

Congress passes the first Fugitive Slave Act which allows for the recovery of runaway slaves, authorizes the arrest and/or seizure of fugitives, and creates a fine of \$500 for any person who aids a fugitive.

The Missouri Compromise is negotiated allowing Maine to be admitted to the Union as a free state and Missouri as a slave state in 1821. This act will maintain a balance between free and slave states. The compromise establishes the 36 degree, 30' parallel of latitude as a dividing line between free and slave areas of the territories.

Slave trading is abolished in the
District of Columbia.

The U.S. Supreme Court reaches the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision, a 6 to 3 ruling that Congress lacks the power to exclude slavery from the territories, that slaves are property and have no rights as citizens and that slaves are not made free by living in free territory.

In an attempt to amass arms for slave insurrection, John Brown attacks the federal armory and arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

Republican candidate Abraham
Lincoln is elected 16th President of
the United States.

South Carolina becomes the first southern state to secede from the Union.

The Civil War begins with a
Confederate attack on the federal
garrison at Fort Sumter, South Carolina.

In response to outbreak of hostilities at Ft. Sumter, Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers to put down the rebellion.

Fugitive slaves at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, are received and put to work by Union general Benjamin F. Butler, who declares them “contraband of war.”

The first major battle of the war takes place at Bull Run in Virginia, and results in a Confederate victory.

First Confiscation Act nullifies owners' claims to fugitive slaves who had been employed in the Confederate war effort.

General John C. Fremont uses his military authority to emancipate slaves in Missouri. Fearing the action will result in the secession of the border states, and believing the ability to emancipate belongs only to the commander in chief, Lincoln rescinds the order.

Congress abolishes slavery in Washington D.C. Slave owners who pledge loyalty to the union receive compensation for freeing their slaves.

After several weeks of working at his summer residence at the Soldier's Home, Lincoln presents his cabinet with a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. At the request of Secretary of State William Seward, Lincoln delays making the order public until after a Union victory.

In response to the Confederate invasion of Maryland, Union and Confederate armies clash at Antietam Creek in Maryland. The nominal Union victory costs approximately 23,000 combined casualties making it the bloodiest single day in American history.

Lincoln makes the Emancipation Proclamation public knowledge. The final document, to be signed into effect January 1st, 1863, will free slaves “in states, or designated parts of states, the people whereof, shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.”

Lincoln signs the Emancipation
Proclamation into effect.

The 54th Massachusetts, a regiment of African American soldiers and white officers performs ably in an assault on Battery Wagner in the Charleston harbor. The attack fails, but helps prove African Americans to be capable soldiers.

In commemoration of the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Lincoln delivers what comes to be known as the Gettysburg Address. Seeking to define for the North both why they were fighting and why the war must continue, Lincoln's declares that "the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Confederate forces under Jubal Early probe and fire upon the northern defenses of Washington, D.C., throwing the Capital into a state of high alert.

Union general William T. Sherman captures the city of Atlanta, providing the Union public with a must needed morale boost and severing the Confederacies connection with the Deep South.

Lincoln wins re-election over Democratic candidate George McClellan in an election seen largely as a referendum on the progress of the war. General Grant would call Lincoln's victory as important as any on the battlefield.

Lee surrenders his army to Grant at Appomattox Court House. Although several Confederate field armies remain, their surrender is inevitable after that of Lee's army.

Lincoln is assassinated by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater in Washington D.C. He dies the next morning.

The 13th Amendment is ratified,
ending legal slavery in the United
States.