

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71369-6 - Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: The Coming of the Civil War, 1850-1861 - Volume 2

John Ashworth

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic

The second and concluding volume of Professor Ashworth's study of American antebellum politics, this book offers an exciting new interpretation of the origins of the Civil War. The volume deals with the politics of the 1850s and with the plunge into civil war.

Professor Ashworth offers a new way of understanding the conflict between North and South and shows how northern free labor increasingly came into conflict with southern slavery as a result of both changes in the northern economy and the structural weaknesses of slavery.

John Ashworth was born in Lancashire, England, and studied at the Universities of Lancaster and Oxford. He is currently Professor of American History in the School of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham.

Professor Ashworth is the author of *'Agrarians' and 'Aristocrats': Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846*, and *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: Volume 1: Commerce and Compromise, 1820-1850* (both published by Cambridge University Press), and of numerous articles and reviews in learned journals.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71369-6 - Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: The
Coming of the Civil War, 1850-1861 - Volume 2

John Ashworth

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic

Volume 2: The Coming of the Civil War,
1850–1861

JOHN ASHWORTH

University of Nottingham



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71369-6 - Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: The Coming of the Civil War, 1850-1861 - Volume 2

John Ashworth

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521885928

© John Ashworth 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ashworth, John.

Slavery, capitalism, and politics in the antebellum Republic / John Ashworth.

p. cm.

Contents: v. 1. Commerce and compromise, 1820-1850

1. Slavery - Economic aspects - United States - History - 19th century.

2. Capitalism - United States - History - 19th century. 3. United States -

Politics and government - 1815-1861. 4. Working class - United States -

History - 19th century. 5. United States - Economic conditions - To 1865.

E441.A86 1996

331.11'734'0973 - dc20 95009957

ISBN 978-0-521-88592-8 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-71369-6 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71369-6 - Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: The
Coming of the Civil War, 1850-1861 - Volume 2

John Ashworth

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To my parents, Eric and Freda Ashworth

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Introduction: Explaining the Civil War (1)	1
Part I Slavery versus Antislavery	
1 Combating the weaknesses of slavery: Southern militants, 1850–1861	13
Introduction: The weaknesses of slavery	13
The Compromise of 1850 and its legacy	17
Triumph of the southern Democrats: The Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854	45
Crisis in Kansas, 1854–1858	63
The weaknesses of slavery (1): Free blacks	76
The weaknesses of slavery (2): Nonslaveholding whites	82
The weaknesses of slavery (3): Slaves	96
The southern economy	104
Crisis in the Democratic party and in the nation, 1857–1860	111
Secession and war: 1860–1861	128
Conclusion	167
2 The antislavery challenge: The Republicans, 1854–1861	173
Introduction: The Republican party	173
Democratic antecedents	176
Whig antecedents	205
Slavery and morality	234
Republicans and the Slave Power	244
Republicans and capitalism	265
Secession and war, 1860–1861	303
Conclusion	329

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-71369-6 - Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: The
 Coming of the Civil War, 1850-1861 - Volume 2
 John Ashworth
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Part II Polarisation and Collapse

3	The disintegration of Democratic hegemony: Northern Democrats and their southern allies, 1850–1861	339
	Introduction: The Kansas-Nebraska Act (1)	339
	Democracy, the nation, and the Democratic party	344
	A constricted universalism: Race and ethnicity	354
	State’s rights and limited government	369
	Territorial expansion: Extending the area of freedom (and slavery)	384
	Slavery and antislavery	399
	The Kansas-Nebraska Act (2): Popular sovereignty	417
	Democrats and the economy	436
	Secession and war, 1860–1861	457
	Conclusion	466
4	Political realignment: Collapse of the Whigs and neo-Whigs, 1848–1861	471
	Introduction: Whiggery, neo-Whiggery and their discontents	471
	The Whigs, 1848–1852	476
	Temperance	494
	Nativism: The Know Nothings	515
	Collapse of the Whigs and the Know Nothings, 1852–1856	544
	Realignment completed, 1857–1860	579
	The Constitutional Union party	592
	Secession and war, 1860–1861	606
	Conclusion	624
	Conclusion: Explaining the Civil War (2)	628
	<i>Appendix: A review of some major works on the reasons for Confederate defeat</i>	651
	<i>Index</i>	673

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71369-6 - Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic: The Coming of the Civil War, 1850-1861 - Volume 2

John Ashworth

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help I have received over the many years I have been engaged upon this volume (and its predecessor). I should like to express my gratitude to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a grant which enabled me to take a much-needed study leave. As far as fellow academics are concerned, Eric Foner has been a constant source of engagement and of constructive criticism and special thanks are due to him. Bruce Levine provided me with an excellent critique of an earlier version of the entire manuscript and the book is far better for his criticisms. Thanks also to James Oakes for many helpful points, to William W. Freehling, with whom I have exchanged many e-mails on the subjects addressed in this volume, and to two other anonymous critics, employed by Cambridge University Press, who offered not only criticism but also encouragement that was most welcome. On this side of the Atlantic, my colleague Richard King at Nottingham made some extremely helpful observations about my treatment of southern militants before the Civil War and Owen Butler, a former graduate student, gave the section on the Whig party a very thorough critical reading. Michael Heale, my teacher many years ago, and a friend now for many decades, read the whole manuscript and his comments and support were of incalculable value. Profound thanks also to my father, Eric Ashworth, who also read the manuscript in its entirety – a time-consuming task – and made many very helpful observations. I should also like to express my gratitude to my children Jackie and Mcash. Mary Paden and her team at Aptara Inc. saw this volume through from manuscript to its final form and I am very grateful to her. Last, but certainly not least, I must thank my editor Frank Smith at Cambridge University Press in New York for the immense amount of support, help, and encouragement he has provided over three books and more than twenty years.