell amendment to the Crittenden settlement, Republicans carried a resolution that replaced the Kentuckian’s proposal with Daniel Clark’s hardline declaration that the present situation merited no need for compromise. The Clark substitution passed twenty-five to twenty-three, with all eight Border South senators voting in the negative. Republicans provided all twenty-five of the votes in favor of substitution.¹⁰³

Border South moderates felt the impact of the Republican roadblock in their home states. In Frankfort, Governor Beriah Magoffin on January 17 recommended that the Kentucky legislature call a state convention to consider the state’s place in the Union. Magoffin’s hopes for compromise had dimmed in the three weeks since he had snubbed the Alabama secession commissioner. “Thus firm in position, obstinate in spirit, and sullen in temper,” Magoffin charged, “the Republicans have thwarted every scheme devised to restrain the seceding States.” He also noted that due to Republican intransigence and the secession of four of the Deep South states, the time may have passed for the slaveholding states to hold a convention and present their demands to the North. The governor’s tone had decidedly shifted in the days since his late-December exchange with the Alabama secession commissioner. An erroneous second-hand report reached Missouri that senators James Green and Trusten Polk advocated secession in wake of the Crittenden plan’s defeat. In Maryland, Thomas Hicks fretted that if Congress did not quickly pass some compromise measures, promoters of secession might force him to call the legislature into session.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 362, 409.

¹⁰⁴ Message to the Legislature, Jan. 17, 1861, in *Journal of the Called Session of the House of Representative of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Begun and Held in the Town of Frankfort, on Thursday the Seventeenth Day of January, in the Year of Our Lord 1861, and of the Commonwealth the Sixty-Ninth* (Frankfort:

“I had strong hopes that the Resolutions I submitted, might be accepted as a basis, at least, for measures of adjustment & reconciliation,” a saddened Crittenden confessed after the Republicans replaced his compromise with the Clark Resolutions. “That hope is almost gone!” Although he admitted “Every thing here looks gloomy & foreboding,” Crittenden and his moderate colleagues in the two-and-a-half months since Lincoln’s election had buoyed the hopes of southern Unionists and kept fire-eating radicals at bay in the Border and Upper South.¹⁰⁵ Although prospects of a legislative settlement appeared dim in mid-January, the Unionist campaign convinced many border southerners that Crittenden, Douglas, and other moderate leaders would find some means to extricate the nation from the tangled sectional thicket. Aware that compromise would likely fester in the highly-charged halls of the Capitol, Crittenden began to explore other options for compromise. The following months proved that Unionists in the Border South had yet to expend all of their ammunition in the fight against secession.

Kentucky Yeoman Office, 1861), 6-9, hereinafter cited as *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*; St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 18, 19, 1861; Thomas Hicks to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 9, 1861, Crittenden Papers, LOC.

¹⁰⁵ John J. Crittenden to S.S. Nicholas, No Date, Crittenden Papers, LOC.

Chapter 5

“Compromise May Restore the Union, but the Sword Can Never Preserve It,” The Unionist Offensive Endures, Mid-January – March 1861

Colonel Alexander William Doniphan struck an imposing figure when he entered the overflowing Liberty, Missouri, courthouse on a blustery late-January night to speak about the crisis of the Union. Well over six feet in height, the brawny Doniphan sported a shock of coarse red hair which, according to one observer, protruded from atop his scowling visage “like porcupine quills.” The attorney had made quite a name for himself in the thirty years since he left his Kentucky birthplace and settled in Liberty, a commercial hub and the seat of Clay County at the western edge of the Boon’s Lick region. Local judges and fellow barristers recognized that Doniphan’s oratorical skills exceeded his mastery of the law, but the fifty-one year old attorney had built an impressive practice and earned a comfortable living defending clients in criminal cases. He often rolled up his sleeves, delivered his defense with rhetorical flourish, and used his towering frame to intimidate his adversaries in the courtroom. Although he disagreed with the religious customs of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, who in the 1830s made their home in western Missouri, they kept Doniphan on retainer and provided him with notoriety and an economic lifeline, two essential components of a successful frontier law practice. As commander of a local militia company during the 1838 Mormon War, Doniphan stood up to state authorities and refused to execute Smith and other Mormon leaders after a court martial found them guilty of treason. With civilian courts in operation, Doniphan rejected the jurisdiction of the court martial and dared his commanding officer to attempt the execution. State authorities backed off, Smith and his colleagues escaped death, and the Mormons left Missouri for Illinois.

Doniphan's stand drew the respect of Missourians who appreciated his adherence to legal principle far more than his defense of the religious outsiders.¹

When the United States went to war with Mexico in 1846, Doniphan's military acumen generated national fame that far exceeded his provincial legal renown. He guided a regiment of Missouri volunteers westward into modern-day New Mexico, oversaw the occupation of Santa Fe and drafted a legal code for the new American territory, then led his troops to victory at the battles of El Brazito and Sacramento, which cleared out the province of Chihuahua and contributed to the eventual defeat of all Mexican forces. Upon his regiment's return to the United States one of Doniphan's soldiers published a pamphlet idolizing the unit and their leader, which went far to cement the attorney's reputation as a war hero. Americans, in an outburst of nationalist pride at the conclusion of the war, hailed Doniphan and his volunteers as torchbearers of the citizen-soldier tradition that reached back to the Revolutionary War. Only General Zachary Taylor surpassed Doniphan in captivating the American public.²

His successful legal practice, coupled with his experiences in the Mormon and Mexican wars, paved Doniphan's path to three separate terms in the lower house of the Missouri legislature. A member of the Whig Party, Doniphan during his time in Jefferson City promoted banking initiatives and the construction of railroads throughout the state. Although he despised the political program of the Democratic Party, he and firebrand David Rice Atchison had cultivated a close relationship and actually cooperated with one another in an attempt to keep antislavery agitators from settling in Kansas. Doniphan espoused a moderate temperament toward most political issues, but he emphatically insisted that the Constitution protected slavery

¹ Roger D. Launius, *Alexander William Doniphan: Portrait of a Missouri Moderate* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 24-71, 127-128, 245. The quote is found on p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, 98-117, 134-199. For Doniphan's celebrity status and the American infatuation with the citizen-soldier, see Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 39-43, 123.

and that all Americans should have access to the western territories. An owner of five slaves in 1860, Doniphan could not tolerate abolitionists who sought to violate the liberty of his fellow southerners. Despite his national fame, the war hero never occupied any office higher than the Missouri general assembly and, by the winter of 1861, had quietly resumed his law practice in Liberty. He kept abreast of national affairs, however, and once he learned of John Crittenden's mid-January setback in Congress, he decided to enlist in the Unionist offensive in his home state.³

A testament to Doniphan's celebrity, some two thousand Missourians from Clay, Clinton, and Ray counties on January 28 braved the cold weather and traversed the snow-covered terrain to hear him speak at the Liberty courthouse. Because only about one-third of the crowd could cram inside the building, Doniphan asked for an adjournment and immediate reassembly outside the courthouse so that all comers could take part in the meeting. The old war hero climbed above a platform in the cold night air and with his trademark style delivered a ninety-minute speech in which he admonished all his fellow Missourians to remain loyal to the Union. Undeterred by Congress's efforts to stymie all compromise efforts, he also extolled Crittenden's compromise package and confirmed to the gathering that hopes for its passage still remained alive. He noted the efforts of former president John Tyler and the Virginia legislature, which had on January 19 passed a resolution that laid the groundwork for a national Peace Conference. The Peace Convention idea met with great enthusiasm in the Upper and Border South, the Lower North, and merchant communities in northern commercial centers that relied on intersectional trade. Set to convene on February 4 in the national capital, the Washington Peace Conference provided another vehicle for the potential passage of the Crittenden Compromise. According to

³ Launius, *Alexander William Doniphan*, 220-224, 236-237, 240-245.

Doniphan, a show of hands at the meeting indicated that “19/20 of the crowd” endorsed the Crittenden resolutions.⁴

Before he concluded his speech, Doniphan reminded his listeners that they must elect moderate delegates to the Missouri convention charged with the task of considering the state’s place in the Union. Against his wishes, the members of the meeting unanimously agreed to place Doniphan’s name on the ticket. He preferred that Unionists in his district might find some Democrats to send to the state convention to give their delegation a bipartisan appeal, but whether he or someone else went to Jefferson City, they had to meet certain requirements. “Let no man be nominated who is in principle radical,” Doniphan privately remarked to his nephew. “We must keep the issue secession or compromise – and hence we must have compromise Union men so that no submission issue can be forced upon us.” He understood the delicate balance of Missouri and the other states of the Border South and fully recognized that in order to keep the region in the Unionist column, the hope of a settlement had to remain real.⁵

Doniphan returned to his home that night with a hoarse voice and numbed extremities, yet the bitter cold could not dampen his high spirits. He, like most Border South Unionists, believed that they could continue to isolate the secessionists in their midst as long as a compromise settlement remained a viable option and neither the federal government or fire-eaters in the Lower South inaugurated a shooting war. Events in the following months, however, placed many dangerous obstacles in the Unionist roadway. In time, some ardent Border South Unionists like Alexander William Doniphan began to change their tenor. The period between

⁴ Alexander W. Doniphan to John Doniphan, Jan. 28, 1861, Alexander W. Doniphan Letters, 1861-1873, C1926, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, hereinafter cited as Doniphan Letters, 1861-1873, SHS-MO. For information on the Peace Convention proposition, see William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 224; Robert Gray Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen’s Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 24-27; & Edward P. Crapol, *John Tyler: The Accidental President* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 259, 261-264.

⁵ Alexander W. Doniphan to John Doniphan, Jan. 28, 1861, Doniphan Letters, 1861-1873, SHS-MO.

mid-January and the beginning of April 1861 revealed both the limits to which some Border South Unionists would accede and the durability of the Unionist campaign that Crittenden and his colleagues had commenced in the aftermath of Lincoln's election.

While Doniphan and other moderates across the Border South took to the stump on behalf of the Union, John Jordan Crittenden continued the fight for a conciliatory settlement of the slavery issue in the nation's capital. Although he considered the January 16 substitution of his settlement package with Daniel Clark's unbending declaration that compromise was unnecessary at present an affront, the old Kentuckian began to explore means to circumvent Republican obfuscation in Congress. As his faith in Congress taking action waned, Crittenden's trust in the American people grew. Correspondents from across the country informed him that in spite of the dangerous *Star of the West* episode earlier in the month, most Americans still yearned for a settlement. If he could get his compromise proposals before the great conservative mass, Crittenden believed, the electorate would certainly sanction them. The package would need slight alterations, however, to bring moderate Republicans aboard the ship of compromise. Northern conservatives asked Crittenden to drop the hereafter acquired language that Lazarus Powell had inserted into the territorial resolution, while a New Yorker suggested that he remove the stipulation that territorial governments had to protect slavery south of the old Missouri Compromise line. A simple declaration that slavery could exist south of the line, rather than a full-fledged protective proviso, would go far to ease the concern of moderate northerners. "The sense of right in the North will then not be violated and you will surely succeed in saving the Union," a New York moderate wrote. Maryland Governor Thomas Hicks also assured

Crittenden that in order to secure the settlement's passage the masses would "strip [the package] of the endangering amendment, the Territorial feature."⁶

The course of the general assemblies of Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri helped to convince Crittenden that a strong mandate for his settlement existed. In Dover, the Delaware legislature on January 17 passed a resolution that approved of the Crittenden Compromise and instructed the state's members of Congress to "advocate the said proposition" or any other means of reconciliation. Such a course of action "reflect[s] the will of a large majority of their constituents" and that of the American people in general, the resolution read. The endorsement of the Crittenden package passed the Delaware House of Representatives by a vote of 19-2 and the Senate by a tally of 8-1. The paucity of votes in opposition to an endorsement of the Crittenden settlement demonstrated that many Delawareans had yet to give up on compromise.⁷

The pro-Crittenden resolutions came on the heels of the general assembly's rejection of the Mississippi secession commissioner, which revealed the breadth of support for a settlement in the First State. Sophie M. Du Pont noted that even the state legislators who opposed the resolution that spurned the emissary from Mississippi actually agreed with the majority that Delaware should not entertain the project of secession. Rather, they dissented because they wanted to afford the Mississippian his due respect by having an appointed committee reply to his request. She rationalized that they dissented based on semantics, not because they sympathized with the disunion movement. A political insider attributed Governor William Burton's recommendation that the legislature call a state convention to the machinations of James A. Bayard, but even the senior Delaware senator had gone on the record in favor of the Crittenden plan. Bayard on January 15 presented a memorial to the Senate from citizens of Delaware

⁶ Lat. Ogden to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 19, 1861, E. Fanaken to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 19, 1861, Thomas Hicks to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 19, 1861, all in Crittenden Papers, LOC.

⁷ *Delaware House Journal*, 141-142; *Delaware Senate Journal*, 65.

asking for the adoption of the Crittenden resolutions, and he declared that although he did not feel Congress could cobble together the votes to pass the package, he too supported the Kentuckian's compromise.⁸

Debate in the Kentucky legislature, which convened on January 17, also centered on the Crittenden Compromise. Signs from the Bluegrass State indicated that moderates and Unionists in the legislature could hold the line as long as the Crittenden package remained viable. On the first day of the session several senators and representatives submitted different resolutions which indicated the general assembly's approval of the Crittenden Compromise. The legislature sorted through the various proposals and on January 24 fixed on a series of resolutions that asked Congress to call a national convention to discuss the myriad compromise schemes that politicians had placed before the public. The resolutions also offered the Crittenden plan as the preferred program for a settlement. Moderates in the House defeated an attempt made by some of their colleagues with secessionist proclivities to add language to the resolution which stated that if the northern states rejected the settlement, Kentucky would follow the Deep South out of the Union. Stripped of this ultimatum, the pro-compromise resolutions cleared the House by a vote of 82-8. No roll call exists for the Senate vote, but the upper chamber agreed 37-0 to the suggestion of the House to present the Crittenden Compromise as the best means to quell the crisis.⁹

The Unionist offensive managed to keep disunionists in Frankfort at bay during the early stages of the special session. On the third day of the session Representative John O. Harrison

⁸ Sophie M. Du Pont to Samuel F. Du Pont, Jan. 8, 1861, Sophie M. Du Pont to Ella Breck, Jan. 10, 1861, both in Sophie Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Session, 378-379.

⁹ *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 42-45, 52-53, 78-79, 85-87; *Journal of the Called Session of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Begun and Held in the Town of Frankfort, on Thursday the Seventeenth Day of January, in the Year of Our Lord 1861, and of the Commonwealth the Sixty-ninth* (Frankfort: Kentucky Yeoman Office, 1861), 42-46, 51, 77, 95, hereinafter cited as *Kentucky Senate Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*.

and Senator John F. Fisk coordinated on a resolution that required the sergeant-at-arms to fly the American flag over the state capitol for the duration of the legislative session. Some of Harrison's colleagues unsuccessfully tried to table the resolution, which subsequently passed the House by a tally of 66-23 and the Senate without a dissenting vote. Unionists stymied Representative James G. Leach's attempt to bring a resolution before the House that called for the newly minted Committee on Federal Relations to report a bill calling a state convention. The House on January 21 tabled Leach's resolution by a vote of 54-36. A further sign of Unionist strength, Leach had tried to cater to moderates by including a stipulation that any actions taken by the state convention would be subject to ratification by the electorate. A similar initiative stalled in the Senate, where Unionists joined hands and blocked Thomas S. Grundy's attempt to initiate a popular referendum to see if the people of Kentucky preferred a state convention. Kentucky Unionists held firm and refused to follow even the cautious path taken by the Missouri legislature, which had subjected the actions of their state convention to confirmation by the state's voters. Moderates achieved two more victories when they buried separate resolutions that declared secession legal and called for an alliance with the South if the northern states spurned all means of conciliation in the Committee on Federal Relations.¹⁰

The great lengths to which Unionists and conservatives went to thwart a state convention in Kentucky have gone largely unnoticed by scholars of the sectional crisis.¹¹ Yet these

¹⁰ *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 53-55, 64-66; *Kentucky Senate Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 50, 62, 83. The House journal indicates a vote of 54-35 to table the Leach Resolution for a state convention, but by my tabulation 36 representatives voted against tabling; see the roll call on pp. 64-65. Unionists in the Senate utilized every tactic to stall Grundy's resolution: they watered down the language; tried to substitute his resolution with one that declared it "unwise, inexpedient, unconstitutional, and revolutionary in character" to hold a state convention; and finally sent the resolution to the Committee on Federal Relations.

¹¹ For exceptions to this statement, see Harry A. Volz, III, "Party, State, and Nation: Kentucky and the Coming of the Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1982); Christopher M. Paine, "'Kentucky Will Be the Last to Give Up the Union': Kentucky Politics, 1844-1861," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1998); and John A. Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace: Kentucky and the Secession Crisis of 1861," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1999).

moderates labored day and night to prevent the Bluegrass State, which in terms of its social complexion came closer to mirroring the Upper South states that eventually opted to secede than any other state along the border, from even putting the question of a convention before the people. “I doubt if our people will ever know the deep debt they owe the conservative men who controlled that Assembly, not so much for the good accomplished as for the evil prevented,” C.F. Burnam, a Unionist representative from Richmond, later recalled. “Argument, persuasion, entreaty, the party lash – all means that can be conceived of, are brought into requisition,” a journalist for the pro-secession *Louisville Daily Courier* scoffed. The same reporter termed the symbolic measure to fly the American flag over the statehouse “a token of submission!” A proponent of secession lamented that moderates in the general assembly “are acting as a firm phalanx against any prompt & speedy action” by keeping alive the hopes that a settlement might yet be reached.¹²

By employing Unionist symbolism, backroom bargaining, and every available legislative maneuver, moderates precluded Kentucky from following the path of North Carolina and Tennessee, where both legislatures allowed for a popular referendum on whether or not to call a state convention. Although voters in both Upper South states rejected a convention in February, the passage of the referendum bills put in place the machinery for a quick withdrawal if any event occurred that endangered the flimsy truce between Lower South secessionists and the federal government. Had they not taken action, Unionists may have lost the momentum to secessionists in the Bluegrass State and allowed Kentucky to join the Upper South states which eventually opted for disunion. Warm proponents of a state convention with well-earned reputations for political trickery, including Blanton Duncan and George N. Sanders, exerted all

¹² C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, Feb. 20, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jan. 19, 21, 1861; Blanton Duncan to William Porcher Miles, Jan. 22, 1861, W.P. Miles Papers, SHC-UNC.

the influence they could muster upon the state legislators in Frankfort, but fell short in their effort. Much to the dismay of the advocates of secession, Unionists had built an impressive bulwark that proved difficult to assail as long as hopes for a settlement remained alive.¹³

Kentucky legislators of all stripes, however, reviled the prospect of the federal government coercing any of the seven Lower South states back into the Union. In the aftermath of the *Star of the West* episode in Charleston Harbor, several northern state legislatures had offered the federal government financial aid, supplies, and men to subdue the rebellion in the Lower South. Some northern governors also began to put their states on a war footing by urging enlistments in state militias, instructing state militia officers to conduct drills, and procuring weapons and military accouterments. In response to these foreboding signs from the North, Representative G.W. Ewing crafted a set of joint resolutions: the first expressed regret that some northern governments had made preparations to coerce the seceded states; the second asked Governor Beriah Magoffin to warn state executives in the rest of the Union that if northern troops marched southward, “the people of Kentucky, uniting with their brethren of the South, will, as one man, resist such invasions of the soil of the South at all hazards and to the last extremity.” The first resolution passed the House without a single dissenting vote and the second resolution carried 87-6.¹⁴

Blanton Duncan, a one-time wirepuller for Stephen Douglas who had entered the fire-eater camp during the secession winter, viewed himself as the catalyst for Ewing’s resolutions. He admitted to a South Carolina radical that he had whipped many Kentucky legislators into a

¹³ For North Carolina and Tennessee, see Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 144-146. For the machinations of Duncan and Sanders, see *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jan. 25, 1861; Blanton Duncan to William Porcher Miles, Jan. 22, 24, 1861, W.P. Miles Papers, SHC-UNC.

¹⁴ Kenneth Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 92-94; *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 68-71.

frenzy over the actions of the northern legislatures and cajoled the passage of the resolutions. A newspaper reporter also claimed that prior to the vote on the resolutions one of the state legislators circulated a letter from an unnamed Kentucky congressman who suggested that Crittenden had given up on compromise because of Republican intransigence in Washington. Unconditional Unionist Leslie Combs complained of Duncan's machinations and noted that Frankfort "is full of Devils & Fireeaters – generally with hair all over their faces – as if ashamed to be seen by honest men." Combs noted that Border South Unionism relied on "the anxious hope that the North will do justice on the Slave & Territorial questions," and he believed that the people of the Bluegrass State would not succumb to Ewing's "volcanic bullying resolutions." Duncan's nefarious political engineering aside, Ewing's resolutions illustrate both the robust antipathy toward coercion among border country southerners and the conditional nature of southern Unionism. Any overt action from the North, especially from their erstwhile allies in the Lower North, threatened to capsize Unionist sentiment in the Border South.¹⁵

Although the Missouri legislature had by late January decided to hold a state convention, the subject of the Crittenden Compromise did not recede from the imagination of the state's politicians or people. Representative Mortimer McIlhany from Audrain County introduced a resolution that distinguished the Crittenden plan "as a fair and equitable adjustment of the troubles which now afflict the country." Furthermore, his resolution instructed Missouri's congressional delegation to "use all their influence to secure [its] passage." The House placed McIlhany's resolution aside, though several politicians in Jefferson City referenced the Crittenden package while debating the pressing issue of holding a state convention. Senator Preston Read averred that the Border South and the Lower North had to take the lead in the push

¹⁵ Blanton Duncan to William Porcher Miles, Jan. 22, 1861, W.P. Miles Papers, SHC-UNC; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jan. 22, 1861; Leslie Combs to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 22, 1861, Crittenden Papers, LOC.

for the passage of the Crittenden resolutions, which he believed would solve the impending crisis. Senator John Gullett proclaimed that although he hailed from a district populated by few enslaved persons, “he wanted to see slave property protected as scrupulously as any other property.” Remaining in the Union and securing passage of some compromise settlement offered the best means to do this, he argued. Robert Wilson, a Unionist state senator from Andrew County, reminded his fellow politicians that if Missouri chose secession over compromise, they would surely expedite the destruction of slavery. Prospectively surrounded on three sides by a foreign nation, secession invited slave escapes, welcomed additional abolitionist incursions, and created an 800 mile long border to defend from external invasion. “That institution about which we have talked so much in this hall, must in a few years disappear from our borders, should we secede,” Wilson forewarned. He felt it far better to settle the issue along the lines of the Crittenden Compromise, which he believed would perpetuate the peculiar institution’s life, than to drive slavery down the path of annihilation by following the course of the Deep South. Citizens of St. Louis in late January inaugurated a petition drive and in a few days collected over twelve thousand signatures in favor of the adoption of the Crittenden package.¹⁶

In Annapolis, Governor Thomas Hicks continued to resist the appeals of those who wanted him to convene the Maryland legislature in special session. A group of eleven state senators in late December went so far as to sign a circular letter that requested the governor to call the legislature, but Hicks remained unmoved. An unconditional Unionist pointed out that Democrats, many of whom sympathized with the course of the Cotton South, controlled both houses of the legislature and thus would speedily send a convention bill through the assembly.

¹⁶ St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 1861. Robert Wilson’s quote is found in the Jan. 15, 1861 issue of the paper.

Under Maryland's constitution, he further noted, the executive lacked the veto power, which increased the odds that a convention bill would pass. Fearful that the general assembly might make the rash decision to call a state convention, the governor remained firm and asked the people of his state to rely upon "the sober second thought of the masses," especially conservatives in the North, who would ally with the Border South on the quest for conciliation. Rumors of secessionist plots to carry Maryland out of the Union also strengthened Hicks's resolve to keep the legislature from assembling.¹⁷

Throughout the secession winter, Hicks stayed in contact with Crittenden. The Maryland executive believed that the majority of people in the Old Line State yearned for the passage of his compromise measures, but they had become alarmed by the deadlock in Congress. He questioned the motives of intransigent northern and southern politicians in Washington, who "remind me of a pair of bull yearlings with their heads butting together and pressing agt each other[,] each striving for the mastery." If only they listened to the electorate, he reasoned, these politicians would grasp the prevailing impetus for a settlement. Hicks's outlook on the mood of his state resembled that of Baltimore merchant Henry Lowe, who recognized "a strong Union feeling here, but no disposition to aid the government agains [sic] the South."¹⁸

When the Crittenden measures stalled in the Senate in mid-January, Hicks momentarily relented and considered calling the legislature into session. The pertinacious approach of the Republicans, along with rumblings of a conspiracy to assassinate Hicks for his unyielding stance, rattled the heretofore poised governor. "Vipers are to be crushed[,] not argued with," one such

¹⁷ Thomas Hicks to Thomas G. Pratt, et. al., Nov. 27, 1860, printed in *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 29, 1860; Anthony Kimmel to Thomas H. Hicks, Jan. 26, 1861, James C. Welling to Thomas H. Hicks, Dec. 1, 1860, both in Thomas Hicks Papers, 1860-1862, (MS 1313), Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland; "Extract from Gov. Hicks' Address," in Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, 1:18.

¹⁸ Thomas Hicks to John J. Crittenden, Jan. 25, 1861, Crittenden Papers, LOC; Henry Lowe to J.R. Blossom, Jan. 12, 1861, John Judge Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

anonymous subversive warned Hicks, “and we would hold ourselves guilty of murder could we sacrifice you even thousands of times.” The Maryland governor in mid-January declined to receive officially a delegation sent by Pennsylvania governor Andrew Curtin, who hoped to reassure Hicks that they would do all in their power to sustain him in his fight against Maryland secessionists. He told the Pennsylvania delegation that Maryland could handle its own affairs and added that he “was a Southerner and a slaveholder, and that his whole feelings and interests were identified with the South.” Furthermore, Hicks told the Pennsylvanians that “the unyielding spirit manifested by the republicans” had forced him to reassess his refusal to call the general assembly to Annapolis. Soon thereafter, however, Hicks recommitted himself to holding the line against those who wished for the legislature to assemble.¹⁹

Two phenomena helped Hicks and other moderates across the Border South regain their confidence in the prospects of compromise and redouble their efforts on behalf of the Union. First, in late January the idea of a convention of the states started to gain traction. Some advocates of a multi-state convention suggested a meeting of only slaveholding states while others recommended the free and slaveholding border states convene. As early as December 9, 1860, Beriah Magoffin had proposed to other slave state governors a meeting designed to “arrest the secession movement, until the question as to whether the Union can be preserved upon fair and honorable terms, can be fully tested.” With the compromise effort apparently stillborn in Congress, a growing body of Americans advised a national gathering that included every state in the Union. In the middle of January, Crittenden got each member of the Kentucky congressional delegation to endorse a telegram to Magoffin beseeching the governor to appoint a committee of

¹⁹ Anonymous to Thomas H. Hicks, circa 1861, Hicks Papers, 1860-1865, MS 2104, MDHS; Alexander McClure to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 15, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Baltimore *Sun*, Jan. 19, 1861; George L. Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas H. Hicks of Maryland and the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1902), 33-34.

five to meet with officials from Virginia in Washington for the purpose of finding a solution to the national impasse. Convinced that demagoguery and partisanship inhibited the likelihood of a settlement in Congress, many moderates vested their hopes in a national convention comprised of dispassionate, sober statesmen who would work toward a feasible compromise. William C. Rives thought that conservative leaders from the Upper and Border South would assume the vanguard of conciliation at a national meeting. Moderate Unionists would “overrule the narrow spirit of sectionalism and party infatuation, and open a way by which the harmonious adjustment of our difficulties may be reached.”²⁰

The legislature of Virginia took the lead in the push for a national convention and in mid-January passed a resolution inviting every other state in the Union to send delegates to Washington on February 4. The general assembly submitted a slightly altered version of the Crittenden Compromise as a basis for negotiations and sent forth emissaries who pled with leaders in Washington and South Carolina to refrain from any reckless action which might provoke physical violence. Unionists across the Border South quickly latched on to Virginia’s call for a Peace Convention in Washington. The Delaware legislature swiftly sanctioned a joint resolution to appoint delegates to the meeting and a similar joint resolution sailed through the Kentucky legislature in a matter of days. Some disagreement arose about who to send to Washington, but each state chose a delegation of men from various partisan backgrounds who were committed to the preservation of the Union. The proposition faced some difficulty in the divided Missouri general assembly, but on January 31 the legislature settled on a team to send to Washington. With the legislature out of session in Maryland, Thomas Hicks took it upon himself to assign his state’s members to the Washington Peace Conference. Opponents of Hicks

²⁰ Beriah Magoffin to the Governors of the South, Dec. 9, 1860, in *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17, 19*; John J. Crittenden, et. al., to Beriah Magoffin, telegram, Jan. 12, 1861, in *OR*, Series I, Vol. 52, Part 2, 6; William C. Rives to T.J. Wertenbaker, et. al., Jan. 23, 1861, Rives Papers, LOC.

howled that his decision to send commissioners without legislative fiat represented a usurpation of executive power, but the governors of six other states also sent representatives without consulting their respective legislatures.²¹

	Name	Party	Slaves Owned (1860)	Year of Birth	State of Birth
Delaware	George B. Rodney	Opposition	0	1803	Delaware
	Daniel M. Bates	Democrat	0	1821	Delaware
	Henry Ridgely	Democrat	0	1779	Delaware
	John W. Houston	Opposition	1	1814	Delaware
	William Cannon	Democrat	14	1809	Delaware
Kentucky	William O. Butler	Democrat	0	1791	Kentucky
	James B. Clay	Democrat	12	1817	Washington D.C.
	Joshua F. Bell	Opposition	14	1811	Kentucky
	Charles S. Morehead	Opposition	13	1802	Kentucky
	James Guthrie	Democrat	7	1792	Kentucky
	Charles A. Wickliffe	Democrat	33	1788	Kentucky
Maryland	John F. Dent	Democrat	24	1814	?
	Reverdy Johnson	Opposition	1	1796	Maryland
	John W. Crisfield	Opposition	23	1806	Maryland
	Augustus W. Bradford	Opposition	2	1806	Maryland
	William T. Goldsborough	Opposition	55	1808	Maryland
	James Dixon Roman	Opposition	2	1809	Pennsylvania
	Benjamin C. Howard	Democrat	12	1791	Maryland
Missouri	John D. Coalter	?	3	1818	South Carolina
	Alexander W. Doniphan	Opposition	5	1808	Kentucky
	Waldo P. Johnson	Democrat	1	1817	Virginia
	Aylett H. Buckner	Democrat	9	1816	Virginia
	Harrison Hough	?	29	1813	Kentucky

Sources: Slave Schedules, Census of 1860, accessed at www.ancestry.com; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, accessed at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>.

Notes: C.S. Morehead also had plantations in Mississippi & Louisiana, so the number of slaves owned may have been larger than 13. Reverdy Johnson was listed as the employer of the one slave in the 1860 census, so he likely rented rather than owned the slave. Waldo Johnson owned 1 slave and rented 2 slaves.

²¹ Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 25; *Delaware House Journal*, 235-237; *Delaware Senate Journal*, 98, 105-106; *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 109-112, 133-135, 138-140; *Kentucky Senate Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 95-98, 102; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, at the First Session of the Twenty-First General Assembly* (Jefferson City: W.G. Cheeney Printer, 1861), 202-206; Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas H. Hicks*, 36-37. The other states in which the governor appointed delegates to the Washington Peace Convention were Connecticut, Indiana, Kansas, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Vermont.

Table 22 - A Snapshot of Border South Delegates to the Washington Peace Conference				
Mean Slave Ownership		11.3 slaves		
Mean Year of Birth		1806		
Mean Age		55		
Place of Birth				
Delaware	5	Border South	17	73.91%
Kentucky	7			
Maryland	5			
Missouri	0			
Washington D.C.	1	Upper South & Washington D.C.	3	13.04%
Virginia	2			
South Carolina	1	Lower South	1	4.35%
Pennsylvania	1	Lower North	1	4.35%
Unknown	1	Unknown	1	4.35%
Party Membership				
Democrats		11		
Opposition		10		
Unknown		2		

Tables 21 and 22 provide information about the men chosen to represent the Border South at the Washington Peace Conference. Nearly all of the delegates had earned the respect of their peers and colleagues for their work in state legislatures, on the bench, or in the United States Congress. In addition to their public service, the renown of some of the Border South delegates to the Washington Peace Conference resonated beyond the borders of their state. Most Americans had read about the exploits of Alexander Doniphan in the Mexican-American War; operatives in the Democratic Party had seriously considered James Guthrie, a wealthy railroad president and former secretary of the treasury, as the party's presidential candidate in 1860; Reverdy Johnson served as attorney general under Zachary Taylor, provided legal counsel to John Sanford in the Dred Scott case, and according to one expert on antebellum law, "was probably the most respected constitutional lawyer in the country"; and James B. Clay was a son

and former law partner of Henry Clay.²² The general assemblies and Governor Hicks almost evenly split their overall presence at the conference among Democrats and Opposition men, but no Republicans represented the Border South at the Washington meeting. These eminent border country politicians were on average fifty-five years of age and owned around eleven enslaved persons. Ten delegates, however, owned fewer than five or none, while five of the emissaries had accumulated massive slaveholdings for the Border South and reached the status of planter. Nearly all of the Border South delegates had been born in the Border or Upper South, though one hailed from South Carolina and another from Pennsylvania. Their age, wealth, attachment to slavery, and familiarity with the Border South meant that these men clearly understood the importance of finding some solution to the deepening national crisis.

Along with the Washington Peace Conference movement, Crittenden and his colleagues persisted in their effort to get Congress to consider some compromise plan. Two days after the Senate replaced the hardline Clark Resolutions for his compromise package, Crittenden managed to get the upper house to reconsider the decisive January 16 vote for substitution. The reconsideration measure narrowly passed 27 to 24, with all eight Border South senators voting in the affirmative. Republican Daniel Clark futilely protested Crittenden's tactic on the grounds that a full contingent of senators were not present to vote.²³ Even though they voiced concerns that the bulk of the Republican Party would never acquiesce in a settlement, moderates and Unionists along the border considered it imperative to keep compromise on life-support in Congress. To throw in the towel on Capitol Hill would provide disunionists with greater leverage and confirm to many southerners the fire-eater argument that the South had no future in

²² Launius, *Alexander William Doniphan*, 182-199; Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), 278-279, 307; Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 282; Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 624, 719-721.

²³ CG, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 443.

a Union dominated by Republican leadership. Border South Unionists searched for ways to convince the electorate that not all northerners eschewed compromise. Severn Teackle Wallis, an outspoken Baltimore lawyer and politician with secessionist proclivities, caustically warned a Maryland Unionist “that in the absence of such concessions on the part of the North, the dismemberment of the Republic is a foregone conclusion, & nothing will be left to us, here, but a choice of adhesion to the one or the other of its fragments.”²⁴

Mindful of the delicate balance in the South, several northern moderates in late January and early February played up the amicable intersectional relationships between conservatives that in the 1850s helped suppress radicalism in the great heart of the nation. Democrat William Bigler of Pennsylvania emphatically announced on the floor of the Senate that the northern people would accept the Crittenden measures if given the opportunity to vote upon them. He reminded his colleagues that although the Border and Upper South had stood true to the Union, the leaders in those states openly declared the absolute need for a settlement and an outright intolerance of federal coercion of the seceded states. If the Republicans continued to block the avenue that led toward settlement, Bigler cautioned, many Border South conservatives would have no choice but to join in the disunion movement. The Pennsylvanian shuddered at the prospect of secession and war along the sectional border, where a line on a map simplified the complex relations built up over generations. “That line is sanctified by all the ties that can endear men to each other – political and commercial ties; ties of interest and custom; ties of consanguinity and affection. Great God!” Bigler exclaimed, “Are all those to be severed?” Boston conservative Edward Everett warned that if the Border South sided with the Lower

²⁴ Severn Teackle Wallis to Reverdy Johnson, Jan. 3, 1861, Reverdy Johnson Collection, 1818-1876, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. For information on Wallis, see Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 10:385-386.

South, “the fate of the country is sealed.” Everett counseled political leaders to listen to the northern people and moderates in the Border South who ached for a settlement.²⁵

Border South moderates saw a glimmer of hope on January 21 when Republican senator Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania avowed he had an inclination to vote for the Crittenden package. Delaware senator Willard Saulsbury thanked Cameron for his conciliatory outlook and expressed his optimism that other conservative Republicans would eventually come around and join hands with their erstwhile partisan rivals to secure a settlement. Virginian James Mason, an advocate of disunion, immediately questioned Cameron’s motives and pointed out that the Pennsylvanian had voted on January 16 to defeat the compromise initiative. Cameron responded that Crittenden had personally approached him, made a strong case for compromise, and asked him to reevaluate his position. The two senators may have agreed to a political trade. Earlier in the day the Senate voted on an enabling act that would bring Kansas into the Union as a free state. So long the explosive centerpiece of sectional animosity in Washington, the Kansas issue ironically came to a conclusion during the secession winter without much fanfare. Several Lower South senators had resigned from the upper chamber when their states left the Union, which allowed the measure to pass the Senate by the comfortable margin of 36 to 16. Only one Border South senator – Crittenden - voted in favor of the state’s admission, while four voted against the measure and three abstained.²⁶ Perhaps Crittenden joined with Republicans and northern Democrats to pass the bill in order to earn political capital with the very people who held the fate of his compromise in their hands.

²⁵ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 490, 493; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Feb. 9, 1861.

²⁶ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 489, 494-495. Lazarus Powell of Kentucky, Anthony Kennedy of Maryland, and James Green and Trusten Polk of Missouri voted against the bill; James Bayard and Willard Saulsbury of Delaware and James Pearce of Maryland abstained. All of the negative votes came from southern senators. For details of the Kansas statehood bill’s history and passage, see Nichols, *Disruption of American Democracy*, 475; David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 552; Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 205-206, 219-220.

Republican cooperation on compromise, however, never materialized in the Senate. The day after Cameron's speech, Lazarus Powell beseeched the Republicans to pass the Crittenden program. "If you adopt this amendment," the Kentucky Democrat importuned, "the guns of demagogues, north and south, will be spiked." Pleas for assistance from Border South moderates and northern Democrats did not resonate with Republicans across the aisle. They utilized an array of parliamentary tactics to bring less important matters before the Senate and stall a second vote on the Crittenden proposition. Likely at the behest of party operatives and to salvage his own political career, the slippery Cameron retreated from his conciliatory stance. Just two days after expressing his approval of the Crittenden plan, the Pennsylvanian led a Republican effort to postpone the discussion of compromise and instead take up a tariff bill. The few remaining southern radicals in the upper house teamed up with their Republican enemies in an attempt to disrupt the Crittenden resolutions by voting in favor of delaying measures. Stephen Douglas fumed that "it is no longer worth while to conceal from ourselves the fact that the extremists on this side and on the other side are in concert, from different motives, to defeat a settlement."²⁷

While he could not procure a vote on his resolutions, Crittenden had seen to it that radicals could not simply move past the issue. The agitation of moderates prevented Republicans from burying the compromise initiative on the Senate calendar. He successfully bridged the gap between the substitution of the Clark resolutions and the meeting of peace commissioners at Washington in early February by constantly pressing for consideration of his measures. Once the Peace Conference commenced on February 4, Crittenden relaxed his campaign for the consideration of his compromise package out of respect for the assembled

²⁷ *CG - Appendix*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 93; *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 518-521, 661. Abraham Lincoln had opened a dialogue with Cameron about including him in his cabinet, which likely weighed on the Pennsylvanian's mind when he retreated from his openly conciliatory stance; see Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 122-124.

delegates working toward the same end, but he promised to renew his efforts in the Senate once the meeting concluded.²⁸

Over in the House of Representatives, the chances for a comprehensive settlement appeared to break down. Debate on the six separate reports from the Committee of Thirty-three commenced on January 21 and continued ad nauseam throughout much of the remainder of the legislative session. “The Committee of Thirty-three neither saved the Union nor their own reputations,” a newspaper correspondent grumbled in response to the panel’s absence of cohesion. “Interminable debate still proceeds.” The lack of unity on the Committee of Thirty-three spilled onto the floor of the House when the committees’ reports came up for discussion. Politicians of all stripes used the occasion to deliver eloquent speeches which ranged from fire-eating diatribes and Republican denunciations of secession to honest appeals for peace. During the often vituperative debates, several Border South congressmen admonished their colleagues to vote rather than talk. J. Morrison Harris, a Unionist from Maryland, reminded the House that although the Upper and Border South remained true to the Union, secession sentiment would spread if Congress rested on its laurels. “In the whole tier of these border States, and greatly in my own State, before the rush of events whirls us into greater excitement,” Harris announced, “we want to know whether the northern Representatives in this Congress, who hold the power of this great salvation or this absolute ruin in their hands, are disposed to do anything, upon a basis that will be saving and sufficient.”²⁹

Harris’s warning apparently prodded some Republicans to action in the House. Massachusetts Republican Charles Francis Adams on January 31 clarified his views on the crisis

²⁸ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 822.

²⁹ *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 19, 1861; David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (1942; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 299; *CG - Appendix*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 117-118.

and stated that although he could not endorse the Crittenden plan with the hereafter acquired clause tethered to it, he would accept Thomas Corwin's suggestion for a constitutional amendment that would protect slavery in the states. William Kellogg of Illinois on February 1 submitted a compromise package that extended the Missouri Compromise line westward and incorporated the Corwin amendment to safeguard the peculiar institution in the states, and John Killinger of Pennsylvania followed Kellogg with a conciliatory speech in which he praised Crittenden as "the last of his school; that school of patriots which the Whig party gave to the country." The overtures of these Republicans toward compromise, however, failed to generate any excitement throughout the rest of the party. Few Republicans joined in this brief flurry of conciliatory sentiment and most of the party faithful took it upon themselves to confirm their commitment to intransigence. Kellogg faced a veritable firing squad for introducing a settlement package that surpassed Corwin's suggestion. Constituents in his congressional district denounced his compromise proposal; the *Chicago Tribune* read Kellogg out of the party; and one observer in Illinois regarded the congressman as "politically dead in all parts of the state but among democrats."³⁰

Abraham Lincoln's stance on compromise had not significantly changed since he admonished his Republican colleagues at the opening of Congress to resist any measures that would jeopardize the party's key principle of prohibiting the spread of slavery into the territories. Republicans looked to Lincoln for guidance and direction, and he had not backed away from his unyielding standpoint on the extension of slavery in the West. Still ensconced in Springfield, the

³⁰ Patrick Michael Sowle, "The Conciliatory Republicans during the Winter of Secession," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1963), 362-365; *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 690, 697; A.P. Bartlett to Lyman Trumbull, Feb. 9, 1861, quoted in Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*, 162-163.

president-elect brushed off the mountain of appeals from the Border South calling for him to issue a statement and maintained his public silence on the unfolding national crisis.³¹

The petitions of a few influential Border South moderates, however, did provoke Lincoln to relent ever so slightly. In mid-December Nathan Sargent met with a handful of senators and congressmen in Washington to discuss the national crisis. During the meeting Senator James Pearce of Maryland acknowledged that although a public statement from the president-elect would have little impact in the Lower South, it “would have a powerful effect in the Northern slave states, and might arrest the epidemic now so fearfully & rapidly spreading.” Crittenden and his fellow Kentuckian Green Adams also informed one of Lincoln’s intermediaries that if he issued a public statement outlining the nuance of his position on slavery in the states versus the territories, it would smother the disunion movement in the Border and Upper South. President James Buchanan followed suit and sent Duff Green, an elderly native of Kentucky and a formerly powerful newspaper editor, out to Springfield in the hopes of procuring a letter from the president-elect that sketched his intentions toward the South. Green placed the Crittenden resolutions before Lincoln, who offered his normal response: the extension of the Missouri Compromise line might quiet the agitation of the slavery issue at present, but it would only invite future filibustering schemes from proslavery zealots and leave the root of the issue unresolved. Lincoln added that although “he intended to sustain his party in good faith,” he would acquiesce to the will of the people if they chose to add an amendment to the Constitution through due process. Green apparently convinced Lincoln to compose a letter in which he outlined his

³¹ David Potter and Russell McClintock each explain how leadership of the Republican Party transferred from William Seward to Abraham Lincoln during this crucial interval; see Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* & McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*. See the following letters on December 12 for an example of the daily Border South appeals that flooded Lincoln: J.M. Bullock to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 12, 1860, Leroy P. Cord to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 12, 1860, J.H. McKee to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 12, 1860, R.W. Monecatt to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 12, 1860, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

sentiment that no amendment to the Constitution was necessary, but he would not interfere with the political process if the American people desired to alter the document. Furthermore, the president-elect copied directly from the Chicago Platform the Republican Party position that “the right of each state to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of powers on which the perfection, and endurance of our political fabric depends.”³²

Lincoln consented to the publication of the letter only under the condition that six of the twelve senators from any of the Deep South states aside from South Carolina also affix their name to the document. He also placed the communication in the hands of Lyman Trumbull, not Duff Green, and instructed him to deliver it only if he felt it would do the party no harm. Although Green apparently received the letter, he did not make it public. Speculation about Green’s reticence to publish the letter revolves around two possibilities: he held back because of Lincoln’s “unwillingness to recommend an amendment to the constitution which will arrest the progress of secession” or because he could not procure the signatures of six southern senators. Green did file a report of his visit to Springfield in the *New York Herald* in which he commented that once in office the Republican president would meet several of the demands of the South – from taking no action against slavery in the District of Columbia and federal property in the southern states to keeping the interstate slave trade intact – but on the issue of the territorial expansion of slavery Lincoln was “firmly and unequivocally resolved to make no concession”

³² Nathan Sargent to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 12, 1860, Isaac Newton to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 13, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 174-175; William J. Cooper, Jr., *We Have the War Upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War, November 1860 – April 1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 107-109; Duff Green to James Buchanan, Dec. 28, 1860, James Buchanan Papers, HSP; Abraham Lincoln to Duff Green, Dec. 28, 1860, Abraham Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, Dec. 28, 1860, both in Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:162-163.

unless through constitutional amendment. While Green painted Lincoln in a favorable light, his testimonial did little to pacify nervous southerners about the president-elect's intentions.³³

From outward appearances Lincoln seemed to barricade himself away in Springfield and idly wait for his term to begin in early March. In reality he spent long days poring over correspondence from Republicans in Washington, entertaining an endless stream of visitors, and sifting through a plethora of possible cabinet appointees. The composition of his cabinet became an engrossing issue for all Americans because it would likely indicate the trajectory of the first Republican administration. Would he fill his official family with hardline Republicans who sympathized with the abolition movement, or would he opt to staff his cabinet with more moderate men? This question carried momentous weight among southerners. It held even more value in the Border South, a region that utterly depended on conservative northern cooperation and in which some of its inhabitants had prior to John Brown's October 1859 raid even contemplated an alliance with the Republicans.³⁴ For border country southerners, Lincoln's cabinet served as a barometer of the Republican approach to the South and would likely impact many people's decision about Union or secession.

Border southerners found it difficult to discern how the tight-lipped Lincoln would proceed. He twice met with Edward Bates in December and told the Missourian that he planned to include him in his official family. Lincoln confided to Bates that he would also place William Seward, the senior senator from New York and the de facto leader of the party, in his cabinet. Bates hinted to Lincoln that Seward's inclusion "would exasperate the feelings of the South, and

³³ Abraham Lincoln to Duff Green, Dec. 28, 1860, Abraham Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, Dec. 28, 1860, both in Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:162-163; Duff Green to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 7, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; *New York Herald*, Jan. 8, 1861. It seems likely that Green read the letter or was made aware of its contents by Trumbull; see Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 175-176, 533 n. 109.

³⁴ Daniel W. Crofts, "The Union Party of 1861 and the Secession Crisis," *Perspectives in American History* 11 (1977-1978): 327-376; Crofts, "The Southern Opposition and the Crisis of the Union," in Gary W. Gallagher and Rachel A. Sheldon, eds., *A Political Nation: New Directions in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Political History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 85-111.

make conciliation impossible, because they consider Mr. S[eward] the embodiment of all that they hold odious in the Republican party.” At a meeting on December 31, Lincoln showed Bates some letters which Seward, who had accepted the post of secretary of state, had written. Bates expressed surprise that the New Yorker, whose reputation for radicalism actually cloaked a conservative outlook, suggested several southerners and conservatives to round out the cabinet.³⁵

The Missourian accurately gauged the opinion of many border southerners toward Seward. The New Yorker had in the 1850s invoked the ire of the South for his declaration that an irrepressible conflict existed between slavery and freedom. The adjectives that many southerners used to describe Seward rarely evoked a positive tone: during the crisis a clergyman labeled him an “arch-demagogue”; a Kentuckian considered him “the most obnoxious man of all to the South”; and one South Carolinian lamented that the New Yorker “damns us – scoffs at us with devilish wit.”³⁶ Unbeknownst to most southerners, Seward went to great lengths to keep the Border and Upper South in the Union during the secession winter.³⁷ Nonetheless, for many conservatives the selection of Bates the Border South moderate failed to counterbalance the appointment of Seward, the perceived abolitionist demon.

Most pundits agreed that Lincoln choose wisely when he selected Edward Bates. Perhaps more than any other southern Republican and aside from his desperate groping for the party’s nomination in the run-up to the Chicago Convention in May 1860, the former Whig had established himself as a conservative on the slavery extension issue. Thurlow Weed, who campaigned on behalf of Seward for a moderate cabinet, felt that Bates made a good addition, as

³⁵ Entries for Dec. 16, 30, 31, 1860, in Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 164-167, 170-172. The quote is found on pp. 164-165.

³⁶ Basil Manly, Jr. to Basil Manly, Sr., Jan. 3, 1861, Basil Manly Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Blanton Duncan to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 6, 1861, Douglas Papers, UC; George S. Bryan to John Pendleton Kennedy, Dec. 30, 1860, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

³⁷ For Seward’s efforts with the Upper and Border South, see especially Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis*; Sowle, “Conciliatory Republicans”; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*; McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*; and Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*.

did some Republicans in the Border South.³⁸ Rumors prevailed that Lincoln might assign additional posts in his cabinet to men from the Border South, but the other names talked of frightened both Republicans and border southerners. Cassius Clay, the hard-edged abolitionist from Kentucky, actively sought a place in the cabinet and in early January 1861 told Lincoln, “I know the South – ‘conciliation’ will never save the Union!” While his viewpoint on compromise tended to mirror Lincoln’s, advisors to the president-elect warned of the ill effects of placing Clay in his official family. Robert J. Breckinridge, who met with Lincoln in December to discuss his cabinet, remonstrated that the appointment of the firebrand Clay would likely tip the balance in the Bluegrass State toward secession. “Kentucky would feel insulted at having forced on her as her organ a citizen over whom she would even prefer Seward,” George Robertson admitted.³⁹

Some Republicans also mentioned Henry Winter Davis for a post in the cabinet. Davis, like Cassius Clay, generated more discontentment than satisfaction among most border southerners. His spiteful political style, deep-seated nativism, and most importantly his alliance with the Republicans during the speakership contest of 1859-1860 made the Baltimore politician anathema to most border southerners. A Marylander predicted that if Lincoln included Winter Davis in his cabinet, the already tiny Republican Party would wither in the Old Line State. John T. Graham complained that Winter Davis had never really won an election; rather, he drummed up an army of working class “rowdies” and drove honest voters from the polls. “I tell you, the

³⁸ Marvin R. Cain, *Lincoln’s Attorney General Edward Bates of Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 121; Worthington G. Snethen to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 21, 1860, Francis S. Corkran to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 31, 1860, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC

³⁹ Cassius M. Clay to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 10, 1861, David Davis to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 19, 1860, Leonard Swett to Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 30, 1860, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC; George Robertson to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 16, 1860, Jones Family Papers, 1844-1969, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, Feb. 20, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

people of Maryland and the whole South would rather be represented by Mr Hale [abolitionist Senator John Hale of New Hampshire]” than Henry Winter Davis, Graham moaned.⁴⁰

Lincoln faced pressure to place someone from the powerful Blair family in his cabinet, too. Francis Preston Blair, Sr., a former Democrat and political advisor to Andrew Jackson, had assisted in the formation of the Republican Party in the 1850s. From his home in Silver Spring, Maryland, the aged Blair worked the machinery of the party and hinted that one of his two sons deserved a place in the first Republican administration. The placement of Edward Bates in Lincoln’s official family made it unlikely that fellow Missourian Frank Blair, Jr., would receive an appointment. Frank Jr.’s older brother Montgomery, however, lived and worked in Maryland as an attorney and provided a more conservative alternative to Winter Davis. Francis and his son Frank began a campaign on Montgomery’s behalf, which gained momentum in the winter of 1860-1861. Blair, Sr., thought his eldest son the perfect cabinet appointment, especially because he could help the party grow throughout the Border South. Montgomery’s connections to Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland and the Blair family’s relatively moderate approach to the political issue of slavery – they condoned hindering the westward spread of the peculiar institution but insisted the Constitution protected it in the states and preferred colonization as the best means to whiten America in the future – placed his thinking closer to the Border South consensus than that of Winter Davis or Cassius Clay.⁴¹

The president-elect mulled over the names of these prominent Border South Republicans as he prepared to leave Springfield on February 11 and make his journey to Washington.

⁴⁰ Francis S. Corkran to Abraham Lincoln, Feb. 26, 1861, John T. Graham to Abraham Lincoln, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁴¹ Elbert B. Smith, *Francis Preston Blair* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 218-224; Frank P. Blair, Jr., to Francis Preston Blair, Nov. 8, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Francis Preston Blair to Frank P. Blair, Jr., Oct. 27, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC. For the Blairs and colonization, see Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 124-126.

Lincoln understood that as president of the United States he needed southerners in his cabinet to offset his party's sectional cast, but he faced an uphill battle convincing the people of the Border South that the Republicans meant their region no harm. Conservative Republicans like Edward Bates and Montgomery Blair, both of whom eventually entered the cabinet, were nonetheless still Republicans, which frightened many border country inhabitants.⁴² Without some public assurance that he would not touch slavery in the states, border southerners worried the new president might fall victim to radicals in his party who in their minds planned "some subterranean design to wage an exterminating crusade against [the South] by all the power and patronage of the incoming administration." James A. Bayard held similar concerns about the designs of the Republican Party when in January 1861 he told his son that the "inevitable result of [Republican] dogmas must be the destruction of negro slavery, and the ultimate equality of the negro and the white man." On the floor of the House, Thomas L. Anderson of Missouri laid bare the paranoia that had engulfed the Border South since Lincoln's election: "Many of our slaves are now impressed with the idea that, after the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, they are to be free. This impression makes them restless and discontented; renders our homes, our wives, and our children unsafe," Anderson railed. "Surely no rational man expects us to live with such a state of things in our midst."⁴³

Lincoln's silence, discussions of possible cabinet appointees with radical inclinations, the possibility of armed conflict at Charleston Harbor, and the obstinate stand of Republicans in Congress together manufactured a great deal of disquietude among border southerners. By

⁴² For a very good discussion of Lincoln's cabinet decisions and the concerns of the people of the Border South, see William C. Harris, *Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), Ch. 9 & Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), *passim*.

⁴³ George Robertson to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 16, 1860, Jones Family Papers, FHS; James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Jan. 28, 1861, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 397. Thomas L. Anderson owned five slaves in 1860; see 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, www.ancestry.com.

February tensions ran high as the window for congressional action shrank. Instead of utilizing their time to speak on the reports of the Committee of Thirty-three for constructive means, some Border South congressmen instead delivered diatribes against the Republicans. George W. Hughes of Maryland attacked Lincoln, Seward, and other Republicans as “mischief making politicians” who had brainwashed the northern people with the repugnant doctrine of an irrepressible conflict. Kentuckian Laban Moore warned Republicans to retreat from the notion of coercion and accept some form of compromise, or else they would drive the Border South to join the Deep South in a slaveholding confederacy. “No army can be marched through [Kentucky’s] borders to invade a sister State, without making every plain therein a battle field, and every mountain pass a Thermopylae,” Moore announced.⁴⁴

Affairs in St. Louis complicated matters for Border South moderates who in order to sustain the Unionist offensive wished to avoid an armed conflict at all costs. Missouri’s largest city included a lightly guarded federal arsenal packed with about 60,000 stands of arms and commanded by an officer who sympathized with secessionists in the Lower South. Frank Blair, Jr., heard rumors that disunion militants with the blessing of Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson planned to seize the federal arsenal and distribute the enclosed arms to the state militia. Blair worried that a heavily armed state militia would serve as a boon to secessionists and might convince some wavering disunionists that Missouri could successfully stand up to the federal government. In January 1861 he organized a Union Committee of Public Safety and his own militia unit to offset the secessionists in his midst. Blair named his militia unit, comprised mostly of St. Louis Republicans and Germans, the Home Guards to distinguish it from the state militia. Fears arose among moderates that a standoff in their own backyard of St. Louis, rather than far away Charleston Harbor, might inaugurate hostilities and unravel the tapestry of

⁴⁴ *CG - Appendix, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 149-150, 157.*

Unionism in the Border South. Isaac Sturgeon, who worked as an administrator in the United States Treasury office in St. Louis, warned James Buchanan that if either the disunionists or Blair's organization captured the arsenal "war would at once begin in this section as neither would submit to its possession by the other peacefully."⁴⁵

Fearful of an outbreak of hostilities, General in Chief Winfield Scott ordered Lieutenant W.J. Robinson and forty federal soldiers to St. Louis. After his arrival on January 11 Robinson stationed his men in the upper rooms of the city's post office. Sturgeon worked with local authorities and had the unit moved to the arsenal, where they anxiously held their post while secessionist militia units mobilized around them. Captain Nathaniel Lyon on February 6 led a company of United States regular army troops into St. Louis to buttress the forty regulars and Blair's Home Guard. Lyon, a Connecticut-born officer who had earned a reputation for impetuosity in the regular army while leading troops in the Mexican-American War and fighting Indians in California, undermined commanding officer Major Peter V. Hagner and eventually took charge of the arsenal.⁴⁶ The amplified federal contingent kept the pro-secession forces in St. Louis at bay for the time being, but news of an increased federal presence on Missouri's soil alarmed most of the state's congressional delegation in Washington. Rumors of federal troops entering Missouri had reached the national capital in mid-January, which prompted Senator James Green and Congressman John B. Clark each to submit resolutions of inquiry to the secretary of war to find out "whether we are put under a military despotism." The resolutions

⁴⁵ William E. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 15; Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 79-86; Frank P. Blair, Jr., to Dear Judge [Montgomery Blair], Jan. 18, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Edward Bates to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 30, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Isaac Sturgeon to James Buchanan, Jan. 5, 1861, James Buchanan Papers, HSP. Claiborne Fox Jackson indeed used any means necessary to try and push Missouri out of the Union. For his subterfuge with the state banking industry, see Mark Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 83-85; William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher III, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 28-30; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 15-17.

failed to advance in either body, but Clark caused an uproar when he pressed the matter and declared, “I want to know whether martial law is declared in my State; whether our women and children, when they go to their post office, are to be met by soldiers and bristling bayonets.”⁴⁷ The possibility of conflict in St. Louis foreshadowed the difficulties that Unionists would have to endure if coercion overcame compromise. Furthermore, the prickly reaction of Green and Clark laid bare the contempt that many border southerners felt for federal troops entering any part of the South, even the Unionist bastion of St. Louis.

Aware of the mounting frustration and the escalating impatience that border southerners espoused, Republican George Palmer of New York on February 11 offered a pair of resolutions that proclaimed the federal government and the people of the North had neither the desire nor the constitutional right to interfere with slavery in the states and that radicals in the North who did not ascribe to this viewpoint were “too insignificant in numbers or influence to excite serious attention or alarm.” Intended to allay the fears of border southerners, the resolution instead provoked the wrath of Henry C. Burnett, a Democrat from western Kentucky who embraced secession. A Cincinnati newspaper described Burnett as “a big, burly, loud-mouthed fellow who is forever raising points of order and objections, to embarrass the Republicans in the House.” He had snipped at Republicans throughout the session and cast aspersions at their aims and goals toward the South. The irritable Burnett saw in Palmer’s resolutions an opportunity to impugn the despised Republicans.⁴⁸

Discussion arose about the resolutions, with Burnett and Thomas C. Hindman of Arkansas taking the lead in questioning the phrasing of Palmer’s outwardly innocuous

⁴⁷ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 344, 352.

⁴⁸ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 855; Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, quoted in the Frankfort *Weekly Kentucky Yeoman*, Feb. 8, 1861, quoted in Berry F. Craig, “Henry Cornelius Burnett: Champion of Southern Rights,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 77 (Autumn 1979), 268.

statements. Burnett claimed he could not vote for the first resolution because he doubted that northerners would respect the Constitution in regard to the peculiar institution in the southern states. “I have no doubt, sir, that the majority of the people of the North, as evinced by the men they elect and send here, and especially by the election in November last for President and Vice President, are in favor of interfering with slavery in the slaveholding States,” he huffed. After a period of acrimonious debate, Republican John Sherman suggested simplifying the resolution to read “That neither Congress, nor the people or the governments of the non-slaveholding States, have the right to legislate upon or interfere with slavery in any of the slaveholding States of the Union.” The abridged resolution passed the House by a vote of 161-0, though four Border South congressmen refrained from casting a ballot.⁴⁹

The Palmer resolution managed to clear the House, but the debate it produced demonstrated that some border southerners had begun to reevaluate their section’s place in the Union. Some, like Henry Burnett, increasingly warmed to the idea of secession as the days passed and no compromise settlement emerged. Others began to express interest in the idea of armed neutrality, where each state of the Border South would in the event of war maintain its relations with both the federal government and the seceded states. Former governor Robert M. Stewart of Missouri had broached this idea upon leaving office in late December 1860, and Kentucky congressman William E. Simms had written a letter to his constituents on Christmas Day in which he advised such a course of action if war commenced. An anecdote in Kentucky nicely illustrates how the idea of neutrality started gaining traction in the region while Congress remained paralyzed. An unidentified Kentucky lawyer affirmed to a client, who presumably sought legal advice but first wished to test his prospective attorney’s sectional bona fides, that he was indeed a Unionist. When the patron asked if he would shoulder a federal rifle against the

⁴⁹ CG, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 855-857.

seceded states, the attorney replied: “I have a good rifle of my own – and will never fight against the South[,] but I am in favor of restoring the Union.” The Kentuckian added that he would help hang the first federal tax collector who tried to procure money from him to fund a war of coercion.⁵⁰ The plodding course of Congress and longstanding fears about the Republicans placed a great deal of pressure on Unionists in the Border South. As a result, the conditional nature of Border South Unionism exposed itself. Many border southerners stayed true to the Union, but more and more of the region’s inhabitants began to consider neutrality as a halfway house between a Republican-dominated Union and secession.

Many Americans transferred their hopes for the perpetuity of the Union from the hamstrung Congress to the Peace Conference which on February 4, 1861, opened its proceedings in Washington. The very same day, delegates from the Lower South gathered in Montgomery, Alabama to create a government of their own. Nearly everyone appreciated the irony that the two conventions – one charged with saving the republic of their forefathers and the other with establishing an entirely new nation – met on the day in which seventy-two years earlier the electoral college confirmed George Washington as the first president of the United States. “This day will decide whether we are to have absolutely two governments,” Samuel F. Du Pont remarked to a friend.⁵¹

At noon on February 4 Kentuckian Charles S. Morehead called the Washington Peace Conference to order. A portrait of George Washington stared out at the approximately sixty delegates from eleven states who sat in the dance hall of Willard’s Hotel on the first day of the

⁵⁰ Edward Conrad Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1927), 116-117; William E. Simms to The People of the Eighth Congressional District, Dec. 25, 1860, printed in *Louisville Daily Courier*, Jan. 5, 1861; Letter Fragment, [no date], John Machir Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. I have presumed that the anecdote refers to an attorney in Kentucky based on the finding aid of the John Machir Papers, which can be found at <http://shs.umsystem.edu/manuscripts/invent/2893.html>.

⁵¹ Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33; Samuel F. Du Pont to William Whetten, Feb. 4, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

meeting. Over the next few days more representatives arrived; by the end of the proceedings in late-February over 130 delegates represented 21 states at the meeting. The legislatures in California and Oregon deemed it logistically impossible for a group to travel from the Pacific Coast to the national capital before Congress adjourned and thus opted not to send representatives. Time and distance understandably prevented the states of the Far West from participating in the conference, yet the absence of representatives from Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Arkansas proved more distressing. Political disagreements about compromise prevented the three northern states from attending the conference, while disunionists in Arkansas managed to thwart Unionists from sending a delegation to Washington. Iowa and Maine simply instructed its congressional delegation to represent them at the conference; with their primary commitment to the undertakings of Congress, these congressmen found their time stretched thin and only intermittently participated in the meeting. The Lower South, engaged in its own experiment to construct a new nation of seceded states, also sent no delegates to the meeting.⁵²

The composition of the Washington Peace Conference revealed the degree to which the nation had become fractured by mid-winter. The Border and Upper South states, caught in the vise between two extremes, seemed more eager to effect a settlement at the conference than any other region. Other parts of the nation doubted that much good would emerge from the meeting. “A chance for settlement which depends so entirely on the all but unanimous support, through all its stages, of the Black Republican States,” scoffed a Louisiana editor, “is too remote a vision of credulous hope or unsubstantial figment of the imagination to be the basis of any acts by the Southern people either compromising their rights, or their powers and modes protecting them.”

⁵² Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 41-43, 55-56; L.E. Chittenden, *A Report of the Debates and Proceedings in the Secret Sessions of the Conference Convention for Proposing Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, Held at Washington, D.C., In February, A.D. 1861* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1864), 465-466, hereinafter cited as *Report of the Washington Peace Conference*; James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 129-132.

A Wisconsin Republican denounced the Peace Conference and asked, “Who can tell what possible good can arise from sending delegates to the [Peace Convention]...unless those delegates have authority to make an unconditional surrender of all the principles, purposes and objects of the Republican party?”⁵³

With the Lower South and portions of the Upper North striking a posture of defiance, conservatives hitched their hopes of a settlement to the good faith of their Lower North allies. Unfortunately for Border South moderates, Republican-controlled legislatures in Illinois and Ohio had appointed delegates who refused to budge on the issue of compromise. Indiana governor Oliver P. Morton, a staunch Republican who like Thomas Hicks took it upon himself to appoint his state’s delegates, admitted to Lincoln that he favored sending representatives to Washington not because he “expected any positive good to come from it, but to prevent positive evil.” Morton worried that Republicans in Pennsylvania might upon reaching the meeting waver and condone a settlement. To counterbalance the vacillating Pennsylvanians in Washington, the governor recommended that the rest of the Lower North states dispatch hardliners who would “operate as a powerful restraint upon any disposition on the part of other states to compromise the integrity and future of the Republican party.” Moreover, the legislatures of several northern states had in their resolutions to send delegates to the meeting indicated that they felt it unnecessary to amend the Constitution at present. The resolutions from Illinois, Indiana, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania stated a willingness to attend the conference and hear out the complaints of southerners, but they also plainly conveyed an indisposition towards any compromise on the territorial issue. Other states bound any action of their delegates to the

⁵³ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Feb. 8, 1861, in Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession*, 451; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, Feb. 4, 1861, in Perkins, ed., *Northern Editorials on Secession*, 1:266-267.

approval of the state legislature.⁵⁴ These stipulations and riders boded ill for moderates of the Border South who in previous sectional disputes had often counted upon the collaboration of the Lower North.

Upon assembling, the Peace Conference quickly decided to name former president John Tyler of Virginia the president of the convention and settled on a set of rules to govern the meeting. The body agreed to keep all deliberations secret; the attendance of seven state delegations equaled a quorum; and each state would be allotted one vote, rather than allowing each individual delegate to cast a ballot. The delegates clearly attempted to emulate the revered 1787 convention that produced the Constitution. The rules closely mimicked those adopted at Philadelphia, and the selection of John Tyler to lead the meeting had deep symbolic meaning for the assembled statesmen.⁵⁵ Tyler hailed from Virginia, as had George Washington, the president of the 1787 meeting, and nearly all Americans recognized the name of the former national executive. Beyond their Virginia birth, however, all comparisons between Tyler and Washington ceased. Washington's name, especially in the aftermath of the American Revolution and prior to his enduring the rancorous presidential politics of the 1790s, evoked veneration among Americans. Tyler, on the other hand, had been placed in the White House after the death of William Henry Harrison, which earned him the unenviable sobriquet of "His Accidency." Prior to the Peace Convention, his political career had foundered on the shoals of partisan politics. The party to which he belonged, the Whigs, excommunicated him while president for vetoing Henry Clay's multifaceted economic package. Without a political home, Tyler

⁵⁴ Oliver P. Morton to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 29, 1861 Lincoln Papers, LOC; Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 46; Chittenden, *Report of the Washington Peace Conference*, 456, 458-464. The Republicans of Illinois held a majority of seven seats in their lower house and one in the upper house; in Ohio the Republicans carried an eleven-seat majority in their House and a majority of fifteen seats in their Senate. For the partisan breakdowns on these legislatures, see Michael J. Dubin, *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures: A Year by Year Summary, 1796-2006* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 57, 148.

⁵⁵ Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 47-49; Richard Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution* (New York: Random House, 2009), 80-85.

subsequently helped to unleash a torrent of sectional acrimony when beginning in 1842 he vociferously pushed for the annexation of Texas, a portion of Mexico where slavery had taken root, into the United States. One of his contemporaries in 1861 labeled Tyler a “tottering ashen ruin” who among the list of former presidents was “more cordially despised” than any other.⁵⁶

After placing Tyler in the president’s chair and setting the ground rules for the meeting, James Guthrie of Kentucky proposed the creation of a committee of one delegate from each state in attendance to review the numerous compromise proposals before the nation and make a report on the best mode of settlement. Guthrie chaired the committee, which included Daniel M. Bates from Delaware, Reverdy Johnson from Maryland, and Alexander W. Doniphan from Missouri. The rest of the convention waited, at times impatiently, while the committee closeted from February 6 until February 14. During the interval, Border South moderates implored their colleagues from the North to recognize how crucial a settlement was to the Unionist offensive in their states. “Our Border State friends say we must not be deceived – Unless some adjustment is made those now Union men, will join their futures to the Southern Confederacy,” an Ohio delegate chronicled to his brother. On Capitol Hill, Henry Winter Davis fretted that the “assembled fogeneity” at Willard’s would complicate matters for Congress. “They know nothing of the temper of the country,” Winter Davis complained, and if the meeting broke up without a settlement it would exacerbate already seething tensions. On the other hand, he reasoned, any compromise that emerged from the convention would probably go down to defeat in Congress, which would likely yield the same result.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Crapol, *John Tyler*, 19-20, 175-222; Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2010), 211-348; Joel H. Silbey, *Storm Over Texas: The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); quoted in Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen’s Convention*, 10.

⁵⁷ Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen’s Convention*, 49-61; Reuben Hitchcock to Peter Hitchcock, Jr., Feb. 10, 1861, in Robert Gray Gunderson, ed., “Letters from the Washington Peace Conference of 1861,” *Journal of*

While the delegates in Washington awaited the Guthrie Committee's report, Abraham Lincoln on February 11 started his meandering journey to the nation's capital. Ever since the results of the election became known, several towns and state legislatures had invited the president-elect to visit them on his way to the White House. Although Lincoln could not honor every invitation he received, he did make several stops on his train ride east. Large crowds assembled at each stop, hoping to catch a glimpse of the next president. After three months of public silence, Lincoln used the trip to lay out some perfunctory views on the national crisis. Border South moderates certainly grimaced when they read his remarks in the paper. In Indianapolis he made light of the southern demand that the federal government not attempt coercion by likening such a position to "a sort of free-love arrangement." In Cincinnati on February 12 Lincoln tempered his comments and reminded the people across the Ohio River in Kentucky that in 1859 he proclaimed that Republicans "mean to leave you alone, and in no way interfere with your institution; to abide by all and every compromise of the constitution," and to treat them with mutual respect as Americans. Lincoln assured the crowd that circumstances had not changed his viewpoint toward the South. Yet he concluded his remarks with a tactless warning that if the South could not see this, "the fault shall not be mine."⁵⁸

Many border southerners considered Lincoln's flippant attitude toward the crisis offensive. An acquaintance of Blanton Duncan had conversed with Lincoln before he left Springfield and asked the president-elect about several different resolutions before the Kentucky legislature which expressed the state's disapprobation with a federal policy of coercion. One such resolution went so far as to proclaim that if the federal government used force against the

Southern History 17 (August 1951), 387; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Feb. 14, 20, 1861, March 12, 1861, all in S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

⁵⁸ Speech from the Balcony of the Bates House at Indianapolis, Indiana, Feb. 11, 1861, Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio, Feb. 12, 1861, both in Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:195, 198-199.

seceded states, Kentucky would consider the act “a dissolution of all previous compacts” and would make preparations to resist invasion. Lincoln allegedly responded that if these resolutions represented the true sentiment of Kentucky, “let her prepare for war.” Duncan read Lincoln’s Indianapolis speech and believed it confirmed that the new president “is the most fanatical of his party & it is idle to hope for peace.” Several newspapers in the Border South lamented the tone of Lincoln’s speeches, while those that advocated secession colored each oration as a declaration of war on the South. “He approaches the capital of the country more in the character of a harlequin, dealing with the great issues which agitate and agonize the minds of thoughtful and rational men as if they were only the absurdities of a pantomime which would all be ‘put to rights’ by a touch of his magic wand,” a Baltimore editor muttered. Alexander Doniphan took time out from his labors on the Guthrie Committee to read Lincoln’s speeches and deduced that “we are constantly looking for him to ruin everything [with] his ridiculously childish display of eloquence & presidential taste and literary attainment.” An angry Doniphan branded Lincoln “as ridiculously vain and fanatic as a country boy with his first red morocco hat” and dismissed the president-elect as “an ignorant, country buffoon.”⁵⁹

While Lincoln continued his journey toward Washington, the Guthrie Committee on February 15 finally presented its majority report to the Peace Conference. The compromise settlement the committee issued contained elements of both the Crittenden Compromise and the solution earlier advised by Crittenden’s unofficial joint border state committee. Guthrie’s

⁵⁹ Blanton Duncan to William Porcher Miles, Feb. 11, 12, 1861, W.P. Miles Papers, SHC; *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 45-46, 195-197, 209-210, 214-218; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Feb. 13, 19, 1861; *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 15, 1861; *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Feb. 15, 1861; Alexander W. Doniphan to Dear Jno., Feb. 22, 1861, Alexander W. Doniphan Letter, 1861, C1935, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. Lincoln prepared an address expressly for Kentuckians, but he never delivered it. The speech laid out his rationale for refusing to endorse a compromise and stated that if the American people were not satisfied with him, they could vote him out of office in the next election. Considering how border southerners reacted to his other speeches, the address intended for Kentuckians probably would have done more harm than good. See Fragment of Speech Intended for Kentuckians, c. Feb. 12, 1861, in Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:200-201.

associates called for a constitutional amendment that divided the territories between slavery and freedom at the familiar parallel of 36°30', but in an effort to attract Republican support it required neither Congress nor territorial governments to protect the peculiar institution south of the line. The committee's plan included Crittenden's original suggestions that Congress could not abolish slavery in Washington D.C. without the consent of Maryland, nor could it abolish slavery in the states where it then existed. Furthermore, the committee called for the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, the eternal prohibition of the African slave trade, and just compensation for slaveholders who due to interference from abolitionists could not recapture enslaved persons who had fled northward. In an attempt to stifle the repeated sectional agitation caused by territorial acquisition, the Guthrie panel recommended that four-fifths of the Senate had to ratify any future attainment of land. According to one attendee, Guthrie and Reverdy Johnson of Maryland had taken the lead in ushering the majority report through the committee. Separate minority reports from the committee called for a national constitutional convention, which some moderates considered nothing more than a means for Republicans to continue their policy of inactivity, and a hardline southern report which included a provision that clarified the right of secession.⁶⁰

For the next several days the delegates discussed every proposal before the body. Reverdy Johnson asked the Republicans in attendance to realize the enormity of the crisis if the body produced no settlement. If the Peace Convention accomplished nothing, he surmised, then Kentucky and Missouri would likely join the disunion movement and war would commence. The Marylander asked the delegates to grasp that the slaveholding states, not the North, were willing to yield on slavery in the territories. He pointed out that the 1857 Dred Scott decision

⁶⁰ Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 62-63; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 209-210; E.W.H. Ellis to Oliver P. Morton, Feb. 9, 1861, in Kenneth M. Stampp, ed., "Letters from the Washington Peace Conference of 1861," *Journal of Southern History* 9 (August 1943), 399.

granted slaveholders the right to take their property into any territory, and now he and other moderates would “abandon our rights North” by agreeing to divide the territory at the old Missouri Compromise line. Like Crittenden in Congress, Johnson and his moderate allies at Willard’s wished for Republicans to put party considerations aside and think of the fate of the entire nation. Debate eventually turned on the territorial issue and appeared to ground to a halt. A few Republicans, such as Iowa’s Samuel R. Curtis, Frederick Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, and Stephen T. Logan of Illinois, signaled to the moderates a willingness to bend on the territorial issue. Curtis conceded that he would accept a division of the territories if the conference cleared up the language of the settlement so it would mirror the Missouri Compromise and tacitly, rather than explicitly, sanction slavery south of the line. Moderates, who feared such a revision would not appease their southern brethren, rejected Curtis’s suggestion. On February 23, the delegations of New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island joined the southern states to defeat the Curtis amendment. Southerners argued that they needed the Republicans to relent even more if they hoped to confine the secession movement to the Lower South.⁶¹

Alexander W. Doniphan watched the proceedings unfold and became less hopeful that any effective settlement would be reached. Although he rarely entered into the endless floor debates, Doniphan privately complained that most Republicans had come to Washington to derail any conciliatory measures and “baffle us to all eternity.” Most of the Republicans would not budge until Lincoln arrived in the capital, he concluded. Doniphan believed that if the president-elect fell under the spell of William Seward, his designee for secretary of state who behind closed doors had given a nod toward conciliation, the Republicans at the convention

⁶¹ Chittenden, *Report of the Washington Peace Conference*, 90, 322; Alexander W. Doniphan to Dear Jno., Feb. 22, 1861, A.W. Doniphan Letter, 1861, SHS-MO; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 211-212; William Baker Reston to Reverdy Johnson, Feb. 18, 1861, Reverdy Johnson Collection, MDHS.

would acquiesce in a deal. If, however, Republican hardliners held sway over the new president, “then we may go home and tell our people to call on Gabriel to blow for the Union will be dissolved in a few days or months at most.” The *Missourian*, who had been an integral part of the Unionist offensive in his home state just a month before, began to entertain the hard conclusion that the Border South might have no choice but to leave the Union.⁶²

Lincoln arrived in Washington during the early morning hours of February 23 after hurrying through Baltimore the previous night. Rumors swirled around the capital about a possible attempt on the president-elect’s life as he made his scheduled trip through Maryland. A concerned William Seward and Winfield Scott managed to contact Lincoln, who altered his plans and swiftly passed through Baltimore sometime before dawn. A large crowd had gathered at the train depot in Baltimore in anticipation of the president-elect’s arrival, but around the middle of the morning someone announced that Lincoln had already made it to Washington. Not all of the people had assembled at the depot to cheer the new president. A Baltimorean commented that a large portion of the assemblage hoped to jeer Lincoln, and he figured that by stealing through the city undetected “you have saved bloodshed and a mob.”⁶³

The night of his arrival, Lincoln met with several members of the Peace Conference at a reception in one of the parlors of Willard’s Hotel. Maryland’s John Crisfield came away from the meeting impressed that Seward had “him in charge and it is perhaps fortunate for the Country it is so” because the New Yorker would probably act as a conservative influence on the new president. Other southerners and moderates who attended the reception walked away with a less optimistic outlook than did Crisfield because Lincoln showed no inclination to give way on the

⁶² Alexander W. Doniphan to Dear Jno., Feb. 22, 1861, A.W. Doniphan Letter, 1861, SHS-MO.

⁶³ Charles P. Stone Memorandum, Feb. 21, 1861, William L. Schley to Abraham Lincoln, Feb. 23, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln’s Indispensable Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 237-238.

territorial issue and adamantly declared that the Constitution had to be “enforced and obeyed in every part of every one of the United States.” Three days after Lincoln appeared in Washington, the Peace Conference rejected the territorial provision of the majority report by a vote of 11 to 8. Delaware, Kentucky, and Maryland joined New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Tennessee to cast an affirmative vote; only Missouri of the Border South voted against the territorial proposition. For the Missouri delegation, Alexander W. Doniphan, Waldo P. Johnson, and Aylett Buckner overruled John Coalter and Harrison Hough to cast the state’s vote in opposition to the key provision. Doniphan later explained that he spurned the territorial proposal not because he advocated Missouri’s secession, but because he felt that only the Crittenden resolutions could adequately remove the issue of slavery in the territories for perpetuity. A saddened convention adjourned for the night, but many delegates had only begun their day’s work; informal caucuses lasted into the next morning as the representatives sought some way to revive the scuttled settlement package.⁶⁴

That night several influential delegates from the Upper and Border South held another meeting with Lincoln. Doniphan, Charles S. Morehead and James Guthrie of Kentucky, and William C. Rives and George Summers of Virginia all beseeched the president-elect to comprehend “the dreadful impending danger, and entreated and implored him to avert it.” Coercion, they warned, would unquestionably turn the tide in favor of secessionists in the Upper and Border South, but if Republicans adopted a conciliatory stance those eight slaveholding

⁶⁴ John Crisfield to Henry Page, Feb. 24, 1861, Henry Page Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; L.E. Chittenden, *Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), 75; Chittenden, *Report of the Washington Peace Conference*, 438; *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City and St. Louis, March 1861* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Company, 1861), *Proceedings*, 24; Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen’s Convention*, 87-88.

states would likely remain in the Union.⁶⁵ The elderly Rives made an impassioned appeal on behalf of the Union but told the president-elect that if he opted for coercion and forced Virginia to secede, even an old Unionist like himself would go with his state. Lincoln reportedly responded with a bargain: if Rives could promise to keep Virginia in the Union, he would withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter once he entered the executive office. Rives replied that he had no authority to make such an agreement, but that he would continue to work to preserve the Union.⁶⁶

Whether or not Doniphan and his associates had an impact on Lincoln remains mere conjecture. Nonetheless, when the Peace Convention reassembled on February 27 the Illinois delegation had a change of heart and voted in favor of the territorial provision; the delegations of Indiana, Kansas, New York, and Missouri abstained from voting, which allowed the provision to pass narrowly by a count of 9 to 8. With the territorial hurdle leaped, the convention quickly approved of the remaining articles of the majority report. Aside from Missouri's abstention on the territorial provision and the state's delegation voting against the final article which dealt with slaveholder compensation in cases where fugitive slaves could not be recaptured, the delegations of the Border South voted in favor of every piece of the majority report, which the convention hurried to the Capitol for the consideration of Congress.⁶⁷ Cannons boomed as the Peace Conference adjourned, and one newspaper boldly proclaimed "Every border State has been saved..., and the return of the seceded States to the Union is now but a question of a short time."

⁶⁵ Charles S. Morehead to John J. Crittenden, Feb. 23, 1862, in Mrs. Chapman Coleman, ed., *The Life of John J. Crittenden, with Selections from His Correspondence and Speeches* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1871), 2:337-338. Morehead recollected this meeting, even though he assured Crittenden he immediately took notes after the visit with Lincoln. His outlook of the events may have been colored by the fact that United States authorities in September 1861 arrested him and charged him with disloyalty. For an explanation of Morehead's recollection, see Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 305, n. 78.

⁶⁶ For this encounter, see Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 425-428 and Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 200-201.

⁶⁷ Crittenden, *Report of the Washington Peace Conference*, 440-445; Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 89-92.

A Wilmington, Delaware, businessman noted that the news of the Peace Convention's passage of the settlement provoked the town's citizens to raise American flags and celebrate in the streets.⁶⁸

The fate of a compromise settlement returned to the hands of Congress, whose members in the interim had continued to snipe at one another instead of making progress toward a settlement. One interested observer bemoaned to John Pendleton Kennedy that Republican stubbornness in Congress had aggravated matters in the Border South to the point that "the ground upon which you stand – solid as it may seem to you now, will become quicksand to swallow you & all your noble Conservatives in Maryland." The work of the Peace Conference signaled headway for Border South moderates, but they had not yet come close to clinching a victory. Two events on February 18, one in Missouri and the other in the halls of Congress, illustrated the paradoxical nature of Unionism in the Border South. Across Missouri, voters trekked to their polling places and selected delegates for the state convention slated to meet in Jefferson City at the end of the month. The result of the election demonstrated how far the Unionist offensive had evolved in Missouri. Conditional and unconditional Unionists smashed their secessionist competitors in the contest – not a single one of the ninety-nine delegates elected to the state convention had campaigned on behalf of separate state secession – much to the dismay of disunionists. "Our election is over & as far as Missouri is concerned the Union is safe," an excited conservative proclaimed. A resident of Grundy County, Missouri, claimed that secessionists had made a last-ditch attempt to proliferate disunion documents in the hopes of converting voters, but they discovered that the well-established Unionist offensive could easily

⁶⁸ Washington *Evening Star*, Feb. 27, 1861, quoted in Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, 91; Entry for Feb. 28, 1861, William Canby Journal, June 1854-1865, Book #3, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware.

counteract their poorly managed onslaught. Months of rigorous campaigning paid dividends for the Missouri Unionists, who captured 110,000 votes in comparison to 30,000 for disunionists.⁶⁹

Despite the auspicious results of the February 18 election, the Missourian who avowed that the election made the state safe for the Union spoke prematurely. Candidates for the convention election entered the field on one of three distinct tickets: Conditional Unionist; Unconditional Unionist; and States' Rights or Anti-submission.⁷⁰ The predominant form of Unionism among the delegates remained the conditional variety, which meant that external events could easily convert these representatives to the secessionist camp. Exact numbers for the preferred brand of Unionism among the delegates are difficult to ascertain because an early twentieth-century fire at the Missouri statehouse damaged a large portion of the official election returns. Nonetheless, one scholar counts fifty-two of the ninety-nine delegates as Unconditional Unionists and the remaining forty-seven representatives as Conditional Unionists, while another assigns the Conditional Unionists with a two-thirds majority at the convention. Although inexact, these unsubstantiated estimations highlight the contested nature of Unionism in the Border South. Unionists attending the Missouri state convention split almost evenly among the two factions and several most likely wavered between the two blocs, which meant that a defiant northern posture toward compromise or an explosive physical altercation at Fort Sumter, St. Louis, or elsewhere could easily tip the balance of the state toward disunion.⁷¹

⁶⁹ George S. Bryan to John Pendleton Kennedy, Jan. 16, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; W.T. Stewart to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 24, 1861, J.R. Howard to Stephen Douglas, Feb. 19, 1861, both in Douglas Papers, UC; S.M. Breckinridge to W.C.P. Breckinridge, Feb. 20, 1861, S.M. Breckinridge to R.J. Breckinridge, Feb. 21, 1861, both in Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC; Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 226. William Roed points out that this vote count remains a bit problematic. Most of the official returns were destroyed and historians have relied on a speech made by a Missouri politician in 1863 for this number. See William Roed, "Secessionist Strength in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 72 (July 1978), 419.

⁷⁰ Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 8.

⁷¹ For the first estimate see W.L. Webb, *Battles and Biographies of Missourians, or the Civil War Period of Our State* (Kansas City: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Company, 1900), 47 and Roed, "Secessionist Strength in Missouri," 418-419, 421. The second estimation is found in Jonas Viles, "Sections and Sectionalism in a Border

While Missourians registered their votes, the introduction of a controversial piece of legislation in the United States House of Representatives on the very same day exemplified the tenuous nature of Border South Unionism. Benjamin Stanton, a Republican from Ohio, on February 18 reported a militia bill to the House that would prepare the nation's military forces in case war commenced. Southerners howled that the measure, which they derisively labeled the force bill, placed the nation on a war footing and served as an endorsement of a policy of coercion. Border southerners would have been aghast to know that two inhabitants of their region had been prime movers in the introduction of the objectionable legislation. In response to the rumored machinations of secessionists in and around St. Louis, Frank Blair, Jr., had written his brother Montgomery in January 1861 and asked him to inform his numerous contacts in Washington that the Unionist effort in the city would benefit greatly from the passage of a militia bill. Blair, who probably allowed his anxieties to cloud his better judgment, miscalculated that legislation allowing officers to make enlistments, accept volunteers, and arm their troops, would successfully offset the disunion movement in St. Louis. Henry Winter Davis also had a hand in the legislation, though he seems to have worked to try and moderate the force bill. He told a friend that he "drew it & know it will do its work & got it substituted for a very offensive and impudent one."⁷²

Perhaps nothing else better reveals how Blair and Winter Davis had greatly surpassed the mainstream attitude of the Border South toward coercion. Upon Stanton's introduction of the force bill, every border southerner in the House, aside from Winter Davis, voted to reject the

State," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21 (June 1934), 21. In April 2012 the author examined the election returns in Records of the 1861 Missouri Convention, Office of the Secretary of State, Record Group 5.23, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri, but found too many of the returns damaged by fire or incomplete in order to derive any new estimates on the nature of the election. The fire engulfed the Missouri State Capitol in February 1911.

⁷² CG, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1001; Frank P. Blair, Jr., to Montgomery Blair, Jan. 18, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Feb. 28 or Mar. 1, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

legislation or abstained from voting. The motion to reject the force bill lost 110-68 on Feb. 18; southerners tried to table the bill on Feb. 19 but lost by the same vote, with 15 Border South congressmen in favor of tabling and 9 abstaining.⁷³ Winter Davis believed that secessionists had frightened Border South conservatives about the nature of the legislation and seduced them to oppose Stanton's bill. "They [southern Unionists in the House] cannot see their power even now that Missouri has spoken," Winter Davis carped. "They halt between wish & will – till it may be too late."⁷⁴

Blair and Winter Davis woefully misconstrued the typical Border South reaction to Stanton's force bill. Perhaps influenced by their urban constituencies, neither of the Border South proto-Republicans could comprehend how greatly coercion would undermine the Unionist cause. A friend of Winter Davis's in Delaware lamented that he had voted with the Republicans on the measure, which she considered unconstitutional and extremely hazardous to Unionism in the region. In the House debate on the bill, border southerners let loose a barrage of condemnation against the measure. The ire of many border country congressmen had been aroused when two days prior to the introduction of Stanton's force bill, Republican Daniel E. Somes of Maine suggested that the people of the Border South should consent to the abolition of slavery in Washington D.C. and on federal property and additionally should undertake a scheme of gradual emancipation within their own borders. William E. Simms of Kentucky labeled Stanton's legislation "a bill of murder...a war measure, not only made and desperate in its designs, but a measure in direct violation of the Constitution." Simms followed up his salvo with a pointed query for the Republicans: "While ostensibly you merely talk of enforcing the laws, will you not avail yourself of the war you have thus inaugurated to accomplish that first and

⁷³ CG, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1001, 1032-1033. In the Feb. 18 vote, 19 border southerners voted to reject the legislation and 4 abstained; only Winter Davis voted against rejecting Stanton's bill.

⁷⁴ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Feb. 20, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

highest purpose of your party organization, the overthrow of slavery throughout the southern States?” Republicans refused to dignify the Kentuckian’s charge of a “double purpose” in the force bill, and moderates within Lincoln’s party managed to postpone the measure, which with time drawing to a close on the session effectively killed the legislation.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Simms more accurately expressed the sentiments of the Border South than did Blair or Winter Davis. Coercion and force threatened to shatter the conditional Unionist coalition that had held firm thus far, and most of the region’s inhabitants dreaded the commencement of a civil war that would surely place the peculiar institution on fragile ground in the Border South.

The icy atmosphere in the House of Representatives proved anything but conducive to passing some form of the compromise during the late stages of the session. On February 26 and 27, the House made quick work of several compromise proposals. A suggestion for a national constitutional convention lost, 74-108, with 10 Border South congressmen in favor of the proposition and 14 opposed. Shortly afterwards William Kellogg’s compromise package went down to defeat by a tally of 33-158; only 2 congressmen from the Border South supported this measure. The greatest blow for Border South moderates came on February 27 when the House voted against adopting the Crittenden resolutions, which Virginia Democrat Sherrard Clemens had placed before the lower chamber. Republicans consolidated ranks and defeated the Crittenden plan, 80-113. No Republican voted in favor of the Crittenden resolutions, and all but three of the negative votes came from members of Lincoln’s party. Twenty-one of the twenty-four Border South congressmen voted for the Crittenden proposal; only Henry Winter Davis cast a negative vote. Green Adams of Kentucky abstained from voting on the measures and Thomas L. Anderson of Missouri recorded no vote because he had left the Capitol to take care of an ill

⁷⁵ Sophie M. Du Pont to Samuel F. Du Pont, Feb. 28, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 969, 1229-1230, 1231; Stamp, *And the War Came*, 117-119.

family member. The House next considered Thomas Corwin's proposed constitutional amendment that prevented Congress from interfering with slavery in the states where it existed. It too failed to pass the House. Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority, and with 123 yeas votes opposed to 71 nays, the Corwin amendment fell just short of the requisite vote. All twenty-three border southerners in the House on February 27 voted in favor of the Corwin amendment.⁷⁶

The somber mood in the House improved on February 28 when Republican David Kilgore of Indiana entered a motion to reconsider the vote on the Corwin amendment. Kilgore, who had been born in Kentucky and moved to Indiana at age fifteen, chastised his Republican colleagues for their inflexible attitude. "If the Republicans to-day have changed their ground, and claim now the right to invade the sovereignty of the States, and interfere with the institution of slavery – if that is Republican doctrine, then I am no Republican," Kilgore thundered. The Indiana congressman provided border southerners with the conservative cooperation that they had so often relied upon during the 1850s. Enough Republicans changed their votes to secure passage of the Corwin amendment, 128-65, which in the absence of securing the Crittenden proposal at least allowed Border South Unionists to tell their constituents that Congress had pledged not to interfere with slavery in the states. The proposed Thirteenth Amendment under the floor leadership of John Crittenden and Stephen Douglas passed the Senate during its final hours by a vote of 24 to 12.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ CG, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1258-1261, 1263-1264; Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis*, 302.

⁷⁷ "David Kilgore," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-present*, available at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000175>; CG, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1283, 1285, 1364-1365, 1403. Three border southerners voted in favor of the Thirteenth Amendment (Crittenden, Anthony Kennedy of Maryland, and Trusten Polk of Missouri), while the remaining five Border South senators recorded no vote.

Outside of the passage of the Corwin amendment, all other compromise measures failed in the House of Representatives. Moderates in the lower house could not muster the requisite two-thirds majority needed to suspend the rules and consider the Peace Conference proposals, which sat undisturbed on the speaker's table when the gavel fell on the morning of March 4 to close the session of Congress.⁷⁸ Republicans in the House had held firm throughout the secession winter and did not bow to any conciliatory measures outside of the Corwin amendment. Some border southerners attacked the Republicans for their "plotting and plodding on selfish and dark thoughts and deeds," while others appreciated that at the bare minimum the conservatives in the organization had convinced enough of their party brethren that they should acquiesce on an amendment protecting slavery in the states. "As a domestic institution it is a state right, with which Congress has no right to interfere," a Marylander jotted down in her diary. "It is but right the Border States should have such a guarantee."⁷⁹

As in the House, compromise made little headway in the last days of the session in the Senate. On February 27, Lazarus Powell charged the Republicans who attended the Washington Peace Conference with bad faith and asked that for the sake of accomplishing something the Senate should set aside other matters and consider the Crittenden resolutions. Powell pointed to letters that had been recently published from Michigan senators Kinsley Bingham and Zachariah Chandler to Governor Austin Blair in which the triumvirate of Republicans discussed ways and means to wreck conciliatory measures at the Washington Peace Conference. "They desire, in the language of these letters, to save their party from destruction," Powell accused. "In the estimation of the Senators, [the Republican Party] is higher, holier, and better, it seems, than the Union." Despite the Kentucky senator's scathing remarks, the Senate refrained from considering

⁷⁸ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1331-1333.

⁷⁹ J.P. Gillis to Samuel F. Du Pont, Mar. 2, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; Entry for Mar. 2, 1861, Hester Ann [Wilkins] Davis Diary, 1859-1861, Allen Bowie Davis Papers, MDHS.

the Crittenden compromise and instead sent the resolutions from the Peace Conference to a special committee of five chaired by none other than John Crittenden.⁸⁰

In the following days Crittenden pled with his colleagues to do anything to secure a settlement and even suggested replacing his own resolutions with the Peace Conference proposal. The aged Kentuckian acknowledged that the major difference between his proposal and that of the Peace Conference revolved around the hereafter acquired clause in reference to the territories and the dividing line between slavery and freedom. He explained that he had acquiesced in including the clause in his settlement because he wanted a permanent settlement on the issue. Crittenden felt the nation had grown large enough; he would gladly appease the Republicans by accepting the Peace Conference resolutions without the inclusion of the offensive clause. Missouri's James Green followed with a speech that indicated a fissure in Border South unity on the issue of compromise. Green had joined the growing contingent of border southerners who believed no settlement would emerge that would adequately satisfy their demands. He certainly would not vote for the Peace Conference proposal, which he claimed "are designed simply to lull us into a fancied security" and did not sufficiently protect slavery south of the Missouri Compromise line. "I believe that the die is cast," the Missourian articulated, "that there is a belligerent feeling, diversity of sentiment, and a difference of opinion so diametrically opposite that we cannot live together." He advised that in the absence of passing Crittenden's resolutions, Missouri should secede from the Union and join the newly minted Confederate States of America.⁸¹

Green's speech, which illustrated how some border southerners had by the start of March slid into either the secessionist or neutral camp, surely stung Crittenden and other moderates. By

⁸⁰ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1246-1247, 1255.

⁸¹ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1269-1273, 1305-1311, 1316-1317.

Sunday, March 3 the Senate had taken no action on any of the various compromise packages. That evening, a haggard and disappointed Crittenden delivered what he thought to be his final speech on Capitol Hill. He praised the efforts of his northern colleagues, especially Stephen Douglas and Pennsylvania's William Bigler, who had cast aside partisan labels and worked with him in the name of compromise during the session, and he beseeched his fellow Kentuckians to stand by the Union. Finally, he appealed to Republicans across the aisle to do something in the last hours of the session to save the Union. Crittenden begged them at least to sanction the Corwin amendment, which he considered a first step that "may have some good effect, like a solitary ray of sunshine breaking through the clouds, which might show an opening in them." Abraham Lincoln reportedly sat in the galleries while Crittenden delivered his stirring valedictory which several times drew the applause of the packed Senate chamber.⁸²

The Senate worked through the night and into the small hours of Monday, March 4. While Crittenden's colleagues heeded his advice and passed the Corwin amendment, the rest of the compromise proposals collapsed ingloriously. The Senate voted 7-28 against substituting the Peace Conference settlement for Crittenden's own. Crittenden made a last-ditch effort to secure his proposal's passage when he inquired if he could remove the hereafter acquired clause before the Senate took a vote. The chair ruled that he could not, and the package suffered defeat by a tally of 19 to 20; every dissenting vote came from the Republicans. Four border southerners voted for the Crittenden resolutions and although none of the region's senators cast a negative vote, four senators abstained from voting. At dawn, the second session of the Thirty-sixth Congress came to a close. Many of the senators headed to their Washington residences to catch

⁸² Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 415-420; *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1374-1379.

a few hours of much needed rest before Lincoln's inaugural ceremony commenced later that day.⁸³

Shortly after noon, Lincoln stood atop a wooden platform on the east portico of the Capitol and delivered his inaugural address. A few days prior he had asked Seward to read and make comments on a draft of the address. Seward, who worried that Lincoln's prose at times bordered on daring the seceded states to inaugurate war, made several suggestions to soften the tone of the president's message. He even predicted that if Lincoln read the original message without any alterations Virginia and Maryland would promptly secede. Even though Lincoln incorporated several of the changes that his secretary of state proposed, detractors still argued that the address, and especially the president's promise to "hold, occupy, and possess" all federal property and collect federal revenue, was tantamount to a declaration of war on the seceded states. Many Border South moderates, on the other hand, found the inaugural reasonable and temperate. The president disclosed that he had no objection to the Corwin amendment and ended his message with a plea for friendship and a hope for peace, which resonated with conservative border southerners. Pleasantly surprised Kentucky politician C.F. Burnam felt that Lincoln's address had done nothing to exacerbate the crisis, and he estimated that if the new president eventually evacuated Fort Sumter "the Union cause in the Border States of the South will be vastly strengthened." After reading the speech John Pendleton Kennedy concluded that Lincoln did not aim to coerce the seceded states back into the Union. He breathed a sigh of relief that the

⁸³ *CG*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1405; Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 208-209. Crittenden, James Bayard of Delaware, Anthony Kennedy of Maryland, and Trusten Polk of Missouri voted in favor of the Crittenden Compromise; James Green, Willard Saulsbury of Delaware, Lazarus Powell, and James Pearce of Maryland all abstained. It is unclear if these men abstained on principle or whether they had already left the Senate chamber out of exhaustion.

new president did not belong to the camp of “pragmatic, sour, conceited numskulls who both in and out of Congress represent the inveteracy of Black Republican policy.”⁸⁴

Border southerners of all political persuasions found what they wanted to hear in Lincoln’s inaugural. “Some think it warlike & some think it conservative,” Samuel Haycraft confided to his diary after speaking with his neighbors in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The diversity of opinion among border southerners illustrates the many degrees of southern Unionism and underscores how Lincoln’s course during the previous three months had forced some of the region’s inhabitants to reassess their Unionist outlook. The moderately toned inaugural and his politically well-balanced cabinet that included Edward Bates and Montgomery Blair could not offset his initial studied silence and his barbed remarks on his journey to Washington. Lincoln’s actions, coupled with Republican inaction in Congress, left many erstwhile moderates more concerned about the future of the nation than ever before. John C. Breckinridge appreciated the conciliatory nature of the inaugural, but he had developed a fear that the combination of hardliners in both his party and his cabinet would force Lincoln down a path of “collision and bloodshed.” Moreover, Breckinridge still suspected that the Republicans had designs to eradicate slavery throughout the nation. “They [southerners] will never, never consent to be hemmed in by a hostile policy, and denied all share of the public domain, as an outlet for their people and the natural increase of their slaves,” he declared. The former vice president

⁸⁴ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 282-284; Stahr, *Seward*, 239-241; First Inaugural Address – Final Text, in Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:266, 270-271; C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, Mar. 15, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; John Pendleton Kennedy to George S. Bryan, Mar. 15, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL. For a sampling of negative reactions among border southerners to the inaugural, see James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Mar. 5, 1861, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; Blanton Duncan to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 7, 1861, W. Kimmel to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 16, 1861, both in Douglas Papers, UC; & William Mathews to George B. Boyles, Mar. 5, 1861, Eliza Hall Ball Gordon Boyles Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. For positive reaction see Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, Mar. 7, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; Zebulon Vance to J. Morrison Harris, Mar. 12, 1861, John S. Millson to J. Morrison Harris, Apr. 6, 1861, both in J. Morrison Harris Papers, MDHS; Entry for Mar. 5, 1861, William Canby Journal, DHS.

increasingly called for a peaceful separation between the United States and the newly created Confederate States of America, and he warned that if the federal government attacked the new nation, the states of the Border South would add their names to its roster. As time passed, Breckinridge and many border southerners edged ever closer to a neutral or secessionist standpoint.⁸⁵

Table 23 - Slaveholdings of the Delegates to the March 1861 Missouri State Convention

Slaves Owned	Number	Percentage of Total Delegates
0	39	39.4%
1-4	25	25.3%
5-9	17	17.2%
10-19	12	12.1%
20 or more	6	6.1%
<i>Total</i>	99	100.0%
Mean Slaveholding		4.84 slaves
Median Slaveholding		2 slaves

Source: Census of 1860, Slave Schedules.

Lincoln's course of action became a heated topic of discussion at the Missouri state convention, which on February 28 convened in Jefferson City. The delegates chose Sterling Price, a former Missouri governor, president of the convention and Unionists rammed through a resolution to move the convention from Jefferson City, where Governor Claiborne Jackson and other pro-secessionists might have a debilitating influence on some of the wavering members, to St. Louis. Alexander W. Doniphan, who while attending the Peace Conference had been elected as a delegate to the Missouri convention, left Washington at the conclusion of the meeting's

⁸⁵ Entry for Mar. 4, 1861, Samuel Haycraft Journal, FHS; CG, 37th Cong., Special Session of the Senate, 1466-1469; James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 118-119.

proceedings and on March 4 arrived in St. Louis as the delegates prepared to resume their business.⁸⁶

Profession	Number	Total	Occupational Category
Lawyer	45	53	Legal (53.5%)
Circuit Court Judge	6		
Common Pleas Court Judge	1		
Circuit Court Clerk	1		
Farmer	26	26	Agriculture (26.3%)
Merchant	10	15	Entrepreneur (15.2%)
Merchant-Banker	1		
Leather Dealer	1		
Lumber Dealer	1		
Blacksmith	1		
Tanner	1		
Physician	3	5	Professional (5.1%)
Civil Engineer	1		
Bank Commissioner	1		

Source: *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention...March 1861*, pp. 5-7.

Tables 23 through 25 provide statistical details of the men who met Doniphan at the convention in St. Louis. Nearly 61 percent of the delegates owned slaves, though a solid majority of the slaveholders had accumulated holdings of 9 slaves or less. The average slaveholding for the delegates was 4.84 enslaved persons, which closely mirrored the larger Missouri slaveholding population (nearly 88 percent of all Missouri slaveholders owned fewer than 9 slaves). The legal profession served as the primary occupation for over half of the delegates, and almost 80 percent of the representatives either worked in the law or in agriculture. Nearly 82 percent of the delegates hailed from one of the eight Upper and Border South states, with over half being born in either Kentucky or Virginia, and the mean age for the delegates was 45. In terms of slave ownership, a majority of the delegates had a stake in perpetuating slavery; the vast majority of the delegates had been born in the South and whether they owned slaves or

⁸⁶ Wooster, *Secession Conventions of the South*, 230-231; Launius, *Alexander William Doniphan*, 248-249.

not, understood the importance of the institution to the society, economy, and culture of their state and region.⁸⁷

Table 25 - A Snapshot of the Delegates to the March 1861 Missouri State Convention

Mean Slave Ownership		4.84 slaves		
Mean Year of Birth		1816		
Mean Age		45		
Place of Birth				
Delaware	0	Border South	45	45.5%
Kentucky	30			
Maryland	2			
Missouri	13	Upper South & Washington D.C.	36	36.4%
Washington D.C.	1			
North Carolina	3			
Tennessee	9			
Virginia	23	Lower South	1	1.0%
Alabama	1			
Illinois	2	Lower North	5	5.1%
Ohio	1			
Pennsylvania	2			
Maine	1	Upper North	8	8.1%
New Hampshire	3			
New Jersey	1			
New York	3			
Austria	1	Foreign-Born	4	4.0%
Bremen	1			
Ireland	1			
Prussia	1			

Source: *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention...March 1861*, pp. 5-7.

In St. Louis, the convention created a committee on federal relations at the behest of Hamilton Gamble, a former chief justice of the Missouri Supreme Court and brother-in-law of Edward Bates. Doniphan joined Gamble and eleven other men on the important committee, which began preparing a report that included suggestions for Missouri's future course of action.

⁸⁷ My findings vary slightly from those found in Ralph Wooster, *Secession Conventions of the South*, Ch. 14. Wooster claims that 43 of the delegates owned no slaves, 38 owned between 1 and 9 slaves, 11 owned between 10 and 19 slaves, and 7 owned more than 20 slaves. My findings are based upon the Slave Schedules of the 1860 Federal Census.

Luther J. Glenn, a secession commissioner from Georgia, on March 4 addressed the convention and beseeched Missouri to secede, but found that his speech generated little enthusiasm from most delegates. Unionists buried Glenn's recommendations for secession in a special committee; later in March the convention postponed consideration of the issue until December 1861, effectively killing the Georgian's prescription for the secession of Missouri.⁸⁸

While the important committee on federal relations deliberated, several delegates offered resolutions that ranged from bitter denunciations of coercion to practical suggestions for a conference of all the states of the Border and Upper South. Nearly all the resolutions submitted included a declaration of the dangerous nature of coercion, and several avowed that the Crittenden Compromise remained the best hope for procuring a peaceful settlement. Clearly Crittenden's efforts to keep the hopes of compromise alive in Washington had resonated with the Missouri delegates, who on March 7 adopted without a single dissenting vote a resolution tendering thanks to the Kentuckian and Stephen Douglas for their "patriotic, able and untiring efforts" on behalf of compromise. Crittenden and other Unionists had come to the realization early in the crisis that the fate of the non-seceded slaveholding states hinged on keeping a settlement package before the nation, and the unanimous passage of this resolution in the only Border South state to hold a convention revealed the fruit of their labors. Even though many border southerners had started contemplating the idea of neutrality and secession, the resolution and vote exposed the enduring strength of the Unionist offensive. The resolution even indicated the embers of compromise had yet to be extinguished, further proof that at least in the eyes of border southerners Crittenden and Douglas had not wholly failed in their effort to acquire a conciliatory settlement.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 19-22, 50-52, 56-57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 21, 23-30, 32. The resolution of thanks passed the convention 83-0.

While the convention heaped approbation upon the peacemakers, it scorned the Republicans and Lincoln. On the very day that the resolution of thanks passed, James H. Moss pressed for a discussion of the president's inaugural against the wishes of Robert Hatcher, who proclaimed that such conversation "would be an apple of discord thrown into this Convention." The convention tabled Moss's suggestion, but the following day Unionist John Long submitted a resolution that proclaimed Lincoln's inaugural "a message of peace and not of war." After Long introduced the resolution, Moss expressed his fears that the Republicans might use Lincoln's message as an instrument of coercion. If Lincoln agreed to a coercive policy, he asserted, "the friends of the Union [in Missouri] will melt away like snow-flakes." The ardently pro-southern John T. Redd declared the inaugural "a declaration of war against the institutions of the South" and compared the position taken by Lincoln to that of Britain's George III in the 1770s. Moderates correctly feared that an extended discussion about the inaugural would provoke partisan wrangling and managed by a vote of 52-37 to table the resolutions. They clarified their position the following day when they stated that the tabling of the resolution in no way indicated a test vote on the content of Lincoln's message, but a means to preserve harmony at the convention.⁹⁰

The committee on federal relations on March 9 submitted its report to the convention. The report indicated that conditional Unionists had the upper hand in Missouri's convention. It emphasized that although the Republicans had gained the ascendancy, the Supreme Court still served as a check on any repugnant legislation that might interfere with slavery. Further, the committee acknowledged that the federal government had always faithfully executed the Fugitive Slave Law and reminded the delegates that when fanatics like John Brown had invaded

⁹⁰ *Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 35-36, 46-48, 53; *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 32-34.

the South to overthrow slavery, “they meet their death by the law, and that is the end of their scheme.” The report affirmed that Missouri’s secession was unwarranted for several reasons: the magnitude of the South’s present grievances did not require such bold action; trade would dwindle in the event of Missouri’s secession; and, significantly, “our slave interest would be destroyed, because we would have no better right to recapture a slave found in a free State than we now have in Canada.” The committee attached seven resolutions to the report that included a promise for Missouri to continue to work toward compromise, a declaration that the Crittenden Compromise represented the best basis of adjustment, a call for a national constitutional convention to carry out the Crittenden settlement, and a cautionary warning that coercion would blast all hopes for a peaceful solution and provoke war.⁹¹

The resolutions concerning coercion and compromise generated the greatest conflict among the delegates. George Y. Bast failed on March 19 to add an ultimatum that stated if the North would not agree to the Crittenden Compromise, then Missouri “will not hesitate to take a firm and decided stand in favor of her sister slave States of the South.” His suggestion went down to defeat by a wide margin, 23-70. The outspoken John Redd, who hardly hid his secessionist proclivities, growled that if the rest of the delegates were willing to allow federal troops to remain in the seceded states, then they should go ahead and remove the grizzly bear from the Missouri coat of arms “and substitute in its place the fawning spaniel, cowing at the feet of its master and licking the hand that smites it.” Missouri had a choice, Redd proclaimed: stay in the Union and allow the Republicans to carry out “the extinction of slavery everywhere, or the establishment of the proposition that man cannot hold property in man,” or join the Lower South in the project of disunion to forestall the party’s designs on the slaveholding states. Redd’s continued comments in favor of disunion provoked a response from the Unionist majority.

⁹¹ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861, 34-37.*

Sample Orr noted that if Missouri seceded, he and the rest of the delegates would witness the destruction of slavery in their state within one year. “The only salvation for the institution of slavery,” Orr maintained, “is her adherence to the [federal] Government that protects slavery.” M.L. Linton replied to Redd that secession would greatly endanger the peculiar institution by making “a Canada of every Northern State.” Linton compared disunion to “cutting off an arm to cure a wart – it is like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.”⁹²

Some of the pro-southern representatives pushed for the inclusion of either a separate resolution or the amendment of the existing resolution relating to coercion to request the withdrawal of federal troops who remained in the seceded states. Thomas Shackelford on March 20 recommended an amendment of the coercion resolution to state that a withdrawal of federal troops would greatly enhance the chances for peace. After proceeding through two very narrow procedural votes, the convention by a vote of 89-6 accepted Shackelford’s amended resolution. Shackelford had clearly softened the language so as not to offend the federal government and simultaneously to express the great desire of the people of the Border South to avoid a collision of arms. Nearly all of the delegates in St. Louis and indeed most border southerners agreed with Alexander M. Woolfolk who delivered a doleful tocsin upon casting his vote in favor of the Shackelford amendment: “Compromise may restore the Union, but the sword can never preserve it.”⁹³

By Friday, March 22, the convention had passed each one of the seven resolutions suggested by the committee on federal relations. Most of the provisions cleared the convention by large margins, which underscored the perseverance of a strong Unionist impulse in Missouri.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 46-47; *Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 76, 127, 134, 169.

⁹³ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 48-49; *Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 245. The close procedural votes indicated the depth of division among the members on the issue of coercion; the Shackelford amendment progressed by the closer votes of 54-39 and 51-44 in the two procedural votes.

During the proceedings, several delegates had warmed to the notion of a conference of the Border and Upper South states. The Border State Convention idea had gained momentum in the Virginia state convention, which also was in session in March. Hamilton Gamble, mindful of the need to sustain the Unionist offensive by keeping all means for a settlement alive, had apparently been in communication with colleagues in the Old Dominion and on March 14 presented a resolution for the convention to elect delegates to such a meeting. A week later the Missouri convention passed Gamble's resolution and proceeded to elect one representative from each of the state's seven congressional districts to represent the state at the proposed conference. Before adjourning on March 22, the convention agreed to meet again in December 1861 and established a committee of seven charged with the task of reassembling the body in the event of an emergency before the end of the year. Delegate Samuel Breckinridge privately acknowledged that the committee of seven had been created because "our Governor, & the state officers generally, as well as the majority of the members of the Legislature, are avowedly hostile to the Convention, & entirely in the interest of secession." Breckinridge and other Unionists worried that Claiborne Jackson might take matters into his own hands if conditions deteriorated in the state.⁹⁴

Unionists and moderates could breathe a sigh of relief as the Missouri convention adjourned in late March. The previous two-and-a-half months had been trying, but they had accomplished their goal of relegating the secession movement to the Lower South. The Missouri convention had not taken any steps toward secession, and Unionists in the legislatures of Delaware and Kentucky had blocked secessionists from even calling a sovereignty convention.

⁹⁴ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 46-61; Link, *Roots of Secession*, 229; George H. Reese, ed., *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861, February 13 – May 1*, 4 Volumes (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1965), 1:227-230; S.M. Breckinridge to Robert J. Breckinridge, Mar. 22, 1861, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC.

Even though Congress spurned a comprehensive compromise package, Crittenden and his allies could point to the fact that a constitutional amendment protecting slavery in the states had advanced through the initial stages and now only awaited ratification by the states. Moreover, the proceedings of the conventions in Missouri and Virginia and the suggestion of a Border State conference had revealed that the hopes for securing a compromise remained alive and well among moderates in the eight slaveholding states remaining in the Union. On the whole, the Unionist offensive had endured through the grueling trial, absorbed the shocks of Republican intransigence, and helped buoy the hopes of border southerners for a peaceful solution of the crisis.

By late March, however, the fear of an outbreak of war and foreboding signs from the Republicans had exposed some cracks in the Unionist offensive. “At present, the country is resting in anxious suspense, altogether uncertain of the future,” John Pendleton Kennedy relayed to a friend. Kennedy postulated that if Lincoln attempted a policy of coercion, he would “instantly break down all this conservatism, and drive the whole of the Border States into a separation.” Another onlooker observed that “Missouri is safe for the present. The Convention is decidedly anti-Secession; but every body is in a fever about Fort Sumpter, the question being – how can it be supplied without opening the war?”⁹⁵

War would unquestionably jeopardize the position of the remaining southern states and likely convert many border southerners into secessionists, which Unionists fully comprehended. Over the past couple of months, some of their neighbors had already left the Unionist standard and adopted a preference for neutrality or, to a lesser degree, secession. Missourian Thomas Shackelford recalled that during the state convention Sterling Price, the president of the body

⁹⁵ John Pendleton Kennedy to Sir Charles Wood, April 6, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; Ethan A. Hitchcock to Winfield Scott, March 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

who had been elected on a strong Unionist platform, confessed to him in mid-March: “I believe that war is inevitable...I cant [sic] fight against the South, so I must go with the Border States[.]” After the convention adjourned on March 22, Price never retook his seat. Another Missourian watched the state convention “sacrafice [sic] Right, Principle, and every thing else for the sake of the name.” “As long as there was a possibility of an amicable adjustment, I was for Union,” he continued, “but now that all hope is lost, and the Union virtually dissolved [sic], common sense dictates that [the Border South’s] interest[s] are identified with the South.” With Congress adjourned and Lincoln in the White House, some border southerners had already lost faith in the Union. Unwilling to wait for war to commence or a compromise to materialize, they went ahead and cast their lot with the Confederacy.⁹⁶

Many border southerners, suspicious of Republican designs but unable to desert wholly the cherished Union, embraced the idea of neutrality. Alexander Doniphan had started down this path during the first quarter of 1861. His effusive optimism about a peaceful settlement, so evident when he tramped through the snow and addressed his neighbors back in late January, began to wane as he witnessed the Washington Peace Conference neutralize the Crittenden resolutions and substitute a package in its stead that he considered nothing more than a transient “patchwork.” Moreover, he watched helplessly as Republicans in Congress dismantled every serviceable compromise proposition. For much of the Missouri state convention the gifted orator sat in unusual silence. By the time he returned to his western Missouri home, early spring rain showers had replaced the white snow of winter and left the ground a muddy morass. Doniphan’s mood closely resembled the dark skies that opened every day and kept him housebound. He

⁹⁶ Thomas Shackelford, “Paper Presented to the Missouri Historical Society in Regard to the Shackelford Amendment of 1861,” 1907, Thomas Shackelford to Mary Louise Dalton, May 6, 1907, both in Thomas Shackelford Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri; L.B. Harwood to Mr. B. Sappington, Mar. 11, 1861, Sappington Papers, SHS-MO.

confessed that he had “no well founded hope” that the national crisis would ever improve, and now he used the poor weather as an excuse to refrain from making Unionist speeches to his neighbors. In time, Doniphan “quietly folded the comforts of his home around him” and became “an idle spectator of one of the mightiest Revolutions that ever crowned the earth.” The old colonel would not raise his sword against the Union, yet neither would he unsheathe it to subjugate the South. The Unionist offensive had kept the Border South safe, but it churned forward with less momentum as winter gave way to spring.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, March 1861*, 24; Alexander W. Doniphan to Dear Jno., Apr. 10, 1861, Doniphan Letters, 1861-1873, SHS-MO; M. Jeff Thompson, “War Experiences,” 13, M. Jeff Thompson Papers, SHS-MO.

Chapter 6

“If We Can’t Go With the South Let Us Quit the North”: The Muddled Career of Border South Neutrality, April – September 1861

Throughout the winter of 1860-61, Baltimore attorney Severn Teackle Wallis struggled to keep his composure. Descended from a wealthy Eastern Shore family, the forty-four year old Wallis opted to pursue a life of the mind in the teeming southern metropolis rather than follow the path of his father, who in 1837 left behind Baltimore’s cobblestone streets and the exhausted soil of the family’s ancestral Chesapeake home, headed to the virgin bottomlands of the Mississippi Delta, and reestablished himself as a planter. Instead of acquiring farmland and slaves as had his father, Severn Teackle Wallis had by 1860 amassed a respectable fortune through his metropolitan law practice. The life-long bachelor employed two African-American servants in his St. Paul Street home in 1860, but according to the federal census he owned no slaves on the eve of the Civil War. Rather, Wallis made his entrée into Baltimore’s highest circles through his sharp legal mind and his devotion to education, history, and literature. One of the founders of the Maryland Historical Society, he also belonged to prestigious European societies such as Madrid’s Royal Academy of History and Copenhagen’s Society of Northern Antiquities. Entranced by the Old World, he often traveled to Europe during the 1840s and 1850s. Visits to Spain inspired him to pen two travel accounts about the Iberian nation, and he also dabbled in poetry while not arguing cases. Visitors to his Baltimore home noticed his impressive library, which included one of the earliest surviving editions of Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote de la Mancha*. During the 1850s Wallis undertook a lifelong crusade

to improve the quality of education available to Marylanders, which culminated in a two-decade long stint after the war as provost of the University of Maryland.¹

Wallis's cosmopolitan taste and urbane style, however, did not impede him from taking a deep interest in the unfolding national crisis that had placed Abraham Lincoln in the White House and provoked the secession of South Carolina. For Wallis, the non-slaveholding Baltimore socialite, was one of the Border South's most outspoken proponents of secession. During the secession crisis Wallis's library and his memories of Spain provided him with little solace. His polish and charm gave way to indignation and frustration when parlor conversations turned to the future of his beloved Maryland. Known for "the sharpness of rapier-like thrusts which he gave his adversaries," Wallis in early 1861 focused his resentment on two entities: the Republicans, whom he viewed as a band of abolitionists bent on provoking a war in order to complete their project of emancipation; and Maryland Governor Thomas Hicks, whom he charged with stifling the voice of the people for his refusal to call the legislature into an emergency session. A friend recalled that Wallis "hated and loathed [abolitionism] with a hatred and loathing which exhausted the resources of his unmatched vocabulary of invective." His feelings toward Thomas Hicks hardly qualified as subordinate to his repugnance for the Republicans. A friend remembered that when stirred to speak of either subject, Wallis unleashed a tirade of "rather mordant" wit which poured forth "as if from the mouth of a gatling-gun."²

Throughout his career, Wallis's concern with politics matched his fascination with the law and *belles lettres*. As a member of the Whig Party he had twice been defeated for public

¹ Manuscript US Census of 1830, 1840, & 1860; 1860 US Census, Slave Schedules, all found at www.ancestry.com; Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 10:385-386; Bernard C. Steiner, "Severn Teackle Wallis: First Paper," *Sewanee Review* 15 (Jan. 1907), 58-59; Bernard C. Steiner, "Severn Teackle Wallis: Second Paper," *Sewanee Review* 15 (Apr. 1907), 135, 138-140; Don Quixote de la Mancha Online Exhibit, Tour 2, Room 3, Project of the Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, found online at quixote.mse.jhu.edu/Wallis.html.

² Steiner, "Severn Teackle Wallis: Second Paper," 142-143; Charles Morris Howard, *Personal Recollections of Severn Teackle Wallis* (Baltimore: The Daily Record, 1939), 3-4.

office, unsuccessfully running for the state legislature in 1847 and for the office of state attorney in 1851. Unlike many Maryland Whigs, the demise of the organization in the mid-1850s prompted Wallis to transfer his allegiance not to the American Party, but to the Democratic Party. In the late-1850s he began writing occasional editorials for the *Daily Exchange*, a Baltimore newspaper devoted to unseating the American Party and reforming the city government. He successfully championed new election laws and a restructuring of the Baltimore Police Board to offset the Know Nothings, who he felt utilized gerrymandering and intimidation to maintain control of the Old Line State, and in the election of 1860 Wallis warmly supported the candidacy of John C. Breckinridge. Unable to sit on the sidelines while Maryland drifted into the deepening chasm between the North and the South, he agitated for a sovereignty convention to decide the state's destiny. After carefully examining the state constitution, Wallis believed the legislature must issue a summons for a convention. As long as Hicks remained idle at Annapolis, Wallis's much anticipated convention remained stillborn.³

Unable to restrain himself any longer, Wallis accepted an invitation to speak at the Maryland Institute on the evening of February 1. With his stooped carriage, the tall, spare Wallis scarcely evinced the body language of a firebrand when he climbed the dais that night. His eyes, however, betrayed the storm brewing behind his learned mien. An acquaintance remembered that Wallis had "the most expressive blue eyes I have ever seen, seeming now to dance with smiles and again to darken and flash with scorn." During the address he carefully catalogued what he considered the deceptive course of Thomas Hicks since the election of Lincoln. The governor, he argued, had purposefully kept the legislature from meeting in order to keep Maryland "inert and silent under one pretext or another, until the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln,

³ Steiner, "Severn Teackle Wallis: First Paper," 64-65; Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 156-160.

and then her people are to be rallied to his support, as the representative of the government and the Union, and their love and devotion to the Union are to be their lure and decoy into the practical support of the Republican party.” Not only was Hicks a handmaiden of the Republicans, Wallis complained, but he had also acted unconstitutionally when he sent Maryland’s delegation to the Washington Peace Conference without conferring with the legislature. His list of Hicks’s offenses even led Wallis, who normally preached perfect subservience to the word of law, to an extralegal conclusion: if the governor refused to call a state convention, the people of Maryland must take action and issue the summons themselves. With six states out of the Union and several other slaveholding states poised to follow, Marylanders could not remain inactive. He unabashedly remarked that if the border between slavery and freedom became a dividing line between two nations, “the right is on the one side and the wrong is on the other, and the Republican party is the champion of the wrong.”⁴

Several other proponents of a state convention echoed Wallis’s complaints and suggestions at the Maryland Institute that night. The conclave scheduled a larger meeting on February 18 to consider how to call a state convention in the absence of legislative imprimatur. Wallis attended this meeting as well, but nothing more than another plea for Hicks to assemble the state legislature emerged from the conference. As Baltimore native John Morris correctly predicted, the convention occupied “an indefinite ground which will mean anything or nothing as future events may determine. They will not move one step towards secession unless Virginia encourages them.”⁵ Wallis and likeminded Border South secessionists found that the Unionist

⁴ Steiner, “Severn Teackle Wallis: Second Paper,” 146; Severn Teackle Wallis, “Speech at the Maryland Institute, February 1, 1861,” in *Writings of Severn Teackle Wallis*, 4 volumes (Baltimore: John Murphy & Company, 1896), 2:130-135.

⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 4, 1861; John Morris to James Buchanan, Feb. 6, 1861, Buchanan Papers, HSP. For the demands of the convention, see *Address and Resolutions Adopted at the Meeting of the Southern Rights Convention of Maryland, Held in the Universalist Church, in the City of Baltimore, February 18th and 19th, 1861* (Baltimore: J.B. Rose & Company, 1861).

offensive had for the most part stonewalled their belated mobilization on behalf of disunion. The auspices of a settlement in Congress or in the Washington Peace Conference left most border southerners unwilling to follow the drastic course recommended by Wallis and other border country secessionists. The inauguration of Lincoln and the endurance of a tense truce between the seceded states and the federal government won Wallis very few converts in the Border South. Furthermore, much to the dismay of border country fire-eaters, John Crittenden and his colleagues had in March broached the idea of a Border State convention to keep the idea of compromise afloat. While some border southerners had soured on the hopes of a comprehensive settlement and adopted a neutral attitude, many more seemed willing to give Crittenden every conceivable opportunity to reach a compromise agreement. The conditional nature of Border South Unionism, however, became as much a liability for Crittenden as it was an asset for Wallis. A collision might jeopardize everything Crittenden and his allies had worked for over the past five months and could very well convert many border southerners to Wallis's line of thinking. Although frustrated by the cautious course of the Border South constituency, Severn Teackle Wallis and his colleagues tenaciously clung to the dream of secession as winter gave way to spring.⁶

John Crittenden, no longer a United States senator, returned home to Frankfort in mid-March 1861, just as the Kentucky state legislature reassembled after a recess of a little over a month. As a sign of respect for his herculean efforts in Washington, the legislature suspended business on March 20 and repaired to the Frankfort train depot to welcome the aged Crittenden. Although greatly wearied by the grueling schedule of long Senate sessions, seemingly endless committee

⁶ William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 166-167.

meetings, and late-night parlor politics, Crittenden's return to Frankfort did not signal the commencement of retirement. In late February, a group of Kentucky Unionists broached the idea of Crittenden running for Congress. These Kentuckians believed that Crittenden could continue to lead the Unionist offensive from the House chamber. Moreover, his presence in Washington would indicate that even with a Republican president in the executive office, the hope for compromise remained alive. "You can do more for us & yourself in the house than you can do in the Senate," C.J. Blackburn asserted. "Lincoln is a bigoted fool therefore it is more necessary you should be in Congress." His old friend Orlando Brown reported that the people in and around Frankfort had rallied behind Crittenden's candidacy. Although initially reluctant to sign up for another tour of duty in Washington, Crittenden's return home convinced him that retirement would have to wait once again. With congressional elections in Kentucky scheduled for August, he had some time to contemplate his political future. For the present, he devoted his time and energy to organizing a convention of the Upper and Border South states.⁷

Although the Kentucky general assembly adjourned on February 11, 1861, without calling a state convention, the idea of a conference of the slaveholding states remaining in the Union had gradually gained momentum. Once the legislature returned to Frankfort on March 20, proponents of a slave state conclave renewed their efforts to secure passage of an enabling resolution for the meeting. Throughout the month of March, a growing number of Unionists from across the Upper and Border South clamored for what became known as a border slave state convention.⁸ The border slave state convention scheme had been discussed at length in the

⁷ *Kentucky Senate Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17, 249; Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of Jan. 17, 321-322; C.J. Blackburn to John J. Crittenden, Feb. 21, 1861, Orlando Brown to John J. Crittenden, Mar. 7, 1861, both in Crittenden Papers, LOC; John J. Crittenden to Joseph Wightman, Mar. 13, 1861, John J. Crittenden Letters, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 430-431, 438.*

⁸ For the period between Lincoln's election and Fort Sumter, the term border slave state normally referred to any of the eight slaveholding states in the Upper and Border South.

state conventions of Missouri and Virginia, the general assemblies of Delaware and Kentucky, and the southern press. Unionists realized that with Congress adjourned, a convention could keep the issue of compromise before the people. In short, it would signal to wavering Unionists throughout the South that conservatives had yet to surrender. “A heavy responsibility devolves upon the central states, where the great heart of the country beats,” a Virginia native remarked in response to the possibility of a border state conference. “May they be fully alive to their responsibilities and true to them!”⁹

Kentucky Unionists played their trump card on March 21 when they asked Crittenden to address the state legislature. No other personality held as much sway in Kentucky or the Border South as did Crittenden, and the invitation provided the manager of the Unionist offensive with a platform that would draw the attention of the regional and national press. He agreed to the invitation, scheduled the speech for March 26, and took a few days to prepare his address. Just over three weeks after his valedictory to the United States Senate, the old Kentuckian discovered that although he held no public office, his name still attracted an immense crowd. An overflowing throng of men and women packed the galleries of the House chamber, crowded the floor, and spilled into the lobby of the statehouse. Crittenden took the floor around 11:00 in the morning and spoke to the joint session of the general assembly for roughly two hours.¹⁰

During the address, Crittenden emphasized that as long as the nation avoided an outbreak of hostilities, the Border South could depend on support from the conservative masses of the North. He underscored that in the recently adjourned session of Congress, thousands of voters

⁹ J.R. Thompson to John Pendleton Kennedy, Feb. 26, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; James E. Harvey to Abraham Lincoln, March 1861 [no specific day provided], Lincoln Papers, LOC; David Walker to Beriah Magoffin, Mar. 29, 1861, Magoffin Papers, KDLA; Zebulon B. Vance to J. Morrison Harris, Apr. 8, 1861, J. Morrison Harris Papers, MDHS; A. Whittle to Samuel F. Du Pont, Mar. 15, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

¹⁰ *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 334, 356; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Mar. 27, 1861.

from all over the North had sent him petitions and letters in support of his compromise package. “It showed me that the argument which had been so often used to disunite us – that the North hates the South and that the South hates the North – is not true,” he admitted. He warned his fellow border southerners that extremists in both the North and the South had used partisanship to fire the passions of the people and cloud the true spirit of intersectional cordiality which still existed. Thus, Crittenden advised that the South should continue to press for recognition of her rights within the Union. “Let us struggle in the Union, contend in the Union, make the Union the instrument with which we contend, and we shall get all that we ask – all that we can desire – all that reason can warrant us in expecting,” Crittenden pled.¹¹

He continued with a reminder that most border country southerners had family members or friends who lived in either the North or the Lower South. Thus, he found the notion of coercion utterly repugnant. The shedding of blood, Crittenden cautioned, would dash the hopes of reconciliation and instantly convert intersectional amicability into sectional hatred. Rather, both sides ought to find a peaceful means of patching the old Union back together. He hoped that the Border South would follow the example set by Henry Clay, who in 1850 had labored intensively for a compromise settlement and boldly declared to the Kentucky legislature that he would never give up on the Union. In his appeal for peaceful measures, Crittenden pointed out that the electoral process, not revolution, granted the American voter the best means of setting aside bad rulers and political leaders.¹²

Although Crittenden did not explicitly condone a border state convention in his address to the Kentucky legislature, his plea for peace, calm, and Union certainly helped the legislators

¹¹ “Speech of the Hon. John J. Crittenden, Before the Legislature of Kentucky, on Tuesday, 26th of March, 1861,” in Mrs. Chapman Coleman, ed., *The Life of John J. Crittenden, with Selections from His Correspondence and Speeches* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1871), 2:304, 305.

¹² *Ibid.*, 306-307, 312-314.

who pushed for the meeting. C.F. Burnam believed that Crittenden's address rejuvenated the Union movement in the general assembly and paved the way for the passage of a resolution calling for the border state conference. The "aged & worthy public servant" had dinner with several members of the legislature shortly after delivering his speech, which also bolstered the spirits of Bluegrass State Unionists. In the following days the legislature considered several different proposals for the border state convention. The timing and means of electing representatives to the convention became the two main points of contention. Some members wanted to schedule the convention in August, while others preferred May. Debate also ensued as to whether the people of Kentucky should elect their delegates to the meeting or if the legislature should appoint them. In the end, the legislature on April 2 settled on holding an election for delegates to the conference on Saturday, May 4, 1861; the meeting would convene at Frankfort on May 27. The final legislation passed the Senate by a vote of 27-0 but faced more difficulty in the House.¹³

In the House proponents of secession George B. Hodge and W.B. Machen unsuccessfully attempted to insert language that upheld the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, which Thomas Jefferson had drafted in opposition to what he deemed an overabundance of executive and legislative power during the Quasi-War with France. Throughout the nineteenth century, nullifiers and secessionists utilized Jefferson's resolutions as a precedent for resisting the authority of the federal government when they regarded its actions unconstitutional. Apparently Machen hoped to gain a victory for Kentucky secessionists by tethering this interpretation to the bill. His ploy failed by the close margin of 41-44, and on April 2 the House passed the legislation by a vote of 82-2 after John C. Breckinridge, whom most Kentucky Unionists

¹³ C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, Mar. 28, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; Entry for Mar. 29, 1861, Samuel Haycraft Journal, FHS; *Journal of the Kentucky Senate, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 314-315, 365-369, 427-428.

considered “the head & front of disunion” in the state, gave his blessing to the border state convention. Only Machen and Daniel P. White voted in the negative.¹⁴

When the general assembly adjourned on April 5, Kentucky Unionists again congratulated one another for their efforts. Although some conservatives had in the absence of a comprehensive settlement from Congress jumped off the Unionist bandwagon, the March-April 1861 session of the Kentucky legislature highlighted the resiliency of the Unionist offensive. For the second time in 1861, moderates had prevented their pro-secession colleagues from ramming a bill for a state sovereignty convention through the legislature. At this term, pro-secession legislators even failed to bring the state convention proposition to a vote. Furthermore, during this brief sitting the Kentucky legislature passed a resolution in support of the proposed Thirteenth Amendment, known as the Corwin Amendment, which forbade Congress from abolishing slavery in the states where it existed. While nearly every southern Unionist agreed that this amendment addressed only a portion of the numerous political problems plaguing the nation, they could at least view its passage as a necessary first step toward a settlement and likely calm the nerves of uncommitted conservatives. Kentucky secessionists knew this precisely and tried to prevent the measure’s passage by adding various explanatory resolutions to the amendment. One called for the immediate withdrawal of all federal troops in the South, while another insisted the Corwin Amendment was “a declaration of rights we already claim to possess.” George B. Hodge, leader of the obstructionists, feared that ratification of the amendment would set a dangerous precedent because it opened the door to the federal

¹⁴*Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 450-451, 467-475; Entry for Apr. 2, 1861, Samuel Haycraft Journal, FHS. For Jefferson’s authorship of the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, see Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 216-220. For the subsequent interpretations of Jefferson’s influential resolutions, see especially Drew R. McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 139-151. The legacy of the resolutions is also aptly discussed in Norman K. Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965) and William J. Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).

government rendering future decisions on slavery in the states. Unionists stripped the final package of these obstacles and settled on a resolution that expressed the shared conviction that the passage of the amendment did not equate to a final settlement of the crisis, but nonetheless exemplified Kentucky's desire to avoid the agitation of the slavery issue.¹⁵

Politicians who favored disunion had come to Frankfort in March full of optimism, yet once again found themselves overmatched by the regimented Unionists. Fire-eaters could, however, count one small victory in late March. The same day that the legislature opened and Crittenden made his return, a group in favor of disunion held a meeting in the Kentucky capital. They branded themselves the Southern Rights Party and established a committee to manage the new organization's affairs. Blanton Duncan orchestrated the development of a network of Southern Rights clubs to circulate secession propaganda across the state and launched a campaign to gather signatures for petitions to the legislature in favor of calling a state convention. Nevertheless, the unfolding events in the legislative session demoralized some of the Southern Rights members and exposed the party's lack of strength in relation to the Unionists.¹⁶

Crittenden's speech and presence helped neutralize the embryonic party, which one moderate labeled a band of "Secession buccaneers." John C. Breckinridge, whom the legislature had in November 1859 tabbed to replace the retiring Crittenden in the United States Senate, discovered in April 1861 the difficulties of following his predecessor. Invited to speak to the legislature on April 2, Breckinridge struggled to convince many fence-sitters to join the Southern

¹⁵ *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 330-332, 391-393, 423-424, 427-428, 443-446, 457-459; *Journal of the Kentucky Senate, Called Session of Jan. 17*, 253, 269, 407; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Mar. 30, 1861; E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 36-37.

¹⁶ *Louisville Daily Courier*, Mar. 13, 21, 1861; Blanton Duncan to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 7, 1861, Douglas Papers, UC; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 37; John A. Boyd, "Neutrality and Peace: Kentucky and the Secession Crisis of 1861," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1999), 147.

Rights crusade. Whereas Crittenden stressed the commonalities between the North and South, Breckinridge underscored the differences between the sections. Republicans reigned supreme in the North, he claimed, and now the federal government resembled “an alien government, the worst that ever cursed the world.” He warned his fellow Kentuckians that Republicans in the recently adjourned Congress had practiced the art of deception and duped most southern Unionists. Even though the Republicans acquiesced in the Corwin Amendment, Breckinridge reminded his listeners, they remained firmly committed to preventing the spread of slavery into the territories. This, he averred, signaled a Republican design to abolish slavery “by more circuitous but not less fatal means.” The former vice president predicted a woeful future of social ruin if the state’s quarter of a million enslaved persons became free. Finally, Breckinridge advised that Kentucky take part in the proposed border states conference, but declared if nothing came of the meeting then the Bluegrass State should join the government that best protected its inhabitants from the “combined influence of fanaticism, hypocrisy, and perfidy” – the Confederate States of America.¹⁷

Breckinridge’s speech did little to mobilize the Southern Rights men in the legislature. Many Kentuckians still shared Crittenden’s conviction that they could reach out to moderates in the North for cooperation just as they had in the preceding three decades. By the time Breckinridge spoke most legislators considered the passage of legislation for a border state conference and resistance to a Kentucky state sovereignty convention a foregone conclusion. Several irked Southern Rights members and confident Unionists headed home before the close of the session and did not even witness Breckinridge’s address; a day before his speech a newspaper correspondent remarked that if the legislature did not soon adjourn “the defection will

¹⁷ C.F. Burnam to James S. Rollins, Mar. 15, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO; James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 112; *Louisville Daily Courier*, April 4, 1861.

amount to a stampede.” Both the Unionists and the Southern Rights adherents, however, realized that a massive number of Kentuckians and border southerners remained conditional Unionists and that outside events could alter their outlook on secession. With that thought in mind, both camps geared up for the May 4 election for delegates to the border states convention. Some Unionists, mindful of the substantial size of the conditional bloc, expressed misgivings about the meeting because they feared disunionists would use it as a means to present an impracticable ultimatum to the North and convert equivocating moderates to their standard. Crittenden likely took these factors into consideration when he eventually consented to run for Congress despite his admission that he had long wished to retire.¹⁸

Since the beginning of the secession crisis, Border South Unionists had anxiously monitored two situations, one in St. Louis and the other in Charleston, South Carolina, in which federal troops stared down pro-secession forces. Earlier in the winter Nathaniel Lyon and a small contingent of federal regulars had reinforced the United States arsenal at St. Louis, which provoked the wrath of many Missourians. Lyon worked closely with the Unionist Home Guard under the direction of Frank Blair and Franz Sigel, a leader in the St. Louis German community, to ensure that the arsenal remained adequately defended. Secessionists in St. Louis made their presence known by flying disunion flags from rooftops throughout the town, including one atop the city courthouse for a few days in early March. Basil Duke, a St. Louis attorney who supported secession, had organized a paramilitary organization of about four hundred men known as the Ninth Ward Washington Minute Men, which kept onlookers on edge. Duke later admitted “the chief and primary object of this organization was the capture of the arsenal,” but a

¹⁸ *Louisville Daily Courier*, Apr. 2, 1861; Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden*, 438-439; “Speech Before the Legislature,” in Coleman, ed., *The Life of John J. Crittenden*. 2:316; D.P. Bedinger to John J. Crittenden, Apr. 11, 1861, D.C. Wickliffe to John J. Crittenden, May 9, 1861, Garrett Davis to John J. Crittenden, May 11, 1861, all in Crittenden Papers, LOC.

lack of adequate arms and hesitancy among some of the secessionist leaders prevented the Minute Men from achieving their goal during the winter. The pro-secession forces celebrated a small victory when on April 1 the city's voters elected Daniel G. Taylor, who ran on an anti-Republican coalition ticket, to the mayor's office. Taylor replaced Republican Oliver Filley and in the contest he defeated the Republican candidate John How by a sizable margin. "We have taken our position against Lincolnism," a conservative editor boasted, "and against that malignant theory of the North which declares perpetual war on the slave States and their institutions." Disunionists also rejoiced when Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson appointed Duke and several other men with secessionist proclivities to the St. Louis Police Board.¹⁹

Despite the uncertain and untenable conditions in St. Louis, by April 1861 the standoff had not escalated into open warfare. Americans could not count on similar results in Charleston Harbor, where a federal force commanded by Kentuckian Robert Anderson in Fort Sumter became a symbol of defiance to Confederates and an emblem of resiliency to northern hardliners. For months border southerners of all political persuasions had bemoaned the presence of federal troops in the seceded states. Before returning to Frankfort for his speech to the legislature, the newly installed John C. Breckinridge used the special session of the Senate in late March, normally reserved for confirming the nominations of the incoming president, to submit a resolution that called for the removal of all federal troops from the Confederate States of America. Unwilling to act upon the resolution both because it represented a tacit recognition of Confederate nationhood and because most Republicans viewed it as base surrender to the demands of traitors, the Senate cast his resolution aside. Moderate border southerners also asked for the removal of federal forces from the Lower South, albeit for different reasons. They

¹⁹ Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 77, 86-91; Basil W. Duke, *Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C.S.A.* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1911), 34-43 (Duke's quote on p. 38); *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Apr. 2, 1861.

understood that as long as the two forces faced one another in the cradle of secession, an overzealous potshot from one of the shore batteries ringing Fort Sumter might provoke return fire and bring about war, which would likely derail all hopes for a peaceful compromise settlement. Unionists in both the Missouri state convention and the Kentucky legislature had with varying degrees of success entered resolutions asking that Lincoln remove the troops from the seceded states so that negotiations toward a compromise could proceed unencumbered. Samuel F. Du Pont of Delaware, like many other committed Unionists, conceded that the evacuation of Fort Sumter would be “a bitter pill to swallow,” but he figured such a course would prevent civil war and exponentially increase the likelihood of a political settlement.²⁰

Breckinridge likely asked for the removal of troops so that the Confederate project could advance unimpeded, but he provided a common Border South explanation when he introduced his resolution. Most border southerners realized that the outbreak of war would likely plunge their region into the thick of the contest. “Those of us who live a few miles on either side of the border, if the passions of men should become aroused, and if indeed human nature has made no progress since the times of the Peloponnesian war... would be engaged in it; yes, and would have to contribute our children to the unnatural strife,” Breckinridge somberly predicted. A Delaware Unionist echoed the sentiments of Breckinridge when she remarked, “Every patriot ought to bend all his energies to prevent the commencement of civil war, for if once begun it will be applying the match to the tinder, [and] the whole land will be in a blaze.” A Kentucky politician lamented that if war commenced, “the beautiful Ohio would run red with the blood of slaughtered brethren.” Perhaps before any other element of the Union, border southerners

²⁰ *CG*, 37th Cong., Special Session of the Senate, 1511-1513; *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City and St. Louis, March 1861* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Company, 1861), *Proceedings*, 235-237, 243-246; *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of Jan. 17, 323*; Samuel F. Du Pont to William Whetten, Mar. 26, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

grasped the destructive toll that a civil war might unleash. Their geographic position along the sectional fault line, along with glimpses of episodic violence in the preceding decades, taught them that a full-blown armed conflict would place the Border South in a most vulnerable position.²¹

Even as handwringing in the Border South over the impending outbreak of war intensified, conditions in Charleston deteriorated during the spring. Soon after Abraham Lincoln entered the executive office on March 4, 1861, the new president received astonishing news: Anderson only had enough food and supplies to keep his garrison in operation for six more weeks. Before most Washington revelers concluded their inauguration festivities, Lincoln faced a painfully difficult decision. Should he reinforce Anderson, which would certainly provoke retaliation from the Confederate forces on the shore, and risk the commencement of war? Or, should he evacuate the federal troops, avoid war, and possibly face a fractured northern populace and Republican Party? Over the next six weeks Lincoln weighed his options, relying on the counsel of his cabinet, General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, and a small cadre of army and navy officers.²²

Lincoln in mid-March polled his cabinet to ascertain their thoughts on the situation at Fort Sumter. From the beginning, Secretary of State William Seward led the way in advocating

²¹ CG, 37th Cong., Special Session of the Senate, 1507; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 260-264; Sophie M. Du Pont to Samuel F. Du Pont, Jan. 16, 1861, Sophie Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Feb. 1, 1861.

²² Lincoln's handling of the Fort Sumter situation has been covered at length by many excellent historians. For example, see David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (1942; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Kenneth M. Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950); W.A. Swanberg, *First Blood: The Story of Fort Sumter* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957); Richard N. Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Maury Klein, *Days of Defiance: Sumter, Secession, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Nelson D. Lankford, *Cry Havoc! The Crooked Road to Civil War, 1861* (New York: Viking, 2007); Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); and William J. Cooper, Jr., *We Have the War Upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War, November 1860 – April 1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

the removal of Anderson's men. Several Upper South Unionists and influential delegates to the Virginia state convention had convinced Seward that the remaining eight slave states would stay in the Union only if the federal government adopted a peaceful stance toward the seceded states. He reasoned that the evacuation of Fort Sumter would demonstrate to these Unionists that the administration had chosen peaceful means to end the crisis and that a pacific posture would keep the eight states of the Upper and Border South firmly attached to the Union.²³ Missourian Edward Bates originally followed Seward's line of thinking and advised the president to remove Anderson's men from Sumter and send additional troops to Fort Pickens and other installations along the Gulf of Mexico, which held less symbolic and strategic value than Fort Sumter. Bates's Border South thinking about war, the Union, and the fate of slavery contributed to his initial decision for withdrawal. He predicted that reinforcing Fort Sumter would bring about armed conflict, which "would soon become a social war, and that could hardly fail to bring on a servile war, the horrors of which need not be dwelt upon." At the outset, only Montgomery Blair of Maryland voiced an outright opposition to evacuating the fort, which he considered caving to the demands of traitors. The disparate opinions of Lincoln's two Border South cabinet members reveals how each man's political antecedents influenced his thinking. Bates, the cautious moderate, adhered more closely to the conventional opinion of border southerners, while Blair, the former Democrat who had broken with the mainstream of the party back in the 1840s and entered the free-soil fold, thought more in terms of absolutes.²⁴

²³ Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 274-275; Daniel W. Crofts, "Secession Winter: William Henry Seward and the Decision for War," *New York History* 65 (July 1984), 229-256; Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 228-240.

²⁴ Entry for Mar. 16, 1861, in Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 179; James M. McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 16; Elbert B. Smith, *Francis Preston Blair* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 192-199.

During the following two weeks, Seward worked every angle possible to convince the president to evacuate Fort Sumter, yet Lincoln remained uncommitted. The secretary of state kept in contact with Unionists in Virginia and Confederate commissioners in Washington and made the grave blunder of assuring them that Anderson and his men would withdraw from the fort. Lincoln, however, finally decided in late March to resupply Anderson after General Scott suggested abandoning not only Sumter but also Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida. Lincoln could not accept Scott's recommendation to yield both forts, especially since Pickens suffered little duress in relation to Sumter. He viewed Scott's suggestion as ignoble submission, and all but Seward and Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith now agreed with the president. In early April the president prepared orders for the navy to provision Sumter. Tipped off that a flotilla had left New York City with supplies for Anderson's men, Confederate president Jefferson Davis instructed the commanding officer at Charleston to prevent the federals from restocking the bastion. Before sunrise on April 12, the Confederate batteries opened fire on the fort. After a bombardment of more than thirty hours, the federal garrison surrendered and evacuated Charleston Harbor. On April 15, Lincoln responded with a proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to subdue the rebellious Lower South states. For border southerners, the unthinkable had occurred. "I fear the effect of this event upon the Border States," John Pendleton Kennedy despondently scribbled in his diary. "It strengthens the secession men and may end in driving us all out of the Union."²⁵

Reactions to the bombardment at Fort Sumter and Lincoln's proclamation varied from outrage and indignation to exuberant delight. In response to the news, disunionists raised a secession flag over the courthouse in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, while fire-eaters took to the

²⁵ McPherson, *Tried by War*, 16-20; Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot*, 103-125; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 313; Journal Entry for Apr. 14, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL. For the view that Lincoln had determined to resupply Sumter prior to Scott's advice, see Cooper, *We Have the War Upon Us*, 242-255.

streets of Magnolia, Delaware, and cheered for Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy. One Kent County, Delaware, merchant adamantly refused to allow authorities to post Lincoln's call for troops inside or outside of his store. While a great gulf separated the mindset of fire-eaters and unconditional Unionists in the Border South, both groups seemed relieved that the contest had finally come. Disunionists were confident that the Border South would now follow the Lower South out of the Union, and unyielding Unionists looked forward to exterminating the fire-eaters in their midst. "The war has begun & I am glad it is inaugurated by the act of Rebels in the State of South Carolina; if it has to be, let those who are the authors of all the trouble, reap the first fruits of the dire Calamity," an unconditional Unionist in Delaware squawked.²⁶

Moderates greeted the news with a less sanguine outlook than did secessionists and unconditional Unionists. The opening of the war apparently caught some Unionists off guard and left them unsure of how to proceed. A Danville, Kentucky, native remarked that "The Union party seem as mad as march hares, running backward & forward from one extreme of policy to the other." James Guthrie worried that the attack would cause Virginia and other Upper and Border South states to secede. Moreover, he fretted that emboldened disunionists in Maryland might attempt to capture Washington D.C, throw the federal government into disarray, and win a massive victory for the Confederacy. An inhabitant of St. Louis proclaimed to Stephen Douglas that until the attack on Fort Sumter he had stood firmly beside the Union, but stated he would never join with the Republicans who he charged with inaugurating the war "for party purposes against slavery." Confused and saddened, he asked the Little Giant for advice. The attack produced a change in sentiment for many conditional Unionists across the region. William Nelson reported that in Louisville "the people have absolutely gone mad. Some of the best

²⁶ Entry for Apr. 18, 1861, Samuel Haycraft Journal, Filson; *Delaware Republican*, May 9, 1861; Henry Du Pont to Samuel F. Du Pont, No Date [circa April 12-14, 1861], Henry Du Pont Papers, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, hereinafter cited as Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

Union men are talking and acting as officers of secession meetings.” Orville Hickman Browning gazed across the Mississippi River from his Quincy, Illinois home and concluded that “treason and secession are rampant” in Missouri.²⁷

The inhabitants of both the Border and Upper South understood that the action of Virginia would have a profound impact on the other seven slaveholding states. Virginia, the largest slaveholding state, proudly boasted of a prestigious political lineage that dated back to the early seventeenth century, and most southerners revered the Old Dominion’s lengthy roster of eminent statesmen. Many border southerners hailed from Virginia and thus looked to their former home for guidance throughout the crisis. A prominent Virginian predicted that the Old Dominion “is so ponderous a vessel of state that she will drag all the rest of the border slave states along in her wake.” An advisor to Lincoln early in the year warned that if Virginia seceded, he might as well prepare for the rest of the Border South to “surrender to the demon.” “If Virginia plays the fool now the whole South is lost,” James Guthrie likewise fretted. Unionists in the Border South held their breath when on April 17 the Virginian convention discarded the advice of delegate Waitman Willey, who warned that secession would destroy all the social, economic, and political accord that had long been so important to the states along the sectional border, and voted 88-55 in favor of secession.²⁸

Good fortune smiled on the Unionists of the Border South in that neither the Missouri state convention nor the general assemblies of the four states were in session when on April 12

²⁷ Joseph Breckinridge to Robert J. Breckinridge, Apr. 21, 1861, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC; James Guthrie to P.G. Washington, Apr. 13, 1861, Guthrie Letters, SHC; J.R. Brent to Stephen Douglas, Apr. 23, 1861, Douglas Papers, UC; William Nelson to John B.S. Todd, Apr. 18, 1861, Orville Hickman Browning to Abraham Lincoln, Apr. 18, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

²⁸ Sidney Smith Lee to Samuel F. Du Pont, Jan. 26, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; James S. Flanagan to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 25, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; James Guthrie to P.G. Washington, Mar. 7, 1861, Guthrie Letters, SHC; “Waitman Willey’s and Jubal Early’s Alarm,” in William W. Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds., *Showdown in Virginia: The 1861 Convention and the Fate of the Union* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 184.

the feeble truce between the Confederacy and the federal government fell through. Had the Missouri convention remained in session beyond March 22 or the Kentucky legislature beyond April 5, the worst fears about a conditional Unionist metamorphosis to disunionism may have been realized. Much to the chagrin of Border South fire-eaters, legislators and delegates had scattered across the vast expanse of the region and returned to their homes when the cold war between the Lower South and the federal government ended and a shooting war ensued. Disunionists relied upon brisk action; with none of these Border South legislative bodies in session their task became more difficult in the four northernmost slaveholding states. William Watkins Glenn, a Baltimore fire-eater, groused that although Virginia had voted to secede, his disunionist colleagues in Maryland did little more than talk of their indignation about Lincoln's proclamation. Glenn recalled with frustration that the lack of "concerted action" on the part of Baltimore disunionists prevented them from riding Virginia's coattails at this juncture.²⁹

The attack on Fort Sumter combined with Lincoln's proclamation tipped the balance in favor of disunion in the Upper South, where the machinery for secession had been assembled earlier in the winter. All four of the Upper South states contained significant pockets of concentrated pro-secession sentiment which unlike in the Border South served as an effective counterweight to the Unionist offensive. Prior to the bombardment, state conventions had met in both Arkansas and Virginia, though neither body had rendered a final decision about its state's future in the Union. Virginia's convention remained in session at this crucial interval and wasted

²⁹ Entry for April 17, 1861, in Bayly Ellen Marks and Mark Norton Schatz, eds., *Between North and South: A Maryland Journalist Views the Civil War, The Narrative of William Watkins Glenn, 1861-1869* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1976), 27. After the Civil War Simon Bolivar Buckner and Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, two Kentuckians with disparate loyalties, both surmised that had the Kentucky legislature been in session in mid-April, it would probably have followed Virginia's lead and called a state convention. Buckner went so far as to suggest that Maryland and Missouri would have followed Kentucky's lead if the Bluegrass State opted for disunion. See Arndt M. Stickles, *Simon Bolivar Buckner: Borderland Knight* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 54, and Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, "The Border State Men of the Civil War," *Atlantic Monthly* 69 (Feb. 1892), 255.

little time preparing and passing a secession ordinance in response to Lincoln's proclamation. In Arkansas, the governor recalled the adjourned convention and in early May the delegates swiftly declared the state out of the Union. Although voters in North Carolina and Tennessee had spurned holding a convention in February, the groundwork had been laid for each state's exit from the Union. In Tennessee, the legislature in early May approved of a military alliance with the Confederacy and later in June the state's voters approved of secession in a public referendum. North Carolinians sent delegates to a state convention in mid-May, which passed a secession ordinance in quick order. Unionists in the Border South, however, had through their efforts during the winter applied the brakes to precipitate legislative action in their region.³⁰

While Border South politicians read of the events at Fort Sumter and Virginia from their firesides, the executives of the region wasted little time in their response to Lincoln's call for troops to subdue the rebellion. The biting rejoinder from Kentucky's Beriah Magoffin and Missouri's Claiborne Fox Jackson varied little from that of state executives across the Upper South. "In answer I say emphatically Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States," Magoffin snorted in reply to the request. Jackson made an even bolder declaration: "Your requisition, in my judgment, is illegal, unconstitutional, and revolutionary in its object, inhuman and diabolical, and cannot be complied with. Not one man will the State of Missouri furnish to carry on any such unholy crusade." Governor William Burton of Delaware also refused to provide troops to the federal government, although he responded to Secretary of War Simon Cameron in significantly more measured language than did Magoffin and Jackson. Burton acknowledged that Delaware law did not include a provision

³⁰ Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 340-341; James M. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 153-160; Jonathan M. Atkins, *Parties, Politics, and the Sectional Conflict in Tennessee, 1832-1861* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 246-247.

for a standing militia; with no state militia, he could not turn any units over to the federal government. He conceded that volunteer companies existed and were forming and that state law granted him the authority to commission the officers of these units, but “it is altogether optional with them to offer their service to the U.S. authorities.”³¹

The jarring rebukes of Magoffin, Jackson, and Burton revealed the complexity of the Border South position in the crisis. None of these Democratic executives wished to contribute troops to a war against their southern brethren, and all three men claimed that Lincoln lacked the constitutional authority to call up soldiers for such a purpose. Most border southerners agreed that Lincoln had overstepped the boundaries set forth in the Constitution with his call for 75,000 men to crush the rebellion. Nathaniel Paschall remonstrated that the question before the people revolved around “whether our liberties are secured by laws or whether they are subject to the will, the mere will of despotism.” Still, the St. Louis editor held out hope that a pacific separation might occur between the warring sections. “The ties by which the Border States have been bound to the Union, and which have been displayed in many sacrifices of feeling and interest for its preservation,” he proclaimed, “have been much weakened by the developments of the last two weeks.” Paschall admitted that if Lincoln did not entertain the idea of a peaceful settlement, the Border South might venture into the unknown ground of secession.³²

While Paschall conceded the possibility of secession, he gave voice to the growing demand for neutrality in the Border South. Once the cannons opened fire at Fort Sumter, Paschall and other border southerners experienced more countervailing sectional pressure than ever before. Beriah Magoffin and William Burton both fixed on neutrality as the best response to Lincoln’s proclamation and the specter of war. Magoffin on April 24 asked the legislature to

³¹ Beriah Magoffin to Simon Cameron, Apr. 15, 1861, Claiborne Fox Jackson to Simon Cameron, Apr. 17, 1861, William Burton to Simon Cameron, Apr. 25, 1861, all in *OR*, Series III, vol. 1, 70, 83, 114.

³² *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Apr. 19, 16, 1861.

convene on May 6 so that it could prepare the state for the future, which alarmed committed Unionists in the Bluegrass State. Kentucky Unionists had twice before beaten back fire-eaters in the general assembly who had clamored for a state convention; they now wondered if they could continue to hold the line. Unconditional Unionists in Kentucky distrusted Magoffin and doubted his intentions in setting the state on the path to neutrality. “He is a rebel at heart and afflicted beyond hope of cure,” James Speed later surmised.³³ Scholars have engaged in a long-running debate about the intentions of the Kentucky governor in the spring of 1861 and formed two camps of opinion: one group portrays Magoffin as a disunionist who hoped the adoption of neutrality would eventually lead Kentucky to align herself with the Confederacy, while the other praises the governor for his efforts to keep the Bluegrass State out of the fray.³⁴ Despite enriching our understanding of Kentucky’s governor, these interpretations tend to overstate his long-term vision. Magoffin, like almost every other American and border southerner, found himself blindsided by the opening of the conflict. Although war had been much discussed ever since Lincoln’s election, few Americans had prepared for an actual conflict. His preliminary response to the war belied sheer confusion rather than ulterior machinations or patent choreography for Kentucky’s future.

Magoffin initially sought a decidedly Border South solution to the commencement of war. In addition to advocating neutrality, he reached out to the governors of Indiana and Ohio and gauged their interest in joining him to mediate a peaceful settlement between the

³³ James Speed to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 22, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

³⁴ For the view of Magoffin as a secessionist see Lowell Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Thomas C. Mackey, “Not a Pariah, but a Keystone: Kentucky and Secession,” in Kent T. Dollar, Larry H. Whiteaker, and W. Calvin Dickinson, eds., *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009, 25-45; and Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Lincoln’s Forgotten Ally: Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt of Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). For the opposing interpretation, see Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*; Michael T. Dues, “The Pro-Secessionist Governor of Kentucky: Beriah Magoffin’s Credibility Gap,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 67 (July 1969): 221-231; and Boyd, “Neutrality and Peace.”

Confederacy and the federal government. If they could effect a truce between the warring sections, “the passions of the people may cool in the meantime” and politicians across the nation could find some means by which “this horrid war may be stopped and our difficulties adjusted in a manner honorable to all parties.”³⁵ In his proclamation Lincoln had called for a special session of Congress to meet on July 4; Magoffin figured that preventing armed hostilities until that point would produce a mandate for a settlement. While Magoffin counted on the antebellum intersectional amity that had been so integral to the Border South’s conception of the Union, he failed to understand the momentous sea change that had occurred in northern opinion once Confederate soldiers opened fire on federal troops at Fort Sumter. No longer did northerners view the crisis as merely a political question about slavery’s future in the republic. With their nationalism placed on trial, most northerners allowed a *rage militaire* to overcome the intersectional goodwill that border southerners had relied upon during the antebellum years.³⁶ The bombardment at Fort Sumter “has united all the free states as one man,” Sophie Du Pont correctly discerned. “What has started the North, is the sentiment of fealty to the constitutional authority of the land & the flag of our country.” A Democratic paper in Pennsylvania noted in the aftermath of Fort Sumter that it had long advocated a compromise between the sections, “but now, they have fired upon the flag of their country, and of ours. No American of true heart and brave soul will stand this.” Ohio governor William Dennison refused Magoffin’s invitation and

³⁵ Beriah Magoffin to William Dennison, Telegram, [No Date], Beriah Magoffin to William Dennison, Telegram, Apr. 26, 1861, Beriah Magoffin to Lazarus Powell, Telegram, Apr. 26, 1861, Beriah Magoffin to Oliver Morton, Telegram, Apr. 28, 1861, Beriah Magoffin to Thomas L. Crittenden, Telegram, Apr. 29, 1861, all in Magoffin Papers, KDLA.

³⁶ For the momentous unifying impact of Fort Sumter, see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 274-275; Shearer Davis Bowman, *At the Precipice: Americans North and South during the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 8-9, 284-287; and Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), Ch. 2. For the concept of *rage militaire* I have relied heavily upon Charles Royster’s analysis of the American people at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War; see Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), Ch. 1. See also Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

proclaimed the federal government “to be wholly in the right.” After initially signaling a willingness to meet with Magoffin’s proxy, Indiana governor Oliver Morton also declined and asked Kentucky to side with the free states in the contest.³⁷

While attempting to convince the executives of Indiana and Ohio to meet with him, Magoffin also sent emissaries to New Orleans to purchase arms and munitions for the state militia commanded by Simon Bolivar Buckner, a West Point graduate, former instructor at the academy, and a distinguished officer during the Mexican War. The Kentucky legislature had in March 1860 passed a law to revamp the state militia, which became known as the State Guard. The general assembly placed Buckner in charge of the outfit, and by early 1861 he had organized sixty-one companies and scrounged equipment and weapons from every available outlet in the Bluegrass State. The State Guard had a decidedly pro-southern complexion, and some Kentuckians believed that Magoffin intended to use it “to cow down the unprotected Union men” in the state. One of Magoffin’s agents procured about 1,500 guns in the Crescent City but confessed that other equally anxious parties had gobbled up all the rest of the weapons in New Orleans. The governor’s other agent seemed less concerned about the urgency of the situation and instead spent the majority of his time on a barstool, much to the dismay of Magoffin. The governor realized that in order for a policy of neutrality to garner respect, the state had to arm itself adequately. His search for arms in the heart of the Confederacy, however, only aroused the

³⁷ Sophie M. Du Pont to Henry Du Pont, Apr. 28, 1861, S.M. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *Pittsburgh Post*, Apr. 15, 1861, in Howard Cecil Perkins, ed., *Northern Editorials on Secession* (New York: American Historical Association, 1942), 2:739; William Dennison to Thomas L. Crittenden, May 1, 1861, Oliver P. Morton to Beriah Magoffin, Apr. 25, May 1, 1861, all reprinted in *Journal of the Called Session of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Begun and Held in the Town of Frankfort, on Monday, the Sixth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1861, and of the Commonwealth the Sixty-Ninth* (Frankfort: John B. Major, Printer, 1861), 14-16, hereinafter cited as *Kentucky House Journal, Called Session of May 6*.

suspicions of many unconditional Unionists, who in response urged the formation of independent militia units to counter the presence of the State Guard.³⁸

Delaware governor William Burton, like Magoffin, also had trouble deciding how best to respond to the opening of hostilities between the sections. His refusal to commit Delaware troops to the United States government upset some of the state's unconditional Unionists, who felt that Burton and James A. Bayard's clique of Democrats planned to deliver the state to the Confederacy. Bayard, who in late March had on the floor of the Senate proclaimed that war could never mend the severed ties between the Lower South and the federal government, took an inopportune vacation through the Lower South during the month of April. In the aftermath of Fort Sumter, unconditional Unionists charged him with conspiring with Confederate officials. Bayard's letters to his son during this interval indicated his strong desire for Delaware to join in the secession movement, but he conceded that "unless [Virginia] and Maryland go South, we are tied hand and foot" to what he derisively labeled "a free negro republic."³⁹ Burton refrained from calling the legislature into special session, which unlike in the rest of the Border South concerned Unionists. While the governor wavered, volunteer militia units with differing sectional allegiances organized throughout the state. One Wilmington editor bemoaned that "we are surrounded by secret secessionists." Henry Du Pont, the president of the Du Pont powder works located just outside of Wilmington, coordinated the Unionist militia and complained that

³⁸ James A. Ramage and Andrea S. Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 290; Beriah Magoffin to M.O.H. Norton, Telegram, Apr. 29, 1861, M.O.H. Norton to Beriah Magoffin, Telegram, Apr. 30, 1861, Robert A. Johnson to Beriah Magoffin, Telegram, May 1, 1861, all in Magoffin Papers, KDLA; C.F. Beyland, et. al., to Simon Cameron, May 10, 1861, in *OR*, Series I, vol. 52, part 1, 141; Garrett Davis to George Prentice, Apr. 28, 1861, printed in *CG - Appendix*, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 82-83. For Buckner, see Stickles, *Simon Bolivar Buckner*, 12-20, 51-91.

³⁹ A.W. Gilpin to Henry Du Pont, Apr. 23, 1861, Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *CG*, 37th Cong., Special Session of the Senate, 1477-1479; James A. Bayard to Florence Bayard, Mar. 13, 1861, James A. Bayard, Jr., Family Letters, Accession 86.34, Delaware Historical Society, Manuscripts Division, Wilmington, Delaware; James A. Bayard to Thomas F. Bayard, Apr. 17, 1861, T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC.

without the legislature in session to pass an appropriation bill his troops would suffer from inadequate supplies and munitions.⁴⁰

Governor Claiborne Jackson of Missouri, unlike Magoffin and Burton, acted with force and myopic conviction in the aftermath of Lincoln's proclamation. No one could question Jackson's sympathies or motives; he unapologetically yearned for Missouri to add its star to the Confederate flag. Soon after he refused to offer troops to the federal government, Jackson called the state legislature into an emergency session on May 2 so it could prepare the state for war. Militia units hummed with activity in the days following Jackson's defiant response, and secessionists in the western part of the state captured the federal arsenal at Liberty and absconded with a cache of weapons and four cannon.⁴¹ Jackson informed David Walker, the president of the Arkansas state convention, that he and the people of Missouri would not countenance living under a government controlled by the Republicans. He felt that the Republicans, whose primary goal was the extinction of slavery, had begun "the most damnable and hellish crusade that was ever waged against any people upon earth." The halfway step of neutrality would not satisfy Jackson – he preferred "a full, complete and final separation" – who predicted that Missouri would secede within thirty days.⁴² Many Missourians applauded Jackson's brash stand, but he had misread the great mass of his constituency. Far more of the state's inhabitants followed the line of thinking of William F. Switzler, the editor of the *Columbia Missouri Statesman*. "Let them [the states of the Border South] stand as a wall of fire

⁴⁰ Henry Eckel to Abraham Lincoln, Apr. 9, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Henry Du Pont to Simon Cameron, Apr. 19, 1861, in *OR*, Series I, vol. 51, part 1, 328-329; Simon Cameron to Henry Du Pont, Apr. 27, 1861, Henry Du Pont to Henry A. Du Pont, May 27, 1861, both in Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

⁴¹ Arthur Roy Kirkpatrick, "Missouri in the Early Months of the Civil War," *Missouri Historical Review* 55 (April 1961), 235-237;

⁴² Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 146; Claiborne F. Jackson to David Walker, Apr. 19, 1861, Claiborne Fox Jackson Papers, 1861, Office of Governor, Record Group 3.15, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri.

between the belligerent extremes, and with their strong arms and potential counsel keep them apart,” Switzler recommended.⁴³

Of the four Border South executives, Thomas Hicks had up to April 1861 proven the most committed to the Union cause. The firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for troops, however, led to a series of events in Maryland that placed the fate of the state in great peril. Prior to Fort Sumter tensions ran so high in Baltimore that one inhabitant claimed “that people are afraid of their own shadow.” Afterwards, large crowds with contradictory sectional allegiances assembled in the streets, cursed either Lincoln or Jefferson Davis, and engaged in sporadic fistfights. Fearful of the reaction that might result from acquiescence to Lincoln’s proclamation, Hicks traveled to Washington on April 15 and conversed with the president, Winfield Scott, and Simon Cameron. The triumvirate promised Hicks that any troops raised in Maryland would either protect the national capital or stay in the Old Line State. The governor returned to Annapolis, mulled over the offer, and on April 17 agreed to the proposition.⁴⁴

Hicks technically had not agreed to furnish any troops to coerce the seceded states and in essence had adopted a policy of armed neutrality, which the *Frederick Examiner* and the *Baltimore American* outlined as the best policy for Maryland and the Border South. As a symbol of this policy, the Maryland state flag for a brief stint replaced the American flag above some public buildings. Hicks surely understood that this policy did not satisfy all Marylanders. “Shall Maryland be with the North, or with the South, is the true question to consider now,” John F. Dent queried. That Hicks had cooperated with the Lincoln administration sickened Dent, who

⁴³ Columbia *Missouri Statesman*, Apr. 19, 1861, quoted in Kirkpatrick, “Missouri in the Early Months,” 236.

⁴⁴ Henry Lowe to John Judge, Feb. 9, 1861, Henry Lowe to John Judge, Apr. 18, 1861, both in John Judge Papers, SHC; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 175-176; George L. Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas H. Hicks of Maryland and the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1901), 51-52; Thomas Hicks to Simon Cameron, Apr. 17, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 51, part 1, 326-327; Journal Entry for Apr. 16, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

implored the governor to call the legislature into session so that it could inaugurate the process of holding a state convention. Throughout the winter and spring Hicks worried that the spirit of disunion had mushroomed and could any day overtake the Unionists in the state, especially if Virginia left the Union.⁴⁵

One historian of Maryland politics considers Hicks's course of armed neutrality a ploy to buy precious time for Unionists, whom he considered a dominant force throughout the state. In hindsight, such a program appears well coordinated and thought out, a neat step in the state's inevitable progression toward the Union column. Neither Hicks nor any other Unionist, however, knew what lay in store for Maryland. Even in late July 1861, once the war had begun in earnest and federal troops occupied the state, a Baltimore native remarked, "there is no hotter secession state than Maryland and in the final enlistment she will go with the South." Moreover, Unionist John Pendleton Kennedy acknowledged in September 1861 that "here in Maryland we are only saved from the outbreak of civil conflict by the presence of the great force which now keeps the peace of the State." Most likely, the governor advocated neutrality because it was the most noncommittal course available and perfectly suited to a Border South state sandwiched between the slave states where secession had gained the ascendancy and the free states where a *rage militaire* had overtaken the majority of the people.⁴⁶

Furthermore, the swift onrush of another crisis deprived Hicks the luxury of time or foresight. Maryland's proximity to the national capital proved inauspicious for a policy of neutrality because units from the northeast responding to Lincoln's proclamation would have to cross through the Old Line State on their journey southward. Baltimore, a cauldron of

⁴⁵ Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 185-186; John F. Dent to Thomas Hicks, Apr. 17, 1861, Thomas Hicks Papers, MS 1313, MDHS; Thomas H. Hicks to Winfield Scott, Mar. 18, 1861, Thomas Hicks Papers, MS 2104, MDHS.

⁴⁶ Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 186-187; Henry Lowe to John Judge, July 30, 1861, John Judge Papers, SHC; Journal Entry for Sept. 10, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL.

excitement in the days after Fort Sumter, housed an interchange of the major rail lines connecting the northeast to the national capital. To reach Washington expeditiously, nearly all northeastern units would be siphoned from secondary lines onto the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, which terminated at Baltimore's President Street Station. These passengers then had to disembark and walk a mile through the heart of the city to the Camden Station, where they boarded trains bound for Washington. On April 18 angry citizens ignored a plea from Mayor George W. Brown to refrain from taunting southbound soldiers and greeted the first northern troops to enter Baltimore with epithets, jeers, and bibulous renditions of "Dixie." The troops, likely nonplussed and dumbfounded by the crowd, did not respond to the provocations. Later that evening T. Parkin Scott and Ross Winans hosted an impromptu States Rights Convention which passed a series of resolutions calling on Marylanders "to repel, if need be, any invader who may come to establish a military despotism over us." Brown and Hicks relayed to Lincoln that "the excitement is fearful" and advised the federal government to find another route for soldiers coming to Washington. "It is not possible for more soldiers to pass through Baltimore unless they fight their way at every step," an unnerved Brown warned the president.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, troops from the Sixth Massachusetts and ten companies of unarmed Pennsylvania militiamen left Philadelphia around three o'clock on the morning of April 19 and arrived in Baltimore at noon. Chaos descended upon Baltimore once the approximately 1,700 northern troops disembarked at the President Street Station and boarded horse-drawn trollies bound for Camden Station. Observers accumulated along Pratt Street, and "as the troops kept

⁴⁷ Towers, *Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*, 166; George William Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, 1861: A Study of the War* (1887; reprint, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 36-39; George W. Brown and Thomas Hicks to Abraham Lincoln, Apr. 18, 1861, George W. Brown to Abraham Lincoln, Apr. 18, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

passing, the crowd of bystanders grew larger, the excitement and – among many – the feeling of indignation grew more intense.” Seven companies of the Massachusetts soldiers made it through the gauntlet unscathed, but the mob pelted the last horse-drawn car with debris and used sand and cobblestones to obstruct the street. The remaining four companies had to march through the growing mob, which now rained bricks and stones down upon the troops. The frenzied throng soon added bullets to its arsenal of brickbats, rocks, and rails. Discipline among the troops quickly dissipated; they returned fire and a full-fledged street battle erupted. Mayor Brown, Police Marshall George P. Kane, and a contingent of Baltimore policemen arrived on the scene and eventually pressed back the mob. Before the last soldiers reached Camden Station and made their departure for Washington in the early afternoon, the Massachusetts troops endured between four and thirteen deaths and three dozen wounded men in the melee. The Pennsylvania militia units never left the President Street Station; they scattered once the mob set in on them and some escaped by rail back to Pennsylvania. Still, three Pennsylvanians perished, more than twenty suffered wounds, and about two hundred temporarily went missing. Officials estimated that twelve civilians died during the fracas and an unknown number sustained injuries. The violence brought tears to the eyes of one Baltimore Unionist, who lamented that Maryland’s “soil must be a battle field, a slaughter house, because her people...cannot see Northern troops pass through to war with their brethern [sic] of the South.”⁴⁸

The bloodletting in the streets of Baltimore weighed heavily upon Hicks. Brown called together a public meeting at Monument Square around four o’clock on the afternoon of the riot

⁴⁸ Edward G. Everett, “The Baltimore Riots, April, 1861,” *Pennsylvania History* 24 (October 1957), 333-335; James Dorsey to Levin Richardson, Apr. 19, 1861, Levin Richardson Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland; Henry Lowe to John Judge, Apr. 26, 1861, John Judge Papers, SHC; Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April*, 45; Towers, *Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*, 166; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 179-180; A Supplicant for Peace to Abraham Lincoln, Apr. 22, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC. Evitts and Everett contend four Massachusetts soldiers died, while Towers counts thirteen killed.

in the hopes of preventing the edgy citizenry from turning on one another. Several prominent inhabitants of Baltimore addressed the excited crowd, including Mayor Brown, William P. Preston, and Severn Teackle Wallis. Although he had not expected to speak, Wallis delivered a short speech in which he advised the people of the city to trust the local authorities. Like several of the other speakers, Wallis probably agitated rather than soothed the crowd when he expressed his sympathy for the seceded states and his desire for Maryland to follow them out of the Union. “He hoped the blood of the citizens, shed by an invading foe,” a reporter summarized, “would obliterate all past differences, and seal the covenant of brotherhood among the people.” The crowd demanded to hear from Hicks, who had barricaded himself in a nearby hotel. At the Monument Square meeting the governor voiced a desire for the preservation of the Union, which provoked an angry reply from the audience. Shaken, Hicks retreated and stated “I will suffer my right arm to be torn from my body before I will raise it to strike a sister State.” Brown, worried about the safety of the governor, invited him to lodge at his house. That night Hicks, disoriented and confined to a bed, met with Brown and other Baltimore officials and apparently gave his approval for Maryland militiamen, the Baltimore police, and private citizens to burn all the major northbound railroad bridges surrounding the city in order to prevent more troops from entering.⁴⁹

Hicks returned to Annapolis the next morning; two days later he finally relented and called the legislature into special session. Disunionists in Maryland certainly felt that the outburst at Baltimore would provide them with the necessary mandate to push a convention bill through the general assembly when it met on April 26. They received more good news when on April 24 a special election in Baltimore resulted in all ten of the city’s seats in the lower house

⁴⁹ Baltimore *Sun*, Apr. 20, 1861; Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland*, 54-58; Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April*, 56, 58; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 180-181. Hicks later denied granting approval for the burning of the bridges, but Brown testified otherwise; see “Communication from the Mayor of Baltimore with the Mayor and Board of Police of Baltimore City,” House Document G, in Maryland General Assembly, *House and Senate Documents, 1861* (Frederick: E.S. Riley, 1861), 2-5.

going to Southern Rights candidates. The special election occurred because the House in 1860 had vacated the ten Baltimore seats on the suspicion of voter fraud. The Southern Rights candidates ran unopposed in the spur of the moment election, and less than a third of the voters that participated in the presidential election of 1860 cast ballots on April 24. Nevertheless, the election represented a victory for Maryland fire-eaters, including Wallis, who after two previously unsuccessful runs for public office could now boast of a victory.⁵⁰

A contingent of four Baltimore officials, including George Brown and Wallis, met with Lincoln, his cabinet, and Winfield Scott on April 21 and begged them to find some other route to shuffle troops to Washington. The president and his advisors agreed and decided that henceforth soldiers would take the railroad to the Chesapeake Bay, then board a water transport to Annapolis, where they could once again travel by rail to the capital. Although a roundabout course, this new route did prove less provocative to the people of Maryland. That day, General Benjamin Butler arrived in Annapolis with the Eighth Massachusetts Regiment and proceeded to Washington without interference from Marylanders. In order to avoid a collision between the legislature and federal troops, Governor Hicks on April 24 moved the extra session to Frederick, a town situated in the heavily Unionist western portion of the state.⁵¹

The Baltimore riot and its aftermath generated three significant consequences for Maryland and the Border South. First, and most obvious, it prodded Hicks to summon the

⁵⁰ Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland*, 62-63; *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 25, 1861. In the November 1860 presidential election, 30,151 votes were cast by Baltimoreans; Evitts counted 9,244 votes cast in the April 25, 1861 election, while Towers tallied 9,578 votes. For these numbers see Michael J. Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections, 1788-160: The Official Results by County and State* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 171; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 188, n. 169; and Towers, *Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*, 170. The low turnout can be contributed to the election being called less than forty-hours in advance of the polling, the absence of any opposition for the Southern Rights candidates, and the disarray that resulted from the riot on April 19. See *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 23, 1861, for the calling of the election.

⁵¹ Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April*, 71-73, 76; Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland*, 58-60; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 187-188; Benjamin F. Butler to Robert Patterson, Apr. 24, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 51, part 1, 1273-1275.

legislature into session after months of sidestepping the issue. The general assembly, and especially the Southern Rights contingent from Baltimore, caused no shortage of headaches for Hicks and other Unionists in the following months. With the legislature finally in session, moderates and Unionists in Maryland found that they would have to amplify their offensive to keep the state's fire-eaters from gaining superiority. More ominously for Maryland fire-eaters, however, the riot gave the federal government the excuse they needed to station troops in the Old Line State. Once Butler's troops landed at Annapolis on April 24, Maryland would not rid itself of a federal presence for the duration of the war. "Our Pontius Pilate (Gov Hicks) without washing his hands," one disunionist observed, "handed our beloved state over to blustering Abe to be crucified." Federal troops augmented the strength of Maryland's unconditional Unionists and their presence cowed many conditional Unionists, the largest element of the Border South populace, who may have otherwise converted to the secessionist standard in the aftermath of Fort Sumter, Lincoln's proclamation, and the Baltimore riot. Finally, the riot only increased the ferocity of the northern *rage militaire*, which reduced the chances for bringing about a truce and reaching a compromise between the sections. Border South conservatives found few allies in the once ripe region of northern moderation, the Lower North, in the aftermath of the altercation at Baltimore. "If Baltimore was laid in ashes the North would rejoice over it and laud the Spirit that dictated the act," remarked Andrew H. Reeder, a former Democrat who lived in Philadelphia. "All hope of help, and almost all hope of neutrality, from the Border States is given up by our people. The policy of conciliation which a few weeks ago had so many friends," Reeder continued, "has now no friends at all." In due time the moderate impulse that animated elements of the Lower North returned, but at this crucial interval its momentary disappearance struck a hard blow for Border South conservatives.⁵²

⁵² Joseph C. Booth to Michael, Apr. 21, 1861, Phebe Wood Coburn Daugherty Papers, 1818-1899, Filson

Hicks welcomed the legislature to Frederick on April 26 with an address in which he chronicled his response to the Baltimore riot. Hicks defended his course and noted that he had met with Lincoln personally and asked that no additional federal troops cross over Maryland soil, but the president and his advisors replied that they could not comply. The soldiers, Lincoln told the governor, had come to Washington to protect the national capital, not to place Maryland under the heel of a military despotism. The governor thus asked the legislature to adopt a policy of neutrality in the unfolding contest. “We have violated no rights of either section,” and thus “I cannot counsel Maryland to take sides against the General Government, until it shall commit outrages upon us which would justify us in resisting its authority,” Hicks declared. The governor cautioned that if Maryland embraced secession instead of neutrality, the state would become the seat of the war. He hinted that in that event, Maryland would suffer economic, political, and social devastation.⁵³

Disunionists in the general assembly failed to heed Hicks’s advice and on the second day of the session pressed for the creation of a special committee to prepare legislation for the summoning of a state convention. Unionists and conservatives immediately realized that, just like their brethren in the Kentucky legislature and the Missouri state convention, they faced a sturdy opponent. Democrats held a two-seat advantage over Americans in the Senate and a sixteen-seat edge in the lower house, though party affiliation did not always distinguish fire-eaters from moderates. Democratic senator H.H. Goldsborough, for example, led the unconditional Unionist forces throughout the session, while American James U. Dennis

Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Beckie Steuart to Charley Steuart, Apr. 19, 1861, George Hume Steuart Papers, DU; Andrew H. Reeder to Simon Cameron, Apr. 24, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC. For a similar interpretation of the riot’s impact on the northern populace, see William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 57-58.

⁵³ “Message of the Governor of Maryland to the General Assembly in Extra Session, 1861,” House Document A, *Maryland House and Senate Documents, 1861*, 3-7.

applauded the secession movement and even submitted a resolution intended to accelerate the process for a state convention in Maryland.⁵⁴

Party lines underwent a wartime mutation from the antebellum distinctions of Democrats and Americans or Constitutional Unionists into Union and Southern Rights organizations. The Union Party had started taking shape prior to the Baltimore riot, but it faced the unenviable task of overcoming former partisan allegiances and distancing itself from the Republican Party. “The Union party must sustain not the administration but the government,” William Kimmell explained. In order to do so, Kimmell called for a nationwide coalition between the followers of John Crittenden, Stephen Douglas, and Andrew Johnson of Tennessee. Because so many Marylanders and border southerners disapproved of Lincoln, the Republicans, and their adherents in the region such as Cassius Clay and Henry Winter Davis, Kimmell and the leaders of the movement strove to make distinctions between their movement and the president’s party. The new organization had to emphasize an opposition to secession rather than the slavery issue, Union Party organizers believed. He worried that the presence of Winter Davis, who had been angling for spoils from the Lincoln administration, would complicate matters in Maryland. Kimmell asked for Douglas to flex his political muscle and get Winter Davis appointed to any political office outside of Maryland, preferably one in a foreign nation. “Send him somewhere,” Kimmell quipped, “even if it should be the court of his Satanic Majesty.” Another Union Party manager acknowledged that fire-eaters in Maryland attempted to smear them as handmaidens of

⁵⁴ Maryland General Assembly, *Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Delegates, In Extra Session* (Frederick: Elihu S. Riley, 1861), 9, 24-25, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Maryland House*; Michael J. Dubin, *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures: A Year by Year Summary, 1796-2006* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2007), 87; Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland*, 73.

the Republicans, “but we firmly hold to the middle national ground we have always held & we desire to conquer a peace.”⁵⁵

Maryland Unionists in the general assembly employed an array of tactics to stonewall the overtures of the disunionists. In the House they swept T. Parkin Scott’s proposal for a state convention into the committee on federal relations. Although Southern Rights men occupied five of the seven seats on the committee and outspoken secessionist Severn Teackle Wallis chaired it, the group as a whole suffered from a divergence of opinion about how best to pull Maryland out of the Union. Wallis, for all his bluster about secession, insisted that it could only be accomplished by calling a convention, electing delegates, and allowing that body to render a decision about the state’s future. Other Southern Rights men feared the result of the lengthy convention process, especially since federal soldiers had entered the state. They rejected Wallis’s constitutional reservations and claimed that the sitting legislature could itself adopt a secession ordinance. E. Pliny Bryan presented a memorial from 216 voters in Prince George’s County endorsing the latter course, but five of the seven members of the committee agreed that the legislature lacked the constitutional authority to carry Maryland out of the Union. The House concurred in Wallis’s opinion and refused to accept the memorial. The Senate in effect forced the House to acquiesce in accepting secession only through constitutional means. Two days prior to Bryan’s introduction of the memorial, the Senate composed an address which assured Maryland voters that the legislature grasped the fact that it had no authority to pass a secession

⁵⁵ William Kimmell to Stephen Douglas, Mar. 9, 1861, W. Kimmell to Stephen Douglas, Apr. 3, 1861, R.T. Brent to Douglas, May 4, 1861, all in Douglas Papers, UC. For other discussions of the Union Party movement, see Daniel W. Crofts, “The Union Party of 1861 and the Secession Crisis,” *Perspectives in American History* 11 (1977-1978): 327-376; Crofts, “The Southern Opposition and the Crisis of the Union,” in Gary W. Gallagher and Rachel A. Sheldon, eds., *A Political Nation: New Directions in Mid-Nineteenth Century American Political History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 85-111; Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States*, 75-76, 92. William Henry Seward had worked with Unionists in the Upper South to build such a coalition, but Lincoln’s April proclamation proved the death knell of this movement in that region; see John Gilmer to William Seward, Apr. 21, 1861, William Henry Seward Papers, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York (microfilm).

ordinance, and the statement cleared both houses of the general assembly by unanimous consent.⁵⁶

While Unionists and fire-eaters sparred in the state legislature, a period of relative calm overcame Baltimore and the rest of Maryland. Just ten days after the riot John Pendleton Kennedy noted that “the spirit in favor of secession in this State is very much sobered.” He credited the relaxation of the disunionist impulse to the appearance of three large camps of federal troops just across the Pennsylvania border. Kennedy estimated that this large gathering of federal soldiers would pounce on Maryland if the legislature or the people made a bid for secession. Fire-eaters complained that the presence of the federal troops had intimidated many of their colleagues who just a week earlier had promised to do everything in their power to help Maryland join the Confederacy. An officer in the United States Navy remarked that Marylanders had begun to realize “that geography has something to do with the policy of the states.” As long as Maryland lay between the national capital and the free states, the federal government would use any means necessary to ensure the state stayed in the Union column. Republican Lyman Trumbull of Illinois recommended that the federal government and Unionists in Maryland should “meet them [secessionists in Maryland] right square in the face & we shall soon subdue them...Let the blows fall thick and hard.” In the wake of the riot Maryland Unionists took heed of Trumbull’s advice.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Journal of the Maryland House*, 10, 15-16, 19, 20-23; Maryland Senate, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of Maryland, In Extra Session, April 1861* (Frederick: Beale H. Richardson, 1861), 8-9, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Maryland Senate*; “Address to the People of Maryland by the General Assembly, In Extra Session,” Senate Document B, *Maryland House and Senate Documents*, 3-4. For the party distinctions of the committee I have relied upon a list of attendees at a Southern Rights Caucus held in August 1861 which can be found in the *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 9, 1861.

⁵⁷ Journal Entry for Apr. 29, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL; George Hume Steuart to W.J. Steuart, May 1, 1861, George Hume Steuart Papers, DU; Andrew A. Harwood to Samuel F. Du Pont, May 2, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; Lyman Trumbull to Montgomery Blair, Apr. 21, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

Secessionists in the legislature began to realize the combination of federal might and Unionist resolve made their dream of leaving the old republic behind all the more difficult. In early May they made a desperate attempt to gain the upper hand through circumvention. Senator Coleman Yellott at a May 1 secret session of the legislature introduced what became known as the Public Safety Bill. Ostensibly intended to safeguard the vulnerable state from northward or southward invasions, the bill actually sought to cut into Hicks's executive authority by establishing a seven person committee of public safety. Yellott envisioned the committee, made up of six proponents of secession and Hicks, as a leadership council with the power to organize and arm the state militia, remove and appoint officers above the rank of captain in the militia, and provide for the defense of the state. Few people failed to see that the legislation would give the skewed committee the tools to procure Maryland's eventual secession. Henry Winter Davis dismissed the bill as a ruse to bring about a "military despotism" in the state and projected that if the Senate passed the measure, the Unionist home guard in Frederick would "turn the Senate out of doors by arms." John Pendleton Kennedy, who valued the Union as dearly as Winter Davis but rarely agreed with him on policy, in this instance affirmed his Baltimore neighbor's depiction of the proposed council. "This is the most open and bold exposure of the machinery of secession we have yet had," he confided to his journal. Kennedy predicted it would arouse the Unionists of Maryland into urgent action and proceeded to organize a public meeting in Baltimore in opposition to the bill. Even A.S. Abell, the pro-southern editor of the Baltimore *Sun* whom many Unionists considered a closet secessionist, claimed that Yellott had overreached. "Whither it [the legislature] goes the people will follow," Abell published, "but that people will not follow under any leadership except that of the Legislature, or of a convention called by that Legislature."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland*, 76-77; *Journal of the Maryland Senate*, 29; Baltimore

The Public Safety Bill indeed roused Maryland's committed Unionists, who flooded both houses of the legislature with petitions against the measure's passage. The records of the general assembly indicate that Unionists presented no fewer than forty-four petitions or memorials in opposition to the bill in the days following its introduction, another sign of the administrative capacity of Border South moderates.⁵⁹ Unionists in the Senate utilized every possible parliamentary tactic to prevent the Southern Rights men from ramming the legislation through the upper house. They paralyzed the measure's momentum by offering a dizzying array of amendments to the bill, which included replacing the six pro-southern members of the committee with devout Unionists; officially rebranding the committee a "Military Despotism"; and subjecting any of the committee's action to a referendum of the people. None of the amendments passed the Senate, but they served their intended purpose of delaying a vote on the legislation. Unionists also took the opportunity to filibuster and repeatedly pushed for adjournment in their campaign for the bill's derailment. The Unionists claimed victory when on May 4 the Senate sent the bill back to committee, which one reporter considered "as equivalent to its defeat, certainly in its present shape, and unless radically modified."⁶⁰

By the second week in May the tide had turned in favor of the Unionists in the Maryland legislature, which many of the advocates of secession found difficult to accept. It surely pained Severn Teackle Wallis, who on May 9 delivered to the House the report from the committee on federal relations in regard to the propriety of calling a state convention. The report included Wallis's trademark caustic commentary. He labeled Lincoln's proclamation for troops nothing

Sun, May 3, 4, 1861; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, May 5, 1861, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; Journal Entry for May 3, 1861, J.P. Kennedy Papers, EPFL. For information on Arunah Shepardson Abell, see Clayton Coleman Hall, *Baltimore: Its History and Its People*, 3 volumes (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912), 2:3-10.

⁵⁹ The author counted forty-four petitions and memorials opposing the Public Safety Bill in *Journal of the Maryland Senate & Journal of the Maryland House*, *passim*. The Senate also received at least five petitions or memorials in opposition to the body holding secret sessions; *Journal of the Maryland Senate*, 61, 66, 73.

⁶⁰ *Journal of the Maryland Senate*, 29-33, 39-61, 67; *Baltimore Sun*, May 6, 1861.

less than a declaration of war and expressed Maryland's indignation at the federal policy of coercion. "Unless the American Revolution was a crime, the declaration of American Independence a falsehood, and every patriot and hero of 1776 a traitor," Wallis argued, "the South was right and the North was wrong." The report castigated Thomas Hicks for his irresolute reply to Lincoln's proclamation, which its author claimed paled in comparison to the bold rejoinders of the governors of Kentucky and Missouri. Because of Hicks's vacillating course since the Baltimore riot, Wallis complained, Maryland had been trampled over by the federal government "partly for military convenience, and partly for chastisement...and her name blotted out, for the time, from the list of free governments." Wallis sadly confessed that due to this circumstance "no election, held at such time and with such surroundings, could possibly be fair or free." An election for delegates to a state convention, he contended, would not reflect the will of Maryland's people as long as the state's voters witnessed the gleam of federal bayonets at the ballot box. Therefore, he and the committee recommended that Maryland adopt a policy of official neutrality and hold off on calling a sovereignty convention at present.⁶¹

Maryland fire-eaters viewed Wallis's lament as nothing more than capitulation to the Unionists. "I anticipate the very worst, and when I find that I and others who are ready at all hazards to resist and fight are left in the lurch I will resign and leave the State – go into Virginia and claim the privilege of shouldering a musket in the cause of Southern rights," George Hume Steuart scoffed in response to the legislature's inaction. The number of Maryland radicals who followed Steuart southward will never be known, but it seems as if the combination of federal troops and the redoubled efforts by Unionists convinced many other fire-eaters to abandon what

⁶¹ "Report of the Committee on Federal Relations in Regard to the Calling of a Sovereign Convention," House Document F, *Maryland House and Senate Documents*, 4-6, 8-9, 16-20.

they now considered a lost cause in the Old Line State.⁶² Unconditional Unionists in the House unsuccessfully attempted to moderate Wallis's acid tone and on May 10, the resolutions passed 45-12 in the lower chamber. The Senate on May 14 concurred with the House and passed each of the resolutions by a wide margin before adjourning until June. The short session produced none of the results that fire-eaters had just three weeks prior considered within reach. Without a sovereignty convention, a board of Public Safety, or even legislation to arm the state militia, Maryland radicals returned home in mid-May empty-handed. "Maryland has succumbed to Lincoln, and degraded herself," a distressed diarist grumbled.⁶³

Unfolding events dealt added blows to the secession movement in Maryland. On May 13, the night before the legislature adjourned, Benjamin Butler led his troops into Baltimore and occupied Federal Hill. The following day Butler arrested Ross Winans, a Southern Rights member of the legislature who had just returned from Frederick, charged him with treason, and imprisoned him at Fort McHenry. Because Lincoln had in the aftermath of the Baltimore riot suspended the writ of habeas corpus along the rail corridor from Philadelphia to Washington, Winans had no means for legal recourse. Butler's action set a precedent that alarmed Maryland fire-eaters, who faced the possibility of imprisonment for flying secessionist flags, sporting the blue cockade, or speaking out against the policy of the federal government. On the heels of Winans's arrest and emboldened by the legislature's adjournment, Hicks finally called for four regiments to meet the terms of Lincoln's April 15 proclamation. Secretary of War Simon Cameron actually refused the governor's call because the federal government now desired

⁶² George Hume Steuart, Sr. to W.J. Steuart, May 2, 1861, George Hume Steuart Papers, DU. George William Brown guessed that perhaps as many as 20,000 young men fled Maryland and joined the Confederacy in the wake of the legislature's inaction, but even he proclaimed that his estimate might be too high. He did, however, believe that many sympathizers of the Confederate cause who remained in Maryland held on to their neutral attitude and refused to take up arms for either side in the contest. See Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April*, 85-86.

⁶³ *Journal of the Maryland House*, 117-122; *Journal of the Maryland Senate*, 131-135; Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland*, 84-85; Entry for May 17, 1861, Mrs. Benjamin Gwinn Harris Diary, 1850-1891, MS 1585, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

enlistments for three years rather than three months, as Hicks stipulated in his message. Nonetheless, Hicks had officially abandoned the project of neutrality and decidedly cast his lot with the federal government. Despite Cameron's negation, recruiting for the Union army began in earnest. One Union soldier who marched through Maryland in May 1861 remarked that he saw few American flags in the state, a sign that many of the state's inhabitants still harbored neutral sentiments. Many northerners and unconditional Unionists applauded the governor's actions, while secessionists lambasted him. "It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning and it appears to me that you have been fiddling as far as the welfare & safety of your State is concerned," an upset Marylander protested. The angry writer wondered how Hicks could allow the "beautiful city of monuments [to be] gagged by Lynn shoemakers."⁶⁴

In Delaware, Unionists also intensified their efforts to ensure that the proponents of secession did not gain leverage in the state. Rumors that secessionists planned to overrun the Du Pont powder works in Wilmington, along with reports of the mobilization of disunionist militia groups in Kent and Sussex counties, prodded Unionists to action.⁶⁵ Although Governor Burton still refused to offer troops to Lincoln based on his technical reading of the state constitution, on May 11 he issued a pair of general orders that made Henry Du Pont major general of the armed forces in Delaware and gave him the discretion to distribute arms and munitions to the volunteer units as he saw fit. Henry Du Pont tried to strengthen the governor's general orders by requiring

⁶⁴ Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States*, 58-59; Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April*, 94; Radcliffe, *Governor Thomas Hicks*, 95-96; Joseph Sinnott to William Brobson, May 22, 1861, William and Frank Brobson Papers, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware; Thomas Davis to Thomas Hicks, May 16, 1861, Johnson, Findley, & Co. to Thomas H. Hicks, No Date [Circa May 1861], both in Thomas H. Hicks Papers, 1860-1862, MS 1313, MDHS. For Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, see Mark E. Neely, Jr., *Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation: Constitutional Conflict in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), Ch. 2.

⁶⁵ Sophie M. Du Pont to My Dear Friend [Sarah], May 4, 1861, Sophie M. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; R. Patterson to Henry Du Pont, Apr. 30, 1861, Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley; Charles Layton to A.H. Grimshaw, May 1, 1861, J.S. Prettyman to A.H. Grimshaw, May 4, 1861, both in Franklin E. Smith Papers, Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

all members of the volunteer companies to take an oath of allegiance to the United States before receiving arms and munitions. Du Pont agreed with an unconditional Unionist in Clayton, Delaware, who remarked, “I look upon a conditional Union man as a rebellious character equal to the secessionist[s] of S Carolina.” Du Pont and his colleagues wished to place arms only in the hands of firmly committed Unionists. Upon hearing of Du Pont’s oath requirement and the general’s intention to disarm any companies that refused to take the oath retroactively, Burton rescinded General Orders No. 2. The governor claimed Du Pont lacked the legal authority to require the oath of Delaware volunteers, which he felt “would indicate a distrust of their loyalty and reflect upon them as good citizens.”⁶⁶

Although unconditional Unionists complained of Burton’s hedging stance, the governor did not interfere with the organization of troops who wished to volunteer their services to the old republic. The First Delaware Volunteer Infantry in May 1861 enlisted in the federal cause without any meddling from Burton. The governor loathed Lincoln and the Republicans, but he and most Delawareans appeared to value the Union to a greater degree than many border southerners. “Although Mr. Lincoln is not our choice for President,” a member of the Brandywine Home Guards professed, “still he is our President & must be sustained.” Unionist John P. Gillis reminded his sons that “we are all now Unionists or Secessionists...Let selfish politicians and fanaticism be all tied up in bags, like the Kilkenny cats.” Secessionist activity still occurred in Delaware, but by the end of May the Unionist offensive overseen by Henry Du Pont had left little doubt that as long as Maryland stayed in the Union, so would Delaware. “We have some bloody secessionists in this State, but they are pretty well muffled,” Henry Du Pont

⁶⁶ General Orders No. 1, May 11, 1861, General Orders No. 2, May 11, 1861, E. Spruance to Henry Du Pont, May 23, 1861, William Burton to Henry Du Pont, May 14, 1861, William Burton to Henry Du Pont, June 6, 1861, all in Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

noted. By the summer of 1861, Delaware had all but abandoned neutrality in favor of the Union.⁶⁷

James A. Bayard discovered first hand that many of the residents of Wilmington had thrown their lot in with the Union. Thomas F. Bayard kept his father informed of Wilmington's reaction to the opening of the war as he made his way back to his Delaware home from his vacation in the Deep South. Thomas pronounced that his heart was "full of abhorrence for the Northern sentiment" that he witnessed in Wilmington during the spring. He held his community in contempt because so many residents seemed reluctant to aid the cause of the Confederacy. In light of these displays Thomas, concerned for his father's safety, advised him to take an alternate route to their home and even instructed him to carry a revolver. Upon his arrival in Wilmington on May 4, Bayard faced accusations that he had conspired to pull the state out of the Union while in the Deep South. He denied these reports, noting that he had scheduled the vacation a year in advance. Three days after his return home, Bayard made a brief foray to nearby Philadelphia. Hardline Unionists in Wilmington telegraphed ahead to Philadelphia that the senator would arrive in the city by rail. By the time he reached his destination, a mob of at least two hundred people had assembled to give Bayard a less than warm welcome to the City of Brotherly Love. The city police detained Bayard for his own safety, took him to the mayor's office, and helped him secure passage back to Delaware. A conservative Philadelphian grieved that conditions had devolved to the point where an angry mob thirsted for Bayard's blood simply because he had advocated recognizing the independence of the Confederacy. Upon his return Bayard offered to resign from the Senate if the citizens of Delaware did not agree with his stance on peaceable separation. He remained in office at the behest of his friends, though he removed most of his

⁶⁷ Hancock, *Delaware During the Civil War*, 103-104; Richard Brindley to William Brobson, May 7, 1861, Brobson Papers, DHS; John P. Gillis to My Dear Boys, May 7, 1861, Gillis Papers, DHS; Henry Du Pont to Henry A. Du Pont, May 27, 1861, Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

family to Dorchester County, Maryland, in the aftermath of the incident. His experience revealed that the *rage militaire* of the North had by the late spring infected some inhabitants of the northernmost portion of Delaware.⁶⁸

While Bayard encountered the strident Unionism of a portion of his constituents, legislators in Kentucky prepared in early May to return to Frankfort for the opening of the special session of the general assembly. The Kentucky legislators watched with great interest as the state's voters went to the polls on May 4 to choose their delegates to the border states conference. Circumstances had left Kentuckians with few options on their ballots. In response to the onset of war, the entire slate of Southern Rights men removed their names from consideration in the contest. James Brown Clay, a Southern Rights candidate and the son of Henry Clay, explained that he had withdrawn because the clash at Fort Sumter, the secession of Virginia, and the Baltimore riot had convinced him that few, if any, states would now send delegates to the meeting. Blanton Duncan, who had been angling for Kentucky's secession, considered a peaceful settlement ludicrous and rejoiced that the Southern Rights men would not take part in the election. "All this [talk of a compromise at the border states convention] is damn nonsense & child play," Duncan howled, "for there is no Earthly chance of restoring the Union & Kentucky is compelled to take position with the seceded states." Another advocate of the Border South's secession disparaged the thought that any good could come from the convention. He scoffed that the delegates, by holding out the false hope of a peaceful compromise, would only chain "the border States as a tail to the Northern Confederacy, and thus abolitionize them

⁶⁸ Thomas F. Bayard to James A. Bayard, Apr. 29, 1861, William S. Reed to Thomas F. Bayard, May 8, 1861, W.C. Lodge to Thomas F. Bayard, June 19, 1861, all in T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; James Bayard to Samuel F. Du Pont, May 11, 1861, Samuel F. Du Pont to Henry Winter Davis, May 8, 1861, both in S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; Henry Du Pont to Henry A. Du Pont, May 27, 1861, Henry Du Pont Papers, Hagley; James Bayard to Florence Bayard Lockwood, June 23, 1861, Bayard Family Letters, DHS; "Senator Bayard on Secession," in Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, 1:240-242; Hancock, *Delaware During the Civil War*, 67-69.

all.” With no Southern Rights candidates in the field, Unionists swept the May 4 election in Kentucky.⁶⁹

Approximately three-quarters of the Kentucky voters who cast ballots in the November 1860 presidential election participated in the May elections, which indicated a fairly strong turnout.⁷⁰ The popularity of John J. Crittenden, who headed the Union ticket, aided the Unionists, along with the fact that some secessionists had already begun a southward exodus from the Bluegrass State. In late April, Blanton Duncan and John Hunt Morgan recruited young men, marched them out of Kentucky, and offered their services to the Confederacy. Other proponents of secession, frustrated by the idleness of their Kentucky neighbors, began making their way for the Confederacy after Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s proclamation.⁷¹ The May vote, however, does not indicate an outright endorsement of unconditional Unionism in Kentucky. Even Crittenden expected his native state to adopt a neutral stance, as did many other Kentuckians who voted the Unionist ticket. “Kenty is averse to this Civil War,” Crittenden told his son. “And it is now, & I trust will continue, to be her determination to keep out of the strife.” “He is holding the State of Ky with steady hand as a good rider does an unbroken colt,” one Unionist remarked in response to Crittenden’s campaign on behalf of neutrality. A Kentuckian from Spring Hill who voted for the Unionists described his decision more bluntly: “If we can’t

⁶⁹ *Louisville Daily Courier*, Apr. 27, 1861; Blanton Duncan to W.C.P. Breckinridge, Apr. 6, 1861, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC; James S. Grigsby to J. Warren Grigsby, Apr. 14, 1861, Grigsby Collection, FHS; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 51-52.

⁷⁰ Harry Volz estimates that 111,000 Kentuckians voted in the May election, and of that number 107,000 votes went to Unionists. In the November 1860 presidential election, 146,217 votes were cast. Thus, turnout in the May election was about 75.9 percent of the November election. See Harry A. Volz, III, “Party, State, and Nation: Kentucky and the Coming of the Civil War” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Virginia, 1982), 443-445; Dubin, *US Presidential Elections*, 169.

⁷¹ Ben M. Anderson to Leroy P. Walker, Apr. 12, 1861, Blanton Duncan to Leroy P. Walker, Apr. 13, 1861, John Hunt Morgan to Jefferson Davis, Apr. 16, 1861, Jno. C. Burch to Leroy P. Walker, Apr. 19, 1861, Blanton Duncan to Leroy P. Walker, Apr. 20, 1861, St. George Croghan to Leroy P. Walker, Apr. 24, 1861, all in *OR*, Series I, vol. 52, part 2, 44, 46, 56-57, 68; Leroy P. Walker to Beriah Magoffin, Apr. 22, 1861, *OR*, Series IV, vol. 1, 231-232.

go with the South let us quit the North & not be like a free negro at a Barbecue unable to speak till they have all left.”⁷²

The legislature met in Frankfort just days after the border state convention election, and its actions revealed that many Kentuckians espoused an outlook similar to an inhabitant of Henderson, who proclaimed “my sympathies are for neither of the extremes North or South...I want our rights, all that our great patriot Crittenden claims for us.” In his message to the general assembly Magoffin acknowledged that the idea of secession “is now receiving the thoughtful attention of the people and authorities” of Delaware, Maryland, and Missouri, and thus he advised the passage of legislation which would allow for a referendum on a state convention. Furthermore, he asked the general assembly to adopt measures to place Kentucky in a position of armed neutrality for the present. Magoffin portrayed himself as absolutely neutral in thought and deed, but in reality his initial discomfiture about the crisis had given way to anticipation that his state would eventually cast its lot with the Confederacy. Confederate general Gideon J. Pillow met with Magoffin in late April and the governor conveyed to him that because of its proximity to the Lower North, Kentucky must adopt a stance of neutrality to buy time and possibly effect the state’s secession at a later date. “I condemn and utterly abhor his neutral policy, or rather his alliance with Lincoln,” Pillow reported, “but yet I am satisfied that he will ultimately break the shackles with which he is now manacled.”⁷³

Those shackles proved most difficult for Magoffin to unchain. Petitions for armed neutrality flooded the legislature, but most of them indicated an ardent desire to adopt such a

⁷² George H. Gondy to Jno. E. Kimball, June 3, 1861, George Gondy Letter, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; John J. Crittenden to George Crittenden, Apr. 30, 1861, John Crittenden Letters, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; William Nelson to John B.S. Todd, Apr. 22, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; W.T.H. to Sue Grigsby, May 6, 1861, Grigsby Collection, FHS.

⁷³ Father to My Darling Johnnie, May 12, 1861, Green Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Message of Beriah Magoffin, May 7, 1861, *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of May 6, 6, 8-9*; Gideon J. Pillow to Leroy P. Walker, Apr. 24, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 52, part 2, 68-70.

stance in order to beget peace between the warring sections rather than as a means to effect Kentucky's eventual secession. A petition from 242 Bracken County women, for instance, beseeched the legislature to remember the Unionism of Henry Clay, assume a stance of neutrality, and act as a mediator to bring about a settlement. "Guard us from the direful calamity of Civil War," the women continued, "by allowing Kentucky to maintain inviolate her 'armed neutrality.'" No fewer than sixty-four similar petitions or memorials reached the legislature during the brief session, another indicator of the mobilization of Unionists throughout the state.⁷⁴

Unionists in the legislature vowed to prevent the Southern Rights contingent from gaining an edge on them at the session. Suspicious of Magoffin's loyalty, they requested that the governor provide the general assembly with any documents about his efforts to obtain arms for the state in the previous month. Magoffin responded carefully that he had not been in official communication with any agent of the Confederate government other than Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker, whose overture for a regiment from Kentucky he had spurned. The governor's response was deceptive, but not wholly dishonest. He qualified that he had engaged in no "official" communications, which meant he considered his meeting with Pillow a casual affair. He also provided information about his efforts to procure arms and munitions in New Orleans. Unconditional Unionists in the Senate attempted to create a three-man committee to investigate the governor's relationship with Walker, but the Southern Rights men blocked the initiative.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Petition from Bracken County Women, in *Journal of the Called Session of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Begun and Held in the Town of Frankfort on Monday, the Sixth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord 1861, and of the Commonwealth the Sixty-Ninth* (Frankfort: Jno. B. Major, 1861), 20-23, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Kentucky Senate, Called Session of May 6*. No fewer than 41 petitions or memorials in favor of armed neutrality reached the Senate, while no fewer than 23 were introduced in the House; see *Journal of the Kentucky Senate, Called Session of May 6, passim* and *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of May 6, passim*.

⁷⁵ *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of May 6*, 42-44; *Journal of the Kentucky Senate, Called Session of May 6*, 33-34, 42-43.

During the May session the Southern Rights legislators again ineffectively devoted much of their energy to securing passage of legislation to summon a state convention. Aware that their opponents now considered armed neutrality akin to a declaration of the state's Unionism, the Southern Rights men worked to prevent either house from issuing a proclamation of neutrality. Once again, they failed: on May 16 the House adopted by a tally of 69-26 a resolution which called for Kentucky to occupy a position of neutrality and to involve itself in the conflict only as a mediator between the sections. The House agreed to a second resolution that approved of Magoffin's response to Lincoln's request for troops by the wide margin of 89-4, but the Southern Rights men had foundered in their effort to convert conditional Unionists to their line of reasoning. John Crittenden explained to Winfield Scott that the adoption of the two resolutions did not indicate Kentucky's defiance of the Union, but rather a means "to preserve, substantially and ultimately, our connection with the Union." In response, Magoffin issued an executive neutrality proclamation four days after the House passed its resolutions. The Southern Rights men in the Senate held out until the final day of the session, when the upper chamber passed a set of resolutions in concurrence with the policy adopted by the House and the governor.⁷⁶

Unionists in the legislature took additional steps to give neutrality teeth and ensure that neither Magoffin nor any other state officials could bend the policy in the direction of secession. For some time Unionists had expressed concerns that the officer corps of the State Guard included an overwhelming majority of disunionists. William Nelson, a naval lieutenant, unconditional Unionist, and liaison for the Lincoln administration, had in April begun to raise

⁷⁶ *Journal of the Kentucky House, Called Session of May 6*, 91-97; John J. Crittenden to Winfield Scott, May 17, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Proclamation of Neutrality, May 20, 1861, printed in Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 47-49; *Journal of the Kentucky Senate, Called Session of May 6*, 144-145; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 54-56. The House Journal indicates that the first resolution passed by a vote of 69-26, but I only counted 25 negatives in the roll call. Nevertheless, I have followed other historians and used the higher number.

Unionist militias throughout the state to offset the State Guard.⁷⁷ The general assembly passed a bill that created a five-man military board and vested it with the power to borrow funds for arming the state, to purchase munitions and accoutrements, and granted it control over the state's military preparation. Magoffin sat on the board, but the remaining members gave absolute fidelity to the Union. To ensure passage, the bill left the State Guard intact, but also established the Unionist Home Guard, and required both militias to swear an oath of allegiance to the United States Constitution. With their work done, the Unionists on May 24 procured the general assembly's adjournment. "Thus has ended the weakest, and most worthless Legislature ever called together in Frankfort," a pro-secession reporter fumed.⁷⁸

Unionists in the Kentucky legislature had accomplished what secessionists had attempted in the Maryland legislature – they stripped the governor of his sole constitutional authority over the state militia – in order to achieve the contradictory objective of keeping the state safe for the Union. They ignored their constitutional scruples and even violated the neutrality proclamation when in late spring they began funneling arms and money from the federal government to Unionists throughout the state. "If we dont have [the guns]," Joshua Speed informed Lincoln, "we will in all probability have to run the gauntlet for our lives." Afraid to risk losing Kentucky to the Confederacy, federal authorities gave their blessing to the distribution program, but cautiously cloaked their involvement. William Nelson managed the delivery of what Kentuckians dubbed "Lincoln guns" to the state's Unionists. Together these efforts ensured that many conditional Unionists would not slip into the ranks of the secessionists.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Unknown [William Nelson?], Memorandum on Situation in Kentucky, Apr. 11, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC. This anonymous memorandum almost certainly was penned by Nelson; the handwriting appears similar to later reports that he filed for Lincoln.

⁷⁸ Speed, *Union Cause in Kentucky*, 33-34; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 86-87; Harrison, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 10; *Louisville Daily Courier*, May 25, 1861.

⁷⁹ Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 88-90; Joshua Speed to Abraham Lincoln, May 27, 1861 (quote), Robert Anderson to Abraham Lincoln, May 19, 1861, Allan A. Burton to William Henry Seward, May

Deteriorating conditions in Missouri probably contributed to Lincoln's resolve to keep Kentucky in the Union column at all costs. Prior to calling the legislature into special session, Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson and General Daniel M. Frost, a leader in the state militia, made preparations to attack the United States arsenal at St. Louis, rid Missouri of the federal presence, and open the way for the state's unimpeded route to secession. To carry out his plan for Missouri's secession, the governor realized that he must adequately arm and equip the state militia, who would no doubt feel the power of federal retaliation. Jackson reached out to Confederate president Jefferson Davis, who agreed with the governor "as to the great importance of capturing the arsenal and securing its supplies." Davis sent cannon to Jackson, who also ordered the state militia to begin drilling. Frost established an encampment for the state militia units under his command on the western edge of St. Louis and named the militia base Camp Jackson to honor the governor whom he trusted would deliver Missouri from the clutches of the federal government.⁸⁰

Missouri Unionists suspected that in the aftermath of Fort Sumter and the Baltimore riot, the governor and his pro-secession colleagues might try to push the state out of the Union. A Jefferson City Unionist assured his associates in St. Louis that "the Old Fox will be well watched here. His movements are carefully guarded and will be hard of detection, but we may catch him yet." In St. Louis, Frank Blair and Nathaniel Lyon made preparations for an expected attack on the arsenal, which to Missouri secessionists had assumed comparable symbolic value to Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Blair would not let the Unionists of St. Louis suffer at the hands

24, 1861, Charles A. Wickliffe, et. al., to Abraham Lincoln, May 28, 1861, Joshua F. Speed to Abraham Lincoln, May 29, 1861, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁸⁰ Claiborne F. Jackson to J.W. Tucker, Apr. 28, 1861, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH; Jefferson Davis to Claiborne Jackson, Apr. 23, 1861 (quote), Claiborne Jackson to Leroy P. Walker, May 5, 1861, both in *OR*, Series I, Vol. 1, 688, 690; William E. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 20-21; Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 92-96.

of a fire-eating mob as had occurred in Baltimore. He told his brother Montgomery that he would not condone “shilly-shally childspay with these infamous scoundrels.” “There is but one policy now to preserve either your honor or safety,” Blair thundered, “and that is vigor, vigor, vigor.” With General William S. Harney, the federal commander of the Department of the West, away in Washington to give the president and his advisors a report on affairs in Missouri, Lyon organized four regiments of volunteers and Blair distributed weapons to the Home Guard. Unionist forces occupied the high ground near the arsenal, and Lyon posted pickets at several points surrounding the federal building. The two unflappable Unionist leaders worked with Illinois governor Richard Yates to ship all the extra arms and munitions housed in the arsenal across the Mississippi River for safekeeping in the Prairie State.⁸¹

By the time the legislature assembled at Jefferson City on May 2, St. Louis had become a volcano on the verge of explosion. Jackson asked the legislature to adopt a policy of armed neutrality, yet his actions in the three weeks after Fort Sumter clearly indicated that he wished to use the policy as a means to steer the state toward the Confederacy. The Missouri governor shared none of the reticence that the other Border South executives seemed to possess in multitudes. Unionists in the general assembly, however, remained resolute and stymied the initial efforts of Jackson’s pawns to pass a bill placing the state on a war footing and granting the executive expansive military authority. Although the general assembly met in secret session, few doubted the topic of discussion in the statehouse. “By a good many of the reckless politicians, a collision at St. Louis would be hailed as a God-send,” a St. Louis newspaper

⁸¹ Allen P. Richardson to James Broadhead, Apr. 30, 1861, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH (first quote); O.D. Felley to Montgomery Blair, Apr. 19, 1861, Frank Blair to A.G. Curtin, Apr. 21, 1861, Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, Apr. 25, 1861, Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, Apr. 28, 1861 (second quote), William Bishop to Samuel Glover, May 10, 1861, all in Blair Family Papers, LOC; Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 92-96.

gleaned from its sources privy to the clandestine assembly of legislators.⁸² In far off Washington D.C., Edward Bates realized the apparent likelihood of another Border South clash in his native city. The attorney general implored the St. Louis Unionists to avoid a collision at all costs because it would result in disastrous consequences for the state's citizenry, especially slaveholders. The onset of war on Missouri soil would yield "a general stampede of the negroes, both to the north & to the south, & the state will be practically abolitionised in less than 100 days."⁸³

In the heated atmosphere of St. Louis, however, few participants thought about the long-term consequences of war. Lyon and Blair received word that the pro-secession men had procured arms from the Confederacy and decided they could wait no longer. Lyon on May 10 marched two companies of United States regulars and a couple of Union volunteer regiments into Camp Jackson and overwhelmed the meager state militia unit posted in western St. Louis. Realizing that the federal forces far outnumbered his own, Frost in mid-afternoon surrendered to Lyon without a fight. Thus far, both sides had averted open violence. Once Lyon began marching his prisoners back through the streets of St. Louis, however, the seething tensions between the city's Unionists and secessionists detonated. A gathering mob howled at the federal troops who escorted the column of prisoners through the city, reserving their greatest scorn for soldiers of German extraction and the pugnacious Lyon. The scene quickly devolved into a reprise of the Baltimore spectacle: the crowd's verbal missiles gave way to gunfire and a riot

⁸² St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, May 8, 1861; Kirkpatrick, "Missouri in the Early Months," 238-239.

⁸³ Edward Bates to James Broadhead, May 3, 1861, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH (quote); G. Price to W.M. Paxton, Apr. 30, 1861, William McClung Paxton Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

soon erupted. In a spree of violence that lasted three days, twenty-eight civilians, two federal soldiers, and three state militiamen lost their lives.⁸⁴

As in Maryland, the St. Louis riot produced doleful consequences for the state's secessionists. Upon receiving news of Lyon's foray, the legislature swiftly passed the militia bill and other military measures that Jackson craved. The governor mobilized the state militia, took control of Missouri's railroads and telegraph network, and exploited the many contacts he had made as state banking commissioner in the 1850s to solicit funds for arming the state troops.⁸⁵ Many Missourians condemned Lyon's rash actions, but Jackson could not capitalize on the indignation of the populace. The tense atmosphere across the state abated somewhat when on May 21 the recently returned General Harney met with Sterling Price, the president of the adjourned state convention and newly appointed commanding general of the Missouri State Guard, and the two mutually agreed to respect the state's neutral position. Unionists, distrustful of Jackson and Price, complained that secessionists throughout the state had ignored the accord and continued to commit acts of aggression. Partly due to the machinations of Lyon and Blair but mainly because he feared that Missouri might slip into the hands of the Confederacy, Lincoln arranged for Harney's removal and replaced him with Lyon.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Duke, *Reminiscences*, 49-50; Thomas L. Snead, *The Fight for Missouri: From the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 166-170; H.L. Bodley to W.S. Bodley, May 11, 1861, Bodley Family Papers, FHS; Report of Capt. Nathaniel Lyon, May 11, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 3, 4-5; Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 102-110; Towers, *Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War*, 190. Duke and Snead contend that Lyon led a force of 7,000 Unionists against a state militia encampment of no more than 700 men; in his official report, Lyon estimates his numbers at about 3,500 men.

⁸⁵ Kirkpatrick, "Missouri in the Early Months," 239-240; Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 251-255; Mark W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 65-68. Geiger has found that after the Camp Jackson affair pro-southern bankers in Missouri signed at least 2,900 promissory notes (for a sum of nearly \$3 million) to assist the state militia and the governor.

⁸⁶ Proclamation of Price & Harney, May 21, 1861, William Harney to Sterling Price, May 27, 1861, General Orders No. 5, Department of the West, May 31, 1861, all in *OR*, Series I, vol. 3, 375, 379-381; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 30-31.

Lyon's elevation to command turned the tide in favor of the Missouri Unionists. In Lyon, the unconditional Unionists found a man who shared their steadfast devotion to the flag. He believed two classes of Missourians existed – Unionists and traitors – and would use all the force at his disposal to guarantee that the state remained true. Alexander Doniphan observed that Lyon preferred “eating the lamb to lying down with it.” Conservatives, desperately clinging to the rapidly vanishing policy of neutrality, in early June arranged a meeting between the heads of Missouri's pro-secession and unconditional Unionist factions in the hopes of preserving peace in the state. Claiborne Jackson and Sterling Price met with Lyon and Frank Blair at the Planters' House in St. Louis on June 11 and soon discovered that Doniphan had not missed the mark in his depiction of the new commander. After hours of unfruitful discussion Lyon coolly pointed to each of his guests and remarked that he would rather see them “and every man, woman, and child in the State dead and buried” than to concede to state officials “the right to dictate to my Government in any matter however unimportant.” Lyon turned to the governor and proclaimed, “This means war.” Jackson and Price stood in stunned amazement as Lyon whirled around and exited the room.⁸⁷

Lyon's bold declaration ended all hopes for neutrality in Missouri. As in Baltimore, the riot in St. Louis had given the federal government the pretext it needed to justify occupying Missouri. The federal commander made plans to march on Jefferson City, but before Lyon's troops arrived Jackson and the state government fled toward the southwest corner of the state. Two men with a penchant for rash action, Jackson and Lyon, proved utterly incapable of sharing control of Missouri. Lyon's triumph over Jackson equaled a major victory for the Unionist cause in the state; the duly elected governor of Missouri spent the rest of the war on the run from

⁸⁷ Alexander W. Doniphan to John Doniphan, June 2, 1861, A.W. Doniphan Letters, C1926, SHS-MO; Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 199-200.

federal forces. Even prior to Lyon's challenge, the increased presence of federal troops had taken effect in St. Louis and the eastern portion of the state. "The Camp Jackson affair and other events following it have operated like a poultice," James Broadhead noticed. "The inflammation has been drawn out of a great number of men who were heretofore rampant secessionists." George Caleb Bingham agreed, comparing the state's fire-eaters to once ferocious tigers who had been caged in by the federal troops and now "become the sport of boys who will poke them in the ribs and make merry over their insane antics." Many dark days of internecine violence and long periods of uncertainty about the state's future lay ahead, but Lyon's late spring stand dealt Missouri's secessionists an enormous setback.⁸⁸

The collective shock of Fort Sumter, Baltimore, and St. Louis, seriously undercut the movement for a peaceful settlement between the Union and the Confederacy and a compromise to bring the seceded states back into the Union. By the end of May only Kentucky adhered to an official stance of neutrality, but even there both the Union and Southern Rights organizations either violated or found ways to circumvent the policy. For John Crittenden and the leaders of the border state convention, this proved most inauspicious. The conference on May 27 convened in the Kentucky Court of Appeals building in Frankfort, but few observers attended the proceedings. A sign of the withering belief in compromise, Delaware and Maryland did not even send delegates to the summit. Four Missourians joined the Kentucky representatives and a single

⁸⁸ James O. Broadhead to Edwin Draper, May 21, 1861, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH (first quote); George Caleb Bingham to James S. Rollins, May 16, 1861, Rollins Papers, SHS-MO (second quote); Hamilton R. Gamble and James Yeatman to Abraham Lincoln, May 15, 1861, Samuel T. Glover to Abraham Lincoln, May 20, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; J.G.F. to Thomas Bayard, June 1, 1860 [misdated – should be 1861], T.F. Bayard Papers, LOC; John M. Richardson to Frank Blair, Jr., June 4, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

delegate from Tennessee over the course of the weeklong meeting. “The members themselves look as though they have despaired of doing anything,” a reporter mockingly commented.⁸⁹

Crittenden presided over the meeting and soon after it convened he appointed a committee to look into possible compromise measures that would “secure the slave States, and the citizens thereof, the enjoyment of their just and equal rights in the Union and under the Constitution.” William A. Hall of Missouri chaired the committee, which reported the following day that the Crittenden Compromise represented the best means of ameliorating the political differences caused by the slavery issue. The convention formed another committee that included Hall and fellow Missourian Hamilton Gamble, along with James Guthrie, Joshua Bell, Archibald Dixon, Charles Wickliffe, and George Dunlap of Kentucky, and charged it with the task of composing an address to the people of the United States. The committee closeted for the next several days to prepare the message.⁹⁰

The convention unveiled its address on Monday, June 3, just prior to its adjournment. The message represented a treatise of the conservative Unionist Border South mindset and the importance of slavery to the region. The delegates aimed their missive at the conditional Unionists of the South and asserted the need for constitutional amendments that would “secure to slaveholders their legal rights, and allay their apprehensions in regard to possible encroachments in the future.” They estimated that the passage of the Crittenden Resolutions would go far to quell the anxieties of southern Unionists, and they recommended their introduction at the session of Congress scheduled to meet on Independence Day. If Congress once again operated in a dilatory manner, the delegates urged the summoning of a national convention to vote on the

⁸⁹ *Journal and Proceedings of the Convention of the Border Slave States, Begun and Held in the City of Frankfort, and State of Kentucky, on the 27th Day of May, 1861* (Frankfort: Kentucky Yeoman Office, 1861), 4-7, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Border State Convention*; *Louisville Daily Courier*, May 28, 30, 1861.

⁹⁰ *Journal of the Border State Convention*, 4, 7-10.

amendments. These conservatives hoped that the passage of the Crittenden plan would not only allay Unionists in the Border South, but would draw the seceded states back into the Union. Finally, the delegates warned of the urgent need to adopt the resolutions in order to avoid war. “The kind feelings that once existed have been changed to bitterness, soon to degenerate, it may be, into deadly animosity,” the moderates somberly predicted. The four Missourians in attendance, Tennessee’s John Caldwell, and all but one of the Kentuckians signed the address. Only Charles S. Morehead, who condoned neutrality and Governor Beriah Magoffin’s resistance to provide troops to the federal government, withheld from signing the document. In a separate address to the people of Kentucky, the Bluegrass State representatives vowed to attend Congress and fight to safeguard the institution of slavery.⁹¹

Few people in the North or the seceded states of the South paid much attention to the proceedings of the border state convention. One reporter groaned that the delegates “have eaten fine dinners, smoked fine cigars, and fared otherwise sumptuously,” but accomplished nothing of substance during their week in Frankfort.⁹² The meeting, however, did help to sustain the Unionist offensive in the Border South. Crittenden and his colleagues made it perfectly clear that despite the foreboding signs pointing toward war, they intended to keep up the fight for compromise and peace. Moreover, they declared once again that the preservation of slavery unquestionably required adherence to the Union. Scores of Border South moderates, including Reverdy Johnson, John Pendleton Kennedy, Joseph Holt, and Hamilton Gamble, followed suit and took to the stump or picked up their pens to emphasize the key correlation between adherence to the Union and the maintenance of the peculiar institution. Kentuckian Garrett Davis met with Lincoln in late April and received the president’s guarantee that he “would make

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 14-17, 22.

⁹² *Louisville Daily Courier*, June 3, 1861.

no attack, direct or indirect, upon the institutions or property of any State.” Unionist newspapers circulated Davis’s report of the meeting in an effort to assuage concerns about Lincoln’s intentions. Upon returning to Missouri John B. Henderson, one of Missouri’s representatives at Frankfort, advised his Unionist friends in St. Louis to issue a proclamation that echoed the border state conference message and Davis’s conversation with Lincoln. “Be sure that you pledge...that there is no desire by the Government to interfere with slave property,” Henderson counseled. “If this be done and promptly done,” he continued, “the victory is won and Missouri is safe.”⁹³

The message of the conservative Unionists certainly registered with the voters of Kentucky and Maryland. The executives of each state had to push their congressional elections, usually held in August in Kentucky and November in Maryland, up to June in order to have representation in the special session of the Thirty-seventh that Lincoln had called to meet on Independence Day. The early meeting date did not affect either Delaware or Missouri, where congressional elections had taken place in 1860. At the Union Party’s state convention in Maryland, the executive committee issued a set of resolutions that maintained the state’s commitment to the Union and called for the Border South states to take the lead in mediating an end to the contest. Moreover, one resolution promised that “The Union men will oppose to the utmost of their ability all attempts of the federal executive to commingle in any manner its particular views on the slavery question.”⁹⁴

When Marylanders went to the polls on June 13, they delivered the Union Party a resounding victory. Unionists defeated Southern Rights contenders in five of Maryland’s six

⁹³ Garrett Davis to George Prentice, Apr. 28, 1861, printed in *CG - Appendix*, 37th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-83; John B. Henderson to James Broadhead, June 10, 1861, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH. The Davis letter was printed in at least three major Border South newspapers; see Frankfort *Commonwealth*, May 3, 1861, and Baltimore *Sun*, May 6. The editor of the *Sun* picked the letter up from George Prentice’s *Louisville Daily Journal*.

⁹⁴ Baltimore *Sun*, May 24, 1861

congressional districts and only in the third and sixth district did the Southern Rights candidates come anywhere close to beating their opponents. The race in Maryland's fourth district, which encompassed Baltimore, pitted two Unionists against one another. Henry May defeated Henry Winter Davis by a wide margin in this race, another indication that border southerners harbored reservations about politicians who allied themselves with the Republicans. Davis carped that "a combination of the secessionists with the mamby pambies of the peace party" had engineered his defeat, but upon an investigation of the overall results in the state he proclaimed: "That ends secession in Md. The State is ours in the fall."⁹⁵

Kentucky Unionists enjoyed similar success in their congressional elections, which took place a week after the Maryland contest. Unionists routed the Southern Rights ticket in nine out of Kentucky's ten congressional districts. Except for the state's first district, where incumbent Henry C. Burnett defeated Unionist Lawrence S. Trimble by a wide margin, the Union Party trounced its competition. The closest race occurred in the eighth district, where John J. Crittenden overpowered incumbent William E. Simms, who captured only forty percent of the vote. A pleased Nathaniel Paschall treated the Unionist victory, specifically Crittenden's triumph, as a sign of the dominance of conservative Unionism in the Border South. "Mr. Crittenden draws, as we all draw, a distinction between Republicanism and the Government of the United States," Paschall observed. "We are *for* the Government, *not* the Administration – *for* the Constitution, *not* the Chicago platform."⁹⁶

Tables 26 and 27 below provide the results of the June 1861 congressional elections in the Border South. In addition, data has been culled from the federal census of 1860 to compute

⁹⁵ Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the Elections of the 1st through the 105th Congresses* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 189; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, June 13 or 14, 1861, Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, June 14 or 15, 1861, both in S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

⁹⁶ Dubin, *US Congressional Elections*, 189; St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, June 25, 1861.

the percentage of slaves in relationship to the overall population of each congressional district. Henry C. Burnett, the only victor from the Southern Rights Party, won Kentucky's first district, in which slaves comprised 18.8 percent of the overall population. Four other congressional districts in the Bluegrass State had denser slave populations than Burnett's, and in each one the Union Party candidate captured no less than 59.4 percent of the vote. The results suggest that for the most part, Kentuckians viewed the Union Party as the best vehicle to preserve the peculiar institution. The Maryland results reveal a closer contest in the state's district with the densest slave population; Charles B. Calvert narrowly edged Benjamin G. Harris in Maryland's sixth congressional district, which was bounded by the Chesapeake Bay to the east, Virginia to the south, and Baltimore to the north. Nonetheless, the Maryland results demonstrate that the state's inhabitants believed the Union Party represented the preeminent guardian of slavery.

Table 26 - Results of the June 13, 1861 Maryland Congressional Election

Congressional District	% of Total Population Enslaved	Candidates	% of Vote
First	19.0%	John W. Crisfield (U)	57.4%
		Daniel McHenry (SR)	42.6%
Second	6.6%	Edwin H. Webster (U)	98.6%
		Others	1.4%
Third	2.0%	Cornelius L. Leary (U)	52.0%
		William P. Preston (SR)	48.1%
Fourth	1.0%	Henry May (U)	57.6%
		Henry Winter Davis (U)	42.5%
Fifth	5.0%	Francis Thomas (U)	96.2%
		Others	3.8%
Sixth	40.4%	Charles B. Calvert (U)	50.9%
		Benjamin G. Harris (SR)	49.1%

Sources: Dubin, *US Congressional Elections*, 189; Parsons, Beach, & Dubin, *US Congressional Districts and Data*, 64; US Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser.

Note: The data for the second, third, and fourth districts is slightly skewed. District 2 included a portion of Baltimore County; District 3 included a portion of Baltimore County and wards 1-8 of Baltimore; District 4 included wards 9-20 of Baltimore. Because this data is not readily available in the US Census, I simply included the raw data provided. Therefore, my calculations for District 2 include all of Baltimore County; for District 3 I included all of Baltimore County & Baltimore city; & for District 4 I included all of Baltimore city.

Table 27 - Results of the June 20, 1861 Kentucky Congressional Election

Congressional District	% of Total Population Enslaved	Candidates	% of Vote
First	18.8%	Henry C. Burnett (SR)	59.1%
		Lawrence S. Trimble (U)	40.9%
Second	24.0%	James S. Jackson (U)	73.4%
		John T. Bunch (SR)	26.6%
Third	25.6%	Henry Grider (U)	77.0%
		Joseph H. Lewis (SR)	23.1%
Fourth	17.4%	Aaron Harding (U)	80.7%
		Albert G. Talbot (SR)	19.3%
Fifth	24.2%	Charles A. Wickliffe (U)	75.1%
		H.E. Read (SR)	24.9%
Sixth	11.4%	George W. Dunlap (U)	97.3%
		Others	3.7%
Seventh	18.1%	Robert Mallory (U)	79.4%
		Horatio W. Bruce (SR)	20.6%
Eighth	36.7%	John J. Crittenden (U)	59.2%
		William E. Simms (SR)	40.8%
Ninth	16.0%	William H. Wadsworth (U)	75.9%
		John L. Williams (SR)	24.1%
Tenth	7.3%	John W. Menzies (U)	65.2%
		Others	34.8%

Sources: Dubin, *US Congressional Elections, 189*; Parsons, Beach, & Dubin, *United States Congressional Districts and Data*, 60; US Census of 1860, University of Virginia Historical Census Browser.

Most conservatives in the Border South expected Crittenden once again to lead the conciliatory forces when he reached Washington in mid-summer. J.B. Underwood, a Union Party candidate for a seat in the Kentucky legislature, advised Crittenden to introduce a resolution that declared the people of the North had enlisted in a war to preserve the Union, not to destroy slavery. Underwood believed that such an affirmation, especially if carried by northern votes in the House, would soothe the concerns of border southerners and resuscitate the antebellum intersectional accord that proved vital to Border South moderates.⁹⁷ Several obstacles made Crittenden's task extremely difficult. With the blood of federal troops shed in

⁹⁷ James May to John J. Crittenden, June 30, 1861, C.S. Morehead to John J. Crittenden, June 30, 1861, John Hugg to John J. Crittenden, July 1, 1861, Orlando Brown to John J. Crittenden, July 5, 1861, J.B. Underwood to John J. Crittenden, July 13, 1861, all in Crittenden Papers, LOC.

the streets of Baltimore and St. Louis, few northerners came to Washington with a magnanimous attitude toward any southern state, even those that had thus far remained loyal to the federal government. A Republican editor blasted the notion of Crittenden bringing about a ceasefire and a compromise settlement at this point. “But as long as [Kentucky] tries to impose terms upon the Government to advance her own slavery interest, or fancied interest, she will be regarded as seeking to secure the profits of rebellion without incurring its dangers,” the editor railed. Thomas Ewing of Ohio took stock of the northern mindset and advised his friend to hold back introducing any compromise settlement in the special session of Congress. “The conservative men who rallied around you last winter would consider this an unpropitious moment,” Ewing acknowledged. Moreover, the Kentuckian had lost his most influential northern ally, Stephen Douglas, who unexpectedly fell ill in May and died on June 3 at the age of forty-eight. An Ohio Democrat claimed that southern Unionists “heard of his demise as the death knell of their loyal hope.” “I know of no man who might have been more useful in this fearful crisis,” Crittenden solemnly observed on the floor of the House after his return to Washington.⁹⁸

The president’s Independence Day message to Congress indicated that Lincoln and the Republicans planned to prosecute the war to the fullest extent possible. He asked Congress to appropriate \$400 million in order to equip, arm, and train an army of 400,000 men; Republicans managed to pass legislation that granted even more money and men than the president had requested. A few border southerners with an appetite for disunion, among them Henry C. Burnett, James Bayard, and John C. Breckinridge, used the session to grandstand against Lincoln, the Republicans, and the war, which further complicated Crittenden’s task. Burnett

⁹⁸ *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, June 25, 1861, in Perkins, ed., *Northern Editorials on Secession*, 2:890; T. Ewing to John J. Crittenden, June 25, 1861, in Coleman, ed., *Life of John J. Crittenden*, 2:322-323; Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 870-873; *CG*, 37th Cong., 1st Sess., 36, 35.

often sparred with northern congressmen and defiantly refused to vote for any war measures, which led several colleagues to question his loyalty. Bayard attacked the president's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, compared Lincoln to Louis XIV, and forcefully divulged his preference for a peaceable separation between the United States and the Confederacy. In an impassioned speech before the Senate, Breckinridge accused the Republicans of ignoring the boundaries of the Constitution and implementing a plan of emancipation under the guise of wartime confiscation. The onset of the war provided radicals in both the North and the South with a pulpit from which to preach their incongruous sermons. In this frenzied environment, obstreperous shouts of zealotry often muffled the voice of moderation.⁹⁹

In spite of an erosion of the vital center, Crittenden pressed forward. The tenor of Congress and Ewing's warning convinced the Kentuckian most northerners were absolutely committed to crushing the rebellion. Without the assistance of congressional delegations from the Upper South and with overwhelming Republican majorities in both houses of Congress, the Crittenden Compromise faced an even more ominous chance of passage than it had at the previous session. Therefore, rather than expose his compromise proposals to almost certain defeat, he instead sought to clarify the aims of the federal government in the burgeoning war. Crittenden most likely shifted direction because he knew that if Congress again spurned his settlement package, even more conditional Unionists in the Border South might join the secession movement. One observer derisively remarked in mid-July that in spite of the recent Unionist victories in the Border South, the region still contained massive quantities of "mewling conditional creatures" whose allegiance hung in the balance.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 302-305; *CG*, 37th Cong., 1st Sess., 72-76, 376-378; *CG - Appendix*, 37th Cong., 1st Sess., 12-19.

¹⁰⁰ Enoch T. Carson to Salmon P. Chase, July 9, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC (quote); Jo. Fallon to Montgomery Blair, June 24, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC. Republicans had an advantage of 102 to 72 in the

Crittenden on July 19 presented a resolution similar to the one that J.B. Underwood had suggested earlier in the month. The resolution affirmed that secessionists in the Lower South had brought about the war and plainly declared the preservation of the Union the sole objective in the contest. “This war is not waged upon our part in any spirit of oppression, nor for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, nor purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those States: but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired,” Crittenden’s resolution stated. A few hardline Republicans tried in vain to table the resolution, but Crittenden’s fellow Kentuckian Burnett succeeded in having it divided between the portion which laid the blame for the war at the feet of the seceded states and the remainder, which specified the preservation of the Union as the design of the war. The accusatory clause passed the House by a count of 121-2, with only Burnett and Missouri’s John William Reid voting in the negative. The House approved the second provision 117-2, with the dissenting votes coming from two Republicans. The Senate on July 24 approved of Crittenden’s resolution by the tally of 30-5; the four senators from Kentucky and Missouri joined Republican Lyman Trumbull in opposition to the measure. The Kentucky and Missouri senators voted against the resolution because they felt it unjustly assigned responsibility for the start of the war on the Confederates. Crittenden exerted more control over the border southerners in the House than those in the Senate. In the lower chamber, 15 of the border southerners voted in favor of the first portion; 2 opposed it; and 6 abstained. For the second part, 16 voted in the affirmative; none opposed it; and 7 abstained. Only Willard Saulsbury and Anthony Kennedy of the Border South

House when Congress convened in July 1861; in the Senate their advantage Republicans held 32 of the 48 seats; see Dubin, *US Congressional Elections*, 191 and Donald, *Lincoln*, 305.

voted for the resolution in the Senate. Aside from the four negative votes in the upper chamber, James Bayard and James Pearce refrained from casting a ballot.¹⁰¹

The war aims resolution briefly quelled the fears of border southerners, who worried that the Republican-dominated Congress would make the destruction of slavery, not the salvation of the Union, its paramount objective. Garrett Davis of Kentucky predicted that the Crittenden War Resolution would “have great & salutary influence in the adhering slave states, and much influence over the public opinion of even the seceded States.” The passage of the resolution, however, soon proved a pyrrhic victory. The first major battle of the Civil War took place in nearby Manassas, Virginia, while Crittenden’s resolution worked its way through Congress, and resulted in a startling Confederate triumph. On the heels of the loss, Republicans resolved to remove any obstacles to a more thorough prosecution of the war.¹⁰²

During the session a confiscation act, which would allow the federal army to seize the property of those engaged in active rebellion against the government, had been widely discussed. The measure included enslaved persons, which most border southerners viewed as a first step toward a program of total emancipation. Southern Unionists had already read of General Benjamin Butler’s refusal to return fugitive slaves in Virginia, and Maryland slaveholders protested that federal troops enticed enslaved persons into their camps and prevented their owners from reclaiming them. “I beg leave to say that these grievances require immediate correction if the Government desires to protect our Rights and encourage and foster the Union feeling in the Border States,” a Maryland congressman implored the president. Congress acted in spite of the opposition of border southerners and Democrats. Near the end of the session the bill passed the House by a vote of 60-48 with the support of only one Border South congressman

¹⁰¹ *CG*, 37th Cong., 1st Sess., 209, 222-223, 265.

¹⁰² Garrett Davis to Abraham Lincoln, Aug. 4, 1861, Charles Calvert to Abraham Lincoln, July 10, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

– Frank Blair. On August 5, the Senate approved of the confiscation act, though no roll call vote exists.¹⁰³ A Delaware Unionist admitted that the measure made it “hard to be obliged to fight for our nationality,” while a Kentucky paper bashed the legislation as “the necessary and inevitable result of the teachings of Abolition statesmen.”¹⁰⁴

While Congress debated the Crittenden War Resolution and the necessity of confiscation legislation, the Missouri state convention reassembled in Jefferson City on July 22 to address the flight of the state government. Several vacant chairs revealed that many of the conditional Unionists, including president Sterling Price, had decided to align themselves with Claiborne Jackson, chosen not to attend, or faced difficulties making it to the state capital. With a quorum in place, the convention replaced Price with Robert Wilson and established a committee of seven to consider how to handle the exodus of Jackson and the state government. Disagreements arose as to what authority the convention possessed: could they actually declare the state government deposed and operate as a provisional government, or did they only have the power to call a special election to staff the vacated government? James O. Broadhead on July 25 delivered a report from the committee that proclaimed the executive office vacant. To remedy the situation, the committee recommended that the convention appoint executive officers who would govern until August 1862, when special elections for those offices would take place.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Charles Calvert to Abraham Lincoln, Aug. 3, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 355-356; *CG*, 37th Cong., 1st Sess., 431, 454; *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican, Evening Edition*, Aug. 7, 1861.

¹⁰⁴ Sophie M. Du Pont to Samuel F. Du Pont, Aug. 5, 1861, S.M. Du Pont Papers, Hagley; *Louisville Daily Courier*, Aug. 13, 1861; Alexander Farnsley to Dear Miss Bettie [Mary Elizabeth Thurman], no date, Alexander Pericles Farnsley Letters, 1856-1860, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

¹⁰⁵ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City, July, 1861* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Company, 1861), 3-5, 9-12, hereinafter cited as *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, July 1861*; Dennis K. Boman, *Lincoln's Resolute Unionist: Hamilton Gamble, Dred Scott Dissenter and Missouri's Civil War Governor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 112. William Parrish counts thirty-two absentees when the convention opened, but by the end of the proceedings seventeen of these men had shown up; see Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 212, n. 6.

Several moderate members of the convention felt that Broadhead and the committee had suggested too bold of a course. On July 26 the convention voted to add Hamilton Gamble, who had recently arrived from a trip to Washington D.C., to the committee and recommit the report. Gamble worked to overhaul certain parts of the report, including moving the elections up to November 1861 and subjecting the body's final recommendations to the electorate to give it more of a democratic appeal. A St. Louis colleague informed Gamble that the lengthy interim between elections appeared "as an act of usurpation by the convention" to many Missourians, and James H. Birch unsuccessfully attempted to move them up to September. The convention squabbled over the constitutionality of these suggestions, but in the end voted to vacate the state's executive offices, deposed the general assembly, and scheduled the election for November. The convention also proclaimed that as the proxy of the Missouri electorate, they could fill the executive offices until the November election.¹⁰⁶ The next day, the convention appointed Gamble governor and Willard P. Hall lieutenant governor. Upon assuming the office, Gamble pled with his delegates to work in unison to bring peace to Missouri and the nation. Without harmony, "the scenes of the French Revolution may be enacted in every quarter of our State," he eerily predicted. With its work complete, the convention adjourned on the last day of July. "C.F. Jackson, who has proved himself so pestiferous an instrument in bringing civil war and great disasters on this State, is no longer Governor," Nathaniel Paschall jubilantly exclaimed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, July 1861*, 17-18, 20-22, 25-; William M. McPherson to Hamilton Gamble, July 26, 1861, Hamilton R. Gamble Papers, Missouri Museum of History, St. Louis, Missouri; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 37-43. The convention voted 56-25 to vacate the executive offices; 52-28 to depose the legislature; and 54-27 on the measure that gave them the power to fill the executive offices.

¹⁰⁷ *Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City, July, 1861* (St. Louis: George Knapp & Company, 1861), 135; *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*, Aug. 1, 1861.

The fulfillment of Gamble's plea for unity never occurred. The proceedings of the convention itself offered foreboding signs. Whereas the convention enjoyed relative accord when it assembled in March, the July meeting witnessed more discordance among the returning delegates. The stress of the war, Jackson's rash actions, and the question of constitutional authority had created a fissure among the state's Unionists. About one-third of the delegates present at Jefferson City voted in opposition to each of the major policy measures the convention approved. The drastic, even extralegal, steps that the convention took pushed some conditional Unionists in attendance, such as Uriel Wright, into the pro-secession ranks. Shortly after the convention adjourned, Wright enlisted in the Confederate army. As in other areas of the Border South, many Unionists still harbored ample reservations about Lincoln and the Republicans. Charles Gibson expressed great unease that their opponents might classify conservative Unionists as Republicans. He told Gamble that on a visit to Washington he had informed Lincoln that abolitionist speeches on the floor of Congress had done more damage for Unionists in the Border South than the secessionist tirades of John C. Breckinridge. Another Missouri moderate admitted that even though Lincoln, "whose principles touching slavery are as heinous to me as to any one," occupied the presidency, he would stay firm in his commitment to the Union.¹⁰⁸

Claiborne Jackson and his followers played up these divisions in an attempt to attract conditional Unionists to their standard. The day of the convention's adjournment, Thomas Reynolds delivered a message in which he laid the blame for the war at Lincoln's feet, labeled the state convention "a mere rump" and the "convenient tool of foes" with no constitutional authority, and recommended the legislature pass an ordinance of secession. In response to the

¹⁰⁸ Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 130-131; Charles Gibson to Hamilton Gamble, Aug. 2, 1861, Samuel Conway to Hamilton Gamble, Aug. 9, 1861, Gamble Papers, MO-MH.

actions of the convention, Jackson on August 5 issued a declaration of independence for Missouri. The menacing presence of Union soldiers also impacted Missouri's citizenry. Lincoln appointed John C. Frémont, an adventurer who had helped the United States acquire California and been the Republican Party's first presidential nominee in 1856, commander of the Department of the West. He arrived in St. Louis in late-July, surrounded himself with a band of supplicants and placemen, and refused to cooperate with Gamble and the provisional government. An observer noted that "men of patriotism, honor and probity, ready to devote their lives and property to the defence of the Union are really under the ban, while a gang of California robbers and scoundrels rule, control and direct everything." Unionists also complained that federal troops searched private homes at will and committed acts of violence against Missourians they perceived as disloyal. A distressed inhabitant of western Missouri complained that the actions of federal soldiers were "making secessionists every day."¹⁰⁹

The Blair family handpicked Frémont to augment Nathaniel Lyon's hold on the state, but a cavalcade of problems soon arose. The Unionist officer corps that Frank Blair had collaborated with to keep Jackson at heel also suffered from Frémont's truculence and contempt. "The officers in command here are evidently military asses," he arrogantly griped upon his arrival in St. Louis. The general's relationship with the Blairs soured in the aftermath of the Battle of Wilson's Creek, which took place just a week and a half after the state convention adjourned. On August 10 the State Guard, led by former state convention president Sterling Price, combined with Confederate forces in southwestern Missouri and won a stunning victory over the federal army. The brutal fighting foreshadowed the enormity of the war to come and buried forever

¹⁰⁹ "Lt. Gov. Reynolds' Proclamation," July 31, 1861, Document 148, Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record*, 2:455-456; C.F. Jackson to E.F. Cabell, Aug. 5, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 3, 639; Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate*, 264-265; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 49; Elihu P., Washburne to Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 21, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; L.W. Burris to Hamilton Gamble, Aug. 8, 1861, Gamble Papers, MO-MH.

Gamble's fleeting wish to avoid violence in Missouri. All told, the battle produced over 2,500 casualties, and the losses on each side exceeded any single battle in the Mexican-American War. Nathaniel Lyon lay among the dead soldiers scattered at Wilson's Creek, the first federal Union general officer to lose his life in battle. During the fray Frémont remained in his headquarters at St. Louis and denied Lyon's request for reinforcements. After the battle guerrilla violence erupted in western Missouri and plagued the state for the remainder of the war. "Men begin to reason that the only hope of safety is to be neutral or join the winning side," John Poyner reported to Lincoln. "The people are divided, distracted, overawed and disheartened."¹¹⁰

Frémont's parsimonious use of troops distressed Frank Blair, but during the month of August the general's actions compounded the growing rift between the two men. Frémont suppressed local newspapers that attacked him, refused to grant an audience to leaders of the Missouri Unionist movement, played favorites with the St. Louis German population, and blamed the Lincoln administration for the disaster at Wilson's Creek. Blair fumed that the martinet Frémont seemed more concerned with keeping Union soldiers out of whiskey shops than stopping Price and the State Guard, who through the month of August inched closer to the central part of the state. Blair's patience reached its limit on September 1, when he wrote to his

¹¹⁰ John C. Frémont to Abraham Lincoln, July 29, 1861 (first quote), John Poyner to Abraham Lincoln, Aug. 27, 1861 (second quote), Henry T. Blow to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 20, 1861, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC; William Garret Piston & Richard W. Hatcher, III, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 268-269, 287, 306-308, 323. For insightful treatments of the emerging guerrilla war in Missouri, see Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence*; & Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky & Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012).

brother Montgomery and recommended Frémont's removal from command at the earliest possible moment.¹¹¹

Lincoln might have chalked up Blair's peevishness to unfulfilled ambition were it not for the abundance of correspondence that flooded his mailbox in response to Frémont's growing hubris. The general issued a proclamation on August 30 that seriously impaired the accomplishments of Unionists across the Border South. Due to the upsurge in guerrilla violence, Frémont declared martial law throughout the state and promised to shoot any person whom a military court-martial found guilty of disloyalty. The general included a stipulation that allowed federal troops to confiscate the property of disloyal citizens and, moreover, granted freedom to any enslaved persons owned by those inhabitants. The decree worked at odds against Crittenden's War Aim Resolution and signaled to wavering Border South conservatives that the Republican desire to eradicate slavery had overtaken their limited objective of preserving the Union.¹¹²

From the beginning of the secession crisis, Border South conservatives had preached that the Union best protected the institution of slavery. Frémont's proclamation, coming less than a month after Congress had passed the Confiscation Act, jeopardized the Unionist position across the region. A Kentucky newspaper labeled the edict "an abominable, atrocious and infamous usurpation," while John B. Henderson complained that thousands of Unionists in northern Missouri had gone over to the secessionists. "Say death and Union men will accede to it,"

¹¹¹ Frank Blair Jr. to Montgomery Blair, Aug. 29, 1861, Sept. 1, 1861, Peter L. Foy to Montgomery Blair, Sept. 17, 1861, William Jones to Montgomery Blair, Oct. 14, 1861, all in Blair Family Papers, LOC.

¹¹² Proclamation, Aug. 30, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 3, 466-467.

Henderson grouched, “but they have been bedeviled on the nigger until many of them take spasms whenever a word is said on the subject.”¹¹³

Perhaps nothing better illustrated the brittle nature of Border South Unionism than the reaction to Frémont’s proclamation, especially in Kentucky and Missouri, the region’s largest slaveholding states. Kentucky Unionists claimed another victory when on August 5, nearly a month before Frémont’s edict, they ran roughshod over the Southern Rights Party in the election for the state legislature. The Union Party won 76 out of 100 seats in the lower house and 27 of the 38 seats in the Senate, yet even in the hour of triumph a resident of Louisville cautioned government officials against counting the state safe. He warned that many young folks supported secession and that numerous conditional Unionists sympathized with the plight of the Confederacy. Conditional Unionists “vote and talk Union,” he acknowledged, but in reality “almost every union man considers the *South* aggrieved.” “I am sure that Kentucky is only a Union State for fear of the consequences of being the seat of war as a border Confederate State,” he added. Similar warnings emanated from Missouri, where N.J. Eaton notified Edward Bates that the state “is trembling in the balance now, & I do not know but it is too late to save it.” Eaton feared that in the wake of Frémont’s decree, many members of the Home Guard and the federal army would throw down their weapons, quit the fight, and hand the state over to the disunionists.¹¹⁴ Garrett Davis of Kentucky admitted that “the proclamation fell amongst us with pretty much the effect of a bomb shell.” “There is a very general, almost universal feeling, in the state against this war being or becoming a war against slavery,” Davis confided. Conservative

¹¹³ *Louisville Daily Courier*, Sept. 2, 1861; John B. Henderson to James O. Broadhead, Sept. 7, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; S.J. to Montgomery Blair, Sept. 3, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

¹¹⁴ Dubin, *Party Affiliations in the State Legislatures*, 72; E.F. Drake to Salmon Chase, Aug. 29, 1861, printed in Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., “Letters to Secretary Chase from the South, 1861,” *American Historical Review* 4 (Jan. 1899), 343; N.J. Eaton to Edward Bates, Sept. 16, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

Unionists across the region made Lincoln abundantly aware of the proclamation's potentially disastrous impact.¹¹⁵

“There is not a day to lose in disavowing emancipation or Kentucky is gone over the mill dam,” a group of Unionists wired to Lincoln's friend Joshua Speed, who owned a large farm outside of Louisville. Speed minced no words when he cautioned his friend the president that the emancipation edict “will crush out every vestage [sic] of a union party in the state.” “So fixed is public sentiment in this state against freeing negroes & allowing negroes to be emancipated & remain among us,” Speed calculated, “that you had as well attack the freedom of worship in the north or the right of a parent to teach his child to read.” Both the State Guard and the Home Guard continued to build up their forces, which literally placed Kentucky on the brink of an internal civil war. On top of the deleterious effect of Frémont's proclamation, conservative Unionists worried that William Nelson's blatant violations of neutrality might further endanger their cause. In mid-August Nelson actively recruited volunteers for the federal army and created Camp Dick Robinson in central Kentucky as a bastion for his army. All the while, Confederate forces had assembled just across the southern border of Kentucky. Lincoln realized he must act rather delicately to keep from losing the Border South to the Confederacy.¹¹⁶

Despite admonitions from Republicans who protested that the president had alienated “the great mass of your supporters in the North in order to propiciate [sic] a few quasi Union

¹¹⁵ Garrett Davis to Salmon Chase, Sept. 3, 1861, printed in Hart, ed., “Letters to Secretary Chase,” 346-347; James Guthrie to P.G. Washington, Sept. 3, 1861, Guthrie Letters, SHC; Joshua F. Speed to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 1, 1861, Green Adams and James Speed to Abraham Lincoln, Telegram, Sept. 2, 1861, Leslie Combs to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 6, 1861, Joseph C.G. Kennedy to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 6, 1861, Joseph Holt to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 12, 1861, Robert Anderson to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 13, 1861, Montgomery Blair to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 14, 1861, all in Lincoln Papers, LOC.

¹¹⁶ J.F. Bullitt, C. Ripley, and W.E. Hughes to Joshua F. Speed, Telegram, Sept. 13, 1861, Joshua F. Speed to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 3, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Garrett Davis to John J. Crittenden, Aug. 12, 1861, J.F. Robinson to John J. Crittenden, Aug. 13, 1861, William Nelson to John J. Crittenden, Aug. 13, 1861, all in Crittenden Papers, LOC; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 101-104; Harrison, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 11-12. Speed owned six slaves in 1860; Slave Schedules, US Census of 1860, www.ancestry.com.

men in Kentucky and Missouri,” Lincoln reined in Frémont. He privately asked the general to revise the proclamation so that it meshed with the recently passed Confiscation Act, which stipulated that only enslaved persons who actively engaged in aiding the rebellion were subject to freedom. Moreover, the legislation allowed federal courts to review any confiscations that took place under the policy.¹¹⁷ When Frémont dragged his feet, the president on September 11 issued a public letter that officially modified the edict. Lincoln faced a firestorm of criticism from the more radical elements of his party, but he held firm. Frémont’s obstinacy forced the president to remove him from command two months later. The president informed Orville Browning, who protested his modification of the emancipation decree, that if he failed to act he feared the weapons that the federal government had funneled to Unionists in Kentucky would have been turned against them. He noted that one Bluegrass State Union company had already responded to Frémont’s proclamation by dropping its guns and disbanding. Lincoln believed that if he left the proclamation unchanged Kentucky would secede and the entire Border South might follow. “I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland,” Lincoln explained. “These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us.” Many Republicans failed to appreciate the president’s hard-edged political calculation, but his modification of the decree certainly resuscitated the Unionist cause in the Border South.¹¹⁸

The career of Border South neutrality came to a crashing close in September 1861. Fearful that the Union army might gain a strategic advantage in the Mississippi Valley if it took the town of Columbus, Kentucky, an impatient Confederate General Leonidas Polk ignored the

¹¹⁷ J.G. Roberts to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 17, 1861 (quote), John L. Scripps to Abraham Lincoln, Sept. 23, 1861, both in Lincoln Papers, LOC; Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States*, 102.

¹¹⁸ Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 61-76; Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States*, 102-108; Abraham Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, Sept. 22, 1861, Basler, ed., *CWL*, 4:531-532.

state's neutrality and on September 3 ordered the occupation of the city. The Union army countered by seizing Paducah, and the legislature, cognizant of Lincoln's modification of Frémont's emancipation decree, sided with the federal forces on September 18 and requested that the Confederates leave the state's soil. The exhausting labors of the state's committed Unionists, a heavy dose of subterfuge, and delicate maneuvering by Lincoln held Kentucky in the balance, but the introduction of federal troops sealed the state's fate.¹¹⁹ Union soldiers now occupied portions of all four Border South states, making the project of secession ever more fleeting for the region's fire-eaters. Even prior to September, observers in Kentucky and Missouri noticed that the pace of frustrated Confederate sympathizers leaving the region had escalated over the summer. Orlando Brown happily watched as secessionists in Kentucky moved "to Virginia, to Tennessee, or [to] the Devil," and J.O. Davis reported that large numbers of Missourians streamed southward to join the Confederate army. The struggle for the western states of the Border South had just begun, but the likelihood of an official push for secession had diminished greatly by the time summer gave way to autumn.¹²⁰

If delicacy marked Lincoln's approach to Kentucky and Missouri, then boldness characterized his attitude toward Maryland. With the state's legislature set to reconvene on September 17 and the Southern Rights members still clamoring for the body to adopt an ordinance of secession, Lincoln authorized the arrest of pro-secession political figures in the state. Under the direction of General John Dix, an erstwhile conservative Democrat from New York, federal troops swept through Maryland in the middle of the night on September 13,

¹¹⁹ William Preston Johnston to My Dear Rosa, Dec. 24, 1861, Johnston Family Papers, 1798-1943, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

¹²⁰ Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 108-110, 114-115; Steven E. Woodworth, "The Indeterminate Quantities": Jefferson Davis, Leonidas Polk, and the End of Kentucky Neutrality, September 1861," *Civil War History* 38 (December 1992), 289-297; William J. Cooper, Jr., *Jefferson Davis: American* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 356-358; Orlando Brown to John J. Crittenden, July 9, 1861, Crittenden Papers, LOC; J.O. Davis to Hamilton Gamble, Aug. 22, 1861, Gamble Papers, MO-MH.

arrested twenty-seven members of the state legislature, Congressman Henry May, Baltimore mayor George Brown, the editors of several anti-administration newspapers, and confined them to Fort McHenry. “The ‘Hotel de McHenry’ is becoming quite fashionable and popular,” a Maryland Unionist joked, “at any rate there is quite a number of our prominent citizens [that] have been furnished with apartments there.”¹²¹

Severn Teackle Wallis’s political career ended nearly as quickly as it had begun. In the middle of the night federal soldiers entered his Baltimore home, rifled through his personal papers, clapped him in handcuffs, and whisked him away to Fort McHenry. Locked in his cell, Wallis protested that he and his colleagues had been arrested on mere pretense and without any commission of treasonous acts. Over the coming months he used his pen to unleash a salvo of invective at Lincoln and the Republicans for abrogating the civil liberties of Marylanders and bending the war to their abolitionist designs. “You allowed the victims to languish, for nearly a year and a half, in prison after prison, to which they were dragged – you emancipating negroes, the while, by the thousand, as the President now is, by the million,” Wallis fulminated in a letter to Senator John Sherman. Yet for all his venom and for all his self-assurance that he occupied the side of right, Wallis and his fire-eating colleagues had suffered defeat. Their energy had been transferred from the movement for Maryland’s secession to extended discourses on the Constitution and justifications of their actions.¹²²

No doubt, the president had played fast and loose with the Constitution. Later in the war Secretary of State William Seward reportedly responded to complaints about arbitrary arrests in the Border South with a harsh rejoinder: “I don’t give a damn whether they are guilty or

¹²¹ Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April*, 100-108; Entry for Sept. 13, 1861, Marks & Schatz, eds., *Between North and South*, 36-37; Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States*, 70-71; Cusey to Joseph Williams, Sept. 16, 1861, Joseph S. Williams Letters, 1857-1882, Perkins Library, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, NC.

¹²² Severn Teackle Wallis to the Public, Sept. 22, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Severn Teackle Wallis to John Sherman, Jan. 3, 1863, printed in *Writings of Severn Teackle Wallis*, 2:276, 282.

innocent. I saved Maryland by similar arrests, and so I mean to hold Kentucky.” As Wallis and other Border South fire-eaters discovered, hardline Unionists utilized every available tool to ensure the region did not slide from neutrality to secession. Missourian Abiel Leonard captured the resolve of the Unionists in a missive to one of his colleagues: “We must cut down the secessionists in this State or they will put us down – it has come to this issue at last, and we must meet the issue boldly, and not with words, but with acts and pretty strong ones too, if we would succeed.” By the fall of 1861, much to the chagrin of pro-secession Marylanders, Unionists had seen to it that Wallis’s arsenal included nothing more dangerous than that which he possessed before he entered the legislature in April: his pen and inkwell, florid vocabulary, and bitter wit.¹²³

¹²³ Quoted in Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln’s Indispensable Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 288; Abiel Leonard to James Broadhead, July 29, 1861, Broadhead Papers, MO-MH.

Conclusion

“Pursued to the Last Extremity”: Henry Winter Davis’s Republic

Robert Jefferson Breckinridge’s tone had changed a great deal in the four and a half years since he beseeched his countrymen to remedy the nation’s problems through moderate means at the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone at the Henry Clay National Monument in Lexington, Kentucky. A likeness of Henry Clay stood atop the 120-foot tall limestone monument, but by December 1861 the statue no longer peered out at the unified nation that Breckinridge once considered to be on the verge of unimpeded greatness. The cancer of disunion had during the interim spread into the Border South and even into his own family: several of the men with whom he shared the dais at the Clay ceremony had cast their lot with the Confederacy; two of his sons and a son-in-law eventually enlisted in the Confederate cause; and in December the United States Senate expelled his famous nephew John C. Breckinridge, who in response offered his services to Jefferson Davis. In 1857 Breckinridge extolled Clay for his lessons of “forbearance, brotherhood, and mutual concession for the common liberty”; in the aftermath of John Crittenden’s failed compromise and the opening of the Civil War, however, the Presbyterian minister promised that the American people would “put an end to the traitorous dominion of the cruel and perfidious class minority” that had brought about the conflict. A wartime ardor to annihilate the traitors in his midst, even his wayward family members, supplanted his antebellum preference for conciliation and moderation.¹

¹ *Report of the Ceremonies of the Fourth of July, 1857, at the Laying of the Corner Stone of a National Monument, to be Erected Near Lexington, Kentucky, to the Memory of Henry Clay; Together with the Oration Delivered on the Occasion, by the Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, D.D., L.L.D.* (Lexington: Clay Monument Association, 1857), 48; www.nps.gov/nr/travel/lexington/lce.htm; James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 80-81; Robert J. Breckinridge, *The Civil War: Its Nature and End* (Cincinnati: Office of the Danville Review, 1861), 646. For a similar wartime metamorphosis, compare “Rough Draft of Suggestions to Mr. Lincoln,” Jan. 9, 1861 and “Memo of E. Bates, in Cabinet,” Apr. 15, 1861, both in Papers of Edward Bates, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., (microfilm), to

By the end of 1861, Unionists in the Border South had won a hard-fought victory that often receives scant attention from scholars of the Civil War. Often obscured by the secession of the Lower South, Fort Sumter and the Upper South's procession out of the Union, and the massive buildup of armies in the corridor between Richmond and Washington, the fight in the Border South was no less perilous than these other closely studied events. The battles took place in the halls of Congress and the legislative chambers of statehouses; on the stump at country barbecues and at polling places that varied from neat county courthouses to seedy urban taverns; and on the streets of Baltimore and St. Louis, the hills of western Missouri, and the interior of Kentucky.

The Unionist victory emboldened some border southerners and embittered others. For Robert Breckinridge and many other Unionists in the Border South, by the end of 1861 the great American tradition of compromise appeared as lifeless as Henry Clay's bones, which lay entombed under the Lexington monument he had consecrated on that Independence Day in 1857. They joined the ranks of unconditional Unionism and sought to vanquish their foes by any means necessary. Still other Unionists clung to the fleeting notion of neutrality, hopeful that the war would come to an end before it escalated to once inconceivable levels. By the summer of 1861, conditional Unionists faced the unenviable task of choosing an allegiance. The vast majority of border southerners, unlike Robert Breckinridge, anguished over this decision. A tormented Frankfort, Kentucky mother spoke for many border southerners in response to her pro-secessionist son's jubilant exclamation upon hearing the news of the Confederate victory at the Battle of Bull Run. "To me the news of victory on either side is distressing for we are all brethren & I did still hope for compromise," she glumly reported to her brother. Some

Entry for Sept. 30, 1861, Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 194-195.

conditional Unionists remained committed to the cause, others tried in vain to stay out of the fray, and still others joined the Confederate experiment. “How this state of things breaks up the family ties, carrying scorn to so many happy homes,” a Louisville woman lamented in the summer of 1861.²

Calculating the number of conditional Unionists in the Border South who abandoned the Unionist cause is a difficult enterprise. Scholars have estimated the number of border southerners who fought for the Union or the Confederacy, but poor contemporary record-keeping and the absence of vital records lends a certain level of doubt to the viability of these figures. Furthermore, many border southerners who joined the Confederate armed forces enlisted in states other than their own, and the figures neglect whole swaths of the population, such as women and the elderly. Nonetheless, the enlistment estimations provide a context for understanding the impact of the Unionist offensive in the Border South. Table 28 below provides a breakdown of the estimated troop enlistments from each Border South state and compares these numbers to the overall 1860 population of white and black (both enslaved and free) males age 20 to 59. According to the estimates, 29.4 percent of all white males aged 20-59 enlisted in the Union army, while 14.5 percent of all white males of the same age enlisted in the Confederate army. The data suggests that twice as many white border southerners opted to fight for the federal army, a clear indication that the Unionist offensive helped to keep more men of fighting age loyal to the old flag. Nearly 40.3 percent of enslaved and free blacks of the same

² M.J. Church to My Dear Brother, July 22, 1861, Bodley Family Papers, FHS; Mrs. Augusta [Maria] Holyoke to My Dear Mother & Sister, Aug. 18, 1861, Holyoke Family Papers, 1861-1865, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. For other examples of family divisions in the Border South, see M.T.B. to My Dear Tom [Bullitt], Feb. 9, 1861, Mildred T. Bullitt to My Dear Tom [Bullitt], June 18, 1861, M.T.B. to My Dear John [Bullitt], Nov. 14, 1861, all in Bullitt Family Papers – Oxmoor Collection, 1683-2003, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; *Tuesday Evening Post*, June 3, 1861, Pattie A. Curd Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky; James M. Woods to Dear Sister Zelia, June 24, 1861, Woods-Holman Family Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri; James Headly to Miss Rebecca Atchison, Sept. 16, 1861, David Rice Atchison Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

age group enlisted in the Union army, which illustrates strikingly the devotion of African Americans to the cause of freedom.

Table 28 - Troop Enlistments in the Border South

State	Total Enlistment Estimates			% of Male Population, Age 20-59		
	Union		Confederate	Union		Confederate
	White	Black		White	Black	
Delaware	10,000	1,000	1,000	48.5%	23.8%	4.8%
Kentucky	50,000	24,000	35,000	25.0%	54.0%	17.5%
Maryland	34,000	9,000	20,000	28.9%	26.4%	17.0%
Missouri	80,000	8,000	30,000	31.6%	37.1%	11.8%
Border South Total	174,000	42,000	86,000	29.4%	40.3%	14.5%

Sources: Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*; *OR*, Series III, vol. 4, 1269-1270; Giennapp, "Abraham Lincoln and the Border States," 39, Table 3; Freehling, *The South vs. The South*, 61.

Although in the latter half of 1861 many pro-secessionist border southerners trekked southward to enlist in the Confederate army or to wait out the war in more comfortable surroundings, a scattering of the region's inhabitants refused to relent in their effort to pull the Border South states out of the Union. The Missouri state convention in July 1861 prorogued the officially elected state government, yet in spite of their fugitive existence Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson and a few pro-secession legislators remained undeterred. In September Jackson summoned the legislature to meet in Neosho, a town in the far southwestern corner of the state, to make arrangements for Missouri's secession.³ Extant records do not reveal how many of the deposed legislators showed up in Neosho, but it seems likely that no more than a handful made an appearance. The Senate journal for the session, perhaps as a means to obscure the scant turnout, contains no roll calls. Moreover, the names of only twelve of the state's thirty-three senators appear in the document. The House created a committee of five to determine if a

³ Arthur Roy Kirkpatrick, "Missouri's Secessionist Government, 1861-1865," *Missouri Historical Review* 45 (January 1951), 124-127.

quorum had been achieved, but the panel never produced a report and the lower chamber's journal does not include a roster or roll call votes.⁴

The absence of a quorum, however, did not daunt the ever assertive Jackson. The legislature passed an ordinance of secession over a single negative vote, ratified the Provisional Confederate Constitution, and selected members to attend the first Confederate Congress.⁵ On November 28, 1861, the Confederate Congress admitted Missouri to the new nation, but the state's government spent the rest of the war in exile. It met only once more in early 1862, but with federal troops in the vicinity of New Madrid the legislators scattered before attending to any business. The resolute Claiborne Jackson never returned to his home along the Missouri River; rather, he established the seat of his Confederate government in Arkansas, where he died in late 1862 after a battle with stomach cancer.⁶ Jackson's dream of a Confederate Missouri never reached full maturity, but the vicious guerrilla violence that wracked the state for the next four years demonstrated that many Missourians shared in his secessionist illusion.

The story in Kentucky closely mirrored that of Missouri, with one major exception – in the Bluegrass State a United States congressman, not the elected governor, led the charge for secession. Henry C. Burnett protested the prosecution of the war while in Washington during July and August; when he returned home to Cadiz in late summer, Kentucky's neutrality vanished and the legislature declared for the Union. Rather than remain prostrate as did

⁴ *Journal of the Senate, Extra Session of the Rebel Legislature, Called Together by a Proclamation of C.F. Jackson, Begun and Held at the Town of Neosho, Newton County, Missouri, on the Twenty-First of Day of October, Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-One* (Washington D.C.: Statute Law Book Company, 1916), *passim*; Missouri General Assembly, House of Representatives (Confederate), Journal, 1861, Typescript, 2, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. The author wishes to thank Joan E. Stack, Curator of Art Collections, and Amy L. Waters, Reference Specialist, both of the Missouri Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri, for their assistance with locating the names of the attendees at this session of the legislature.

⁵ The House journal does not record the actual tally of the vote on secession, but merely states that the measure passed with only Isaac N. Shambaugh of DeKalb County casting a negative vote; see House Confederate Journal, 10, SHS-MO.

⁶ Kirkpatrick, "Missouri's Secessionist Government," 127-131; Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 273.

Governor Beriah Magoffin, Burnett took action. He raised a regiment of Confederate volunteers and in late October chaired a meeting of pro-secessionists held at Russellville, a small town located in southwestern Kentucky and just miles from the Tennessee line. Burnett and the attendees called for a sovereignty convention to meet in the town on November 18. He presided over the November meeting, too, which attracted approximately two hundred Kentuckians. The convention passed a declaration of independence, adopted an ordinance of secession, established a provisional state government, and named George W. Johnson, a planter from Scott County, governor. Burnett and former Congressman William E. Simms repaired to Richmond and made an appeal for Kentucky's inclusion in the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Congress complied, and on December 10 Kentucky officially became the thirteenth member of the Confederacy.⁷

As in Missouri, the Kentucky Confederate government spent most of its life fleeing the Union army. The United States Congress in December 1861 expelled Burnett, who spent the rest of the war in the Confederate Senate. In October 1861 George Johnson, full of enthusiasm and envisioning a short war, boasted to his wife, "I expect to be with you much sooner than Lincoln and his minions may desire." Johnson split his executive duties with soldiering and in April 1862 found himself on the battlefield at Shiloh, Tennessee. His prognostication about the war, however, proved erroneous. Johnson suffered wounds to his thigh and abdomen on April 7 during a vicious fight against federal forces that included a large contingent of his erstwhile

⁷ Berry F. Craig, "Henry Cornelius Burnett: Champion of Southern Rights," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 77 (Autumn 1979), 271-273; E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 137-138; *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the Provisional Government of the State of Kentucky, Together with the Messages of the Governor* (Bowling Green, KY: [no publisher identified], 1861), 5-9. For statistical information on the contributors to the Border South secession conventions, see the Appendix below.

Kentucky neighbors. He died two days later, an ominous foreshadowing of the internecine violence that razed the Bluegrass State throughout the war.⁸

The voices of the participants demonstrate the high stakes involved in keeping the Border South tethered to the Union and the very real likelihood that these four states might follow the other eleven slaveholding states into the Confederacy. Writing after the war, Basil Duke calculated that without the federal occupation of St. Louis, Missouri would have joined the Confederacy and substantially altered the outcome of the Civil War. “I was convinced then, and believe now,” Duke wrote, “that it would have eliminated all danger of failure [for the Confederacy].” Unionists across the Border South went to great pains to foil their secessionist neighbors, certain that if they relaxed for even a moment disunionists might gain the advantage. “If those who favored the Union had been less active and vigilant, there is reason to believe the State would have been declared out of the Union,” Kentuckian Thomas Speed remembered. In the spring of 1861 Garrett Davis summarized the tenacity with which the Border South Unionists worked during the crisis. “We will remain in the Union by voting if we can, by fighting if we must, and if we cannot hold our own,” Davis confided to George McClellan, “we will call on the General Government to aid us.”⁹

Abraham Lincoln certainly understood the strategic importance of keeping the Border South in the Union, and he listened attentively to the Unionists who explained the precarious and nuanced nature of the region’s Unionism. Garrett Davis and scores of other Border South

⁸ Craig, “Henry Cornelius Burnett,” 273-274; George W. Johnson to My Dear Ann, Oct. 20, 1861, George W. Johnson Papers, KHS; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 138-139; Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle that Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 276-277. For the escalation of guerrilla violence in Kentucky, see Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 220-226.

⁹ Basil W. Duke, *Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C.S.A.* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911), 36; Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907), 44; George B. McClellan to E.D. Townsend, May 17, 1861, *OR*, Series I, vol. 51, part 1, 381. For a similar glimpse of Unionist resolve in the Border South, see George D. Prentice to Richard Yates, Aug. 30, 1861, Richard Yates Papers, 1861-1865, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Unionists had warned the president that the very success of their offensive hinged upon convincing the inhabitants of these four slaveholding states that the federal government would not interfere with the peculiar institution. Through 1861 Lincoln, mindful of the importance of satisfying Border South Unionists, had exposed himself to ridicule from the radical wing of his party in an attempt to limit the war to the preservation of the Union. While border southerners continued to cast a suspicious eye on Lincoln, his revision of John C. Frémont's emancipation edict and decision to sack the non-compliant general demonstrated the president's absorption of the critical precept of Border South Unionism.¹⁰

The president took bold strokes and utilized less than desirable means to ensure that the Border South felt the weight of federal military might, but on the subject of slavery Lincoln acted with restraint. Crittenden's War Resolution, protests over the confiscation of enslaved persons, and the outcry over Frémont's proclamation convinced Lincoln that broad swipes at the institution of slavery would unquestionably undermine the progress that Border South Unionists had made. Arraying census data for the Border South men elected to the Thirty-seventh Congress against those chosen to sit in the Provisional Confederate Congress further establishes the link between slavery and Unionism in the Border South. Table 29 illustrates that Unionist Border South congressmen owned, on average, nearly twice as many enslaved persons in 1860 as did the border southerners sitting in Congress at Richmond. Furthermore, nearly half of the representatives in the Confederate Congress owned no slaves; only one-fifth of Unionists fit this category. The region's politicians and the people who voted to send them to Washington clearly comprehended the correlation between Unionism and slavery in the Border South. William S. Harney gave voice to this connection in the spring of 1861 when he told a Missourian that if the

¹⁰ See especially William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).

state left the Union, it would lose every protection which the Constitution and the federal legal code vouchsafed to its slaveholders. “The protection of her slave property, if nothing else,” Harney advised, “admonishes Missouri never to give up the Union.”¹¹

Table 29 - A Comparison of Border South Congressmen and Senators in the Thirty-Seventh US Congress and the Provisional CS Congress

Nation	Mean Slaves Owned in 1860	Percentage who Owned No Slaves in 1860
United States	13.2	20.0%
Confederate States	6.7	47.1%

Note: The numbers for the US Congressmen and Senators does not include those members who either resigned to join the Confederacy or were expelled because of doubtful allegiance. This data includes only those who remained attached to the Union cause. Census data was located for 30 of the 33 US politicians and 17 of the 18 CS politicians. The US politicians hailed from all 4 Border South states, whereas the CS politicians came only from Kentucky and Missouri, the 2

Sources: US Census of 1860, Slave Schedules; *Biographical Directory of the US Congress*, www.bioguide.congress.gov; Ezra J. Warner & W. Buck Yearns, *Biographical Register of the Confederate Congress* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), Appendix III.

Not until November 1861, with state elections completed and federal troops occupying portions of each of the Border South states, did Lincoln feel comfortable enough to broach the question of emancipation. The president sent out feelers to two Delaware Unionists, who after a discussion with Lincoln pressed members of the general assembly to enact a program of gradual, compensated emancipation. Lincoln hoped to use Delaware, with fewer than 1,800 enslaved persons, as a laboratory for Border South emancipation. The president wished to avoid constitutional entanglements and believed the experiment in Delaware, which would not complete the process of emancipation until 1893 and offered \$400 for each slave, might catch on in the rest of the Border South. Furthermore, in order to offset concerns about social unrest, he made his preference for colonizing the freed slaves to the Caribbean or Africa known to his colleagues. Even at the end of 1861, however, the Unionists of the Border South refused to accept Lincoln’s conservative emancipation program. The devout Unionist Hamilton Gamble, who had been handed the governorship of Missouri by the state convention, spoke for many

¹¹ William S. Harney to John O’Fallon, May 1, 1861, [copy], Rollins Papers, SHS-MO.

Border South conservatives when he heard rumors of Lincoln's emancipation scheme. "If he should yield to the malignant influence of those black hearted and insane abolitionists I have no longer hope for the restoration of peace and order," Gamble declared. "In such a war I can take no part." The members of the Delaware legislature agreed with Gamble. Lincoln's intercessors could not muster support among the state's legislators, and the bill for compensated emancipation never received formal introduction in the general assembly.¹²

By the beginning of 1862, few of the region's inhabitants were prepared to depart voluntarily with the peculiar institution. Even in the northernmost outpost of the South, where areas of sparse enslaved populations overshadowed pockets of dense concentrations of slaves, the peculiar institution commanded a powerful influence over the region's politics, society, culture, and economy. This truism animated the Unionist offensive from its inception in November 1860 and continued to resonate with the people of the Border South. Few border southerners could imagine a future without slavery; most remained firmly convinced that if emancipation occurred, its responsibility lay with the individual states, not the federal government.

In the spring of 1862, Sophie M. Du Pont, who harbored great reservations about the legality and the ensuing social consequences of emancipation, asked her close friend Henry Winter Davis what he thought about the prospect of abolition. He agreed that emancipation at present violated the law of the land, but disagreed with her misgivings about the outcome. In his usual posture far in advance of the Border South mainstream, Davis considered immediate emancipation just and necessary. "The rebellion has ensured this result – which two years ago

¹² Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton. 2010), 181-184; Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States*, 159-162; Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 162-172; Betty L. Fladland, "Compensated Emancipation: A Rejected Alternative," *Journal of Southern History* 42 (May 1976), 169-186; Hamilton Gamble to David K. Pitman, Dec. 14, 1861, Gamble Papers, MO-MH.

no one would have been justified in saying was likely to occur in five hundred years,” Davis forecast. “There may be suffering – inconvenience [-] confusion – but no injustice.”¹³

Few border southerners would agree with Davis in 1862, but his prophecy came true. Ironically, as conservative Border South Unionists like Robert Breckinridge called for the prosecution of the war “to be pursued to the last extremity,” they also unleashed the forces that would undermine slavery, the institution which they sought to protect by remaining in the Union in 1861. Large battles, guerrilla warfare, marching armies, and the flight of enslaved persons substantially weakened the peculiar institution across the Border South. American slavery received its deathblow in 1865 when Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment and three-fourths of the states ratified the constitutional decree that capped four years of torturous war. Perhaps not surprisingly, two Border South legislatures showed an empty devotion to the peculiar institution by refusing to ratify the amendment. The Delaware legislature finally acquiesced during the administration of William McKinley, while Kentucky held out until 1976.¹⁴

During the secession crisis the Border South Unionists warned that war, once unbridled, would alter forever the landscape of the region. “Our fields will be laid waste, our houses and cities will be burned, our people will be slain, and this goodly land be re-baptized ‘the land of blood.’ And even the institution, to preserve or control which this wretched war was undertaken,” the delegates to the border state conference in the spring of 1861 dolefully predicted, “will be exterminated in the general ruin.”¹⁵ Henry Clay’s statue in 1865 stood watch

¹³ Henry Winter Davis to Sophie M. Du Pont, May 20, 1862, S.F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley.

¹⁴ *Two Speeches of Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, D.D., LL.D., on the State of the Country* (Cincinnati: Press of E. Morgan & Company, 1862), 10; Essah, *A House Divided*, 189-190; James A. Ramage & Andrea S. Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 347.

¹⁵ *Journal and Proceedings of the Convention of the Border Slave States, Begun and Held in the City of Frankfort, and State of Kentucky, on the 27th Day of May, 1861* (Frankfort: Kentucky Yeoman Office, 1861), 22.

over a scarred, transformed, and remodeled land, one that his Border South heirs had seen on the horizon and vainly tried to resist. They had kept their states in the Union, but the exigencies of civil war had irrevocably destroyed Clay's America. Whether they were willing to accept it or not, border southerners now lived in the republic of Henry Winter Davis.

Appendix The Secessionists of the Border South

Historians studying the antebellum South often face the problem of identifying who, outside of the fire-eaters who trumpeted the cause of disunion on the stump and in the press, endorsed secession across the region. The voices of some of those disunionist zealots in the Border South, such as Claiborne Fox Jackson, M. Jeff Thompson, and Blanton Duncan, have been utilized throughout this study to open a window on the mindset of the region's secessionists. In addition, the analysis of election returns provides clues to the depth and breadth of secession sentiment throughout the Border South and has helped to track the ebb and flow of attitudes toward disunion in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. Aside from the words and deeds of the region's secessionist leaders and the faceless ballots cast by Border South voters, though, scholars are left with few sources to build a more complete picture of the region's disunionists.

The manuscript record provides some clues to how historical actors regarded the secessionists with whom they worked and worshiped, attended court days and county elections, shared familial ties, and in extreme instances, fought. C.F. Mitchell, an inhabitant of Flemingsburg, Kentucky remarked that "all the substantial property Holders in the state are on the side of the Union – But every poor white scamp, every adventurer, every demagogue & every disappointed office seeker & slavery fanatic in the state" endorsed secession. Mitchell also rehashed a scene at a Frankfort tavern, where in January 1861 an outspoken, and most likely well lubricated, fire-eater energetically preached the gospel of disunion from his barstool. Not all members of the barroom congregation experienced a conversion that day. During the fire-eater's tirade a substantial slaveholder interrupted and asked why the disunionist so adamantly wanted

Kentucky to secede. The fire-eater responded that he desired to maintain his rights of property, to which the slaveowner queried how many slaves the hotspur owned. The disunionist answered that he owned no slaves, but members of his family possessed twenty-nine bondspersons. “Well sir,” the slaveholder retorted, “tell your ‘people’ to bring their slaves to me & I’ll buy every one of them & then your damnd [sic] County will have no excuse for going out of the Union.”¹ A similar anecdote from Bowling Green buttresses Mitchell’s depiction of Unionists as well-off slaveholders and secessionists as impoverished upstarts. A wealthy Kentuckian confided to her diary in March 1861 that her youthful brother Warner fought a classmate who had chastised him for his resolute Unionism. Warner, whose family owned twenty-eight slaves and a handsome plantation named Mount Air, thrashed his fellow student and declared that “he would teach a low down cur who didn’t know which side of the line he was born on and never owned a mule, much less a negro, how to call him a ‘Yankee and Abolitionist, because he was Union.’”²

Anecdotal evidence from Missouri complements the portrayal of Kentucky secessionists as poorer and younger than the state’s Unionists. “The old oaks, the men of property and substance” in St. Louis supported the Union, Isaac Sturgeon detected. “The young men, the hot heads and rable [sic] to a great extent with few honorable exceptions of age and experience,” he continued, “are with S. Carolina and for any extreme measures.”³ The depiction of secessionists in Maryland varied somewhat from those of Kentucky and Missouri fire-eaters. A Baltimorean surveyed the landscape and claimed that the “Old ‘Aristocracy’” of the Eastern Shore and southern Maryland combined with merchants whose trade primarily went southward to form the

¹ C.F. Mitchell to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 27, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

² Entry for Mar. 10, 1861, Nancy Disher Baird, ed., *Josie Underwood’s Civil War Diary* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 4, 68.

³ Isaac H. Sturgeon to James Buchanan, Jan. 10, 1861, Buchanan Papers, HSP.

backbone of secession sentiment in the Old Line State.⁴ Delawareans often commented on the secessionists that surrounded them, but unlike the other three states of the Border South few contemporaries classified those disunionists as rich slaveholders or meager parvenus.

Scholars investigating the Border South have offered some conclusions that tend to support to varying degrees the anecdotal generalizations about fire-eaters included in the manuscript record. James E. Copeland used census data and the records of volunteers for the Union army from Kentucky to map pockets of Unionism and secession sympathy throughout the Bluegrass State. He found that most support for secession came from the western end of the state and noted that slaveholding and prosperity was more entrenched in the central portion of Kentucky, where Unionists outstripped fire-eaters.⁵ In his study of election returns in Missouri, William Roed argued that no strong correlation exists between votes for John C. Breckinridge in 1860 and support for secession. While he reached no firm conclusions about Missouri secessionists, Roed's discoveries support the notion that many shades of Border South Unionism existed and some conditional Unionists easily made the transition to support for the Confederacy.⁶ Frank Towers has undertaken the most recent attempt to distinguish Border South secessionists. He used census data culled from the arrest records of the Baltimore Riot of April 19 to confirm the contemporary assertion that wealthy merchants and managers of commerce took the lead in promoting secession.⁷

In an effort to shed more light on who comprised the backbone of the push for secession in the Border South, I have collected census data for attendees of pro-secession conventions or

⁴ "Tellula" to Abraham Lincoln, May 27, 1861, Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁵ James E. Copeland, "Where Were the Kentucky Unionists and Secessionists?" *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 71 (October 1973), 344-363.

⁶ William Roed, "Secessionist Strength in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 72 (July 1978), 412-423.

⁷ Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 169-170.

conclaves in Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. For Maryland, I used a roster of the February 18, 1861 state convention which met in Baltimore and attracted delegates from across the state. Census data were recovered with reasonable certainty for 152 of the seated delegates; Tables 30 and 33 below provide a composite snapshot of those delegates and their interest in slavery.

Table 30 - Census Data for Seated Delegates to the Maryland State Convention, February 18, 1861

	Mean	Median
Age	44.8	44
Real Estate	\$23,958	\$14,550
Personal Estate	\$19,216	\$10,000
Slaveholdings	8.4	2
<i>Place of Birth</i>		
State or Region	Number	Percentage
Maryland	137	90.1%
Border South	139	91.4%
Upper South	2	1.3%
Lower South	0	0.0%
Free States	8	5.3%
Foreign Born	2	1.3%
Not Listed	1	0.7%
<i>Occupation</i>		
Grouping	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	71	46.7%
Legal	38	25.0%
Entrepreneurial	24	15.8%
Professional	13	8.6%
None Listed	6	3.9%

Sources: Baltimore *Sun* , Feb. 18-19, 1861; US Census, 1860; US Census, Slave Schedules, 1860.

Finding a sample of Missouri fire-eaters proved more problematic. I used the journals of the deposed Missouri legislature, whose members in October 1861 gathered in Neosho and drew up a secession ordinance for the state. Unfortunately, the scanty journals list very few names and contain no roll call votes. Most of the same legislators served on the few committees created during the brief session, which suggests that a true quorum did not exist. Despite these deficiencies, I found census data for thirteen of the state legislators (mostly from the Senate) and

Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson. While a sparse sample, the data in Tables 31 and 34 at least provides a starting point for understanding who supported secession in Missouri.

Table 31 - Census Data for Legislators Attending the Missouri Legislative Session in Neosho, October 1861		
	Mean	Median
Age	39.4	39
Real Estate	\$11,200	\$7,400
Personal Estate	\$11,599	\$6,150
Slaveholdings	7.6	5
<i>Place of Birth</i>		
State or Region	Number	Percentage
Missouri	0	0.0%
Border South	5	35.7%
Upper South	7	50.0%
Lower South	0	0.0%
Free States	1	7.1%
Foreign Born	1	7.1%
<i>Occupation</i>		
Grouping	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	5	35.7%
Legal	7	50.0%
Entrepreneurial	1	7.1%
Professional	1	7.1%

Sources: *House Journal*, *Senate Journal*, Missouri Rebel Legislature, SHS-MO; *Missouri Official Manual of 1935-1936*, 204-205; US Census, 1860; US Census, Slave Schedules, 1860.

The secession convention that met in Russellville, Kentucky, in November 1861 offers a decent sample for building a composite of Bluegrass State disunionists. Extant records include a list of the signers of the state's secession ordinance, but the document contains some problems. A transcription of the document survives, but several of the names do not include their county of residence, rendering it impossible to locate those signers with any certainty. Also, as a means to provide an illusion of legitimacy by adding more signatures to the ordinance, the organizers of the convention apparently had soldiers and civilians, rather than true delegates, affix their names

to the document.⁸ Nevertheless, census data has been recovered for eighty-seven of the signers and are displayed in Tables 32 and 35 below. Unfortunately, I came across no data that would help to offer a glimpse of secessionists in Delaware.

Table 32 - Census Data for Delegates to the Kentucky Secession Convention, November 1861		
	Mean	Median
Age	37.6	35
Real Estate	\$8,169	\$3,000
Personal Estate	\$8,265	\$3,000
Slaveholdings	6.1	2
<i>Place of Birth</i>		
State or Region	Number	Percentage
Kentucky	57	65.5%
Border South	61	70.1%
Upper South	21	24.1%
Lower South	0	0.0%
Free States	5	5.7%
<i>Occupation</i>		
Grouping	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	32	36.8%
Legal	25	28.7%
Entrepreneurial	15	17.2%
Other	2	2.3%
None Listed	5	5.7%

Sources: *The Declaration of Independence and Constitution...*, 9-11; *US Census, 1860*; *US Census, Slave Schedules, 1860*.

Together, the profiles of secessionists in three of the four Border South states tend to corroborate the anecdotal evidence from the manuscript record. The secessionists of Maryland were older and richer than their colleagues in Kentucky and Missouri; the great majority of disunionists in each of these states made their living off the land or by practicing law. Aside from Missouri, most of the region's fire-eaters had been born in the state in which they resided in 1860. Large slaveholdings accumulated by a handful of these fire-eaters skewed the average slaveholdings upward, but the median values and the breakdown of slaveholdings in Tables 33-

⁸ Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 20.

35 indicates that in general most of the Border South secessionists were not substantial slaveowners. Strikingly, a majority of the men in each of the three samples owned fewer than five enslaved persons or none at all.⁹

A comparison of the findings about these groups of secessionists with the census data that Ralph Wooster compiled and analyzed for the legislatures of Kentucky and Maryland and my own data for the strongly Unionist Missouri state convention illustrates a few important points. The attendees at the Maryland state convention closely resembled the membership of the Maryland legislature, in which the average age (44.5 years) and median age (44 years) nearly mirrored those of the delegates. Wooster found that the mean slaveholdings for the legislators stood at 9.5 (as compared to 8.4 for the delegates) and the median holding stood at one slave (in comparison to 2 for the delegates).¹⁰ The Missouri legislators who attended the rump session at Neosho were significantly younger (average age of 39.4 years) than the delegates who attended the Unionist-controlled convention (average age of 45 years). Although the mean and median slaveholdings of the legislators exceeds those of the delegates, one must consider the small sample size of the Neosho legislature and the fact that Governor Jackson's ownership of forty-eight slaves significantly raised the average. When Jackson's slaveholdings are removed, the average falls back to 4.5 enslaved persons, a figure smaller than the average for delegates to the convention (4.8 slaves).¹¹ The signers of the Kentucky secession ordinance were younger (an average age of 37.6 and a median age of 35 for the signers; an average age of 41.3 and a median age of 40 for the legislators) than their counterparts in the Unionist-dominated legislature, though

⁹ These findings tend to confirm Robert E. May's contention that even though secessionists sought a radical solution to the sectional conflict, in general they were not estranged outsiders in southern society. See Robert E. May, "Psychobiography and Secession: The Southern Radical as Maladjusted 'Outsider,'" *Civil War History* 34 (March 1988), 46-69.

¹⁰ Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 244-247.

¹¹ For the data on the Missouri state convention, see Tables 23-25 in Chapter 5.

their slaveholdings closely resembled one another (the legislators held 6.3 slaves on average with a median value of 2 enslaved persons; the signers owned a mean of 6.1 slaves and a median of 2).¹² These composites have shaped my approach to the secession crisis in the Border South and illustrate the strong connection between the protection of slavery and Unionism, rather than disunion, in the region.

Table 33 - Slaveholdings of Seated Delegates of the Maryland State Convention, February 18, 1861

Slaves Owned	Number	Percentage
0	57	37.5%
1-5	39	25.7%
6-9	13	8.6%
10-19	21	13.8%
20 or more	22	14.5%
Total	152	100.0%
Mean Slaveholding		8.4
Median Slaveholding		2

Sources: Baltimore *Sun*, Feb. 18-19, 1861; US Census, 1860; US Census, Slave Schedules, 1860.

Table 34 - Slaveholdings of Legislators Attending the Missouri Legislative Session at Neosho, October 1861

Slave Owned	Number	Percentage
0	4	28.6%
1-5	3	21.4%
6-9	5	35.7%
10-19	1	7.1%
20 or more	1	7.1%
Total	14	100.0%
Mean Slaveholding		7.6
Median Slaveholding		5

Sources: *House Journal*, *Senate Journal*, Missouri Rebel Legislature, SHS-MO; *Missouri Official Manual of 1935-1936*, 204-205; US Census, 1860; US Census, Slave Schedules, 1860.

¹² Wooster, *Secession Conventions of the South*, 209-212.

**Table 35 - Slaveholdings of Delegates to the Kentucky
Secession Convention, November 1861**

Slaves Owned	Number	Percentage
0	38	43.7%
1-5	17	19.5%
6-9	15	17.2%
10-19	8	9.2%
20 or more	9	10.3%
Total	87	100.0%
Mean Slaveholding		6.1
Median Slaveholding		2

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