



Harriet Beecher Stowe



Abraham Lincoln

- 1619** The first Africans arrive in North America. Many of the first Africans were not slaves, but indentured servants who would work for four to seven years before being freed.
- 1705** Describing slaves as real estate, Virginia lawmakers allow owners to bequeath their slaves. The same law allowed masters to “kill” and destroy” runaway slaves.
- 1775-1790** Most Northern states abolish slavery in their Constitutions, or adopt emancipation laws. Vermont, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island are among the first.
- 1789** United States Constitution takes effect, in which a black slave is defined as 3/5 of a free white for tax and census purposes. It also stipulates that the slave trade may not be abolished by the federal government until 1808.
- 1793** A federal fugitive slave law is signed, stating that no slave could claim freedom by escaping to a Northern state, but would instead be sent back to the slaveholding state from which he had come. The Underground Railroad developed in response.
- 1808** The slave trade is officially banned in the United States by federal law. However, this only banned the importation of new African slaves. The 1.2 million slaves currently in the US could be bred and traded domestically, and the total number of slaves in the United States would grow to 4 million before the Civil War.
- 1831** Nat Turner, a Virginia slave, leads a rebellion of more than 70 blacks who freed slaves and killed their white owners, leaving 57 white dead before they were captured. The white retaliation was fierce, resulting in the execution of more than 100 blacks.
- 1852** Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and sells 300,000 copies in its first year of publication. The book exacerbates secessionist tension.
- 1857** The Dred Scott decision is written, stating that no person of African descent could become a citizen and therefore, cannot bring suit for civil rights or freedom.
- 1860** South Carolina is the first state to secede from the Union, soon followed by many other Southern states. The Confederate States of America are formed.
- 1861-1865** United States Civil War.
- 1862** Emancipation Proclamation is issued, stating that all slaves in a state currently in rebellion were freed as of January 1, 1863. It did not, however, free slaves in border states.
- 1865** The Thirteenth Amendment is added to the Constitution abolishing slavery throughout the United States.

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