

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated Territory, or part of a State or Territory, whereof the people shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall nevertheless be and forever be free; and the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in their freedom, but will do all things lawful for us to do in order to give effect to this proclamation, and may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, declare the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, are in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, or in the State legislatures thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such States or Territories participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed sufficient evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

Now, therefore, I, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, in virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, at the time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do hereby, from and after the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, in pursuance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of ninety days, unless sooner terminated, order and designate as the States or Territories, respectively, wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit: ARKANSAS, TEXAS, LOUISIANA, (except the Parishes of St. Landry, Iberville, St. Martin, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans,) and also the Florida Territory, and the counties of ALABAMA, FLORIDA, GEORGIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, NORTH CAROLINA, AND VIRGINIA, (except the counties of Berkeley, Accomack, Stafford, Albemarle, Loudoun, Fairfax, Shenandoah, and West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Amherst, Southampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the Cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth,) and which excepted parts are for the present left out of the scope of this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do hereby order and designate as slaves within said designated States and parts of States

Emancipation Proclamation Discussion Questions

Background

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Abraham Lincoln on the second year of the Civil War. In a preliminary proclamation issued in 1862, Lincoln stated that on the first of the year “all persons held as slaves” in “States in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be free. The Emancipation Proclamation put this declaration into effect in states or parts of states currently in the Confederacy and promised that the military would maintain the slaves’ freedom.

Lincoln was at first unsure about the extent of his executive power and his authority under the Constitution to free the slaves. Eventually he saw the necessity that fell under his constitutional powers as commander-in-chief. He was concerned about the effect that the proclamation would have on the Union war effort, which was more than two years from being concluded. His concerns included the possibility that states such as Maryland and Kentucky, which, even though they held slaves, were not in the Confederacy. Would the Emancipation Proclamation force those states to join the Confederacy, increasing its manpower and supplies? Lincoln also consulted with his opinion that supported a war to save the Union but not necessarily to free the slaves. In issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, however, the freedom of slaves was guaranteed and Lincoln stood by this position, even risking losing the Election of 1860. In the Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln said, “I never, in my whole life, was doing right, than I do in signing this paper.”

About This Document

This copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln is on display at the National Constitution Center. It is one of the Leland-Bowling Collection.