

PART I

A History

“It amounted to a Declaration of War.”

—William Tecumseh Sherman,
Louisiana Seminary Superintendent, 1861

CHAPTER ONE

The Storm Approaches

Secession and Military Preparation of Louisiana

National politics were center stage in Louisiana in 1860, with the upcoming presidential contest creating great uncertainty regarding the social and economic institutions of the state. The October 1859 raid of John Brown and his followers on the Federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in the hopes of inciting a slave riot, coupled with the sympathy with which it was received in the North, had created much alarm among Louisiana residents. Add to this the bitter contest in the U.S. House of Representatives for the speaker's seat, and many Louisianians could see the storm clouds gathering. The newly elected superintendent of the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning, one William Tecumseh Sherman, sent this correspondence to his wife from New Orleans on December 12, 1859: "As long as the abolitionists and the Republicans seem to threaten the safety of slave property so long will this excitement last, and no one can foresee its result; but all here talk as if a dissolution of the Union were not only a possibility but a probability of easy execution."

The Louisiana legislature convened at Baton Rouge on January 17, 1860. The topic of Federal relations was much on the minds and tongues of the legislators. Retiring governor Robert C. Wickliffe addressed the assembly: "The state should provide for the equipment of her own men, in all respects, within herself, so as to be independent should the hour of trial come, of all outside assistance." The governor also expressed indignation at the John Brown affair and further recommended,



Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, *courtesy Library of Congress*

To assure her [Virginia], as well as the other border slave States of the active cooperation of Louisiana; to show them that we recognize their cause as our cause, I recommend the immediate appropriation by the Legislature of \$25,000, as Louisiana's quota toward these expenses, accompanied by a solemn pledge that our State will stand by her sister Southern states to the utmost extent of the men and means she can command, in any course they may see proper to adopt to secure our Constitutional rights.

The chairman of the House Committee on Federal Relations, Henry W. Allen of West Baton Rouge Parish, wasted no time in answering this call. On January 18, 1860, Allen sponsored a resolution declaring that the John Brown raid was an attack upon the rights of the South by the North; in the event of another invasion of Virginia's territory, Louisiana would stand by her, and if a "Black Republican" were elected president in November, that would be grounds for a dissolution of the Union. He recommended appropriating the twenty-five thousand dollars for Virginia mentioned by the outgoing governor. The resolution also included these ominous words from Allen in the event a Black Republican were to win the presidency: "The Governor shall order an election of delegates to represent Louisiana in a Southern Convention, and to cooperate with other states in taking such steps as the circumstances of the case and honor of the country may require." Though this resolution died in committee, one can see where the seeds of secession were growing.

The inauguration on January 23 of Democrat Thomas Overton Moore as governor, who would serve as chief executive of the state for most of the Civil War, occurred almost ten months before Abraham Lincoln's election as U.S. president and several months before the national party conventions were to meet. In his inaugural address, Moore devoted substantial time to the issue of Federal relations. Louisiana, said the governor, was something more than a mere state of the Union: she was a Southern slaveholding state, and Louisiana's duty to herself and her sister slaveholding states might be brought into painful conflict with her devotion to the Union. He further proclaimed that a great party had grown in the North based on animosity to the institutions of fifteen states. He

charged that the territories be freely opened for settlement and the demand that there be no more slave states admitted to the Union forever be forgotten.

Moore was a North Carolinian by birth, educated in Sampson County, and in 1829, at the age of seventeen, he moved to Rapides Parish in central Louisiana, where he managed his uncle's sugar plantation. He would become a successful planter and substantial slave owner in his own right and marry Bethiah Jane Leonard on November 30, 1830, their union producing five children. He was elected to the lower house of the Louisiana legislature in 1848 and the upper house in 1856. Now, in 1860, he was an ardent secessionist at the top of the executive branch of government of the richest state in the South, also boasting the largest city in the South, New Orleans. Upon Confederate president Jefferson Davis's call for three thousand Louisiana troops for service in 1861, Moore called for five thousand additional men for the Confederacy.

In five years, in 1865, Louisiana would be one of the poorest states in the South, Moore would be in self-imposed exile in Havana, Cuba, and his Rapides Parish plantation, sugar mill, and home would lie in ashes. Upon securing a Federal parole in 1866, he would return to his plantation and attempt to rebuild his fortune. He died there on June 25, 1876, never having reentered politics.

The Democratic party in Louisiana did not have complete agreement within its ranks, however. The "New Liners" supported Stephen A. Douglas for president and were openly hostile to John Slidell, U.S. senator from Louisiana and the leader of the "Southern Rights" wing of Louisiana Democrats. Douglas's Popular Sovereignty doctrine held that the citizens of a U.S. territory should be able to decide for themselves if they wanted slavery in that territory, a view espoused by the New Liners. Slidell believed that slavery was guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and therefore legal in all territories. He had the support of not only the Southern Rights Democrats but also the Old Liners.

Slidell was born in New York City in 1793 and was a Columbia graduate. He had failed in business in New York before moving

to New Orleans to practice law. An active Democrat, he was commissioner to Mexico in 1845 and served in the Senate from 1853 to 1861. After the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, he resigned from that body and was appointed Confederate commissioner to France. During that period of service, he and James M. Mason, Confederate commissioner to England, were taken off the British steamer *Trent* by the Union navy and detained in Boston. They were released after the incident threatened to rupture relations between Britain and the U.S. Though unsuccessful in winning recognition of the Confederacy by Napoleon III, he did arrange for loans and the construction of ships in French yards. He passed from this world in 1871.

The “Old Liners,” as the Slidell Democrats were known, were in the majority when the state Democratic convention met in Baton Rouge on March 5 to select delegates to the national convention at Charleston. A correspondent for the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* wrote on the first day of the convention:

Squatter sovereignty and the popular sovereignty doctrines of Mr. Douglas will receive their final quietus at the hands of the convention, as far as Louisiana is concerned. The Douglas men, who come principally from Lafourche, Assumption, Ascension and that section of the State will be found in a sad minority, and it is thought they will not attempt to bring Douglas forward. So far as I can learn, Mr. Breckinridge is the favorite of the convention; but, as I telegraphed this morning, no expression of opinion will be made in his favor, over any other man who favors the Administration—at least that is the expectation at this moment.

The convention passed a series of resolutions in which “undiminished confidence” in the Buchanan administration and the abilities and statesmanship of Senator Slidell, as well as their belief of him being qualified for the presidency, were expressed. A motion to kill the resolution referring to Slidell was defeated 206 to 34. A motion to instruct the delegates for Charleston to cast their vote for John C. Breckinridge was defeated 233 to 29. The convention was adamant in its refusal to instruct the delegates on a presidential nominee. A sixth resolution said that in the event of

the election of a Republican president, “we concur in the opinion that Louisiana should meet in council her sister slaveholding States to consult as to the means of future protection.”

The resolution addressing slavery stated,

That the territories of the United States belong to the several States as their common property, and not to the individuals thereof. That the federal constitution recognized property in slaves, and, as such, the owner thereof is entitled to carry his slaves into any of the Territories of the United States, and hold them there as property; and in case the people of the Territories, by inaction, unfriendly legislation, or otherwise should endanger the tenure of such property, or discriminate against it, by withholding that protection given to other species of property in the Territories, it is the duty of the General Government to interpose by active exertion of its constitutional powers to secure the rights of slaveholders.

The delegates elected to attend the Charleston convention were future Confederate general Richard Taylor, James A. McHatton, John Tarleton, Robert A. Hunter, F. H. Hatch, D. D. Withers, Benjamin W. Pearce, Charles Jones, Alexander Mouton, Effingham Lawrence, Emile La Sere, and Augustus G. Talbot. This group consisted almost completely of large land and slave owners, and represented millions of dollars of sugar and cotton plantation property. One attorney and one officeholder comprised the remainder of the delegation. The ultra-Southern views were well represented by Louisiana in this group, which was contemptuous of Douglas and his views, and embraced the concept of Congressional protection of slavery in the territories. Their vote at Charleston was to be given as a unit by a majority of the delegates present.

The convention assembled in Charleston on April 21. A reporter on assignment for the *New Orleans Crescent* wrote:

Senator Slidell keeps himself in the background. He is rarely seen in the streets and never in the Convention Hall. He is quietly engaged in endeavoring so to stack the cards as that Douglas will be defeated and some one nominated whom he can be intimately associated with, politically, of course, as well as personally. . . . The

Louisiana delegation, as a body compares favorably with that from any other State in point of solid attainments, make whatever use of the word you may choose. They are firm and decided in their expression of views, and are not generally regarded as being of the ultra stripe, though two or three of them are as much so as [William Lowndes] Yancey himself.

Yancey was an ardent secessionist and former U.S. congressman who led the Alabama delegation to the Charleston convention and later introduced the secession ordinance at the Alabama secession convention.

Louisiana delegate Alexander Mouton presented the resolution from the Louisiana convention regarding Congressional protection of slavery in the territories. The convention rejected the majority report of its Platform Committee and adopted the minority report, in essence the views of Stephen A. Douglas. The *Picayune's* reporter wrote on Sunday, April 29, "The excitement is very great, greater than it has been yet, and the breach in the party wider than it was before, with hardly a hope of reconciliation."

On Monday, April 30, the Louisiana delegates followed the lead of Alabama and Mississippi and withdrew from the convention. Two of the delegates, Jones and McHatton, did so under protest. Caleb Cushing, convention president, was notified the next day in writing that their withdrawal was due to the rejection of slavery in the territories resolution and stated the convention "refused to recognize the fundamental principles of the Democracy of the State we have the honor to represent."

Back in Louisiana opinion was divided on their withdrawal. The *New Orleans Delta* praised the action in their May 2 edition, stating it was "the logical culmination of the principles of Southern Democracy" and the "natural and justifiable consequences of the arrogant pretensions set up by the Northern delegations to govern the Convention in its choice of a nominee, and to impose upon it a platform of principles which would be rejected by every Southern State." In the northwest section of the state, the *Bossier Banner* carried this endorsement:

We can lay no blame at the hands of those of our delegates that

seceded when they saw that our rights were not to be respected. We sent them there to elect a Democrat with Southern sentiments, and to defeat and show no favor to the Illinois Traitor, and to the best of their ability they did so. Rather than submit to his odious doctrine of slavery in the territories they withdrew from the convention, and who can blame them? We do not for one. The men who are now opposed and derided by some, as being secessionists, fire-eaters, etc., are the very men that have fought bravely and manfully for the Constitutional rights of the South. They would not submit calmly to doctrines antagonistic to our future good welfare, and for this they are cried down by their fellow Democrats. Well and good. We are truly proud to know that there are at least a few pure-minded patriots who will not trust their honor in the keeping of the Abolition fanatics at the North . . . Stephen Arnold Douglas! the Abolition traitor, whose vaulting ambition of “Rule or Ruin” has succeeded in creating a breach in the Democratic ranks that will take time to repair. To him and his followers may we attribute the causes of the late disruption. Traitors to the heart—corrupt as the foul demons of the damned are the treacherous hearts of the incarnate wretches who planned the overthrow and defeat of the friends of the South.

On the reverse side of the issue, the May 7 edition of the *New Orleans Crescent* carried a condemnation of the Charlotte delegates, along with the names of 107 citizens, New Liners, who were endorsing the following call in the newspaper for a pro-Douglas meeting:

All citizens opposed to the secession movements of the Louisiana and other State delegations at the Charleston Convention, and who approve the course pursued by Stephen A. Douglas, are invited to meet in Lafayette Square, at 7 o'clock, to take counsel together, and to protest against any action of any citizens of this State, which, at Charleston or elsewhere, would commit the people of Louisiana to any measure or scheme destructive of the Union.

Farther north, in East Baton Rouge Parish, a meeting was held on May 9 and condemnation of the state's Charlotte delegation was expressed. The attendees made a recommendation that a state convention be held to replace these delegates with new

faces to attend the Baltimore convention. In the central Louisiana parish of Rapides, the *Alexandria American* of May 17, 1860, carried these words regarding Charleston delegate Robert A. Hunter:

We learn that R. A. Hunter, late delegate to the Charleston Convention, arrived in town last night. The query is, what did he come for? By some it is supposed that he came for the purpose of stirring up the Slidellians to get up a ratification meeting to endorse his bullying course at the Charleston Convention. It is also said that he has been dispatched by John Slidell as a missionary to enlighten the heathen of Rapides, and to confer with Governor Moore in relation to the troubles in the camp of the faithful.

In the month of June, two Democratic party conventions were held in Louisiana. The first, held in Baton Rouge on June 4, was a reaffirmation of the Charleston delegates and their right to seats at the Baltimore convention. They were also instructed that if they saw fit, they were to withdraw from the Baltimore convention and join the Richmond convention in nominating candidates. The second convention, held in Donaldsonville on June 6, had 141 delegates from twenty-one parishes. In resolutions, the convention declared that the Charleston delegates had “severed themselves from the great National Democratic family” by their departure and elected new delegates for Baltimore.

Hence, two sets of Louisiana delegates arrived in Baltimore for the Democratic Convention, the Charleston “seceders” and the body elected at Donaldsonville, which included former Louisiana governor Wickliffe. The Charleston delegates were refused admission to the convention on June 19, and on June 21, the Donaldsonville delegates were seated. The Charleston delegates met instead in the Southern Constitutional Democratic convention, also held in Baltimore, with twenty-one states represented. Richard Taylor was one of the vice-presidents of this convention, which resulted in the nomination of John C. Breckinridge for president.

Campaigning in the state was carried forth vigorously and with much enthusiasm during the months of July through November.

Banners and flags, parades and music, and fireworks and cannons were all used to persuade the populace and add flair to the election. The official returns for the popular vote in Louisiana were: John C. Breckinridge, 22,681; John Bell, 20,204; Stephen Douglas, 7,625. Breckinridge carried north and central Louisiana, while primary support for Bell and Douglas was from the southeast portion of the state. The national winner of the election and president-elect, one Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, the dreaded Black Republican so ominously referred to in Louisiana, was not carried on the ballot of the state.

Governor Moore promptly called a special session of the legislature, which was convened on December 10. The purpose of the session was to determine present and future relations between Louisiana and the United States prior to Lincoln's assuming the presidency. The governor repeated Lincoln's comment that the Union could not remain part slave and part free, citing the Northern nullification of the Fugitive Slave Law. He called for a council with other Southern states to make a united request of the Northern states that they meet the demands of the South. Moore included in his speech to the legislature, "I do not think that it comports with the honor and self-respect of Louisiana, as a slaveholding State, to live under the Government of a Black Republican President."

In response the legislature created a military board whose members were the governor and four of his appointees. The function of the board was to acquire for distribution to volunteers weapons and ammunition, which would be stored at New Orleans and the Seminary in Rapides Parish. Each parish was to provide a company comprised of thirty-two men, either cavalry or infantry, to be equipped with the weapons, and five hundred thousand dollars was appropriated to accomplish this act. The governor appointed Braxton Bragg, Paul O. Hebert, Daniel W. Adams, and Isaac Garret to serve with him on the board.

The legislature also passed a bill requiring the governor to call an election for January 7, 1861, to elect delegates for a state convention that was to meet on January 23. In addition, a resolution was passed requesting that he advise the governors of the remaining Southern

states of the actions of the Louisiana legislature in this session and that Moore ask them to advise him of their respective states' actions in regard to the present crisis.

Prior to the January election, news reached Louisiana of the secession of South Carolina on December 21. The reaction was unequalled joy and celebration in the streets of New Orleans. The *New Orleans Picayune* reported the festivities on that fateful day:

At 12 o'clock today a salute of 800 guns, 200 per district, was fired in honor of South Carolina. As the first gun was heard, the flag of Louisiana was hoisted from the third story window of the rooms of the Southern Rights Association, No. 72 Camp Street, amid the cheers of the assembled multitude. A brass band placed beneath the windows struck up the "Marseillaise," which was encored. The flag is, like the original flag of Louisiana, of spotless white, with the addition in the centre of a red star, containing in its centre the emblematic pelican. On the second story window could be seen a fine bust of John C. Calhoun, with a blue badge passed around the neck. After the flag had unfolded itself to the breeze, Gen. [William] Miles, in response to loud calls, addressed the crowd which had blocked up Camp Street from side to side. He alluded to the importance of the event made the occasion for the hoisting of the flag of Louisiana, and appealed to Louisiana, having common wrongs with South Carolina, to range themselves under the banner of the revolution. He was frequently interrupted with cheers. . . . While we write the crowd is still in the street, and loud acclaims greet the remarks which are made by the speakers called and by the excited crowd. It is a stormy event in the history of the Southern movement.

The election was held as scheduled, resulting in eighty pro-secession delegates, forty-four co-operationists delegates, and six undecided delegates. The popular vote was 20,448 for pro-secession delegates and 17,296 for co-operationists delegates. The convention met at Baton Rouge on January 23 with 127 delegates in attendance. Alexander Mouton was elected president of the convention, which would meet in Baton Rouge until January 29, when it was adjourned to accommodate the regular session of the legislature. It met again in New Orleans on the twenty-ninth, after securing a meeting hall and accommodations.

During this time tensions had escalated when Governor Moore received word from Louisiana's U.S. senators John Slidell and Judah P. Benjamin via Daniel W. Adams of the Louisiana Military Board that secret plans were under way in Washington to garrison Southern ports, and to expect a surprise from the Gulf squadron. The governor of Louisiana was not about to sit idle regarding the military situation in the state. On January 10, Fort Jackson and Fort St. Phillip were seized by the state, and Bvt. Maj. Joseph A. Haskin, the commanding officer of the U.S. barracks and arsenal at Baton Rouge, received this demand from the governor:

Sir: The safety of the State of Louisiana demands that I take possession of all Government property within her limits. You are, therefore, summoned hereby to deliver up the barracks, arsenal, and public property now under your command. With the large force at my disposal this demand will be enforced. Any attempt at defense on your part will be a rash sacrifice of life. The highest consideration will be extended to yourself and command.

Haskin wisely complied with the governor's demand at 5 P.M. that same day, surrendering 29,222 percussion muskets, 8,283 flint muskets, 2,287 Hall rifles, and gunpowder enough to supply ten batteries of six guns each. Ironically, a portion of the arms were received at the Louisiana Seminary arsenal by Supt. William Tecumseh Sherman, who was required by his position to accept them. In his memoirs, Sherman would write of that day:

Thus I was made the receiver of stolen goods, and these goods the property of the United States. This grated on my feelings as an ex-army officer, and on counting the arms I noticed that they were packed in the old familiar boxes, with the 'U.S.' simply scratched off.

Fort Macomb would also be seized on January 28 by a detachment from the First Regiment Louisiana Infantry, and in New Orleans, the U.S. Mint and the U.S. Custom House would follow on February 1. The Mint's \$500,000 in gold and silver was appropriated as well, and the Custom House's \$147,519.66 in funds were transferred to the new Confederate government. Fort Pike, on the Rigolets outside of New Orleans, would also be claimed for the state.

Mississippi governor John J. Pettus made a request to Moore for any weapons and ammunition that Louisiana could spare to aid in the defense of his state. Moore responded with 5,000 flintlock muskets, 1,000 Hall rifles, 3,000 percussion muskets, 200,000 cartridges, 1,000 pounds of rifle powder, 6 twenty-four pounder guns and carriages, 500 twenty-four pounder shot, and 1,000 pounds of cannon powder. Moore said he had honored this request “not only from considerations of courtesy to a sister State, but in further execution of my duty to Louisiana regarding the approaches of Federal troops from above.”

On January 24, Governor Moore submitted to the convention delegates a copy of his yearly address to the Louisiana legislature, which he had made two days earlier. He expounded on his December address to the legislature and added that he held no hopes of a peaceful resolution with the North. He enthusiastically stated that “there can no longer be doubt of the wisdom of that policy which demands that the conflict shall come, and shall be settled now.”

By January 25, two events at the convention had set the stage for the withdrawal of Louisiana from the Union. The first was an address by two Southern speakers, former South Carolina governor John L. Manning and former Alabama governor John A. Winston, both ambassadors to the convention from their respective states. Manning had arrived armed with the South Carolina ordinance of secession and urged Louisiana to cooperate in the creation of a Southern nation. Winston predicted that in only two years the South would be the greatest nation in the world. The second event occurred in the form of a communication posted Washington, January 15, that arrived on the twenty-fifth. This message was from Senators Slidell and Benjamin and U.S. Representatives Thomas G. Davidson and John M. Landrum, favoring immediate secession. Twenty-five hundred copies of this message were ordered to be printed for distribution and the message read to the convention.

On January 26, 1861, the Ordinance of Secession was approved by the convention by a vote of 113 for and 17 against. After the result of the vote was announced amid wild cheers,

Mouton declared Louisiana a “free, sovereign and independent power.” Her bonds with the Union were dissolved. The Stars and Stripes were lowered in New Orleans for the first time since the signing of the Louisiana Purchase in December 1803 and a temporary flag unfurled in its place.

The Ordinance of Secession was forwarded to Senator Slidell and Senator Benjamin in Washington and at their request, read to the U.S. Senate. Soon thereafter, they made their dramatic farewell statements and, followed by the Louisiana representatives to the House, started for home. In his fiery address, Slidell prophesied that a boycott would be imposed by the South on Northern manufactories, that Southern ships would ply the oceans, and that foreign intervention would prevent Northern blockades of Southern ports of call from being successfully imposed. He also made this ominous statement to his former colleagues: “This will be war . . . and we shall meet it with . . . efficient weapons.”

With the convention reassembled in New Orleans, the Committee on Confederation provided an ordinance for the election of six delegates to attend the convention of seceding states in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 4. The delegates chosen were Henry Marshall, Alexander DeClouet, Edward Sparrow, Charles M. Conrad, Duncan F. Kenner, and John Perkins, Jr. They were instructed to aid in the creation of a provisional central government that would be framed on the principles of the U.S. Constitution.

A committee was also created to design a flag for the new sovereign State of Louisiana on February 4. On February 11, the committee presented its design, which consisted of thirteen horizontal stripes, representing the thirteen original colonies, in the following order: blue, white, red, white, blue, white, red, white, blue, white, red, white, blue. The canton, or upper left-hand corner, of the flag was a square field of red equal to the width of seven stripes, and in the middle of the canton was a pale yellow, five-pointed star. The colors blue, white, and red were dedicated to the French colonists, and red and yellow were dedicated to the former Spanish rulers.

The flag was unveiled on February 12 at Lafayette Square in

New Orleans, with all convention delegates and Lt. Gov. Henry M. Hyams in attendance. At promptly 11 A.M. the flag was raised at City Hall and the event celebrated by a twenty-one-gun salute from the Washington Artillery. The *New Orleans Daily Picayune* carried this description of the festivities:

After the firing of the salute, three hearty cheers were given in honor of the flag, when the members again marched in front of the military, which saluted them as they passed. The balconies of the private and public buildings were crowded with the fair ladies of our city, and as the breeze unfurled the heaven-born hues of Louisiana's flag against the sky, displaying the beauteous harmony of its combined colors, a thrill of joy and admiration filled the spectators.

The convention was adjourned later that day and called to order again on March 4, the day of the "Black Republican's" inauguration in Washington. In his inaugural address, Lincoln declared the secession ordinances in the South null and void. He assured the audience gathered that he would use his power as president to "hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government."

On March 11, the delegates in Montgomery adopted the Constitution of the Confederate States of America and sent it to the member states for ratification. The new constitution was taken into consideration on March 21 by the convention meeting in New Orleans. That same day, the constitution was ratified by the convention by a vote of 101 for and 7 against and declared binding upon all inhabitants of Louisiana. On March 25, the day before adjournment of the convention, the delegates created six Confederate congressional districts within the state, and the election day for congressmen was fixed as the first Monday in November 1861.

The Montgomery delegates, now referred to as the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy, also began making preparations for the now looming conflict with the North. Lincoln's refusal to meet with the Confederate Peace Commission, sent by the Confederacy "for the purpose of negotiating friendly relations between that Government [the U.S.] and the Confederate States of America," was a strong indicator of the North's intentions. The

Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, was empowered to receive state forces and arms from the members of the Confederacy for the creation of a Confederate States of America military force.

Davis was born in Christian County, Kentucky, in 1808. A West Point graduate of the class of 1828, he was a veteran of the Black Hawk War as well as service on the frontier. Davis resigned from the army when he married Sarah Knox Taylor, the daughter of Pres. Zachary Taylor and sister of Richard Taylor. When Sarah died in 1835, Davis slipped into semiseclusion for ten years as a slave owning planter in Mississippi. He remarried in 1845, wedding Varina Howell, and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a "States Rights" Democrat from Mississippi. After resigning in 1846, he served with distinction in the Mexican War. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1847, where he served until 1851, again representing Mississippi. From 1853 to 1857, Davis was secretary of war in the administration of Pres. Franklin Pierce, after which service he returned to the Senate once more.

Davis was known as a passionate debater in his defense of slavery and the right of a state to secede from the Union. Following the election of Lincoln, he announced from the Senate floor Mississippi's withdrawal from the Union. He hoped to be given command of the Confederate military, but instead would be chosen as its first, and only, president. He would die in 1889 in New Orleans, still a staunch defender of secession and the Southern cause.

Readying itself for conflict with its northern neighbor, the newly established Confederacy began to draw resources from its member states. Confederate secretary of war Leroy P. Walker requested seventeen hundred Louisiana soldiers from Governor Moore on March 9. On April 8, the request was increased to three thousand, and after the firing upon of Fort Sumter, increased again to five thousand Louisiana sons "armed and equipped and ready to move in a moments [*sic*] notice."

Moore responded by appealing for volunteers, and all sections of the state responded overwhelmingly. New Orleans was made the meeting place of the troops, and on the grounds of the Metairie Race Course, which had concluded its spring season on April 9, Camp Walker was established under the command of

Brig. Gen. E. L. Tracy. The legislature would appropriate five hundred thousand dollars from the levee fund for state defense and supplies for the camp.

Camp Walker was a poor choice for a camp of military instruction due to a lack of good drinking water and its swampy conditions. The area was plagued by swarms of mosquitoes, and the adjacent swamps had deep, open ditches that slowly carried the sewage and drainage from New Orleans. The racecourse itself had been built upon soft, marshy soil that was transformed into muck and mud by the constant drilling of the recruits and the necessary supply wagons. Recruits had to pitch their tents in the muck, and this was where they lay their weary heads after a hard day of drills. By order of Governor Moore, the camp would later be moved to a more suitable location within the state.

Many of the planters and merchants of the state contributed toward the cost of equipping military companies, and some were rewarded by having the company bear their name, in some cases, these individuals were even made captain of the company. In all the parishes, military preparation was the order of the day. Flag presentations, parades, and drills all contributed to the warlike atmosphere. In northeast Louisiana it was reported that Monroe had military companies passing through almost every day during July. One estimation had sixteen thousand Louisianians bearing arms by June 1, 1861. This number included the five thousand at New Orleans, one thousand in Arkansas, seventeen hundred in coastal and harbor defense, four thousand at Camp Moore, twenty-three hundred in Virginia, and twenty-one hundred at Pensacola, Florida.

The final act of the New Orleans delegates on March 26 was to repeal and amend ordinances that had made Louisiana an independent state after her secession from the Union. She was now a full-fledged member of the Confederate States of America, with a president of Southern upbringing who shared the sentiments of her people. For the majority of Louisianians, the future had never seemed brighter or held such promise of prosperity. The passage of four years' time would prove them to be tragically mistaken.