

The Union Is Dissolved!, 1860

Introduction

The election of Abraham Lincoln as the sixteenth President of the United States in November 1860 led to the eventual secession of eleven slave-holding states and the formation of the Confederacy. Convinced that the federal government would initiate judicial and legal action against slavery, South Carolina became the first state to secede. Printed in Charleston, South Carolina, on December 20, 1860, this broadside announces South Carolina's repeal of the Constitution of the United States and the state's secession from the Union. "The Union Is Dissolved!" it declares. The Constitution of the new Confederacy would sanction the unrestricted right to hold slaves.

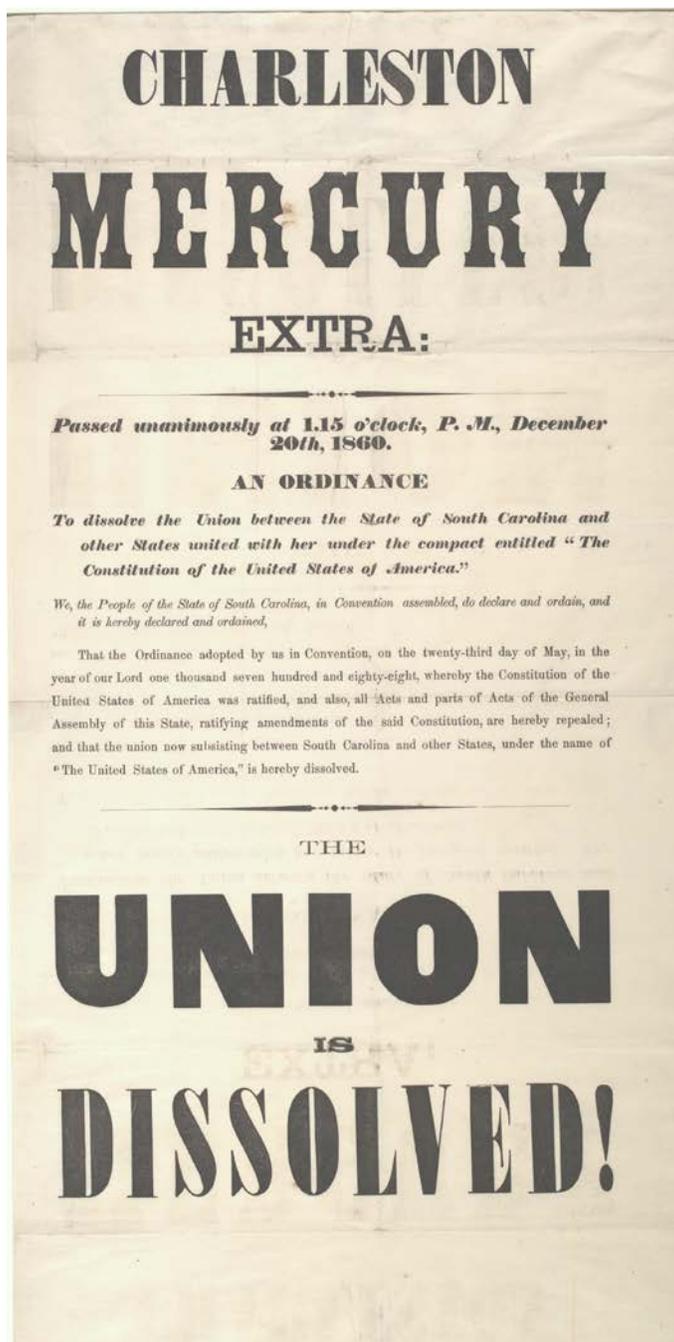
Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction, examine the transcript, and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

1. Some historians refer to this broadside, rather than the bombardment of Fort Sumter, as the "first shot" of the Civil War. Explain what they mean.
2. Why is it not surprising that secession was first declared in South Carolina?
3. On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln in his first Inaugural twice stated "we cannot separate." How realistic was the new president?
4. Why did the creator of this document feel it unnecessary to list any of the reasons for secession?

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Image



Charleston Mercury, The Union Is Dissolved, December 20, 1860. (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC02688)

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Transcript

Charleston Mercury, The Union Is Dissolved, December 20, 1860. (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC02688)

CHARLESTON

MERCURY

EXTRA:

*Passed unanimously at 1.15 o'clock, P.M., December
20th, 1860.*

AN ORDINANCE

*To dissolve the Union between the State of South Carolina and other States united with her
under the compact entitled "The Constitution of the United States of America."*

*We, the People of the State of South Carolina, in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain,
and it is hereby declared and ordained,*

That the Ordinance adopted by us in Convention, on the twenty-third day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, whereby the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified, and also, all Acts and parts of Acts of the General Assembly of this State, ratifying amendments of the said Constitution, are hereby repealed; and that the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of "The United States of America," is hereby dissolved.

The
Union
is
Dissolved!