

THE COMING STORM

Throughout the decade of the 1850s, mid-Marylanders and their near-by neighbors in Pennsylvania and Virginia found themselves trying to navigate a path through the increasingly tense sectional disagreements between the North and the South. Residing in a non-slaveholding state, most Pennsylvanians aligned themselves with the Northern position. For opposite reasons, most Virginians on the Potomac River border saw themselves entwined with Southern policies.

Mid-Marylanders, on the other hand, had extensive ties – politically, economically, and socially – with both the North and the South. As sectional discord became more difficult to contain, citizens in this border region became witnesses to, and participants in, some of the most cataclysmic events



The Tragic Prelude, a mural by John Steuart Curry, depicts John Brown and events leading to the Civil War. (Courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society)

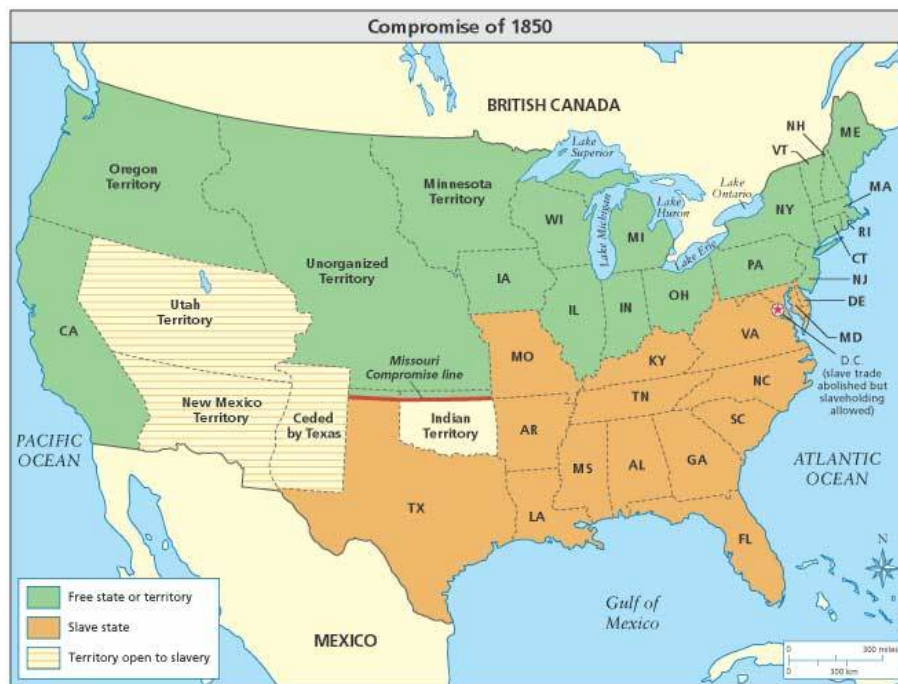
that preceded the outbreak of war. By 1861, these border residents were faced with difficult, at times agonizing, choices as the country lurched toward war.

SLAVERY AND THE GROWTH OF SECTIONALISM

Sectional loyalties of mid-Marylanders and their neighbors began to assert themselves in earnest as the crises of the 1850s produced divisions within the region. By 1850, politicians had been wrestling with the issue for many years. Efforts to retain the balance between free and slave states had produced the Missouri Compromise in 1820, which granted statehood to one free state (Maine) and one slave state (Missouri), and had tried to create a balance of slave and non-slave territories in the United States. New territory gained by the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 set off a new round of disputes over slavery in the territories. By the time the Compromise of 1850 attempted to settle the question of what to do with the land taken from Mexico, the dialogue about the slavery issue was clearly intensifying. In 1849 Frederick, MD diarist Jacob Engelbrecht identified as “new fangled” the phrases “abolitionism” and “free soil;” after 1850 these became familiar terms, appearing frequently in contemporary sources.¹

Citizens on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line had, then, already confronted the issue of slavery repeatedly, both directly and indirectly. The state of Pennsylvania had passed a gradual emancipation act in 1780, and slavery slowly disappeared from the state. In Virginia, on the other hand, slavery was intertwined deeply with the state’s economy. In the 1850 census,

residents of Loudoun and Jefferson Counties together had close to 10,000 slaves, who accounted



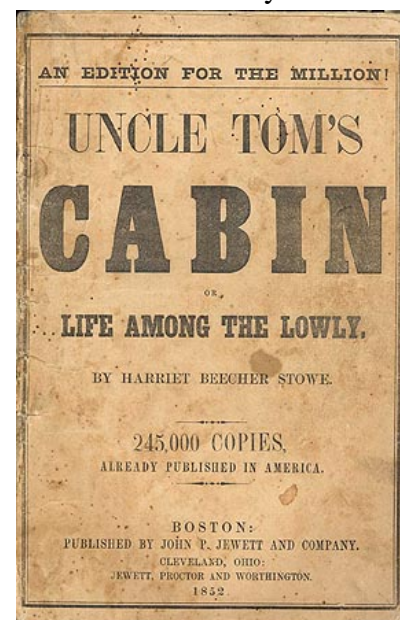
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The Compromise of 1850 consisted of a series of laws dealing with the issue of slavery in the United States; this map shows the free and slave states in the United States after the Compromise. (<http://mrkash.com/activities/compromise.html>)

The most controversial measure of the Compromise of 1850 was the provision for a new and stringent fugitive slave law. This law, which facilitated the capture and return of runaway slaves, was particularly relevant to a region that shared a border with the free state of Pennsylvania. Newspaper notices about runaways appeared throughout the 1850s, and slaveholders below the border with Pennsylvania felt beleaguered in having to deal with not only Pennsylvanians who protected slaves once they crossed the border, but also agents of the underground railroad that operated within the region. Now the new fugitive slave law helped them by making every citizen a slave catcher. Throughout the region, discussions took place over the enforcement of the fugitive slave law, with some wrestling with the option of disobeying what they believed to be a morally wrong law, and others expressing fear that the abolitionist “fanatics” in the North might defy the law.³

In yet another attempt to solve the slavery question once and for all, the United States Congress in 1854 approved the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which replaced the Missouri Compromise with a system of popular sovereignty that shifted the responsibility of determining the fate of slavery in these territories from Congress to the inhabitants.⁴ The reaction of mid-Maryland and her neighbors was mixed. Some citizens

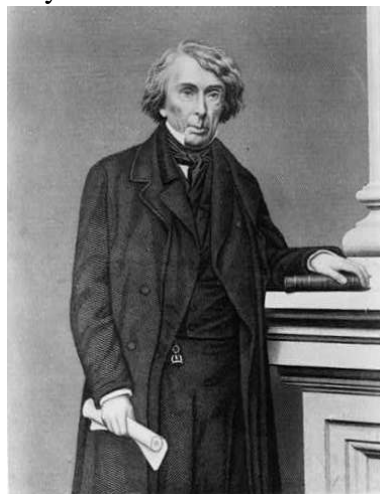
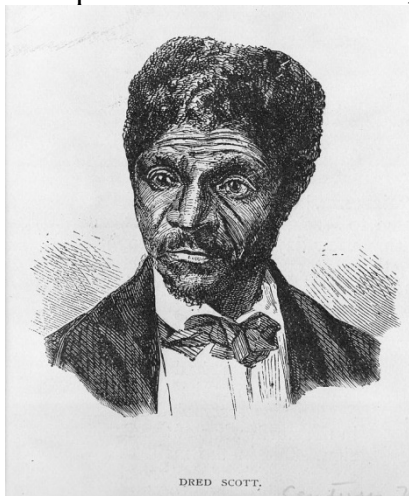
for 27% of the total population of the two counties. Across the Potomac, in the mid-Maryland counties of Carroll, Frederick, and Washington, the enslaved, numbering almost 7,000, made up only 8% of the total population.² The varying degrees of fealty to slavery would have profound consequences for mid-Maryland and the areas just north and south.



Uncle Tom's Cabin, written by Harriet Beecher Stowe and published in 1852, was an anti-slavery novel immensely popular in the North. (University of Virginia)

were hopeful that the new legislation would bring an end to the growing sectional divide and restore peace and stability, while others were certain that it could only end in discord and disunion. Democrats in Frederick, for example, endorsed the idea of popular sovereignty set forth in the Kansas-Nebraska Act as the plan most likely “to obviate all future difficulties, and to settle the excitement at once and forever.”⁵ The opposing political party at the time, the Whigs, saw Stephen A. Douglas’ “reckless” scheme for popular sovereignty as one that would “renew the Slavery agitation,” and reignite a bitter dispute that would only end in secession.⁶ Mid-Maryland, the border region, and the entire country had the opportunity to witness popular sovereignty in action as territorial elections proceeded in Kansas. The resulting violence and brutal killings that earned the territory the name “Bloody Kansas” produced passionate feelings and alarmed prose in eastern presses, and, predictably, further destabilized relations between the North and the South.

With Congress unable to defuse the question of slavery, in 1857 the Supreme Court tried its hand with the *Dred Scott* decision. This legal case was initially about whether a slave who had been taken to live in states and territories that had outlawed slavery was therefore entitled to his freedom. Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney, who had lived in Frederick for some time as a young man, wrote the opinion for the majority. In hoping to finally end questions about slavery in the United States, Taney’s decision touched on far more than the original dispute. Among other provisions of the decision, the Taney court ruled that no one of African descent could be a



The *Dred Scott* case decided in 1857 by the Supreme Court, ignited passionate feelings about slavery North and South, and is cited by some as one of the causes of the Civil War. (Library of Congress)

Roger Brooke Taney (right), Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and a former resident of Frederick, MD, wrote the majority opinion in the *Dred Scott* case in 1857. (Library of Congress)

citizen of the United States, and therefore had no rights as a citizen. Instead of quelling the arguments about the institution of slavery, the *Dred Scott* decision immeasurably inflamed the issue. Taney’s unqualified support for the institution of slavery deserved, according to the *Frederick Examiner*, a “large measure of respect.”⁷ “We are proud,” continued the *Examiner*, “to see ... the decision controlled by the spirit of the law.”⁸ Others in the region, especially abolitionists, saw it differently. They were more inclined to agree with Frederick Douglass, who called the decision an “open, glaring, and scandalous tissue of lies.”⁹ The *Star and Banner* of Gettysburg titled one of its editorials “Another Triumph of the Slave Power,” and said that this “humiliating decision” had simply reopened the “whole slavery agitation....”¹⁰

The Supreme Court, then, joined Congress in failing to formulate a policy that settled the slavery issue. Of particular concern to some mid-Marylanders was the large free black population in the

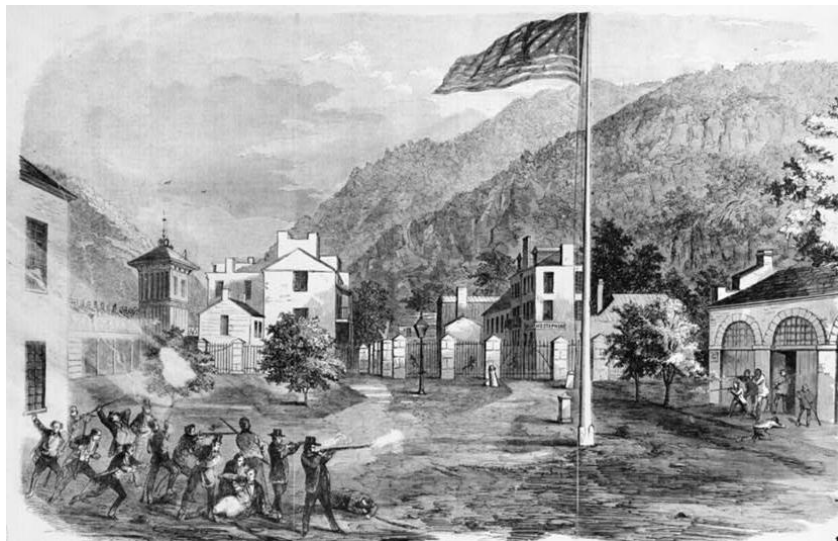
state, which the census of 1850 had numbered at 70,000.¹¹ This was considered, by some, to be an “evil of no small magnitude.”¹² In June of 1859, a convention of Maryland’s slaveholders met in Baltimore to consider what to do about the presence of free blacks in the state. In Hagerstown and Frederick, the convention was regarded as “a trick of certain politicians, who had axes to grind,” and by “*a few Democrats, who expect to make some political capital of it in the coming campaign*” [italics in original]. It was noted that in Hagerstown, only six or seven individuals met to select delegates. Though the convention proposed several “very extreme measures,” including prohibiting all future manumission and expelling all free blacks from the state under threat of immediate enslavement, “fortunately the good sense of a majority of the body defeated them all.” In the end, the convention held the removal of free blacks from the state as “impolitic, inexpedient, and uncalled for by any public exigency which could justify it.”¹³ The expulsion of free blacks would have eliminated the labor necessary for seasonal grain crops and forced Maryland’s farmers to hire more expensive immigrant labor.¹⁴ Four months later, opinions about slavery and abolition would once again be jolted by a shocking event, this one very close to home.

RAID ON HARPERS FERRY

In June 1859, a man calling himself Mr. Stearns appeared in Frederick County, ostensibly selling books but in reality familiarizing himself with the area. He reported the information he gathered to a Mr. Isaac Smith, who in July rented the Kennedy farm in the southeastern corner of Washington County. Local citizens paid little attention to Stearns or to Smith, or to any of Smith’s twenty-one associates, five of whom were black. They did not suspect that Smith was in reality abolitionist John Brown, who was formulating a plan to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and to incite a slave insurrection.¹⁵

On October 17, 1859, Jacob Engelbrecht noted that in Frederick at 10:00 a.m. bells were ringing with commands for the town’s militia companies to assemble for the purpose of suppressing “a kind of Insurrection among the Negroes of Jefferson County Va ... to Siese on the u.s. arms there.”¹⁶

News of a raid at Harpers Ferry quickly set off a wave of panic and confusion in the region. Rumors circulated that there was a force of one thousand insurrectionists, that six hundred armed slaves were participating, and that hundreds of abolitionists had joined the raiders.¹⁷ Frederick’s three



John Brown’s Harpers Ferry Raid in 1859 galvanized public opinion on the issue of slavery and led to a hardening of positions North and South. (Library of Congress)

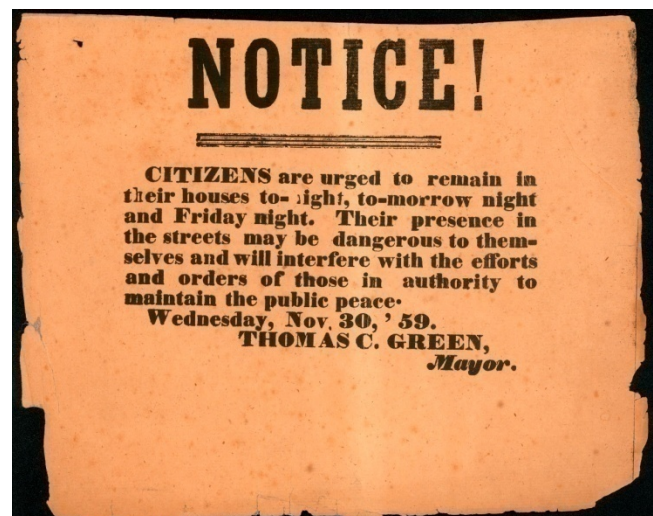
military companies, the United Guards (commanded by Captain Thomas Sinn), the Junior Defenders (led by Captain John Ritchie), and the Independent Riflemen (under the command of Captain Ulysses Hobbs), hurried to Frederick's railroad depot to get to the scene of the "Harpersferry [sic] Riot."¹⁸ Brig. Gen. Edward Shriver, a Frederick attorney and commander of the Sixteenth Regiment, Maryland Militia, was in overall command of the troops from Frederick. Militia companies from all over the region were already in Harpers Ferry, and the Frederick men joined the others in position around the perimeter of the armory buildings where Brown's men had taken refuge.¹⁹ There they discovered that the "riot" they were suppressing consisted of twenty-two men, and that many were already dead or in custody. In a report dated October 22, 1859, General Shriver described what happened next:

Between 11 and 12 Oclock [sic] Capt Sinn who was with a detachment of his company on guard in front of the building occupied by the Insurgents was hailed and invited to approach it for the purpose of conference in regard to the terms on which the Insurgents proposed to surrender.... Capt Sinn communicated with me and ... I held a parly [sic] with Captain Brown and the gentlemen he held as prisoners.... I told him that he was completely surrounded by an overwhelming force and every avenue of escape effectually guarded.²⁰

The raid ended the next day when the brick firehouse, where Brown and his men and hostages had taken refuge, was stormed by U.S. Marines, led by Col. Robert E. Lee. By 2:45 p.m. the three militia units returned to Frederick from Harpers Ferry.²¹

Although little had actually happened – the slave insurrection never materialized, the raiders were killed or captured, and Brown was summarily hanged – John Brown's Raid had an enormous effect on the region and the nation. A week after the raid, a Hagerstown paper reported that "the citizens have not yet recovered from their astonishment at the civil war which has so suddenly been engendered in their peaceful community."²² Brown's "nefarious scheme" for the violent overthrow of slavery threatened the region's stability. In Hagerstown, "the people of our quiet town could hardly realize the fact that a plot of such villainy could have been concocting almost in their midst" by "a few phrenzied [sic], malignant out-laws." Brown's antislavery violence was the result, the Hagerstown paper declared, of the "intense fanaticism" of "misguided ... abolitionists from the North and elsewhere." The raid "spread dismay and terror" among Marylanders who feared violent reactions among the state's large slave and free black populations.²³

Reaction was similar throughout the region. Following Brown's raid, rumors spread that another revolt was imminent. Residents of the region became anxious about secret abolitionist plots, about strangers, and even about provocative language. By order of



In this broadside, residents of Charlestown, Virginia (later West Virginia) are urged to stay indoors before the hanging of John Brown. (Gettysburg National Military Park)

Governor Hicks of Maryland, sheriffs in mid-Maryland were authorized to “arrest and detain” suspicious persons, and they hired extra deputies to assist with the process.²⁴ In New Windsor, in Carroll County, a Dr. Boyd was arrested for trying to smuggle out of Maryland and into Pennsylvania several slaves who were hidden in a secret compartment he had made in his wagon. For his effort, Dr. Boyd was incarcerated in the Carroll County jail.²⁵ A month later, Dr. Breed, a Democrat, was arrested and held for \$2,000 bail. He had used “incendiary language, by saying ‘that the negroes ought to murder their masters, kill their wives, set fire to their houses, and then run away by the light of the fire’ and that ‘he thought it was the duty of every Christian to encourage the negroes in it.’”²⁶

Brown’s raid exacerbated racial tensions for blacks as well as whites. Among Brown’s personal papers was a letter he wrote in which he referred several times to Thomas Henry, a black clergyman in Hagerstown. Henry had been “long suspected of an improper intercourse and intimacy with the abolitionists of the North.” By November of 1859, the Hagerstown *Herald* reported that Henry had sold all of his property and left Maryland.²⁷

Increased anxieties as a result of the John Brown raid led to the formation of even more militia companies in the region. On January 11, 1860, the Hagerstown newspaper, *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, noted:

Since the Brown foray, a large number of military companies have been organized in Maryland and Virginia. Nearly every exchange that we open, from the surrounding counties in this and our neighboring State beyond the Potomac, speaks in flattering terms of the formation of one or more of these companies in its midst; and at no former period does there appear to have been so ardent a military spirit awakened.²⁸

By February 1, 1860 at least seven new military companies had been formed in Frederick County; in Berkeley County, Virginia, eight companies were formed.²⁹ Maryland’s arsenal ran out of rifles and muskets to distribute to the new volunteer companies. Even the state’s allotment of weapons for 1860 was already committed by December 24, 1859, and the General Assembly’s appropriation of \$70,000, which was much larger than usual, was insufficient to meet the demand from the newly formed military companies.³⁰

With the community “excited ... to a degree hitherto unknown,” the partisan opportunities that John Brown’s Raid created were seized upon by Democrats in the region, who made the most of the intensified fears by accusing the Republican Party of being in league with John Brown.³¹ Although the majority of Republicans continually tried to distance themselves from Brown, portraying him as a solitary figure who acted alone, some mid-Marylanders were no longer listening. While most Northerners saw John Brown as a fanatic who deserved his punishment, John Brown and revolutionary violence were now forged together with the Republican Party in Southern minds. Rather than seeing the raid as an utter failure, those sympathetic to the Southern point of view saw it as a taste of what was to come.

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM IN 1860

By 1860, the situation of African Americans in mid-Maryland and the surrounding region varied. Slavery in mid-Maryland had been declining since 1820: in 1820 over 16% of the total population of Frederick County was enslaved; by 1860 that number had dropped to 7%. The same pattern was true for Washington County, which went from 14% enslaved in 1820 to 5% in 1860. In Carroll County, created in 1837, only 3% of its residents were enslaved by the time of the Civil War.³² A prominent historian has argued that in this wheat-producing interior of the state, a way of life was developing in which slavery was “tangential.”³³ Yet these diminishing numbers are in some ways misleading with regard to slavery’s significance in the region, for slavery persisted in exerting its influence politically and socially despite its decline. Mid-Maryland was not economically dependent on slavery, but it did have an investment in the institution.

It was the growth of the free black population, which increased faster than any other segment of the population, that was the most notable demographic development in mid-Maryland (and in the entire state) throughout the nineteenth century. As slavery declined, the number of free African Americans increased steadily. By 1860, free African Americans outnumbered those enslaved. In Frederick County, the percentage of free blacks rose to 11% of the total population in 1860; in both Washington and Carroll Counties, free African Americans accounted for 5% of the total population in each county. In 1860, the three mid-Maryland counties had almost 8,000 free African Americans trying to navigate in a society that exerted social and political pressure to keep them subordinate.³⁴

The neighboring counties in Pennsylvania and Virginia had demographic patterns distinct from those in mid-Maryland. Pennsylvania was a non-slaveholding state by 1860. In that year, Franklin and Adams Counties had small free black populations of 1,799 and 474, respectively, which together comprised a little over 3% of the total population of the two counties. In Loudoun County, Virginia, on the other hand, where slavery was still a thriving institution, African Americans made up 31% of the total population, and the vast majority were enslaved. A similar pattern existed in Jefferson County, Virginia, where African Americans also comprised 31% of the population. Almost 9 of every 10 African Americans in the county were enslaved in 1860.³⁵

THE ELECTION OF 1860

As the election of 1860 approached, mid-Marylanders were keenly aware of political extremism and sectionalism. This included their opposition to military or coercive responses and to threatened secession. In January of 1860, Congressmen Lucius Gartrell of Georgia and John Hickman of Pennsylvania debated the question of how the national government might prevent secession by southern states. Hickman noted that “18,000,000, meaning Northern men, could always cope with 8,000,000 of Southern men.” The January 4, 1860 *Hagerstown Herald of Freedom and Torch Light* noted that it was easy to conclude that Hickman’s “plan of holding the Union together will be war upon the South, which is very nearly similar to John Brown’s plan of settling matters with the South, and certainly if put into practice, would terminate as Brown’s did in every respect.”³⁶

The aggressive, sectional rhetoric of Northern anti-slavery congressmen, the Hagerstown newspaper continued, was understood as a cause of the increasing sectional tensions:

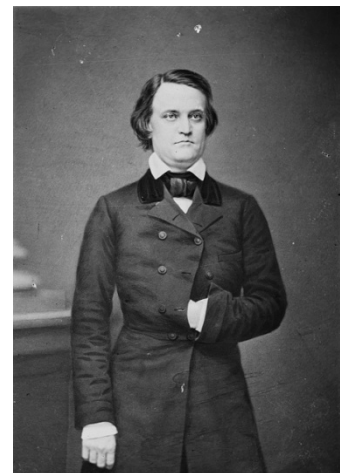
there are men sent to the present Congress who have the impudence to charge the South with creating all the difficulty that is raging from one end of the Union to the other, and seem to have no fear of a dissolution, and speak of the South and Southern institutions and the people as is they were not entitled to common respect. Such men are a disgrace to the nation and the people that send them.³⁷

When the Maryland General Assembly received South Carolina's invitation to join a Southern convention, though, mid-Marylanders reaffirmed their opposition to secession as well. In Frederick, an open letter from South Carolinian James Orr urging dissolution of the Union was viewed as dangerous and radical by the August 14, 1860, *Frederick Herald*:

It will be seen from this that the idea of dissolving the Union, if Lincoln should be elected, is not confined to politicians of the Barnwell Rhett and Yancey School. The tone of the Southern press, and other indications, prove the fact that it is an idea which pervades the Southern mind almost universally—especially in the cotton and gulf States [sic]. It is time that the people should be fully awakened to the danger which threatens so awful a catastrophe. It is imminent, and the more so from the fact that the people will not see it.³⁸

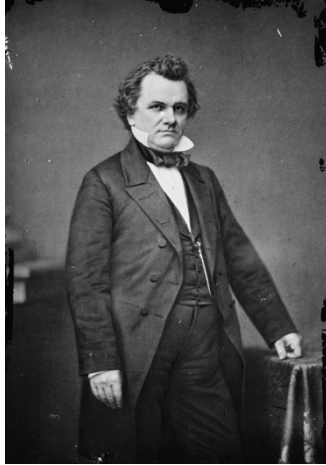
In addition to the ideological opposition of many in the region to secession, there were practical reasons as well. Mid-Maryland and the surrounding region could boast of a thriving economy by 1860. Its cities, though small, exerted a significant influence over the economic well-being of the region, chiefly due to the transportation systems that linked them with Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington.³⁹ Various railroad lines, the National Road, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal all served as arteries to transport the rich agricultural produce of the region to larger markets. Agriculture was by far the dominant source of wealth. In Maryland in 1860, in fact, Frederick and Washington Counties were the top two wheat-producing counties in the state, producing over a third of the state's wheat crop.⁴⁰ The census reported that the rich Piedmont farmland in mid-Maryland was the most valuable in the entire state. Similarly, Loudoun and Jefferson Counties were the top two wheat-producing counties in Virginia in 1860.⁴¹ Residents of the region realized there was a lot to lose if war came.

In the election of 1860, political parties reflected the divergent interests at work in the nation as well as in Maryland.⁴² Despite Maryland's status as a slave state, the Southern Democratic candidate, John C. Breckinridge, was viewed by some residents and opposition newspapers as a sectional, and therefore extremist, candidate. The *Examiner* asked, "How is the South to maintain her Rights and avert the threatened aggression?" It responded that she could not do it by voting for Breckinridge.⁴³ Another Frederick



In the presidential election of 1860, the Democratic Party split over which candidate to nominate. Southern Democrats supported John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky. (Library of Congress)

newspaper, the *Maryland Union* declared, “If you desire dissolution of the Union, vote for Breckinridge; if you desire the disruption of democracy, vote for Breckinridge.”⁴⁴ Yet the majority of Democratic voters rallied around Breckinridge, and these supporters met in July 1860 to “pledge the democracy of this county to the support of Breckinridge.”⁴⁵ This caused a split in the Democratic Party, between those who chose to support Breckinridge and those who supported Stephen A. Douglas. The editors of the *Maryland Union*, Bradley Johnson and Charles Cole, were in such disagreement that they could not continue their partnership. Johnson left the newspaper; in his absence the paper endorsed Douglas.⁴⁶



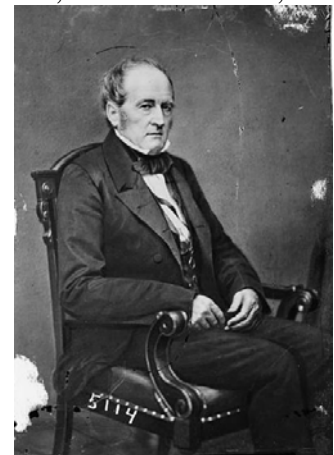
Northern Democrats nominated Stephen Douglas of Illinois. (Library of Congress)

Stephen A. Douglas, the Northern Democrat candidate, was unable to convince Maryland voters that he was a moderate, however. When Douglas came to Frederick on September 5, 1860, the newspapers there were noticeably quiet.⁴⁷ The *Examiner* had earlier accused him of having “no higher ambition than mutual destruction” and of being “an advocate of Squatter Sovereignty, which is Republicanism in disguise.” Mid-Maryland voters avoided Douglas because he was perceived as complicit in “conspiracy against the Union.”⁴⁸

More popular was John Bell, the Constitutional Union Party candidate, whose simple slogan was “The Union, the Constitution, and the Enforcement of the Laws.”⁴⁹ Bell’s success in mid-Maryland was due to the perception that the Constitutional Union ticket represented the only party having appeal in all sections of the country, and the one committed to preserving rights within the Union.⁵⁰ The

Examiner noted that

a survey of political parties discloses the fact that there is but one national party in existence [the Constitutional Union Party]. Republicanism is avowedly sectional; its principles, its policy, its purposes have a limited scope, not common to the people of all the States. The success of such a party is so repugnant to the theory of our gov’t that every conservative citizen would find cause to deplore it.⁵¹



John Bell from Tennessee was the candidate of the moderate Constitutional Union Party. (Library of Congress)

In mid-Maryland, the Constitutional Union Party was seen as representing the best political option for navigating sectionalism, and the best party around which to rally in order to defeat both the Republicans and the secessionists.⁵² In Hagerstown it was noted: “Men, who have stood aloof from the turmoil of politics for years, are now found taking an active part in behalf of the Union; and serving in the national ranks against the treason and radicalism of the Republican and Disunion factions.”⁵³ On July 21, 1860, the *Frederick Examiner* avowed: “The irretrievable choice is ... between ‘Bell and the Union’ or ‘Breckinridge and Disunion!’ There is no evading this issue!”⁵⁴ Even Southern sympathizers in mid-Maryland concluded that Southern rights were best protected with a victory for the Constitutional Union party. The *Frederick Herald* saw support for Bell as a way to ensure Lincoln’s defeat:

Let the Northern Union men be persuaded that Bell and Everett have Southern strength sufficient with what Northern aid they can give them, and they will strike such a blow as will shatter Republicanism to atoms. They are waking up to a true sense of their duty & their danger; and with some encouragement from their Southern Brethren, they will come in overwhelming force to the rescue of the Union Constitution from the destructive grasp of treachery & fanaticism.⁵⁵

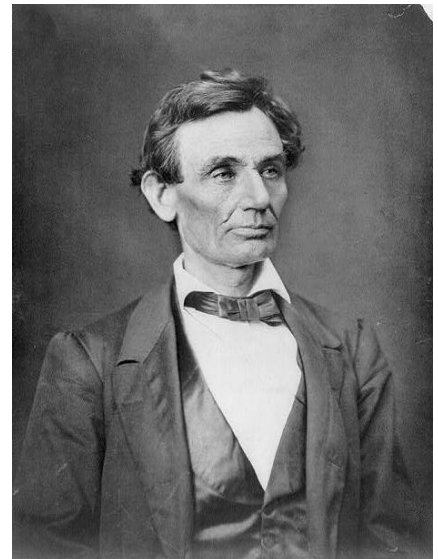
The party's conservative platform included an "appeal to its intelligent voters."⁵⁶ An editor declared, "Let there be BELL and EVERETT Clubs formed in every district of the county." A month later, clubs had been formed in Liberty and Unionville, each of which was reported to be "large, and have as members the best men in their districts."⁵⁷ In Boonsboro, it was reported that Washington County would "give Bell and Everett from 300 to 500 majority without doubt."⁵⁸ In Frederick, a parade on September 6, 1860 included more than three hundred vehicles and three bands, stretching for more than a mile. Leading citizens from across the region addressed the enthusiastic crowds.⁵⁹ The parade was followed nine days later with a meeting of the Union Party in Frederick at "Union Hall."⁶⁰ As the election neared, voters were asked

to consider well the incalculable importance of the issues which the American people are about to decide—issues which involve the perpetuity of the Union, and the preservation of the Constitution—these great sources of all your blessings and safeguards of all your rights... We have had agitation long enough. It has done evil enough, in the country. It is time it should cease. There is no hope offered by any other organization, than that led on by Bell and Everett, that the slavery question shall forever be put to rest—agitation destroyed, and the Union preserved... show the country that Frederick county [sic], at least, will never pause to calculate the value of the Union. Rally! Rally!!⁶¹

Very few mid-Marylanders supported Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln, chiefly because of the party's association with abolitionists, extremism, and sectional interests. The *Herald* noted that it was

plain to see that the Black Republican party is the true disunion party of the country—the only party whose success would place the country in a position which would give any state in the Union a reason or plausible excuse for an attempt at secession.⁶²

So limited was support for the Republicans in Frederick County that the *Herald* assumed that a notice in the *Middletown Valley Register* that referred to Republican meetings in Frederick and Washington Counties was "a hoax." It noted that Maryland's Republicans were "not quite impudent enough to hold meetings in the conservative counties of Washington and Frederick."⁶³ Personal attacks



Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate for President (Library of Congress)

on Republicans were not uncommon; the *Frederick Herald* called each Republican in Frederick a “hired slave,” while Montgomery Blair, a Republican speaker at an event in Middletown, was so harassed that he had to halt his speech.⁶⁴ The *Frederick Herald* called the Republican Party “the worst party that this country ever [had]”⁶⁵ and wrote that Lincoln’s nomination was done by a “strictly sectional party, upon a strictly sectional platform, for the purpose of inaugurating a strictly sectional policy in the general government. Not a single electoral vote will he get in a slaveholding state.”⁶⁶ In Frederick County, it was reported that a man was hung at Point of Rocks “for voting the Lincoln ticket and uttering incendiary abolition doctrines.”⁶⁷ Another had his house stoned after voting for Lincoln.⁶⁸ A notice placed in a newspaper in Hagerstown announced “To Black Republicans! We keep no such papers on our Counter as the *New York Tribune* or the *Chambersburg Repository & Transcript*, &c, &c—Don’t [sic] call for them at our-- Robertson’s Union and Southern Depot.”⁶⁹

John Bell and the Constitutional Union Party polled the most votes in the counties of mid-Maryland. In Carroll County, Bell received 51% of the vote; in Frederick County he won 49% of the votes; and in Washington County Bell received 47% of the ballots.⁷⁰

Despite the relatively low percentage of slaves in mid-Maryland, John Breckinridge, the Southern rights candidate, received significant support from these counties. In Carroll County he polled 40% of the votes; in Frederick County 43% of the votes; and in Washington County he received support on 46% of the ballots.⁷¹ Breckinridge’s strength indicated support for Southern rights in mid-Maryland, likely heightened by fears that arose from John Brown’s raid at nearby Harpers Ferry only a year earlier.

Stephen Douglas, the Northern Democratic candidate, and Abraham Lincoln, the Republican, both fared poorly. Douglas received eight percent of the votes in Carroll County, six percent in Frederick County, and five percent in Washington County. Lincoln did even worse. He received only one percent of the total votes in both Carroll and Frederick Counties, and less than one percent in Washington County. Lincoln was dismissed as an extreme sectional candidate, while Douglas’s platform had little appeal in a border slave state generally.⁷²

John Bell had an even better showing south of the Potomac, winning 69% of the vote in Loudoun County and 52% in Jefferson County. Surprisingly, Breckinridge fared worse in these Virginia counties than in mid-Maryland, polling only 26% in Loudoun and 25% in Jefferson, barely beating Douglas who garnered 24% of the vote.⁷³

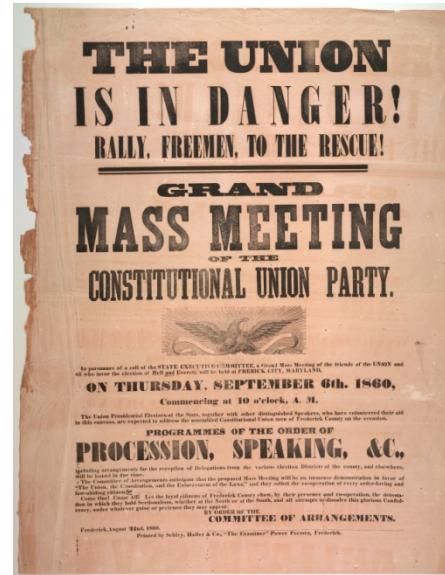
Predictably, the outcome was reversed north of the Mason-Dixon Line, with Lincoln winning 56% of the vote in Franklin County and 50% in Adams County. A Democratic “fusion” ticket (in which voters cast ballots for a Democrat in general and the nominee would be sorted out later) mounted a significant challenge, however, barely losing in Adams County with 49% of the vote, and winning 42% in Franklin County.

THE SECESSION CRISIS

The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 precipitated a cascade of events that took the country ever closer to war. South Carolina was the first state to secede in December 1860, followed within weeks by six other Southern states. In February 1861, these seven states formed the Confederate States of America, and selected Jefferson Davis as President.

With Lincoln's election as President, local residents held their breaths. The editor of the November 12, 1860, *Frederick Herald*: "May God in his mercy avert the dangers ... which so threateningly ... impend."⁷⁴ Sectional tensions grew into major fissures. To some, the election became a call to arms: "Up Southians... The tocsin sounds! Will ye be mere submissionists? Cavaliers to the rescue!"⁷⁵ Others were not so ebullient. Jacob Engelbrecht wrote

the South Carolinians & Allabamians were ready to secede from the Union of the u. States, and at this time They are making Wonderful preparation to leave this Glorious Union...I say go as quick as you please, - they have been Domone(earing) long enough – the sooner they go the better for the peace and quiet of our country.⁷⁶



A broadside advertising a meeting of the Constitutional Union Party in Frederick in September 1860 (Perkins Library, Duke University)

Although Engelbrecht was willing to see the Southern states leave the Union, some mid-Marylanders continued to hope for peaceful reconciliation, aware of their precarious position in a border state. When other border states developed a compromise measure, it was greeted with enthusiasm. On January 9, 1861, the *Frederick Examiner* reported:

A gleam of sunshine breaks through the dark cloud of danger that broods over the Union. The Committee of Fourteen, appointed by the Senators and Representatives from the Border Slave-holding and Non-slaveholding States have agreed upon some important measures of Compromise, which, if adopted by Congress, will at once restore peace and good understanding among the states.⁷⁷

Despite that optimism, January of 1861 was a "gloomy" time for the citizens of Frederick, wrote Jacob Engelbrecht: "business is at a Stand-Still, money very Scarce, and of Course a depreciation in the value of Real Estate & every thing else – we hope for the continuation of this, our blessed Union."⁷⁸

The key area of discussion was the calling of a special session of the state legislature. A broadside distributed in the community read "If the Governor fails to convene the Legislature, the people shall act for themselves for the preservation of their rights."⁷⁹ A local newspaper noted "we do not know of many Secessionists in the district, and as only such have any business

in these meetings and at this convention, we do not anticipate that the leaders of the movement will receive much favor from old Middletown.”⁸⁰ It was revealed later that the district meeting of secessionists in Middletown was “a total failure; the loyal citizens of the Catoclin Valley are not to be entrapped by the glosses of designing demagogues, but cling to the Union.”⁸¹ The *Examiner* urged Unionists to organize, concerned that the “minority of disunionists ...[might] overcome the conservatism of the Union men and drag Maryland into the revolution.”⁸²

In Washington County, a large group assembled on January 15, 1861 at the court house in Hagerstown, to “to take into consideration the alarming condition of the country.” They blamed Northern states for interfering with constitutional rights and were unwilling to permit the use of force to compel seceded states back into the Union. In a series of resolutions, Hagerstown’s citizens declared

it is clear to our comprehension that no such power [to use military force against a state] exists; and that it would be a radical and despotical perversion of the principles and objects of the Union, as well as of the rights of the States, that any such resort to force, by the general government, should be made. And that the only way by which the peace and harmony of the country can be preserved, is by desisting from all attempts to coerce the States seceding from the Union.⁸³

Similarly, the citizens in Smithsburg declared “a resort to force, except so far as may be required for the purpose of collecting the revenue, would be but the certain means of engendering lasting hostility, and of alienating the people of the States.” They went on to resolve, however, that “if the doctrine of secession is the true doctrine, we are constrained to admit that it is simply a heap of loose cobble stones, ready to fall asunder at the first concussion.” They concluded that “we cannot approve of the intemperate haste with which our friends in the Cotton States have rushed into secession; and we sincerely hope our respected fellow citizens of that region will never give occasion to compare their conduct to that of schoolboys.”⁸⁴

To the north, newspapers in Franklin County were divided over the meaning of Lincoln’s election. The *Franklin Repository and Transcript* declared that Lincoln’s victory meant, among other things, that “the beautiful prairies of the far West” would now be “preserved sacred from the polluting foot-prints of a slave.”⁸⁵ The *Valley Spirit*, however, lamented the sectional nature of the voting and declared, “Fifteen States are without a President – they took no part in his election, and refuse their consent to come under an administration founded upon a sentiment hostile to their social system.”⁸⁶

Though many in the region advocated compromise, the growing sectional divide and political strife did limit the impact of those calling for caution. In a divided Carroll County, citizens of Uniontown and Taneytown gravitated toward the North, while in Manchester, with more Southern views, an esteemed Lutheran pastor was secreted away to Abbottstown, Pennsylvania by friends because of his anti-slavery and pro-Union position.⁸⁷ In Funkstown, near Hagerstown in Washington County, concern for preserving constitutional rights had fostered pro-southern sympathies and conflict among neighbors. Joseph Davis, a local store owner, was an ardent Breckinridge supporter, but as the secession crisis worsened and the attack on Fort Sumter took place in April, Davis’ allegiance to the Union led him to abandon his former political affiliation.

His wife, Angela Kirkham, had come from New York and prior to the secession crisis wrote positively of her Funkstown neighbors: “I had never met with a kindlier or more tender hearted people in my life...every service was rendered that affection, generosity, or sympathy could suggest by rich, poor, bond or free.” During the Secession Crisis, however, all of this changed, and she recorded threats of burning her husband’s store, their house, and “running his d— ‘Yankee wife’ out of town.”⁸⁸

During the final months of peace, mid-Marylanders were keenly aware of the difficulties their state would face if forced to choose between warring sections. On January 30, 1861, the editor of *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light* reasoned: “Secession is surely then no remedy for us, because we would not have the slightest protection for our slave property in a Southern Confederacy with but an imaginary line between us and a North deadly hostile to that kind of property.”⁸⁹ Others were displeased with the Southern states that had seceded by February, 1861, describing their secession as “rash in the extreme, and calculated to force us into the position of frontier provinces to a Southern Confederacy.”⁹⁰ Yet they were equally wary of coercive reaction and continued to advocate patience, caution and compromise during the crisis. Citizens in Clear Spring resolved that “the very idea of government implies the right and the power to enforce its authority, yet in the troubled state of the country this power should not be exercised except in a timely forbearance, and a wise discretion, conceding ample time for all other means of conciliation and adjustment.”⁹¹

On the eve of war, many mid-Marylanders were still disavowing radical political means and advocating peaceful resolution within the Union. Local elections and district meetings reflected concern about extremism from either side. The Middletown *Valley Register* declared a “Union Triumph” in an election in Frederick for a seat on the council of the 6th ward: “Phillip Buddy, Union, was elected over John Bender, the rattlesnake candidate.”⁹² In Hagerstown elections at

the beginning of April, the “Union Ticket” won over the “the Opposition,” the newly re-named Democratic Party in Hagerstown.⁹³ Just weeks prior to the attack on Fort Sumter, a Union County Convention was held in Frederick for the purpose of organizing a statewide Union convention in Baltimore in May. Delegates resolved that secession was revolution and “that revolution is only justifiable, when oppression on the part of the government, has implied between it and the



The United States and the Confederacy in 1861

The Union and Confederate states in 1861 (<http://www.education.com/study-help/article/us-history-civil-war-started-when-year/>)

people; and in no case is it justifiable until all Constitutional remedies have been exhausted, including the holding of a National Convention.”⁹⁴ Despite their best efforts to organize a statewide response that would avert war, the worst fears of mid-Marylanders and their neighbors were realized on April 12 when Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter.

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¹ Jacob Engelbrecht, December 17, 1849, *The Diary of Jacob Engelbrecht, 1818-1878*, ed. William R. Quynn, vol. 2 (Frederick, MD: Historical society of Frederick County, 1976), n.p.

² Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 1998; at <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.

³ *Frederick Republican Citizen*, Nov. 8, 1850.

⁴ Four of Maryland's six congressmen (two were absent) and both senators voted for the bill. *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., 1854, pt. 2, pp. 3101 and 3107.

⁵ *Frederick Republican Citizen*, February 17, 1854.

⁶ *Frederick Examiner*, March 8, 1854, March 31, 1854.

⁷ *Frederick Examiner*, May 6, 1857.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Frederick Douglass, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," May 1857, found online at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=772>.

¹⁰ (Gettysburg) *Star and Banner*, March 13, 1857.

¹¹ Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 1998; at <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.

¹² *Frederick Examiner*, June 8, 1859.

¹³ *Frederick Herald*, June 14; *Frederick Examiner*, June 15, 1859.

¹⁴ Free blacks served as day laborers in the grain-based economy of mid-Maryland. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Muddling in the Middle: Maryland and Emancipation," *Reviews in American History*, vol. 14, no.2 (June 1986): 216-221, 217. [See also Edie Wallace, "Reclaiming the Forgotten History and Cultural Landscapes of African-Americans in Rural Washington County, Maryland," *Material Culture*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2007), 12.]

¹⁵ Paul and Rita Gordon, *A Playground of the Civil War* (Frederick, MD: M&B Printing, Inc., 1994), 5.

¹⁶ William R. Quynn, ed., *The Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3 (1858-1878) (Frederick, MD: The Historical Society of Frederick County, Inc., 1976), entry on October 17, 1859, n.p.

¹⁷ Ibid; Gordon, 8; Williams, I, 349.

¹⁸ *Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3, entry on October 17, 1859, n.p.

¹⁹ Edward Shriver to James M. Coale, October 22, 1859, in Gregory A. Stiverson, ed., "In Readiness to Do Every Duty Assigned": *The Frederick Militia and John Brown Raid on Harper's Ferry*, October 17-18, 1859 (Annapolis: Maryland State Archives, 1991), http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc2200/sc2221/000030/html/sc2221_30.html.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3, entry on October 21, 1859, n.p.

²² *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, October 26, 1859.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., November 1, 1859.

²⁵ *The Valley Register*, November 11, 1859.

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- ²⁶ Ibid., December 2, 1859.
- ²⁷ *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, November 18, 1859.
- ²⁸ Ibid., January 11, 1860.
- ²⁹ *Frederick Examiner*, November 30, 1859; December 14, 28, 1859; January 11, 1860; February 1, 1860; *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, February 1, 1860.
- ³⁰ Ibid., December 24, 1859, January 7, 1860.
- ³¹ *The Herald of Freedom & Torch Light*, October 26, 1859; *Frederick Herald*, November 1, 1859.
- ³² Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 1998; at <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.
- ³³ Barbara Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 7.
- ³⁴ Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 1998; at <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, January 4, 1860. These quotes are from the newspaper article and not from Hickman directly.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ *Frederick Herald*, August 14, 1860.
- ³⁹ The region, the “most advanced” in the state in terms of agriculture, provided more than one-third of the state’s output of corn and oats as well as more than half of its output of wheat. The region could boast of a thriving mixed economy, with iron, coal, and flour mills. See Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 8.
- ⁴⁰ Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1850), 226-227, cited in Fields, 19.
- ⁴¹ Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States*, 226, and *Baltimore Sun*, April 5, 1860. Among states, Maryland was the eleventh leading wheat-producing state by 1860. See Carol Lee, *Legacy of the Land: 250 Years of Agriculture in Carroll County, Maryland* (Westminster, MD: The Carroll County Commissioners, 1982), 43-44.
- ⁴² Michael Powell, “‘With Her Southern Sisters’: Frederick County and the Election of 1860,” in Michael A. Powell and Bruce Thomason, eds., *Mid-Maryland: A Crossroads of History*, vol. 1 (Charleston: History Press, 2005), 67, 74.
- ⁴³ *Frederick Examiner*, August 8, 1860.
- ⁴⁴ *Maryland Union* (Frederick), November 1, 1860, in Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 39-40.
- ⁴⁵ *Middletown Valley Register*, July 20, 1860.
- ⁴⁶ Jennifer R. Loux, “The Edge of the South: Slavery and Regional Identity in Frederick County, Maryland, 1848-1865,” Ph.D. diss. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University), 189.
- ⁴⁷ Powell, “‘With Her Southern Sisters,’” 74.
- ⁴⁸ *Frederick Examiner*, July 18, 1860.
- ⁴⁹ *Frederick Herald*, October 23, 1860.
- ⁵⁰ Powell, “‘With Her Southern Sisters,’” 74.
- ⁵¹ *Frederick Examiner*, July 18, 1860.
- ⁵² Powell, “‘With Her Southern Sisters,’” 67.
- ⁵³ *Hagerstown Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, September 12, 1860.
- ⁵⁴ *Frederick Examiner*, July 21, 1860, quoted in William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland From 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 147.
- ⁵⁵ *Frederick Herald*, June 26, October 16, 1860; see Powell, “‘With Her Southern Sisters,’” 75.
- ⁵⁶ *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, August 15, 1860.
- ⁵⁷ *Frederick Herald*, September 18, 1860.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ *Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3, entry on September 6, 1860, n.p. *Valley Register*, September 14 and September 25, 1860.
- ⁶⁰ *Frederick Herald*, September 18, 1860.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid., September 25, 1860.
- ⁶³ Ibid., October 16, 1860.
- ⁶⁴ *Frederick Herald*, November 16, 1860; *Middletown Valley Register*, October 26, 1860.
- ⁶⁵ *Frederick Herald*, October 23, 1860.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., November 13, 1860.

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- ⁶⁷ *Middletown Valley Register*, November 23, 1860.
- ⁶⁸ Loux, 192.
- ⁶⁹ *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, January 2, 1861.
- ⁷⁰ Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 150.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 150; Powell, ““With Her Southern Sisters,”” 72-74.
- ⁷³ *Richmond Daily Enquirer*, December 24, 1860. Found online at http://www.virginiamemory.com/docs/1860_election_returns.pdf.
- ⁷⁴ *Frederick Herald*, November 12, 1860, quoted in Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 155.
- ⁷⁵ *Frederick Examiner*, November 28, 1860, quoted in Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 47.
- ⁷⁶ *Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3, entry on November 16, 1860, n.p.
- ⁷⁷ *Frederick Examiner*, January 9, 1861.
- ⁷⁸ *Diary of Jacob Englebrecht*, vol. 3, entry on January 16, 1861, n.p.
- ⁷⁹ Broadside, “To the People of Frederick County,” Civil War Papers, Record Group 59, Records of the Department of State, National Archives, op cit.; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 48.
- ⁸⁰ *Valley Register*, January 11, 1861.
- ⁸¹ *Frederick Examiner*, January 16, 1861. In February, *The Valley Register* reported “An immense meeting of Union men” complete with the unfurling of a large American flag and a series of patriotic speeches. See *The Valley Register*, February 8, 1861.
- ⁸² Quoted in Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 167.
- ⁸³ *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, January 23, 1861.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ *Franklin Repository and Transcript*, November 14, 1860, p.4, col. 3, in Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), 89.
- ⁸⁶ *Valley Spirit*, November 14, 1860, p.4, col. 1, in Ayers, 91.
- ⁸⁷ Frederic Shriver Klein, ed., *Just South of Gettysburg: Carroll County, Maryland in the Civil War* (Westminster, MD: Historical Society of Carroll County, 1984), 3-5.
- ⁸⁸ Letter of Angela Kirkham Davis to her nieces describing events of the Civil War in S. Roger Keller, *Crossroads of War: Washington County, Maryland in the Civil War* (Shippensburg, PA: Beidel Printing House, 1997), 4-7.
- ⁸⁹ *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, January 30, 1861.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1861.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, January 30, 1861.
- ⁹² *The Valley Register*, March 29, 1861.
- ⁹³ *The Herald of Freedom and Torch Light*, April 10, 1861.
- ⁹⁴ *The Valley Register*, April 5, 1861.