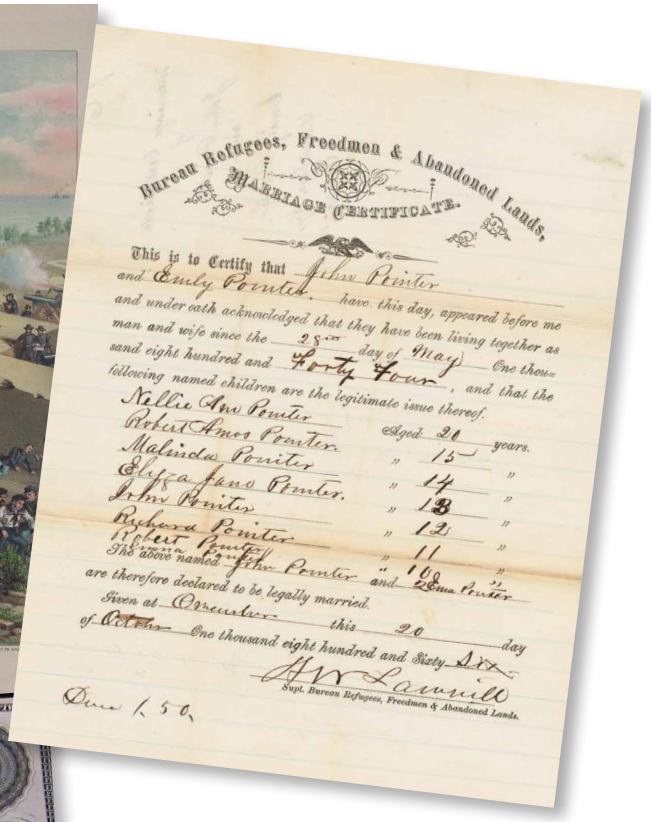
CONGRESS AND THE CIVIL WAR

Historic Treasures in Exhibition Hall



The issue of slavery permeated debate in Congress from the founding of the country through the mid-nineteenth century. The failure to resolve differences between states on the issue of slavery led to the Civil War. To manage both the war effort and its consequences, Congress crafted new legislation that addressed a changing nation.

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CONGRESS AND THE CIVIL WAR

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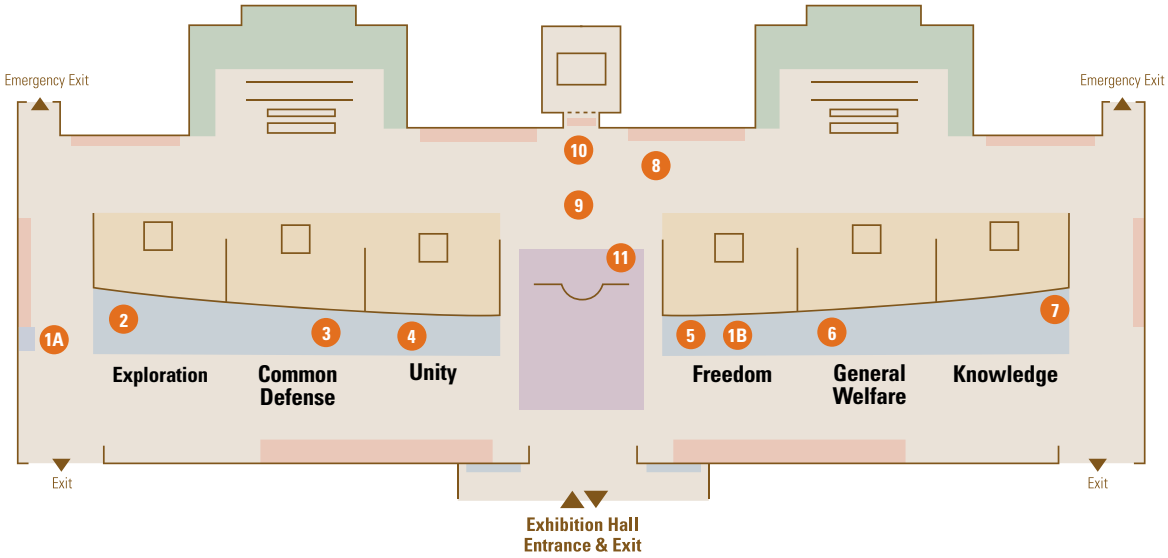
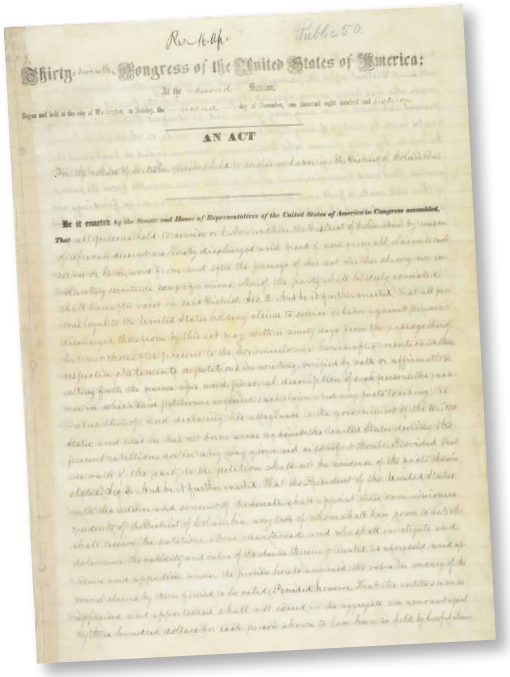
Currently on display



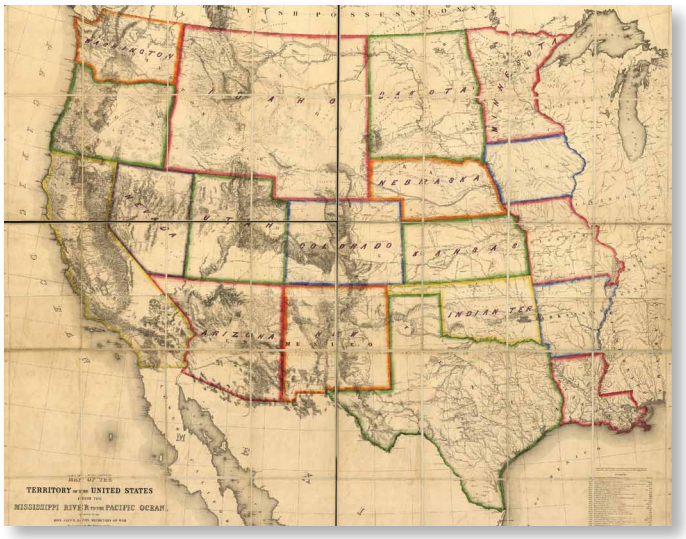
1 An Act for the release of certain persons held to service or labor in the District of Columbia, April 16, 1862

The Constitution grants Congress exclusive authority over the District of Columbia, and Congress used this power to end slavery in Washington, D.C., nine months before the Emancipation Proclamation. Today, Washington, D.C., celebrates April 16 as Emancipation Day.

General Records of the United States Government, National Archives and Records Administration


Thirty-Congress of the United States of America;

AN ACT



2 Map, *Territory of the United States from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*, 1858

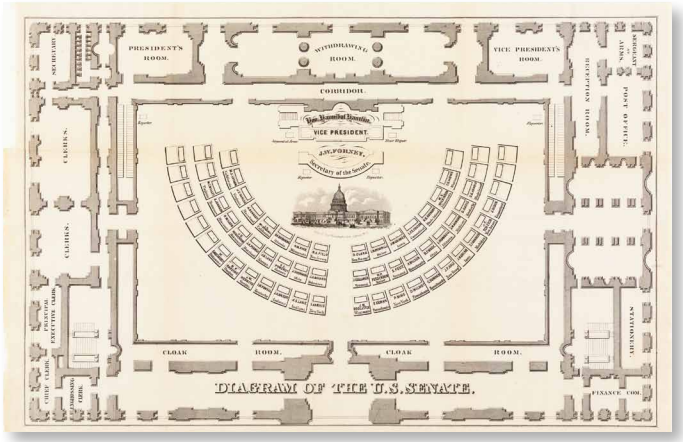
In Congress, northern and southern members could not decide on the route for a new railroad to the Pacific Coast. In 1853, Congress authorized the Army Corps of Engineers to survey four potential rail routes. Intense sectionalism blocked further legislation until Southern states seceded and a northern-controlled Congress passed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862.

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

3 Color lithograph, *Battle Between the Monitor and Merrimac*, c. 1889

In 1861, Congress encouraged development of the ironclad warship. The March 9, 1862, naval battle at Hampton Roads, Virginia, depicted in this lithograph was the world's first between steam-powered ironclads, and it revolutionized naval warfare.

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress



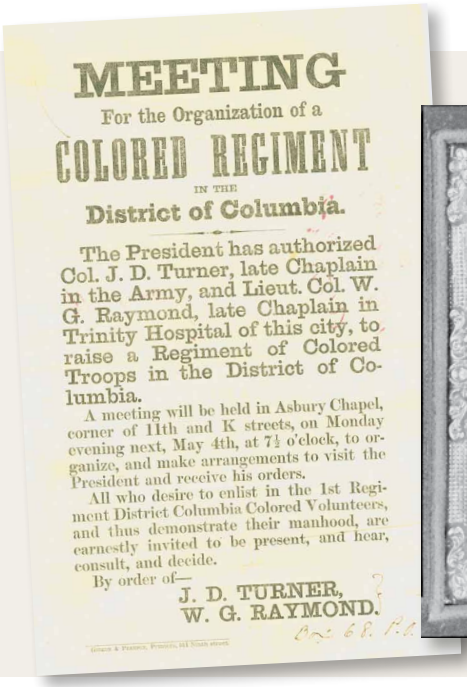
4 Senate seating chart, *Congressional Directory*, 37th Congress, 3rd session, 1863

With the secession of eleven Southern states in 1860 and 1861, the House and Senate lost more than 85 members. One issue Congress had to address was whether to recognize secession and withdrawal from Congress as legitimate under the Constitution, or simply to declare the Southern congressional seats vacant.

Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration

5 FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

In the Militia Act of 1862, Congress allowed President Abraham Lincoln to recruit African-American men for military service. Nearly 200,000 African Americans fought in the Civil War—for the Union, for freedom, and for their right to full citizenship.



MEETING

For the Organization of a

COLORED REGIMENT

IN THE

District of Columbia.

The President has authorized Col. J. D. Turner, late Chaplain in the Army, and Lieut. Col. W. G. Raymond, late Chaplain in Trinity Hospital of this city, to raise a Regiment of Colored Troops in the District of Columbia.

A meeting will be held in Asbury Chapel, corner of 11th and K streets, on Monday evening next, May 4th, at 7½ o'clock, to organize, and make arrangements to visit the President and receive his orders.

All who desire to enlist in the 1st Regiment District Columbia Colored Volunteers, and thus demonstrate their manhood, are earnestly invited to be present, and hear, consult, and decide.

By order of—

J. D. TURNER,
W. G. RAYMOND.

Broadside, "Meeting For the Organization of a Colored Regiment in the District of Columbia," 1863

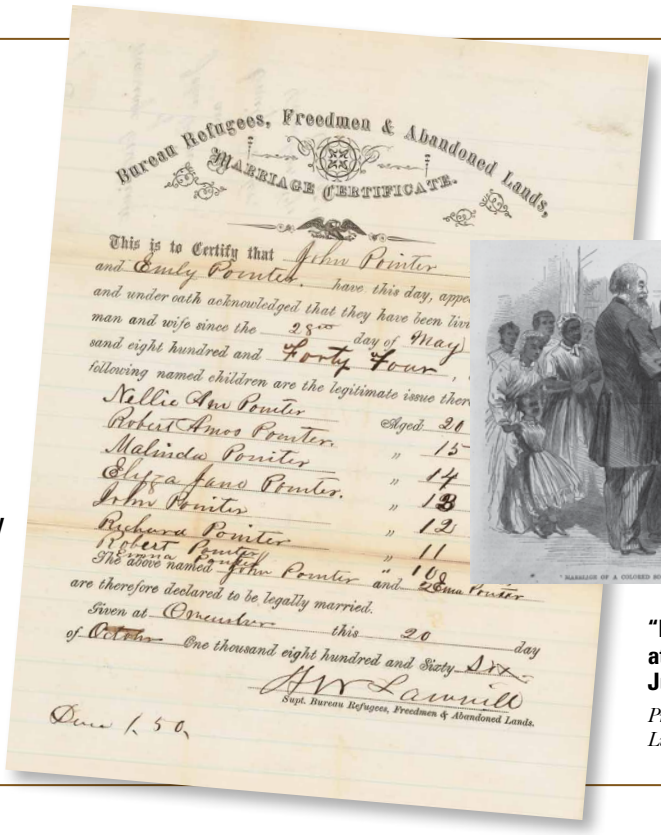
Records of the Adjutant General's Office, National Archives and Records Administration

Hand-colored ambrotype, Portrait of a black soldier

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

6 THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

In 1865 Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, known as the Freedmen's Bureau, to provide for the needs of displaced and formerly-enslaved persons. The Bureau's actions included issuing hundreds of marriage certificates to couples denied the right to marry while enslaved.



Bureau Refugees, Freedmen & Abandoned Lands.

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE.

This is to Certify that John Pointer and Emily Pointer have this day, appe and under oath acknowledged that they have been liv man and wife since the 28th day of May sand eight hundred and Forty Four following named children are the legitimate issue ther

Nellie Ann Pointer
Robert Amos Pointer Aged 20
Malinda Pointer " 15
Eliza Jane Pointer " 14
John Pointer " 13
Richard Pointer " 12
Robert Pointer " 11
Emma Pointer " 10
The above named John Pointer and Emma Pointer are therefore declared to be legally married.

Given at Owensboro this 20 day of October One thousand eight hundred and Sixty Six

H W Lawrill
Supt. Bureau Refugees, Freedmen & Abandoned Lands.

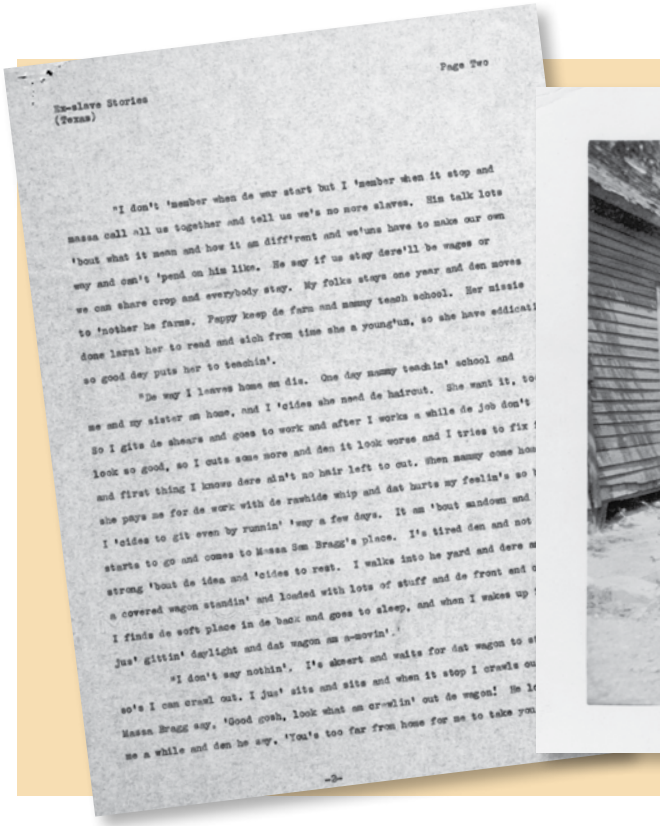
Dec 1, 50.

Marriage Certificate of John and Emily Pointer, Kentucky, October 20, 1866

Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, National Archives and Records Administration (right)

"Marriage of a colored soldier at Vicksburg," *Harper's Weekly*, June 30, 1866

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (above)



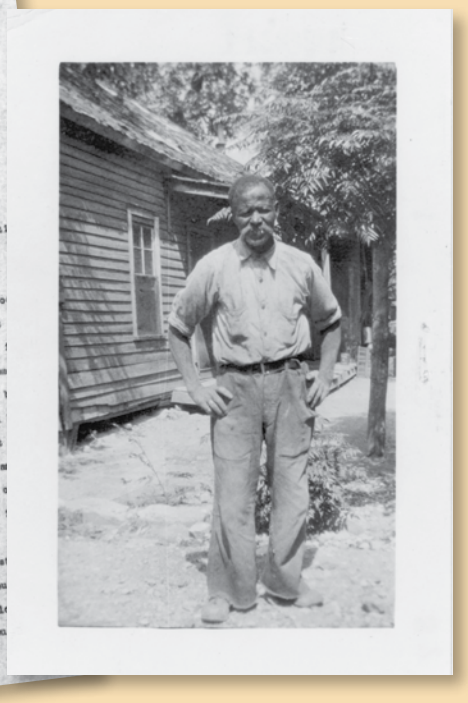
Ex-slave Stories (Texas) Page Two

"I don't 'member when de war start but I 'member when it stop and Massa call all us together and tell us we's no more slaves. Him talk lots 'bout what it mean and how it am diff'rent and we'uns have to make our own way and can't 'pend on him like. He say if us stay dere'll be wages or we can share crop and everybody stay. My folks stays one year and den moves to 'nother he farms. Pappy keep de farm and mammy teach school. Her missis done larnt her to read and sich from time she a young'un, so she have edificat so good dey puts her to teachin'.

"De way I leaves home am die. One day mammy teachin' school and me and my sister am home, and I 'cides she need de haircut. She want it, to So I gits de shears and goes to work and after I works a while de job don't look so good, so I cuts some more and den it look worse and I tries to fix and first thing I knows dere ain't no hair left to cut. When mammy come hom she pays me for de work with de rawhide whip and dat hurts my feelin's so I 'cides to git even by runnin' 'way a few days. It am 'bout sundown and starts to go and comes to Massa Sam Bragg's place. I's tired den and not strong 'bout de idea and 'cides to rest. I walks into he yard and dere a covered wagon standin' and loaded with lots of stuff and de front and I finds de soft place in de back and goes to sleep, and when I wakes up jus' gittin' daylight and dat wagon am a-movin'.

"I don't say nothin'. I's skeert and waits for dat wagon to so's I can crawl out. I jus' sits and sits and when it stop I crawls ou Massa Bragg say, 'Good gosh, look what am cr-wlin' out de wagon! He l me a while and den he say, 'You's too far from home for me to take you

-3-



7 THE SLAVE NARRATIVES PROJECT

Thousands of survivors of slavery recounted their lives to interviewers from the Federal Writers Project (FWP) in the late 1930s. The FWP was part of the New Deal-era Works Progress Administration, funded by Congress with the 1935 Emergency Relief Appropriations Act. These narratives—preserved by the Library of Congress—remain invaluable personal accounts of life in slavery.

Gelatin-silver photographic print and narrative of Zek Brown, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1937

Prints and Photographs Division and Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

SPOTLIGHT ON: THE CAPITOL DURING THE CIVIL WAR

When the Civil War began, the Capitol was in the middle of a major expansion. New, larger chambers, which had been built to accommodate a growing Congress, now seemed especially spacious after the withdrawal of Southern representatives and senators. The grand rooms soon filled with the clamor of Union soldiers as the Capitol became a temporary barracks for some of the 75,000 troops called for by President Abraham Lincoln in April 1861. Brick ovens were constructed in the basement to provide bread. For roughly two months in the fall of 1862, nurses and doctors treated wounded soldiers in the Rotunda, the Old Hall of the House, and corridors of the Capitol.

Meanwhile, construction of the building extension continued. The Capitol Dome was finished on December 2, 1863, with the installation of the Statue of Freedom at the building's apex. President Lincoln's second inauguration was held on the East Front steps on March 4, 1865. Six weeks later, President Lincoln was assassinated, and his body lay in state in the Rotunda beneath the scaffolding for the partially-completed fresco, *The Apotheosis of Washington*.

Union troops on the East Front plaza of the Capitol, May 13, 1861

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

"The Eighth Massachusetts Regiment in the Rotunda of the Capitol, Washington," *Harper's Weekly*, May 25, 1861

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

8 Photograph of Lincoln's second inauguration, March 4, 1865

Abraham Lincoln reads his address standing next to the Lincoln table on the East Front of the Capitol.

Architect of the Capitol

9 Table from Lincoln's second inauguration, 1865

This table was made from surplus ironwork cast for the Capitol Dome. The Commissioner of Public Buildings, B.B. French, had the table made for his own use, but loaned it for Lincoln's second inauguration.

Massachusetts Historical Society

10 Catafalque, 1865

Made of rough pine boards nailed together, the catafalque (a support for a casket) was hastily constructed in 1865 for the lying-in-state of Abraham Lincoln in the Rotunda.

Architect of the Capitol

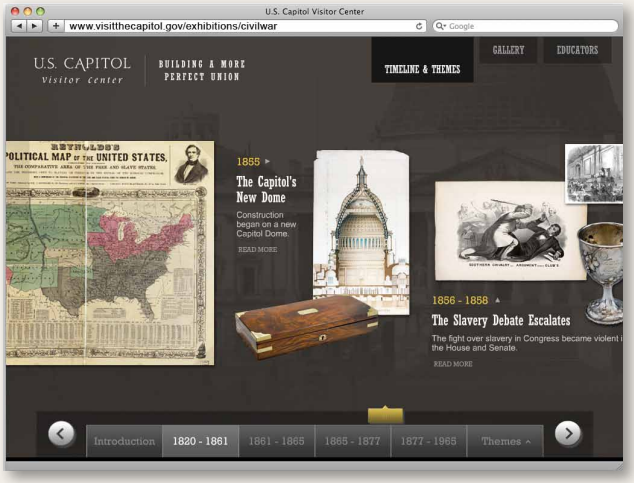
11 *The Apotheosis of Washington,*
Constantino Brumidi, fresco, 1865

Italian-American artist Constantino Brumidi painted the 4,664-square-foot fresco in the eye of the Capitol Rotunda. He created this masterpiece of American art over 11 months at the end of the Civil War.

Architect of the Capitol

U.S. Capitol Dome under construction, 1861

When the Civil War began, the Capitol Dome was only partially completed. The firm hired to construct the Dome, Janes, Fowler, Kirtland & Company, kept working during the war. The rising Dome made an impression on President Lincoln. He felt that if people saw the construction of the Capitol going on, it was a sign that the Union would go on.



Congress and the Civil War Online

Explore "Building a More Perfect Union," an online exhibition that tells the story of Congress and the Capitol during the Civil War. "Building a More Perfect Union" allows online visitors to zoom in on rare artifacts and documents, learn about the members of Congress involved in the Civil War's most notorious debates, and discover how the Capitol itself grew structurally during the nation's most difficult era. Visit **www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibitions/civilwar**.

When viewing "Building a More Perfect Union" online, use the "zoom" feature to examine small details in the documents and artifacts.