People to Know
Biographies for Chapter Fourteen

As you read, consider three things:
1. *Who were these people: lawyers, adventurers, generals, priests, monarchs, business people, etc.*
2. *What did these people do that was important in their time?*
3. *How did these people affect others in their time and possibly today?*

Stephen A. Douglas

Stephen Douglas (1813-1861) was the Democratic Senator of Illinois. Although he stood just over five feet in height, his determination earned him the nickname "Little Giant."

In 1850, he got Congress to pass the Compromise of 1850, thus avoiding a possible civil war. In 1854, he co-wrote the Kansas-Nebraska Act that created two new western territories. Douglas' support of popular sovereignty, however, led to violence in Kansas territory between abolitionist and pro-slavery forces. Northerners referred to the blood letting as Bleeding Kansas.

In 1858, Douglas ran for re-election against the Republican Abraham Lincoln. In a series of seven debates, both men established the differences between the Republican and Democratic parties. Douglas won re-election but the debates gave Lincoln national fame. Douglas would lose against Lincoln in the 1860 presidential election.

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) never called herself an abolitionist but she disliked the practice of slavery. When the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 passed, it angered her. She began writing a series of stories for the Washington D.C. antislavery weekly *The National Era*. In 1852, the stories were collected together and published in book form under the title *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In it, Stowe criticized the institution of slavery. The book became a national and international bestseller.

The South called the book a lie and claimed its real purpose was to attack slavery. In many Southern states the book was banned and in some places a person could be arrested for owning the book. In the North, thousands of people joined the abolitionists after reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

John Brown

John Brown was an abolitionist and religious fanatic. As with most fanatics, he tended to see things from only his point of view and ignored the opinions of others.

In 1855, Brown settled in Kansas territory with five of his sons. When proslavery men attacked abolitionists in Lawrence, Kansas, in May 1856, Brown fumed. On the night of May 24-25, 1856, Brown led a group of abolitionists to Pottawatomie Creek and hacked to death five pro-slavery men. Brown escaped arrest and fled to the North.

On October 16, 1859, Brown led 22 men to take the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Brown hoped to use the weapons he captured to start a slave revolt. Instead, local militia and marines captured Brown. Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859, for murder and treason.

Abolitionists called Brown a hero, but the South accused the North of trying to start a slave revolt and relations between both sections quickly worsened.

Charles Sumner

Republican Charles Sumner (1811-1874) served in the U.S. Senate for Massachusetts. He was squarely against slavery. In reaction to Bleeding Kansas, Sumner gave a passionate speech, "The Crimes Against Kansas," attacking specific Southern politicians. On May 22, 1856, South Carolina representative Preston Brooks entered the Senate chamber and accused Sumner of insulting the South and began beating Sumner with his cane. Sumner nearly died.

After the Civil War, Sumner tirelessly worked for civil rights for African Americans.

Dred Scott

Dred Scott (1795-1858) was a Missouri slave who eventually became the property of John Emerson, a U.S. army surgeon. Emerson took Scott with him to Illinois, a free state, and later to Wisconsin, a free territory. Finally, Scott returned to Missouri in 1838. Emerson died and Scott was transferred to other owners. With the help of friends, Scott sued for his freedom claiming that his time spent in a free state and free territory made him a free man.

Dred Scott v. Sanford reached the Supreme Court in 1857. The court declared Scott had no right to sue since he was an African American and a slave. Furthermore, the court ruled that the federal government had no right to keep slavery out of the territories, thus declaring the Missouri Compromise of 1820 unconstitutional. This ruling allowed slavery to spread to all U.S. territories.

James Buchanan

James Buchanan became the 15th president of the United States in 1856. By the time of his election, slavery had begun tearing the nation apart. Although a Northerner, Buchanan often sympathized with the South. Thus

causing both sections to accuse Buchanan of favoring the other.

Upon the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, Southern states began to secede. Buchanan declared that secession was illegal but refused to do anything about it. Buchanan's policy at this point was to essentially hold the country together until Lincoln took over.

Buchanan's failure to deal with Southern secession has him ranked as one of the worst presidents in United States history.