

CIVIL WAR TIMELINE 1859

[Note: All items relating to Tennessee or reported in Tennessee newspapers will be identified by "TN."]

- pre-1859 TN "July 4, 1855. Another glorious fourth has come and nearly gone. The Union yet stands. We are still bound together, the separate and free states governed by the same constitution. The old ship is yet afloat. She has passed over many a boisterous sea. She has been in many a storm. The sea is now lowering. We see a storm gathering in the distance. The cry is Freedom in national, slavery sectional [sic] A war is being waged upon the institutions of the south. We hope this old ship will pass through unharmed." [Robert Cartmell diary, Madison County, II-L-2]
- " TN "September 10, 1856 [a presidential and gubernatorial election year]. Democracy is bound to triumph." [Cartmell]
- " TN "December 23, 1856. There is some apprehensions [sic] of a general rising of negroes about Christmas—wether [sic] anything of the kind exist[s] about here I don't know but north of this in several places a scheme has been detected and a good many negroes have been hung. This is the result of constant agitation and may yet lead to the most unhappy consequences." [Cartmell]
- " TN "December 25, 1856. There has been a rumor afloat of an insurrection in some parts of the south.... At any event [the slaves] are closely watched." [Cartmell]
- 1859 general TN An African American group in Memphis establishes the Collins Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, the first black congregation independent of the patronage and supervision of a white church.
- " The Georgia legislature passes a law barring owners from manumitting slaves in their wills. Another state law permits free blacks to be sold into slavery if they have been charged with vagrancy.
- " James Parton publishes the first volume in a three-volume *Life of Andrew Jackson*, a work that is still considered a valuable biographical source.
- " Australian landowner Thomas Austin imports 24 English rabbits for hunting. Although in six years Austin will shoot 200,000 of them, that number represents only about half the rabbits on his property. Since five rabbits consume more grass than one sheep, the rapidly multiplying animals will soon create a major problem for sheep ranchers in Australia that will last for decades.
- Jan. 1859 Martin Delaney, an abolitionist and reformer who will become the first African American field officer in the U.S. Army and will recruit thousands of soldiers into the U.S.C.T., publishes his novel *Blake*. It appears as a monthly serial in the *Anglo-African* magazine.
- Jan. 5 TN At this time, the Tennessee State Prison houses only white prisoners. After the Union Occupation in 1862, it will become a Federal military prison. A few representative individuals from the Prison Records will be mentioned from time to time in order to show changes in the prison population. For example, Wm. Simmons, Grainger County (Inmate No. 475), enters the prison on this date to serve two years for manslaughter: "28 years of age; born and raised in Grainger County, his father is dead. His mother lives one mile from Rutledge ... Has but one eye – the right eye out. The two fore fingers on left hand are disfigured No trade." [From Governor's Papers: General Pardon issued Jan. 28, 1860 by Gov. I. G. Harris.]

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- “ **TN** The fourth anniversary of the Young Men’s Christian Association of Nashville was celebrated at the first Baptist Church. [Nagy, Jan. 2]
- Jan. 9 **TN** Carrie Chapman Catt, who will later become a leader in the woman suffrage movement in Tennessee, is born in Ripon, Wisconsin.
- Jan. 12 Liberian President Benson authorizes a military force on his shores to arrest native chiefs engaged in the slave trade. [*New York Times*, p. 3]
- “ **TN** On this date Terrence McMannus (Inmate No. 479), Davidson County, is received at the State Prison for “Crime manslaughter Sentence 5 years from Jany. 12th 1859. 45 years of age, 5 foot 8 inches high, weighs 180 pounds. Blue eyes, dark hair & skin Born in Ireland and came to United States in 1833 to Baltimore Md. ... Came to Tenn. in 1856 and has followed Grading & Turn-piking Has a scar on the upper part of the forehead. No trade.” [From Governor’s Papers: McMannus will receive a general pardon on July 18, 1863, from Andrew Johnson.]
- Jan. 13 As political forces dispute whether Kansas will enter the Union as a slave or free state, “Charley Fisher, an alleged fugitive slave, [is] kidnapped in Leavenworth by Deputy U.S. Marshall Frank Campbell and Frank Harrison, who break into the Planters’ House, over the opposition of Leonard T. Smith, its proprietor.” [*Annals of Kansas*]
- “ **TN** “According to the annual report of the Commissioners of Pensions, the whole number of revolutionary soldiers yet on the rolls is 253, and the number of widows 4209.... The number of revolutionary soldiers reported to have died during the last year is 104, [and of widows] 624.” [Nagy]
- Jan. 14 Journal of the slave-carrying yacht *Wanderer*, from the *New York Times*: “At meridian, Nov. 27, the yacht was within 50 miles of Cumberland light [Georgia], and must have taken the pilot on board on the morning of the 28th, making the run home in about forty days. From a memorandum of ‘List of Cargo, 10 to the Talie,’ it would appear that the number of Africans taken on board was 409. As about 325 are known to have landed, some 75 to 85 must have died on the passage.”
- “ The St. Louis *Democrat* lists steamboat disasters for 1858. These include 47 sunk, 19 burned, and 9 destroyed by explosions. By river, 42 occurred on the Mississippi, 16 on the Ohio, 8 on the Missouri, 3 on the Cumberland, 1 or 2 each on several other rivers, including the Tennessee. [Nagy]
- Jan. 15 From the *New York Times*: “These are becoming serious matters to the whole country. Negroes have been freed by force, for the first time in the history of our Government. Captain JOHN BROWN publishes a letter, openly declaring himself the leader of the party that committee the deed, while a reward is offered for his head. He also told the family distinctly, from whom he took the negroes, who he was at the time: that his name was ‘Old BROWN,’ ‘Ossawatomie BROWN’; and that they might follow him as soon as they pleased—all heads being “at the risk of the owner.”
- Jan. 19 “The very best thing that could possibly be done towards the abolition of Slavery would be *for the North to stop talking about it*. Ten years of absolute silence would do more than fifty of turmoil and hostility, toward a peaceful removal of the evil. It is quite possible that the Abolition crusade may force a bloody and violent termination of the system, but this no sane man desires . . . The great

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necessity is to *let the South alone*,—to throw upon them the necessity of studying their own condition and of looking into their own future. So long as we engross their thoughts by alarming their fears, they have neither time nor inclination to examine the question except from this single point of view.” [New York Times]

- Jan. 24 In Kansas “Charley Fisher, the fugitive slave [see Jan. 13], is rescued by Free-State men, at Leavenworth. In Leavenworth Fisher was a barber. In Mississippi, after the war, he became a State Senator.” [Annals of Kansas]
- Jan. 27 “The twenty-seventh annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society was held in Mercantile Hall to-day. Messrs. Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Pillsbury, Remond, Wright and other veterans in the camp were present and as active as usual. The resolutions and speeches exhibited unfaltering faith in the final triumph of Abolition-ism ; but indicated no new plans for hastening the good time coming.” [New York Times]
- Feb. 3 TN “A resolution, offered in the Arkansas Legislature, requesting the Senators and Representatives in Congress to use their influence to suppress the slave trade, was voted down in a vote of 20 yeas 2 nays.” [Brownlow’s Tri-Weekly Whig, p. 1]
- “ TN The Nashville *Daily Gazette* listed the public high school calendar, to “begin on the first Monday of September of each year, and close on the last Wednesday in June, there being an intermission of one week at the close of the first five months session” – at the end of January. [Nagy]
- Feb. 5 TN Tennessee militia election results are returned on this date. The Tennessee militia is the sustained military force present in the state prior to the Civil War, and the regular training of militiamen will have a significant impact on the war effort in Tennessee.
- “ TN “Two bills are before the Legislature of North Carolina, now in session, which taken together, give free colored people residing therein the choice of removing out of the State in two years, of choosing an owner for themselves, or of being sold at public auction for the benefit of common schools.” [Brownlow’s Tri-Weekly Whig, Knoxville, p. 1]
- Feb. 7 TN “ANNIVERSARY BALL.—That gallant corps of citizen soldiery, the Washington Rifles, are making arrangements to celebrate the approaching anniversary of Washington’s birth-day with a grand military ball, the proceeds of which will be presented to the fund for the purchase of Mount Vernon.”[Memphis *Avalanche*, p. 3]
- “ TN “PACIFIC RAILROAD. To-day will assemble a convention of all those now connected with the various railroad interests converging to this point, and who are desirous of aiding in the construction of a railroad to the Pacific.” [Memphis *Avalanche*, p. 3]
- Feb. 8 TN Probable birth date of Jesse M.H. Graham in Clarksville TN. An African American newspaper editor, Graham will be elected as a Republican to represent Montgomery County in the 50th Tennessee General Assembly, 1897-1898, although he will be unseated on a technicality and will never actually serve.
[<http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/exhibits/blackhistory/bios/graham.htm>]
- Feb. 9 TN “PLAN FOR ANOTHER RAILROAD. . . . Hon. J.D.C. Atkins, the representative in Congress from the Ninth Congressional District . . . has introduced a joint resolution [for] a survey . . . of the eastern bank of the Mississippi river from

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Kentucky City to the boundary line between the States of Tennessee and Mississippi, for ...an approximate estimate of the cost ... necessary to the construction of a levee [T]hat enterprise, when completed, would insure the construction of a railroad from Memphis to Kentucky City, which would connect at the point with all great lines of internal improvement which penetrate the North, East, and West.” [Memphis *Avalanche*, p. 3]

- Feb. 10 **TN** “THE SPLIT IN THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH. Delegates of the Northern and Western Conferences of the Methodist Protestant church met last month in Springfield, Ohio, and withdrew themselves from all official association with their brethren in the Southern States. The full proceedings are not yet before us.” [Brownlow’s *Tri-Weekly Whig*, p. 2]
- Feb. 12 **TN** Edward S. Cheatham of Robertson County is bonded as Agent of the Edgefield & Kentucky Railroad. Bond is \$100,000. The Edgefield & Kentucky RR, the predecessor to the L&N and CSX was the major north-south railroad used by both sides during the Civil War for transport of material and personnel. Cheatham County is named for Edward S. Cheatham; his sawmill north of Nashville in Robertson along the railroad was named “Cheatham’s Station,” later the city of Greenbrier.
- Feb. 14 Oregon is admitted as the 33rd U.S. state.
- “ **TN** “MEMPHIS LIGHT GUARD.—This military organization, . . . although in the first year of their history as a company, . . . received their beautiful new uniforms on Saturday, and will give it its first airing to-day in public parade. It is composed of a blue dress-coat, trimmed with buff and gold; pants of the same color, with a stripe of gold for officers and buff for privates; hat of West Point style, corresponding with the uniform, and having on the front, encircled with a gold wreath, the initials ‘L.G.’” [Memphis *Avalanche*, p. 3]
- Feb. 15 **TN** “THE MILITARY DISPLAY.—We had a fine military display yesterday in honor of the anniversary of the Memphis Light Guards. The procession was composed of the Light Guards, Capt. J.G. Gennett, and the Washington Rifles, two as gallant corps of citizen soldiery as our vision ever fell upon. The festivities of the occasion closed with the grand military and civic ball of the Light Guards at Odd Fellows’ hall in the evening.” [Memphis *Avalanche*, p. 3]
- Feb. 16 **TN** “The people of Troy are about to have an Art Exhibition for the benefit of the poor. The people of Chicago propose a similar movement there. We judge from our exchanges that there is a very abundant supply of mendicants in the Northern cities at this time. We are glad to see that the philanthropy of their more favored is turning that way. They will have less to waste on the ‘horrors’ of slavery at the South.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 2]
- Feb. 17 **TN** “A bill to prevent emancipation of slaves in North Carolina has been rejected by the House of Representatives of that State. The project was very warmly debated.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 1]
- Feb. 19 **TN** “The admission of Oregon as a State into the Union increases the number of stars in our national banner to thirty-three. We have now two States upon the Pacific—two mighty pillars of the temple of the Union, towering staunch and majestic on the western verge of the continent. . . . Her admission into the Union was bitterly opposed by the Black Republicans and their Southern allies in Congress

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because it secures a Democratic Senate for four years more against all contingencies!" [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 2]

- Feb. 20 **TN** "The prices for negroes continue extraordinarily high. At a recent sale at Natchez, Miss., thirty-one were sold on ten months credit, for the aggregate sum of \$41,160, which is an average of \$1,328 each. They were, with four exceptions, between the ages of twelve and twenty-two." [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 1]
- “ **TN** The city of Nashville invites sealed bids “for 1,000 ferry boats to be placed 100 yards apart throughout the city, in order to enable foot passengers to cross our thoroughfares.” The mud in the city streets is so deep it spills over people’s boot-tops. In one instance a fire engine was so thoroughly bogged down trying to navigate the muddy streets, the firemen had to pack the hoses to a fire on their shoulders. [Nashville *Daily Gazette*]
- Feb. 22 **TN** “Forty-five negroes, of ages ranging from six to fifty years belonging to the estate of the late John Clarke, Jr., were sold at Fayetteville on the 12th inst., on a credit of six months, and brought the aggregate amount of \$26,500.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 2]
- Feb. 24 **TN** “The Massachusetts House of Representatives have adopted the amendment to the State Constitution requiring a two years’ residence in that State after naturalization before voting. It was a party vote—Black Republicans voting in the affirmative, and the Democrats in the negative. This knocks the . . . argument on the head that foreigners at the North are Abolitionists.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 2]
- “ **TN** “The number of animals now in use in the Army is stated as follows by the Department: 6,060 cavalry horses; 2575 horses in the Quartermaster’s Department; 13,960 mules; 45 camels and 132 oxen.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 2]
- Feb. 26 **TN** “MAJOR GENERAL OF THE WESTERN DIVISION.—Returns of the recent election for Maj. General of the Western Division of Tennessee Militia, have been received Unofficial returns leave no doubt that Col. John J. Brooks, of Madison, is elected.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 2]
- Feb. 27 **TN** Tennessee is in the perfect geographical position to experience a total eclipse of the moon, beginning at 4:13 a.m. [Nagy]
- Feb. 28 Daniel Sickles, who will later serve as a Union General in the Civil War, shoots and kills Philip Barton Key (son of Francis Scott Key) near the White House. (Sickles has discovered Key’s affair with his wife.) Following the advice of a defense team that includes Edwin M. Stanton, Sickles enters the first recorded plea of temporary insanity and will eventually be acquitted of the murder charge.
- Mar. 1 **TN** In addition to several stories about flooding along the Mississippi River and the failure of the levees at several points, the *Memphis Daily Appeal* features a story about Christy’s Minstrels, a black-face touring group. The story concludes with these lines: “A pleasanter evening cannot be spent than in listening to their fine music and laughing at their pungent wit. There is nothing more healthy after a day’s business than a hearty, hilarious laugh.” [Memphis *Daily Appeal*, p. 3]
- Mar. 4 Opening day of the 36th U.S. Congress, under President James Buchanan, with a Democratic majority in the Senate and a Republican plurality in the House. During

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this legislative session Kansas, newly admitted to the Union, will be represented in Congress for the first time, and seven states (South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas) will secede from the Union.

- “ **TN** A Knoxville newspaper lauds the organization of two new fire companies in the city and suggests that the churches have cisterns built and gutters added to their buildings to fill them, in the absence of city water works. [Nagy]
- Mar. 7 In *Ableman v. Booth*, the United State Supreme Court upholds the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, reversing an 1854 Wisconsin court decision that determined the act to be unconstitutional.
- “ A New York legislator announces that 176 fugitive slaves have passed through Albany on the Underground Railroad during the last seven months of 1858.
- Mar. 8 A Kansas doctor and his son, jailed for helping fugitive slaves escape, are dragged from the jail by a lynch mob and killed. [*New York Times*, p. 2]
- Mar. 10 **TN** A huge fire in Memphis burns five newspaper offices and several stores in the downtown area. [*New York Times*, p. 1] *The Memphis Appeal* had made an editorial plea for an improved water supply to the city only four days earlier.
- Mar. 11 **TN** “The Action of the Democratic State Convention. The nomination of Isham G. Harris ... for Governor ... was unanimous and enthusiastic;— such ... as bespeaks the merited popularity of the man and the strong hold which he has upon the confidence and affections of the honest masses of this State.” [*Union and American*, p. 2]
- Mar. 12 The U.S Marshal in Key West arrests the master of the slave brig *Tyrant* of Rockland, Maine. “The name of the slaver was found on her stern under several thick coats of paint. There can be no doubt as to the identity.” The US Congress had banned the importation of slaves after January 1, 1808, but many ships have continued to elude the embargo.
- Mar. 14 “The Southern portion of the Confederacy is in a highly prosperous condition – perhaps never more so. . . . The amount [of cotton] yet to come in will exceed one million bales, giving a crop this year of over four millions of bales. . . . The average price of field hands may be stated at \$1500, and the tendency is upward [to \$2000].” [*New York Times*, p. 2]
- “ **TN** Many Tennesseans attend the funeral of former Governor (1845-1847) Aaron Venable Brown. A lawyer who began his practice with James K. Polk, Brown served in the State House and Senate and the U.S. Congress. He was a member of the Southern Convention that met in Nashville to formulate policies on the slavery issue, and he was serving as Postmaster General of the United States at the time of his death. [Nagy]
- Mar. 15 **TN** “A bill ... has just been introduced in the Michigan Legislature punishing any Southerner with imprisonment in the State prison for a term of ten years, who shall enter the State accompanied by any one of his slaves.” [*Memphis Daily Appeal*, p. 1]
- “ **TN** “FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW DECLARED CONSTITUTIONAL.— ... In the case of the United States vs. Sherman H. Booth, [the Court found] that the marshal had a right, and it was his duty to resist by force any such interference on the part of the State powers; and that the Fugitive Slave act was clearly constitutional.” [*Memphis Daily Appeal*, p. 2]

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- Mar. 18 **TN** The Clarksville *Weekly Chronicle* proclaims, “If [John] Netherland is the candidate of the Opposition [for governor], he will go out of East Tennessee with such a majority as will make his election sure beyond contingency.” (p. 1) The *Tribune* refers to this gentleman as “the sweet-souled Col. Netherland.”
- Mar. 19 **TN** The last stone on the lower terrace is laid in place, ending construction of the Tennessee Capitol. The legislature last appropriated construction funds during the 1855-1856 session, but work has continued without additional funding to 1859.
- Mar. 25 **TN** “The grading on the first 30 miles of our Railroad, is rapidly approaching completion. The iron, we understand will be here in about two weeks—when the track laying will commence, at the River, and continue in the direction of the Kentucky line.” [Clarksville *Weekly Chronicle*, p. 3]
- Mar. 28 **TN** A destructive tornado rolls through Nashville during the night, ripping large sections of roof from the First Presbyterian Church, the Court House, and other buildings; knocking down the wall of a saddle and harness shop; and blowing down trees and chimneys. “Signs, window-shutters, awnings, &c., got on a general spree, and rushed through the streets at such a rapid rate that it was dangerous to look out upon the scene.” [Nashville *Daily Gazette*/ Nagy]
- Mar. 29 **TN** The Tennessee State Opposition Convention meets in Nashville and nominates John Netherland for governor. However, Democrat Isham G. Harris, first elected in 1857, will continue to hold the seat until the Union occupation of Nashville in 1862.
- Mar. 30 The U.S. Revenue Cutter *McClelland* is ordered to the coast of Louisiana to intercept a tender said to be waiting off the coast with a cargo of slaves.
- “ **TN** Large pike caught in the TN River are selling for \$5 apiece. [Nagy]
- Mar. 31 **TN** On this date John Clark (Inmate No. 517), Shelby County, enters the State Penitentiary: “Crime larceny – Sentence 5 years from reception . . . 32 years of age, weighs 167 lbs. high [sic] 5 feet 7 inches Born and raised in Montreal Canada Had been Memphis about four months driving an Omnibus His Parents are dead Has brother& sister in Montreal Canada Dark hair Eyes & shin [sic] Has a Severe scar runing [sic] from the centre of nose over the left Eye near the edge of the Eye brow Has the left Arm the American Flag with the words Liberty also a monument on Same arm all tattoed [sic] in Blue ink Stone cutter by trade.”
- Apr. 1 **TN** Col. Jesse Taylor, ... county clerk of Henderson County since the revision of the Constitution, has resigned his office. Col. Taylor was, we presume, the oldest clerk in the State. [*Union & American*, p. 2]
- TN** On this date William McLean (Inmate No. 507), Shelby County, is received at the State Penitentiary at Nashville: “Crime larceny. 26 years of age weighs 181 lbs high [sic] 5 feet 9 inches. Born in Edenburg [sic] Scotland. Came to the United States in 1843. Lived in Alton Illinois. Father & Mother lived in Alton Illinois. Also two brothers, both single. One Sister & two brothers in Scotland. Light hair fair skin & Blue eyes. Trade Painter.” [Later note: McLean escaped Oct. 24, 1863.]
- Apr. 2 Forty-two people die in the collision of two steamships on the Ohio River.
- TN** The number of convicts in the State Penitentiary reaches 363, 65 more than the previous year, and the highest number recorded to date. The 352 rooms, formerly

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supposed to be sufficient for many years, are now full, “and from the immense custom which Memphis seems determined to give us, it is more than probable that another enlargement will be necessary.” [Nashville *Daily Gazette* / Nagy]

- “ TN Gov. Isham G. Harris issues a writ of requisition to Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase for John Mann, “a slave man of coulor [*sic*],” believed to have fled to Ohio. Mann has been implicated as an accessory in the murder of George E. Miller of Jackson, TN. Ohio Attorney General C. P. Wolcott feels the case against Mann is weak, claiming, “Upon the whole matter, I am very clearly of opinion that no proper case is made out of issuing (your) warrant of extradition.” Chase’s private secretary adds: “The Governor declines to issue a warrant of extradition in the case of John Mann.” [Governors’ papers] Chase would later become Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury and Chief Justice of the United States.
- Apr. 4 TN Harmon York is elected by the County Court of Van Buren County as “Collector of the State and County Revenue in [said] County,” and bonded unto the State of Tennessee in the amount of \$15,000.00. Attest, G. B. Johnson, Clerk of the County Court of Van Buren. [RG 319: *Bonds of Public Officials*]
- “ Daniel Emmet, founder of the earliest blackface minstrel troupe, first performs the song “Dixie” on a New York stage. The song becomes popular with Manhattan’s working-class audiences, most of whom support the Southern cause. The song was probably written by Ohioans Ben & Lew Snowden, the sons of freed slaves.
- Apr. 5 TN “The Clarksville *Chronicle* complains that the Democratic party is yielding up the rights of the South in Kansas. . . . The Democratic party maintains the doctrine of the Dred Scott decision, which declares that the citizens of the South can carry their property into any territory of the Union, and hold it there under the protection of the constitution and laws.” [Nashville *Union and American*, p. 2]
- “ TN “Jeffrey Devon, formerly a slave of Joseph Robinson, the founder of St. Joseph, Mo., died in that town on the 31st. . . . Deceased by long association with his master in the Indian country, became an expert trader, and realized sufficient to purchase his freedom in 1835. He was then employed as government interpreter. In 1844 he accompanied a number of Iowa, and Sacs, and Fox Indian chiefs, under the charge of Col. Melody, to Europe. His interpretation of their language was so intelligent that he ... made a favorable impression upon all the dignitaries of foreign courts at which they were received D’Israeli and other literati showed him marked attention. He returned to this country loaded with presents, having mastered several European languages during his visit. [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 3]
- “ A call goes out for a Southern Convention of all slave-holding states. *The Charleston Mercury* claims that the Democratic party in the North “is tainted with Anti-Slavery heresies or prejudices, and is utterly averse to supporting the slave-holding States in the assertion of their rights.” It urges the Charleston Nominating Convention to limit its delegates to representatives of the South. [New York *Times*, p. 4]
- Apr. 6 TN The present total membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church South is 699,175. [Union & American, p. 1]
- Apr. 7 TN The Memphis *Inquirer* discusses the punishment of a slave convicted of manslaughter: “As slaves are not [permitted] to enter the penitentiary, [he was] sentenced to receive 40 lashes on the bare back, and to be placed in the stocks and subjected to the public gaze for the space of one hour.”

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- “ **TN** Brownlow’s *Tri-Weekly Whig* describes the recent Whig Convention that nominated John Netherland for governor as “the largest , the ablest, and most enthusiastic Convention of the kind, that ever convened in the State. The best men, the most experienced men, and the venerable and aged men of the party, as well as the young men and the middle-aged men, were there—earnest [and] determined to fight the battles of the country.”
- “ **TN** The Knoxville *Daily Register* also supports conventions: “We are decidedly in favor of Conventions, and think the success of the Democratic party depends upon that harmony which can be secured only through that medium.”
- “ **TN** The *Whig* further insists that “The slaves actually have a *secret society* which convenes every Tuesday night, in East Knoxville. In Knoxville proper, the negroes have a *day school* in operation! These outrages ... are beginning to alarm our citizens. In a word, there is as much *abolitionism* in Knoxville, as there is in any town of its size in the South!”
- “ **TN** “The emigration from California to the Atlantic States is increasing. The Northern Light [railroad], from Aspinwall, brought 670 passengers, and the Illinois 340. The low fares . . . doubtless have much to do in stimulating this emigration from the Pacific to the Atlantic.” [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 3]
- Apr. 8 The Navy names its eight new steamships after Indian tribes. [NYT, p. 4]
- Apr. 9 **TN** A Tennessee legislator receives national attention when he claims that under President Buchanan “every single principle of the party has been abandoned, and every pledge violated . . .” [The President has] “done enough since his election to make public honor a matter of doubt and the continuance of republican freedom a question of difficult solution.” [New York Times, p. 10]
- “ **TN** The Memphis *Avalanche* reports that Gen. Gideon Pillow has left the city to return to his home in Maury County. “We are pleased to learn that, though overflown to some extent, his plantations below were not seriously damaged by the late rise in the Mississippi river.”
- “ **TN** According to the Nashville *Union American*, the effort to rebuild the cotton factory at McMinnville is about to prove successful. The committee to procure subscriptions have raised about nine thousand dollars, [and a group of local citizens] have pledged themselves to raise the remaining one thousand, which will ensure the rebuilding of the establishment.
- “ **TN** In the same newspaper we read: “The fair at the Lincoln County Agricultural and Mechanical Society, will commence the first Monday in October and continue five days.”
- Apr. 11 **TN** On this date G.W. Harred, alias J.B. Smith (Inmate No. 522) enters the State Penitentiary at Nashville: “Crime larceny Passing counterfeit money Sentence 4 years (from reception) . . . 21 Years of age weighs 151 lbs. high [sic] 5 Feet 9 ½ inches Born & raised in Carter County Kentucky Father Dead Mother one Brother & one Sister lives in Metropolis Illinois Single man Dark hair & skin Blue eyes . . . Ship carpenter.” (Harred will be discharged January 12, 1863.)
- Apr. 12 **TN** The Memphis *Appeal* announces that the grading of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad has been completed as far as Union City, a distance of thirteen

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miles from Hickman, Kentucky, the western terminus of the road, and that the superstructure has been completed for that distance, and now is “ready for the iron.”

- Apr. 14 **TN** Editor Brownlow comments on his recent journey riding in “a new passenger car, upon her trial trip, manufactured in this city, of Tennessee lumber, by the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad Company. It is a good job, creditable to the builder, and the Company, and we hope to see ‘more of the same sort’ manufactured here. We were told that it cost a thousand dollars *less* than a similar article ... delivered here from the North.”
- Apr. 15 **TN** The Nashville *Banner* proclaims: “We are strongly inclined to the opinion that Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson is responsible for all the abolitionism and emancipationism of modern times.”
- “ **TN** The Nashville Board of Alderman approves a June election regarding a bond issue of \$100,000 for the construction of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. [Nashville *Union & American*, p. 3]
- Apr. 20 Charles Dickens publishes *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- Apr. 22 Newspapers in Baltimore and Savannah denounce the efforts of a few “Southern fanatics” to re-open the slave trade. This year has seen the trials of several individuals who have been accused of illegally transporting slaves into this country.
- Apr. 25 Ground is broken for the Suez Canal.
- Apr. 27 The jury in Daniel Sickles’ murder trial [see Feb. 28] returns a verdict of “not guilty by reason of insanity.” A group of 37 abolitionists from Oberlin, Ohio, are brought to trial for assisting in the “kidnapping” of a slave who was being returned to his owner under the Fugitive Slave Act. Their trial, which continues for weeks, fascinates the country.
- “ “By her advertisement, it will be seen that Sara Estell, to-day commences her regular ice cream season. Ladies and gentlemen can be provided with excellent ice cream and other delectable summer refreshments by calling at her establishment, No. 89, Cherry street [now 4th Ave.].” [Nagy – Note: *Sarah Estell, a free black business-woman, first opened her successful ice cream parlor and catering business in Nashville in 1840.*]
- Apr. 30 As the Democratic Party, North and South, splinters over the slavery issue, as embodied by the Lecompton Constitution in Kansas, Illinois formally expels Senator Stephen A. Douglas from the party. [New York Times, p. 11] Douglas, who had defeated Abraham Lincoln in the Senatorial election two years earlier following a fiery series of debates, will eventually lose to Lincoln in the Presidential contest.
- May 3 **TN** Governor Harris and Colonel Netherland begin their gubernatorial campaigns at a forum in Nashville. Each candidate delivers a two-hour speech. [Memphis *Avalanche*, p. 2]
- May 5 The Detroit *Free Press* announces the discovery of a new comet by a scientist in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- May 6 Referring to the split in the Methodist Church over the issue of slavery, a church leader writes, “If [the Northern Conference] did not intend to leave the South alone,

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they should not have separated from the Southern Church. It was far better to fight out the Slavery question, even in acrimonious debate, within the Church itself, than to threaten a discussion of it, by two hostile bodies, armed with carnal weapons.” [New York Times, p. 4]

- May 7 **TN** The Memphis *Avalanche* publishes a letter urging the repeal of the ban on the African slave trade: “As the law now stands . . . branding the trade as piracy, [it] is a moral condemnation of the institution [and] . . . ought to be repealed. To prove this it will become necessary to show that slavery is necessary and right, and that the slave trade would be more a blessing to the blacks than the whites.” [p. 2]
- May 10 A boxing match in St. Louis between prize fighters Conley and Bendigo finally comes to an end when Conley, too battered to continue, throws in the towel after 89 rounds. [*St. Louis Democrat*]
- May 12 **TN** Nearly 60 people are killed in a boiler explosion on the steamer *St. Nicholas* from St. Louis. The boat and its cargo are totally destroyed. The newspaper compares the accident to “the memorable explosion of the *Pennsylvania*, which occurred near the same place” a year earlier. [Memphis *Avalanche*]
- May 17 **TN** The *New York Times* publishes a report from the West Tennessee [Baptist] Bible Society, meeting in Jackson, on the religious instruction of slaves: “We are of opinion that much more ought to be done . . . for the religious instruction of this part of our population. They have immortal spirits, that must live forever in bliss or woe. They are deplorably ignorant of the Bible, and as but few can read, they are almost entirely dependant on oral instruction, to be enlightened. They form an element in our families, and their religious instruction is as imperative upon the master, as that of the child upon a parent”
- “ The Associated Press reports that “all the new naval steamers shall be placed in commission as they shall be successively finished, and before the close of this year, every available vessel will probably be in active service.” [*New York Times*, p. 5] The paper expresses some concern about ongoing wars in Mexico and Europe.
- “ **TN** Passengers on the Memphis and Ohio Railroad brag that they have made the trip from Chicago to Memphis in 28 hours – two hours ahead of schedule. [Nashville *Daily News*, p. 2] (*Note: Amtrak makes the same trip today in 10.5 hours.*)
- May 18 A number of letters to the *New York Times* discuss the possibility of Southern secession, but, says a Mr. Boyce, “if the South finds the North irresistible in the Union, what under heaven will save her from the North out of the Union? . . . Where is her deliverance to come from when Northern adventurers will see in her as legitimate a prey as Mexico or Nicaragua?” [p. 4]
- May 20 **TN** A tongue-in-cheek letter to the editor suggests that, since the price of slaves has increased in border states because of the large number of escapees, the government should reconsider its ban on the slave trade in order to lower prices. [*New York Times*, p. 2] Meanwhile, false rumors of a slave rebellion terrify the white citizens of the West Indies. [p. 1] The Nashville & Henderson Railroad carries its first passengers. [*Daily News*, p. 2]
- May 21 The Supreme Court takes up the question of whether a slave is a person and thus

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subject to punishment for stealing mail. [*New York Times*, p. 2] (*Note: The final decision is that the slave is not a person, but property, so the owner is advised to apply a number of lashes.*)

- May 22 Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes books, is born in Scotland.
- May 24 **TN** Fundraising begins for the proposed University of the South. Bishop Leonidas Polk (originally from Maury County) has already raised \$275,000 and hopes to reach \$500,000 before the end of the year. [*Nashville Daily News*, p. 2]
- “ **TN** A Maury County slave owner sues the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad for the price of a slave who escaped to Canada by buying a railroad ticket on the T&A. [*Nashville Daily News*, p. 2]
- May 26 Kentucky Democrats unite behind Presidential candidate James Guthrie. After many ballots at the 1860 Democratic Convention, Guthrie will eventually lose to Stephen A Douglas. [*New York Times*, p. 2]
- “ Michigan Congregationalists release a statement in support of the Ohioans jailed for resisting the Fugitive Slave laws: “A system of slavery like our own, is not fit to be tolerated anywhere among the common offspring of our one Father, and least of all in a nation which claims to be not only civilized but Christian.” [*NY Times*, p. 2]
- “ **TN** The *Nashville Christian Advocate* speaks in glowing terms of a great revival in the temperance cause in the city, led by three orders —Sons of Temperance, Good Templars, and Temple of Honor—which met in a Union Celebration on May 18.
- May 28 **TN** A number of huge blocks of Tennessee marble, purchased for use in the U.S. Capitol building, are shipped from East Tennessee quarries to Washington, D.C. [*Nashville Daily News*, p. 2]
- “ A meeting of the opponents of the Fugitive Slave Law is convened in Cleveland. The 3,500 people present elect Ohioan Joshua R. Giddings (lawyer, abolitionist, U.S. Representative) as president of the convention. [*New York Times*, p. 1]
- May 31 **TN** From the *New York Times*: “A personal difficulty occurred at Nashville, Tenn., on Friday, May 20, between Mr. T. W. BEAUMONT, one of the editors of the *Banner*, and Mr. G. G. POINDEXTER, one of the editors of the *Union and American*.” Insulted by an editorial in the *Banner* referring to the Democratic leadership as “traitors,” Poindexter storms into the *Banner* offices. After a brief altercation there, the two men meet in the street and exchange shots. Beaumont receives a slight wound to the leg, after which the two men shake hands and return to work.
- June 11 The Comstock Lode is discovered near Virginia City, Nevada. This vast deposit of silver and gold will yield \$145 million in the next 11 years.
- “ A letter to the editor of a Nashville newspaper complained: “I trust you will allow me to enter my protest against the wearing of hoops at all times and in all places. . . . Hoops are inconvenient in crowds, and seriously annoy nervous individuals. If properly memorialized upon the subject, do you suppose the ladies would be kind enough to dispense with their hoops when going into public gatherings? I make the suggestion with the utmost kind-ness toward the ladies and their hoops, and I trust the dear creatures will think kindly of it.” [Nagy]
- June 15 The so-called “Pig War,” a boundary dispute between the Americans and British in

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the San Juan Islands begins with the death of the eponymous pig, who is the only casualty of the war.

- June 16 **TN** “The Nashville Female Academy held its Forty-third Annual Exhibition. . . . A graduating class of fifty-eight young ladies received diplomas. Such an array of adorned and cultivated beauty as this class presented has seldom, if ever, been seen in our land. The President’s eyes filled with grateful tears as he returned them to their parents and guardians—none of their class having died during the long educational term—and dismissed them with an affectionate farewell to the ‘wide, wide world.’” [Nashville *Christian Advocate*]
- June 30 The Great Blondin crosses Niagara Falls on a tightrope.
- July A Gold Rush begins in the Colorado Territory as 100,000 prospectors swarm to the area, determined to arrive at “Pike’s Peak or Bust!”
- July 1 Amherst and Williams Colleges play the first intercollegiate baseball game in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Amherst wins, 73-32, in 26 innings.
- July 5 **TN** William George, County Court Clerk of McMinn County, is bonded as special commissioner to “sell the lands and negroes of the Estate of Thomas W. Maston,” deceased, and to “make true report to this Court of his proceedings therein and account for all moneys [*sic*] and vouchers by him received in and about the sale of said Lands & Negroes according to law.” Bond is \$40,000.
- July 7 U.S. Army Headquarters issues orders for greater attention to regular and systematic instruction in the use of bayonets and small arms. [NYT, p. 4]
- “ **TN** The Winchester *Home Journal* advertises a new daily paper called *The Slave Finder and Thief Detector*, which “shall be devoted almost exclusively to . . . the publication of every fact connected with the running away, from their master, of the slaves in the South [We] will be in constant communication with all the Jailors in the Southern States. . . . Subscribe . . . and you get a journal devoted immediately to your interests; and when you want to learn where your slave is, instead of running all over several thousand miles of territory, you have only to examine the columns of your Slave Finder, to get the required information.”
- July 9 The *Clothilde*, the last ship known to carry slaves to the United States, (although a few others claiming to be whalers are suspected and investigated) arrives in Mobile Bay, Alabama, with an illegal shipment of slaves. Its captain, Tim Meaher, has made a wager that he can sneak a shipload of slaves into the country after dark.
- July 11 Charles Dickens publishes *A Tale of Two Cities*. The Oberlin rescuers [see April 27], who had been jailed for their efforts to rescue a runaway slave captured under the Fugitive Slave Act, receive a hero’s welcome when they return home.
- July 12 An article in the *Mobile Register* argues for the re-legalization of the slave trade, insisting that “if the African Slave-trade is wrong, and sinful, and infamous, the same is also true not only of our inter-state Slave-trade, but of our institution of Slavery itself.” The author concludes by claiming this to be an issue of concern to the slave-holding states only, and that they should be given exclusive control over it. Another letter receives wide circulation in newspapers across the country – the writer suggests a form of gradual emancipation by allowing all children of slaves to be born free.

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- July 14 **TN** The Nashville *Christian Advocate* takes a stand on the issue of marriage among slaves: “The duty of masters is not yet fully understood. And where they know their duty and do it, in refusing to separate husband and wife, the laws of several States present too feeble barriers against the breaking up of families, in the partition of estates and by forced sales. The laws of several Southern States need amendment in this respect. Humanity, Christianity calls for it. We hope the Christian sentiment will shape and press such an amendment.”
- “ The Kansas Constitutional Convention holds its first meeting.
- July 18 **TN** “We are requested by W.H. Johnson, Esq., the keeper of the Penitentiary, to State that he has still on hand a large quantity of ‘beaten rock’ which he will be glad to give away to any person who may want it.” [Nagy – Nashville *Daily Gazette*]
- July 19 Former Ambassador Forsyth claims to speak for many in the Gulf States when he says he “looks upon slavery as the glory and strength of the ... nation,” adding that “nothing now remains to complete its triumph but the repeal of all laws prohibiting the African slave-trade.” [*New York Times*, p. 4]
- July 20 A number of Indian attacks on Nebraska settlers make headlines across the country.
- July 21 **TN** The Tennessee Historical Society invites citizens of the state to send in items (letters, books, journals, portraits, etc.) which may have historical significance: “It is the object of the Society to place in its archives and museum everything having any historic interest, and as the rooms of the Society are in the State Capitol, all persons may be assured that their contributions will be safely preserved.” [Winchester *Home Journal*]
- July 22 **TN** The Pulaski *Citizen* reports that “JEFFERSON DAVIS is preparing a bill to bring forward during the next session of Congress, to repeal the laws against the slave-trade.”
- July 25 Peace is finally achieved between France and Austria. The return of fugitive slaves to their masters continues to make headlines in northern newspapers.
- July 28 President Buchanan announces he will not be a candidate for re-election. Formerly Secretary of State under Polk, Buchanan, the only bachelor President, is also the last Secretary of State to ascend to the Presidency. In a recent survey of Presidential historians, Buchanan was chosen the worst President in history for his failure to avert the Civil War. (Second worst was Andrew Johnson, for his decision just after the Civil War to side with Southern whites and oppose improvements in justice for blacks beyond abolishing slavery.)
http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060218/presidential_errors_060218/20060218?hub=World
- “ **TN** Middle Tennessee is suffering from an extraordinary heat wave. The *Christian Advocate* reports, “Nashville for the most part of last week was a very furnace. On Tuesday, 19th, three persons died of sun-stroke. The civil engineer superintending city work, reports the loss of a few hands from the same cause.” The rivers are so low, a number of the steamers are unable to reach the wharves. [Nagy]
- July 29 Many newspapers are now predicting the coming conflict – still nearly two years away – as they consider some of the issues involved in the 1860 election. One editorial warns, “On a purely slave question the North must unite, as the South always will, and the practical fact to be noticed is, that the North is the stronger. If

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the Slave States could but learn wisdom, they would, as the weaker section, cease to tender issues of a sectional character; for to go to war on such grounds is simply to invite their own defeat.” [New York Times, p. 4]

- July 30 **TN** Certification of election of Phillip G. S. Perkins as county judge for Williamson County, John E. Tulloss, Sheriff. [*Evidently, Tulloss was acting Sheriff, as the previous sheriff of Williamson was ousted by the county commission.*] [RG 87]
- July 31 A Naval force lands in China to protect American interests in Shanghai.
- Aug. 1 **TN** At a regular meeting of the (Memphis) Light Guards held at their armory, militia officers were elected: James Genette was elected Captain, replacing John L. Saffarans, resigned. Other officers elected include: David N. Kendall, 1st Lt., Charles L. Powers, 2nd Lt., and Robert T. Hood, 3rd Lt. [RG 131]
- Aug. 4 **TN** Thomas A. R. Nelson is elected U.S. Congressman, representing the First Congressional District of TN in the 36th Congress. He defeats opponent Landon C. Haynes by 69 votes. Nelson will later serve as defense counsel for President Andrew Johnson during Johnson’s 1868 impeachment trial. [RG 87]
- Aug. 7 Newspapers report that two slave ships are being fitted out in Salem, MA. [New York Times, p. 1]
- Aug. 8 A conflict arises between Maryland and Pennsylvania over the capture of fugitive slaves who have crossed the border into the northern state. [New York Times, p. 2]
- Aug. 11 The *Savannah Republican* insists that the majority of Georgia residents are opposed to the African slave-trade.
- Aug. 12 A group of Northern Methodists make a formal appeal to British church members to help them convince slave-holders in the Southern branch of the church to relinquish their slaves and speak out against the institution of slavery in general. [NYT, p. 3]
- Aug. 13 Senator Stephen A. Douglas proclaims himself “irreconcilably opposed to the revival of the African Slave-Trade, in any form and under any circumstances.” [New York Times, p. 4]
- “ **TN** Two major changes come to the city of Nashville after a dogged campaign by local newspapers and city councilmen. The first is to gravel the city streets; the second is to build a first-class hotel that will be the equal of those in Memphis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. After much delay, land is purchased for a grand hotel on the corner of Church and Cherry (4th Ave.). Architect Isaiah Rogers is hired by Col. John Overton to design the building, which Overton will name for his wife’s family, the Maxwells. Built largely by slave labor, the hotel (not wholly completed until after the Civil War) will be used by occupying Union forces as military barracks and a prison hospital. [Nagy / *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture*]
- Aug. 16 **TN** Gov. Isham G. Harris receives an executive requisition from Ohio Gov. Salmon P. Chase for the return of fugitive James Wright, under indictment for the murder of an Ohio resident. Wright has been apprehended by Memphis police and is in custody there. [*Governors’ Papers, Harris, Box 5 (1859)*] – [Note: Chase served as Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury, one of the “Team of Rivals,” and became Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1864. During Chase’s term at Treasury, the U.S. began to print “In God We Trust” on all currency, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (later the Internal Revenue Service) was established.]

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- Aug. 17 **TN** “The first spade pierced the soil for the present Maxwell House [Hotel].”
The Nashville City Council takes up a resolution against fortune-telling in the city.
- Aug. 19 **TN** “Gen. Ward B. Burnett, at present Surveyor-General of Nebraska ... [arrives in] Nashville...to receive formally from the heirs of Gen. Jackson, the gold snuff box awarded to him as the bravest soldier in the Mexican war, in compliance with the will of the hero of New Orleans.” [Nagy – *Washington States*]
- Aug. 20 **TN** Maj. Gen. B. F. Cheatham certifies the organization of the Nashville Infantry, a military company consisting of sixty members, “fully organized and uniformed, and are now ready to receive their arms according to the State.” They are commanded by Capt. R. C. Foster. [*Governor Isham G. Harris Papers, Box 1, f. 4 (1959)*]
- “ A combined force of 5,000 Kaw, Osage, and Comanche Indians launch a series of fierce attacks on settlers in Butler and Greenwood counties in Kansas.
- Aug. 22 **TN** A collection of Ordnance Receipts from the keeper of Public Arms deals with volunteer companies receiving arms. On this date a Captain R.C. Foster, later to become a general in the Provisional Army, receives armaments from the keeper of Public Arms. His unit is listed as “O.S. Nashville Infantry . . . afterwards Rock City Guards.” This state militia group will later yield three companies to the 1st Regiment Tennessee Volunteers. The TN State Library and Archives owns two relevant pieces of sheet music (part of the Rose Music Collection) – the “Rock City Guards Grand March” and the “Rock City Quick-Step.”
- “ The Federal government, in an effort to suppress the illicit slave trade, sends naval vessels to patrol the African coast, as well as the waters around Cuba, with the intent of pursuing and stopping all ships engaged in transporting slaves.
- “ A special census taken in South Carolina indicates that the white population has decreased in seventeen parishes by 5000 persons in less than four years, as the black population has climbed by a similar amount during the same period. Editorials express alarm at the possible effect of this news on the movement to resurrect the slave trade, if there are sufficient numbers of slaves already in the country.
- Aug. 25 Virginia begins to restore a series of fortresses along its coastline.
- Aug. 26 The *Lawrence Herald* of Freedom, Kansas, reports a renewal of the border warfare between Kansas and Nebraska. Meanwhile, candidates for the governorship of the new state begin to throw their hats into the ring. The territorial governor of Nebraska calls for a special legislative session to organize a Constitutional convention with the thought of applying for admission into the Union at the next session of Congress. [*New York Times*, p. 2]
- Aug. 27 Edwin Drake drills the country’s first successful oil well in Titusville, PA. It is soon producing 20 barrels of oil a day, twice that of any other source.
- Sept. 1 The Pullman sleeping car makes its first run, carrying four passengers, who sleep in wooden bunks and are warmed by a wood-burning stove.
- “ British astronomer Richard Carrington is the first scientist to identify a solar flare. Balfour Stewart will shortly become the first to connect a solar flare to a disruption 18 hours later in Earth’s magnetic field. This huge eruption of solar flares interrupts telegraph transmissions around the world for weeks, causing numerous fires from

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electrical spikes, and aurora borealis displays are reported as far south as Rome, Italy; Havana, Cuba; and Hawaii.. On one memorable occasion telegraph operators in the Boston area disconnect their batteries and are able to send messages using only the “celestial power” induced in the telegraph lines by the magnetic disturbances. [Boteler, D.H. “The super storms of August/ September 1859 and their effects on the telegraph system.” *Advances in Space Research*, Col. 38, Issue 2, pp. 159-172] It remains the most intense solar storm ever recorded.

- “ A law goes into effect in Louisiana to jail all free persons of color who come into the state on ships or steamboats “until the departure of the boat or vessel on which they came. Masters of steamboats and ships must report to the Chief of Police all such persons belonging to their crews, or passengers, or incur severe penalties.” [*New York Times*, Aug. 29, p. 3]
- Sept. 2 TN “The Black-Republican candidate for Governor in Ohio says: “If I am elected Governor of Ohio—and I expect to be—no fugitive slave shall be sent back to Kentucky, or any other slave State; if I cannot otherwise protect him from his pursuers; *I will employ the bayonet*, so help me God!”” [*Memphis Appeal*, p. 2]
- “ TN “Quite a number of fugitive slaves have been arrested in this city recently. A runaway, who belongs to a gentleman in Vicksburg, was arrested on board the *Daniel Boone* last evening, and two others, [owned by] planters in Mississippi, were put in prison yesterday. The description of a fugitive who belongs to Mr. John A. Dearing, Baton Rouge, may be found in our advertising columns this morning. [*Memphis Appeal*, p. 3]
- Sept. 7 Big Ben first becomes operational in London.
- “ From the *New York Times*: “The General Land Office has received returns of the progress of the boundary survey in Dacotah territory. The main lines of the survey constitute bases for the subdivisional work in that part of the surveying district of Wisconsin and Iowa which, upon the organization of the State of Minnesota, was not embraced within its limits. Numerous settlements bordering the Big Sioux River, north of the parallel, will soon be accommodated in respect to the wishes of settlers for the survey and subdivision of the public lands. . . . The white settlers in Dacotah are alarmed at the increase of Indian troubles.” [p. 2]
- Early Sept. *Harper’s Monthly* publishes a careful legal argument by Senator Stephen A. Douglas calling for a precise interpretation of the line between federal and local authority. He ends with this statement: “The principle, under our political system is that every distinct political community, loyal to the Constitution and the Union, is entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of self-government in respect to their local concerns and internal polity, subject only to the Constitution of the United States.” This is perhaps the first public statement of the “states’ rights” argument.
- Sept. 13 TN “MILITARY PARADE.—The Memphis Light Guards paraded in our Streets yesterday afternoon. They were under command of Lieut. Gennett, and made a fine display.” [*Memphis Appeal*, p. 3]
- Sept. 14 TN “The 13th Anniversary of the BATTLE OF MONTEREY will be celebrated on the 21st by a Re-union of the surviving members of the First Regiment Tennessee Volunteers at Governor Wm. B. Campbell’s, near Lebanon. Governor Campbell is prepared, and desires to give his old fellow-soldiers a warm welcome, and expects a goodly number present on that occasion . . . Surviving members of the Volunteer

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Regiments who were engaged in the Florida War are also invited to attend.”
[*Nashville Christian Advocate*]

- Sept. 16 Municipal elections in Kansas lead to violence between Democrats and Republicans, as well as charges of election fraud. [*NYT*, p. 2]
- Sept. 17 **TN** “The *eighth* decimal census of the United States, will be ... taken during the coming year.... We feel curious to see the Congressional apportionment under the next census. It will show that the old States, North and South, gain very little in the way of increasing their electoral votes, or their representation in Congress, while the North-Western States will *double* in both cases, thus settling the question as to future Presidential contests. As this increase of strength will all [be] to the benefit of the Abolitionists, the South will be thereafter at the mercy of the North, and will only have to accept such crumbs as they may graciously condescend to give her.”
[*Brownlow’s Tri-Weekly Whig*, p. 2]
- Sept. 21 A Methodist minister in Texas is driven from his church for speaking out against slavery. [*New York Times*, p. 1] The new government of Haiti issues an open invitation to both slaves and free blacks in America, welcoming them to emigrate from the United States to safety on its shores. [p. 2]
- Sept. 24 Newspapers quote part of a Stephen A. Douglas speech relating to popular sovereignty: “I affirm each one of the propositions, that Slavery stands on an equal footing with all other property, and that Congress has no more or no less power over it. . . . According to the Dred Scott Decision the Federal Government cannot interfere in the Territory with Slavery, either for it or against it, and that is the affirmance precisely of my doctrine of Popular Sovereignty.” [*New York Times*, p. 2] By now it is apparent to most observers that this will become Douglas’s theme in his campaign to gain the Democratic Party’s nomination for President.
- “ **TN** “Negroes in Canada. Twenty years ago, the census reported 3,400 colored residents in Canada West. There are now 41,000. The business of stealing them from the South, and running them off to Canada on the Northern underground railroads, is filling up that country!” [*Brownlow’s Tri-Weekly Whig*, p. 1]
- Sept. 29 **TN** W.A. Gardner of Memphis issues a national \$10,000 challenge to anyone who can defeat his champion birds in cock-fighting. The offer is accepted by a group of sportsmen from Virginia.
- Oct. 4 **TN** Gen. William Walker sets sail for Nicaragua with about 300 men, despite the watchfulness of the federal government, who are concerned about an invasion of that country and a violation of the neutrality laws. Many other “filibusters” make their way to Central America in his wake.
- Oct. 8 **TN** “MORE WARMTH NEEDED – The House of Representatives yesterday adjourned until 10 o’clock Monday morning. In the meantime, the heating apparatus of the Hall is to be put in working order. The lack of artificial heat in the Hall has already occasioned some of the members considerable inconvenience.” [Nagy]
- Oct. 10-11 The “Wild West” earns its name as Indian attacks on gold miners and on the Santa Fe Mail stagecoaches make headlines across the country. A band of guerillas attacks Brownsville, Texas; Mexican troops arrive from Matamoras to provide aid to the city. [*New York Times*]

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- Oct. 13 During this year California has elected a Democratic Governor and a Democratic majority in the legislature. Senator David Broderick, an anti-slavery Democrat from California, is gunned down in a duel with California chief Justice David Terry. Broderick is the first and only sitting Senator ever to die in a duel. His death three days later “[turns] him into a martyr and help[s] speed the spiral toward civil war.” Terry, who will later join the Confederacy, will himself be gunned down in 1889 after threatening the life of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Field. [<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0907/5794.html>]
- Oct. 16 John Brown and his followers (five of the thirteen are African Americans) attack Harper’s Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), in an attempt to free and arm the local slaves, and perhaps hoping to encourage general slave rebellion. The large number of newspaper stories about fugitive slaves over the next several weeks indicates that Brown’s efforts may have been successful. Plantation owners panic at the possibility of insurrection among their slaves; residents of Louisiana begin to form “Vigilance” committees to maintain the peace. Brown quickly becomes a martyr for abolition, particularly in the northern part of the country.
- Oct. 18 Federal troops under Colonel Robert E. Lee overpower John Brown after 10 of Brown’s men, including his two sons, are killed.
- “ **TN** The P.O. closes several Tennessee post offices: Buffalo Creek (Campbell County), Hackletooth (Cooke), Elm Hill (Davidson), Cowan (Franklin), Holyoke (Giles), Van Buren (Hardeman), Chancefore (Henry), Greenvale (Jefferson), Chestnut Ridge (Lincoln), Morse Creek (McNairy), Kelly’s Ferry (Meigs), Emory Iron Works (Roane), Horse Shoe Bend (Scott), Cuba and Hagan’s Landing (Shelby), Great Western (Stewart), South Rock Island (Van Buren), Trousdale (Warren), Cedar Hill and Flemings (Weakley), Bon Air (White), and Silver Springs (Wilson). The Dyersburg Jail is destroyed by a fire set by one of the prisoners. [Nagy]
- Oct. 21 An explosion at the DuPont Powder Mills in Delaware destroys five buildings and takes seven lives.
- Oct. 25 John Brown’s trial begins in Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia).
- Oct. 27 **TN** The Louisville & Nashville Railroad line completes 187 miles of track between the two cities. The first through train passes over the line on October 28. Profitable from the beginning, the L&N will consist of 269 miles of track when the Civil War begins in 1861; it will reach Memphis by 1865.
- “ The ship *Laurens*, long suspected of continuing to operate as a slave ship, lands in Cuba with a cargo of 600 slaves.
- Oct. 30 **TN** Former Tennessee Governor James Chamberlain “Lean Jimmy” Jones (1841-1845) dies in Memphis at the age of 50. Tennessee’s first native-born governor, Jones was in office when the cornerstone was laid for the State Capitol. A loyal member of the Whig Party, he served in the U.S. Senate from 1851-1857.
- Oct. 31 The trial of John Brown nears its conclusion, as the defense rests and the jury withdraws to consider its verdict. [*New York Times*, p. 1]
- November Henry David Thoreau delivers the lecture, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in Concord, Massachusetts, winning over an unsympathetic crowd with this defense of a man popularly thought to be a criminal. This speech and two subsequent essays on

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John Brown reveal Thoreau's growing acceptance of violent protest over civil disobedience.

- Nov. 1 The Charleston *Mercury*, discussing Southern church rules, carries this story: "The wedding services of Negroes, which have been held in the Church, have been in every case conducted with the consent of, and in many cases in the presence of their owners, under the express prohibition in every case of any ostentation and display. Finding a growing tendency to overlook this prohibition, the Church session have now adopted a resolution *forbidding these church weddings entirely*." [NYT, p. 8]
- Nov. 2 A number of Northern journals lean toward life imprisonment for John Brown and his associates, rather than execution: "It cannot be doubted that Brown's personal bearing throughout his trial—his courage, his courtesy, his perfect self-possession, and his evident conviction of the rightfulness of his acts, have awakened a personal sympathy for him, even in the hearts of those who most detest his principles and his conduct. His execution would deepen this feeling immensely and would give the active Abolitionists fresh ground for renewing their appeals to public sympathy and support. They would have an accession of *martyrs* to their cause,—and in any crusade of fanaticism martyrdom is infinitely the most available weapon which its enemies can devise or its friends desire." [New York Times, p. 4]
- Nov. 3 John Brown is sentenced to be hanged. The speech he makes in response is widely printed in newspapers across the country.
- “ TN “Wm. Oneal was convicted at the October term 1859 of the Circuit Court of Roane County, crime Placing obstruction on the track of the East Tennessee Rail Road. Sentence six years from the 3rd of November 1859 – His conduct since my agency hasn't been good further I am not advised. James Cavert [*sic*], agt.” [Gov. Harris Papers, Box 4, folder 1, 1859]
- Nov. 5 TN “The South will certainly have trouble if matters are not changed. Northern abolitionists have been among us endeavoring [*sic*] to raise insurrection & rebellion. No telling where it will end” [Cartmell]
- “ Cornelius Vanderbilt sues the *New York Times* for libel for implying a connection between the Vanderbilt shipping empire and William Walker's invasion of Nicaragua. [New York Times, p. 1]
- Nov. 9 The trials of John Brown's co-conspirators continue in Virginia. John Anthony Copeland, a free black who has studied at Oberlin College, is found innocent of treason, since African Americans are not citizens, but he is found guilty of murder and conspiracy to rebel. [New York Times, p. 8]
- Nov. 10 U.S. troops in Arizona and New Mexico engage in several battles against Apache warriors. [New York Times, p. 8] Indian attacks on mail coaches and settlers in western states occupy the attention of the U.S. military during the rest of the month.
- “ Twelve new steamships and gunboats are completed for the U.S. Navy, as ordered by Congress in 1856-1857. [New York Times, p. 2]
- Nov. 11 Four of John Brown's co-conspirators are sentenced to be hanged with him: John A. Copeland (see Nov. 9), Shields Green (a fugitive slave from South Carolina), Edwin Coppick/Coppoc (a former settler from Kansas), and John E. Cook (a book agent). After rumors circulate across the country that a raid is planned to rescue Brown and the others, troop levels are increased. The raid never materializes. [New York Times]

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- Nov. 16 **TN** The same George G. Poindexter (Nashville *Union & American* editor) who had received a bullet wound in the leg during a May 31 clash with a *Banner* editor, is shot to death by Allen A. Hall, editor of the *Daily News*. The shooting comes in the wake of a bitter editorial battle between the two newspapers. [Nagy]
- Nov. 22 A series of fires in New Orleans, believed to be caused by an arsonist, leave hundreds of people homeless. [*New York Times*, p. 8]
- Nov. 23 Henry McCarty, later to be known as William Bonney and Billy the Kid, is born in an Irish neighborhood of New York City.
- Nov. 24 Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. The book quickly sells out its initial print run; it will go through six editions by 1872.
- Nov. 28 Death of American novelist Washington Irving, best known for his stories “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”
- Nov. 29 Military reinforcements continue to arrive in Charles Town, Virginia, to support the 3,000 men already present to take part in the execution of John Brown. [*NYT*, p. 1]
- Dec. 2 Militant abolitionist leader John Brown is hanged for murder and treason at Charles Town, Virginia. . He hands this note to a supporter on his way to the gallows: “*Charlestown, Va. 2nd December, 1859. I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land: will never be purged away; but with Blood. I had as I now think: vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed; it might be done.*”
- “ **TN** The General Assembly passes a resolution deploring the John Brown “conspiracy” and expressing their concern that abolitionist sentiments are becoming too prevalent in national politics: “*Resolved*, That we record it as the sense of the Tennessee Legislature that the declarations of Mr. Seward that a respectable portion of the Southern people . . . will eventually ‘rise up against slavery,’ [are] a libel upon the honor and loyalty of the Southern people.” [Public Acts of Tennessee 1859-60]
- “ **TN** From the Cartmell Diaries: “Today old John Brown is or was to be executed at Charlestown in Virginia for treason, attempting an insurrection of the Southern slaves & for murder. The abolitionist[s] have threatened a rescue. If they attempt it, there will be bloody work and in all probability the union is gone...”
- Dec. 3 **TN** Writing in the same vein, Nashville lawyer William L.B. Lawrence makes this entry in his diary: “Yesterday was the day appointed for the execution of the notorious John Brown . . . I see from reports by telegraph that he has paid the extreme penalty of the law for his crime at Harper’s Ferry, where he headed an insurrection the object of which was to free the slaves of Virginia. . . . [The uprising] has promptly met with its retribution, but yet I fear, speedily as it has been quelled it is but the beginning of a chain of events which will ultimately end in the dissolution of our glorious Union. [Lawrence, Box 2-2.]
- Dec. 5 First performance of *The Octoroon* at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York. The popular play is a melodrama about a man who falls in love with a slave of mixed race. The *New York Times* calls it “the great dramatic *sensation* of the season”
- Dec. 7 In response to a suggestion by the Governor of South Carolina that the South build a wall along its border with the Northern states, an editorial in the *New York Times*

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claims, "The probability of the North sending down a large army to harry and lay waste, is something which any man who can read and write ought to be ashamed to discuss. The majority of the persons in this part of the country who are most strongly opposed to Slavery, are immersed in business and in professions, have wives, and houses, and lands, and are about as likely to arm and march on Virginia as to ... turn pirates!"

- Dec. 11 The *Charleston Courier* reports that the South Carolina Legislature's Committee on Federal Relations has recommended the passage of resolutions declaring the state's right to secede from the Union. Letters and editorials throughout the South express concern about the Northern abolitionist movement, which seems to be gaining momentum in response to John Brown's execution.
- Dec. 15 Ten days after its opening, Dion Boucicault's play, *The Octoroon* [see Dec. 5], has created unexpected conflicts. In the politically charged atmosphere that followed the execution of John Brown, perhaps any play about slavery would have created a stir, but this story seems to be a lightning rod for heated opinion. Some critics call it a piece of abolitionist propaganda, while others object to its pro-slavery stance. A lively editorial in the *New York Times* downplays the play's political significance and advises a more moderate response.
- Dec. 16 **TN** A letter to Alexander Jones, Lebanon, Tennessee: "Your discourse upon Yankeys [*sic*] came to hand a few days since, and I am sorry to see that you cherish so illiberal a spirit towards our bretheren [*sic*] of the north, that there are some vile and rank abolitionists among them. . . . You say we ought not to employ them as teachers. If we could find competent substitutes among our own people doubtless we would employ them but they are not to be found.... [F]or several months has Mr. Donnell been trying to procure a tutor and not one application has he had from a southerner. [Donnell Papers. Box 2-3]
- Dec. 20 More than 300 Southern medical students withdraw from colleges in Philadelphia and return home, where several Southern institutions have agreed to accept them into their medical programs.
- Dec. 22 The Republican Party sets a date for their National Convention. According to the *New York Times*, "The South has said as plainly as possible . . . that the triumph of the Republican organization, in a national contest for national power, must put an end to the existing confederation of the United States. . . . 'You may carry the Northern States as one man . . . , but your victory will turn to ashes once it is enjoyed; for when you carry the Northern States, and with them the majority of the American people, you lose fifteen States forever from the Union, and the President whom you choose will find himself President of the Free States alone.'" [p. 4]
- Dec. 29 A bill passed by the Massachusetts legislature, authorizing African Americans to join the militia, is vetoed by Governor Banks.
- Dec. 31 **TN** Cartmell Diaries: "Farewell 1859. A year long to be remembered.... Much excitement has prevailed all over the land. The stability of the government is being tested to the center. Congress... is yet unorganized. Without a change in the future dissolution is inevitable. Our confidence in the perpetuity of the Union and hope to see common sense triumph over fanaticism & black republicanism. The Union now existing in other words, the constitution we have could not be formed at the present time under present circumstances." [Cartmell, II-L-2]

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New York *Times*, online archives

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Music and Poetry, 1859

The articulation of the powerful emotions evoked by the developing conflict took many forms, ranging from lengthy political speeches, to newspaper editorials and letters, to a variety of artistic expressions. The following poem, which appeared in the Nashville *Daily News* on May 20, 1859 (p. 3), was excerpted from a longer poem entitled "The Home Circle," written by Mr. H. Fontleroy.

The hallowed Union of these sovereign States,
Thy power, thy fame, thy name perpetuates.
One kindred hope and pride thy people bind,
One common impulse moves the nation's mind.

Let foreign despots trample on thy right,
And where is he that burns not for the fight?
Yet, let their trodden subjects to us come,
To seek in thee asylum and a home,

In welcome, then, we throw thy portals wide,
And all our common good with them divide,
Ay, foes or traitors shall attempt in vain
To rend this Union, so endeared, in twain,

Thy people's vengeance shall on all be hurled,
Who'd blast the hopes, the freedom of the world.
Nay, while religion, truth, and virtue reign,
This glorious Union shall intact remain;

Insep'rate North and South, or East and West,
And as one whole, confed'rate nation blest;
Till great Jehovah, closing time, shall roll
The heavens together, as a mighty scroll;

Then, on eternal night, the last illuminating star,
To shed a parting ray, shall be America!