A portrait of Julia Ward Howe, a woman with reddish-brown hair, wearing a dark blue or black shawl over a light-colored, possibly lace-trimmed, blouse. She is looking slightly to the left of the viewer. The background is a dense, green forest with trees and foliage.

JULIA WARD HOWE
and the
BATTLE HYMN
OF THE REPUBLIC

BY MARGOT MORRELL

LeadershipLives.com



Julia Ward was born in lower Manhattan in 1819. Her father was a prosperous banker. When Julia was five years old, her mother died while giving birth to her seventh child. She was 27 years old.





Julia Cutler Ward



Samuel Ward



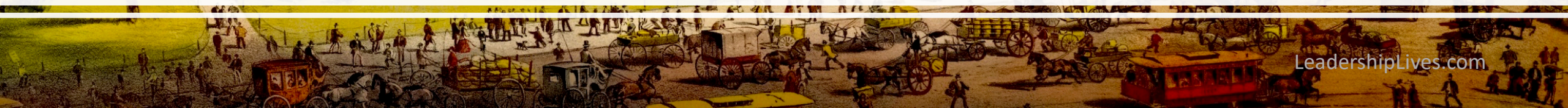
The Wards were descendants of New York's earliest settlers and of heroes of the American Revolution. One ancestor died before he could sign the Declaration of Independence. Fighting for freedom was in Julia's blood.

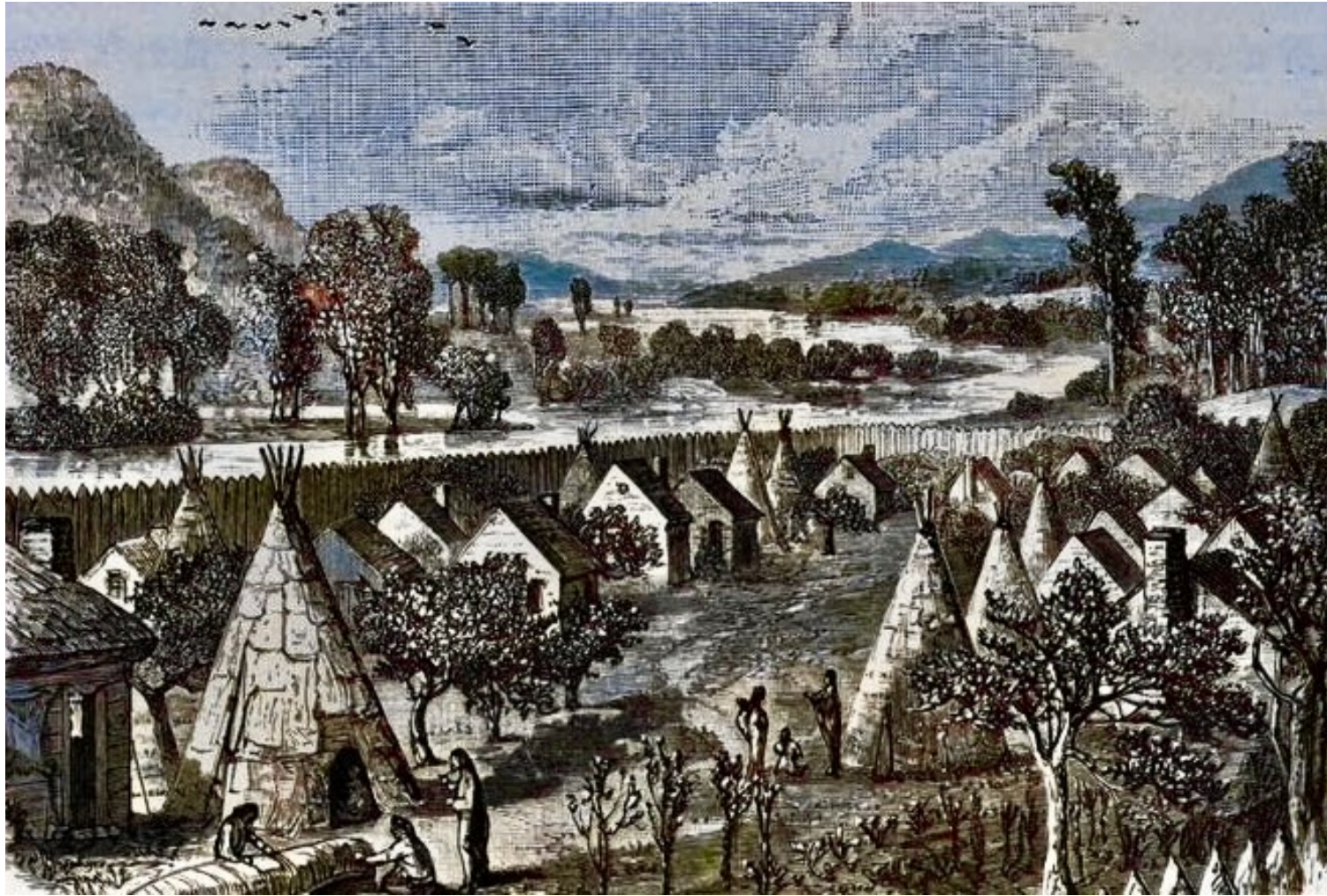


The Wards were particularly proud of being related to General Francis Marion, hero of the Revolutionary War. Julia's brother was named after the famed "Swamp Fox." Julia gave two of her children the middle name "Marion."



Julia's earliest memory was of a "fine house on the Bowling Green." In her memoirs, she wrote about taking walks with her nurse on the Battery where a Revolutionary War-era flagpole still stood.





On a summer holiday in upstate New York with her mother, Julia was introduced to a "great Indian chief."

Julia was told to be "very polite" and to be sure to notice the chief's silver medal given to him by General Washington.



After her mother died, her father moved the family to a new house at Broadway and Bond Street which was considered far uptown at the time.





Even then, Manhattan bustled with energy. Broadway, ca. 1830

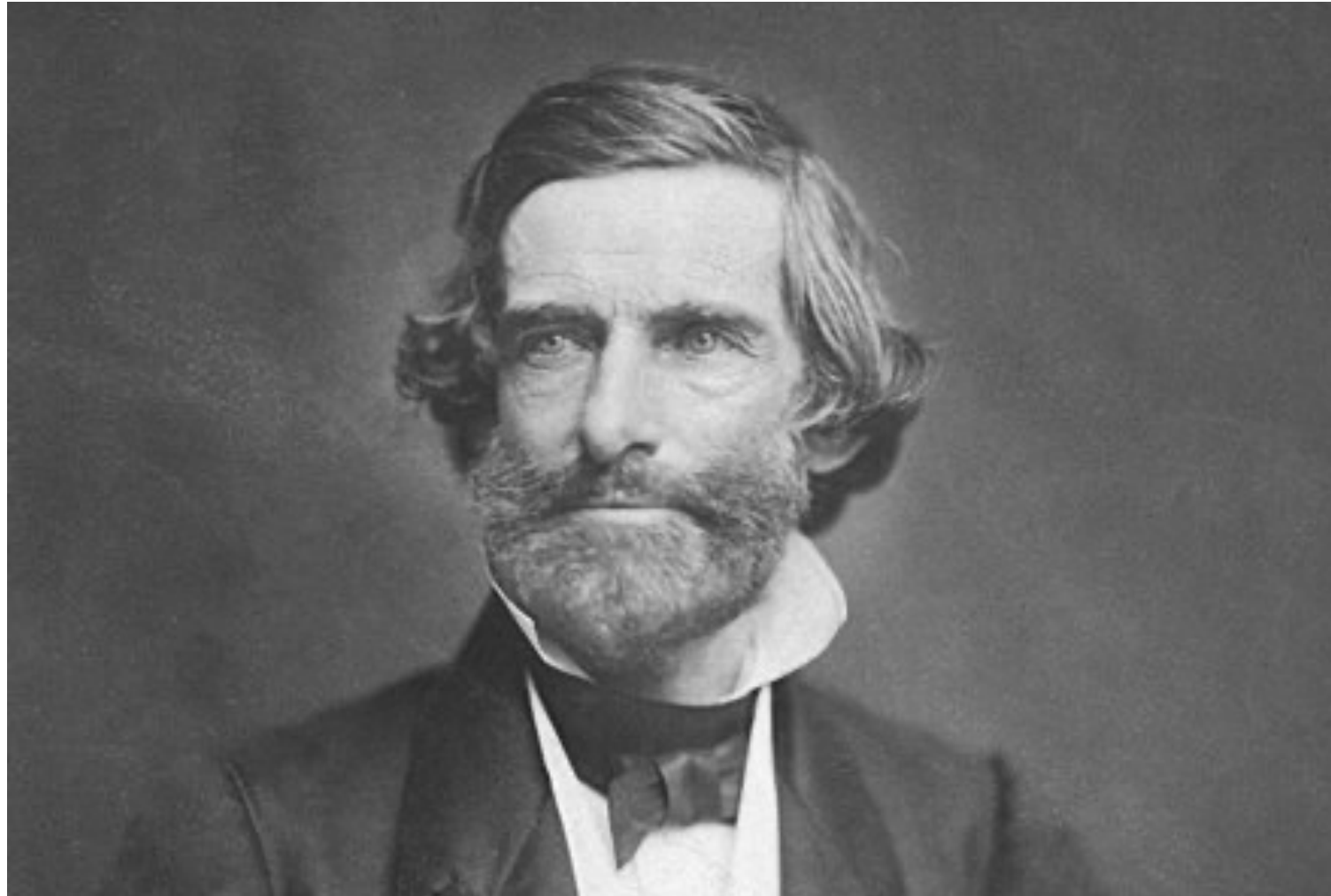
Early in life, Julia displayed a flair for writing – a gift inherited from her mother who was a published poet. Julia's talent was encouraged by her father and his friends.

One friend, Charles King, was the editor of a daily newspaper, *The New York American* and became president of Columbia College.

In her memoirs Julia wrote, “He was the patron of my early literary ventures, and kindly allowed my fugitive pieces to appear in his paper. He always advocated the abolition of slavery and could never forgive Henry Clay his part in effecting the Missouri Compromise.”



Charles King

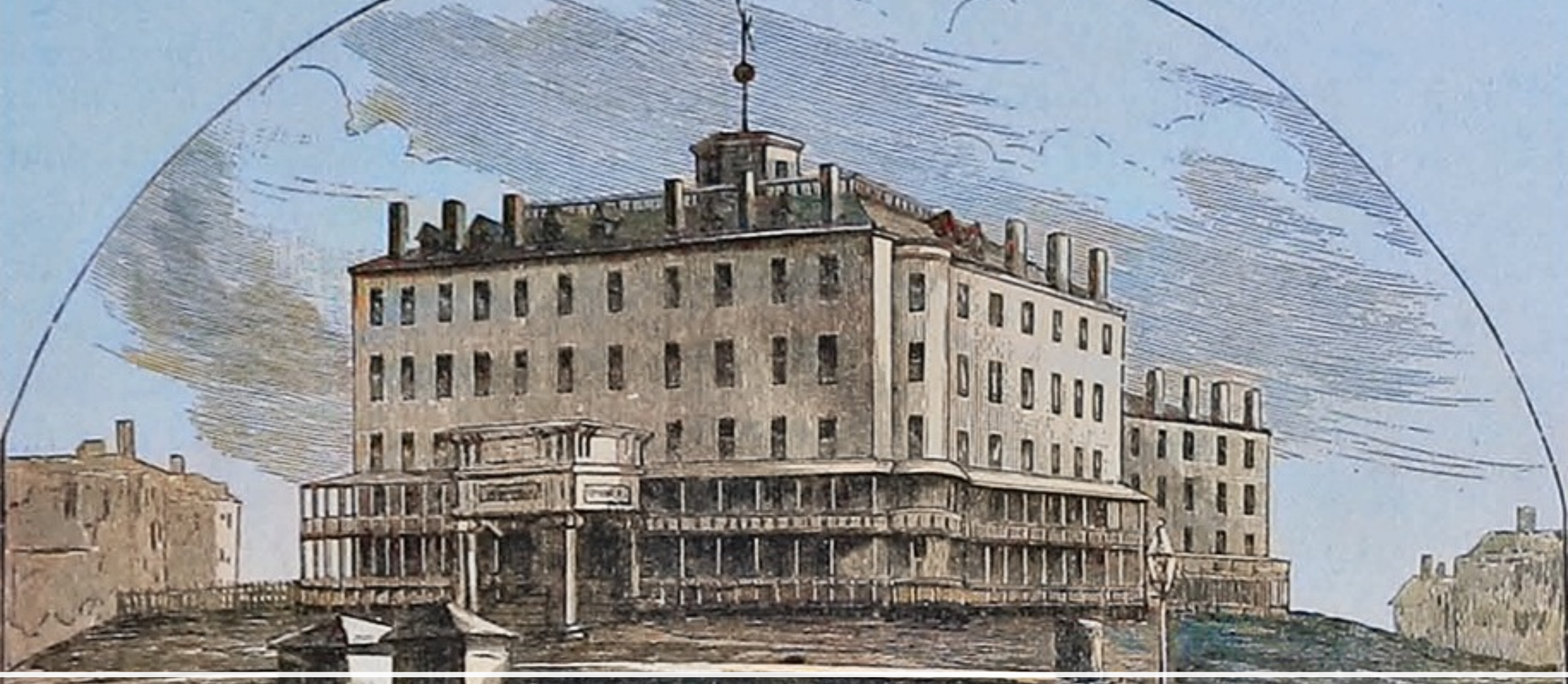


In 1843, Julia Ward married physician and freedom fighter, Bostonian Samuel Gridley Howe, eighteen years her senior.

Like Julia Ward, Howe was a descendant of patriots. His grandfather took part in the Boston Tea Party.

After graduating from Brown and Harvard Medical School, Howe sailed for Greece to join forces fighting for freedom from Turkey.

As a surgeon and soldier, he acquired invaluable experience on the battlefield that he put to use during the U. S. Civil War.



Encouraged by a friend, in 1831, Howe took the first step towards founding the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston. In 1837, he achieved worldwide acclaim by teaching a blind and deaf-mute child, Laura Bridgman, to communicate.

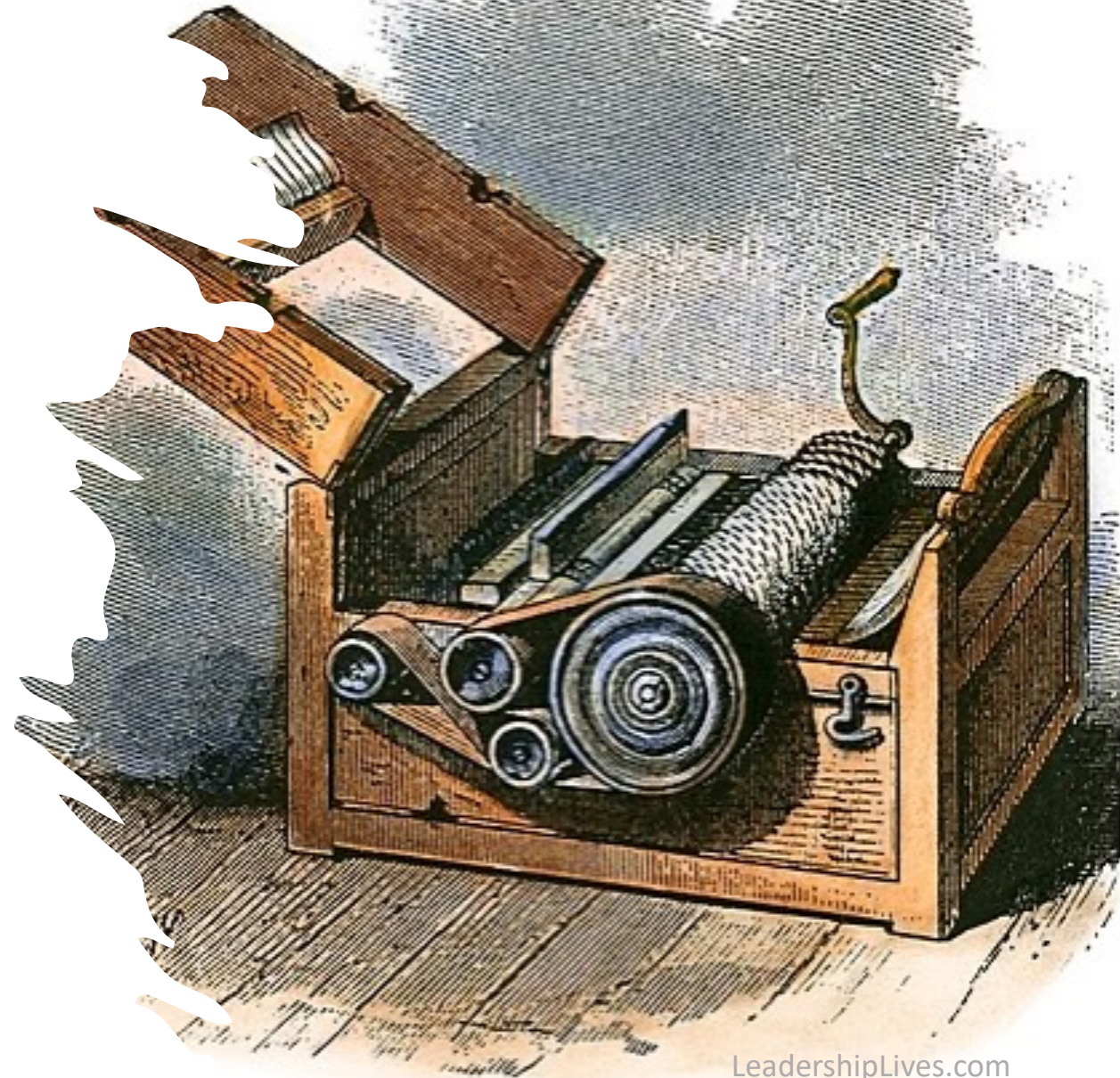
America's founding fathers expected slavery would dissipate because it did not make sense economically – on average, for every person working, the slave owner was responsible for feeding, clothing, and housing two people who were either too young or too old to work.

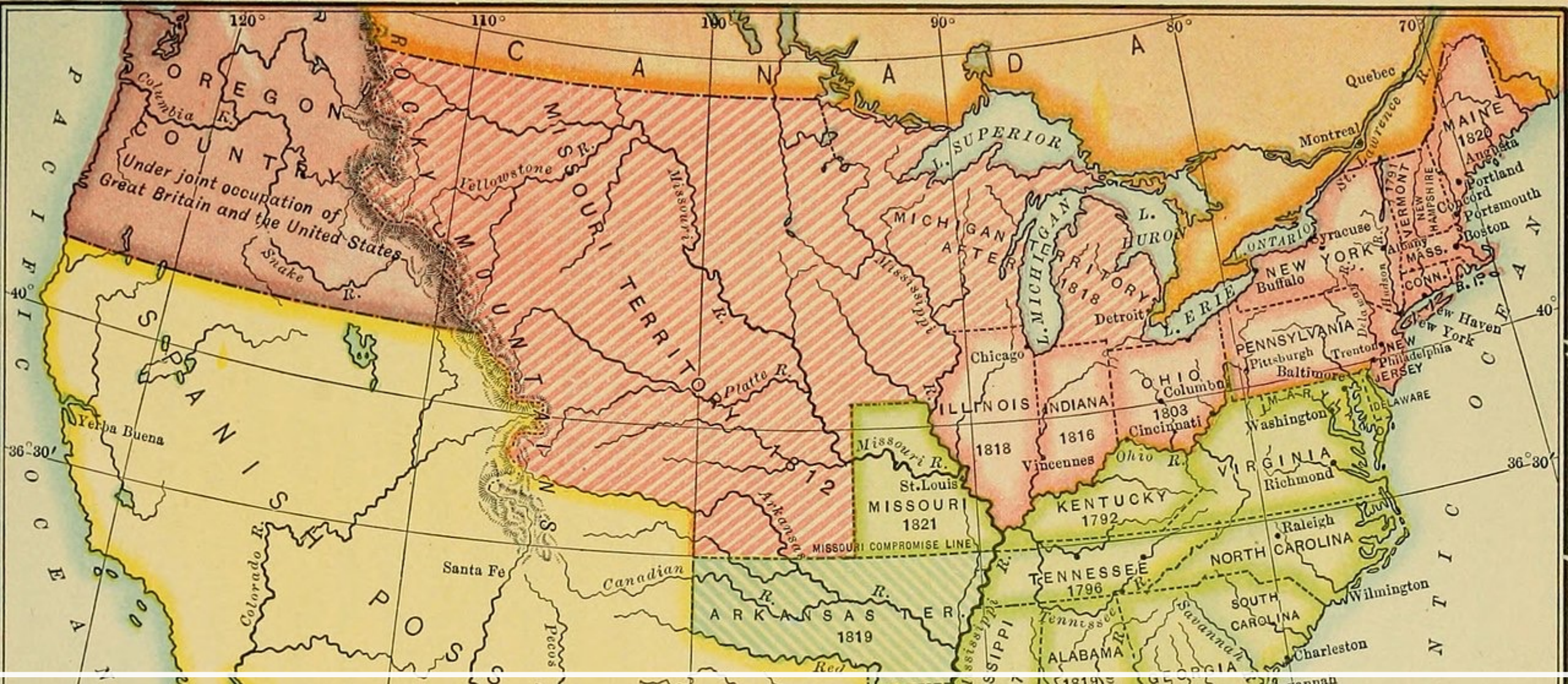
That changed when Massachusetts inventor, Eli Whitney, introduced the cotton gin in 1793.

Whitney thought his machine would bring an end to slavery. The machine did the reverse by making cotton growing more profitable.

As cotton exhausted the soil, slave owners sought ways to expand into new territories.

Samuel and Julia Ward Howe were in the forefront of battling the expansion of slavery.





Signed during the Monroe administration, the 1820 Missouri Compromise admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The law banned any extension of slavery north of the southern border of Missouri.

**UNITED STATES
IN 1821**

COLORED PEOPLE OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and
advised, to avoid conversing with the
**Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,**

For since the recent ORDER OF THE MAYOR &
ALDERMEN, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS AND

Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in
**KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING
SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY,**
and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun*
them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS**
on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

By the 1840s, southerners were agitating for further expansion of slavery into free territory.

In response, the Howes became increasingly active in the anti-slavery movement. In 1848, JWH contributed a poem, "On the Death of the Slave Lewis" to *The Liberty Bell*, an anti-slavery publication.

When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, abolitionists were enraged. The law required officials and citizens of all states to cooperate in returning escaped slaves to their owners.

In 1851, Howe became the founding editor of the *Boston Daily Commonwealth*, an anti-slavery newspaper. JWH helped with editing and contributed literary articles to the publication.



Charles Sumner, ca. 1850

In 1850, Samuel Howe worked hard to elect his closest friend, staunch abolitionist Charles Sumner, to the U. S. Senate. JWH described Sumner as "majestic in person, habitually reserved and rather distant in manner." She first met him in the 1830s as a friend of her eldest brother.

A graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law School and a member of the Porcellian Club, Sumner was ostracized for his beliefs by the Massachusetts aristocracy.

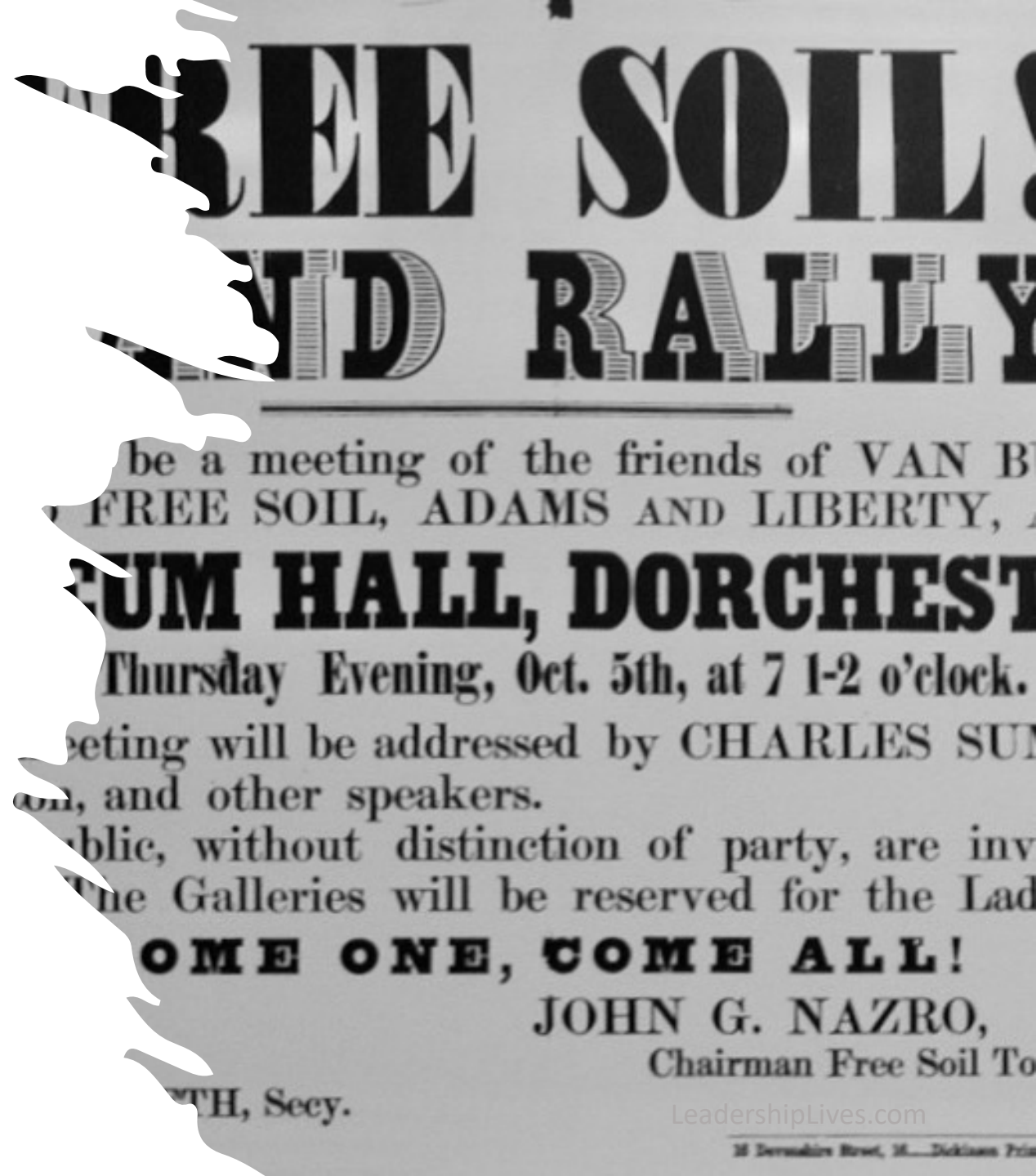
Samuel Howe was exempted from social punishment because, as JWH wrote, "the services which he continually rendered to the community compelled from all who knew him, not only respect, but also cordial good-will."

Reminiscences

In early 1854, Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas introduced a bill intended to foster westward expansion of the United States via a transcontinental railroad line through Chicago. Powerful southern senators pounced on the opportunity to repeal the 1820 Missouri Compromise. If the tracks were built on this northerly route, the railroad would run through the free territory of Nebraska.

To connect the markets of the east with the resources of the west, Douglas was willing to negotiate. He revised his bill to allow settlers in the territory to choose whether they were a free state or slave state. Douglas called this "popular sovereignty."

The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed at five A.M. on the morning of May 30, 1854, by a vote of 37-14. The Missouri Compromise was thus repealed by this overriding law and the stage was set for the Civil War.



On February 1, 1854, Charles Sumner wrote to Samuel Howe, "Do not be impatient with me. I am doing all that I can. This great wickedness disturbs my sleep, my rest, my appetite."

Later that year, Howe organized a lecture series on slavery at Tremont Temple in Boston with an impressive list of speakers – Senator Charles Sumner, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, Salmon P. Chase and Ralph Waldo Emerson, among others.

Notices of Meetings, &c.

LECTURES ON SLAVERY.

This course of Lectures will be delivered in the TREMONT TEMPLE, at 7½ o'clock, on THURSDAY EVENINGS, in the order indicated in the following list:—

Nov. 23. { Hon. CHARLES SUMNER,
Rev. JOHN PIERPONT, Poem.

Dec. 7. Hon. SALMON P. CHASE, of Ohio.

Dec. 14. Hon. ANSON BURLINGAME.

Dec. 21. WENDELL PHILLIPS, Esq.

Dec. 28. CASSIUS M. CLAY, Esq., of Ky.

Jan. 4. Hon. HORACE GREELEY.

Jan. 11. Rev. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

Jan. 18. Hon. JOHN P. HALE.

Jan. 25. RALPH WALDO EMERSON, Esq.

Feb. 8. Hon. NATHANIEL P. BANKS, Jr.

Feb. 15. Hon. LEWIS D. CAMPBELL, of Ohio.

Feb. 22. Hon. SAMUEL HOUSTON, of Texas.

Mar. 1. Hon. DAVID WILMOT, of Pa.

Mar. 8. Hon. CHARLES W. UPHAM.

— Organist—Mr. JOHN H. WILLCOX.

All the lecturers having engaged themselves to the Committee, there is the utmost confidence that there will be no failure.

Tickets, at \$3.00 each, admitting a lady and gentleman, can be obtained at Ticknor & Co.'s, 135, and Jewett & Co.'s, 117, Washington street.

☞ No single tickets will be sold.

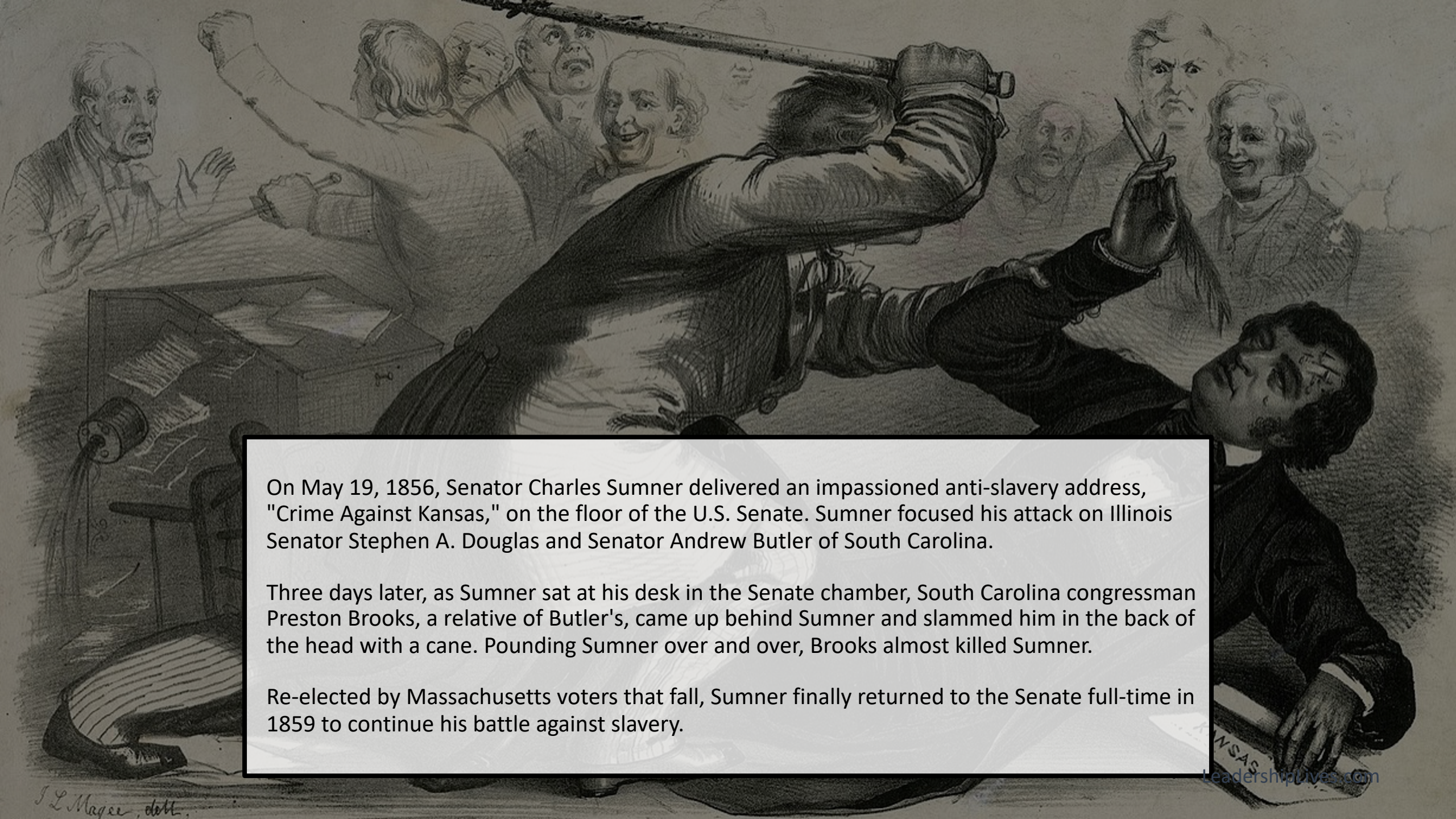
SAMUEL G. HOWE,
Chairman Lecture Committee.

Oct. 20 1854



In 1855, Abraham Lincoln wrote to his former business partner Joshua Speed about the Kansas-Nebraska Act, "I look upon that enactment not as a law, but as a violence from the beginning. It was conceived in violence and is being executed in violence."

In 1858, Lincoln and Douglas held a series of closely watched debates in Illinois on the extension of slavery, "popular sovereignty," and "Bleeding Kansas," where fierce fighting between slavery and abolitionist factions had already broken out.



On May 19, 1856, Senator Charles Sumner delivered an impassioned anti-slavery address, "Crime Against Kansas," on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Sumner focused his attack on Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas and Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina.

Three days later, as Sumner sat at his desk in the Senate chamber, South Carolina congressman Preston Brooks, a relative of Butler's, came up behind Sumner and slammed him in the back of the head with a cane. Pounding Sumner over and over, Brooks almost killed Sumner.

Re-elected by Massachusetts voters that fall, Sumner finally returned to the Senate full-time in 1859 to continue his battle against slavery.

By 1857, a lawsuit concerning a slave named Dred Scott had been seesawing its way through the court system for over ten years.

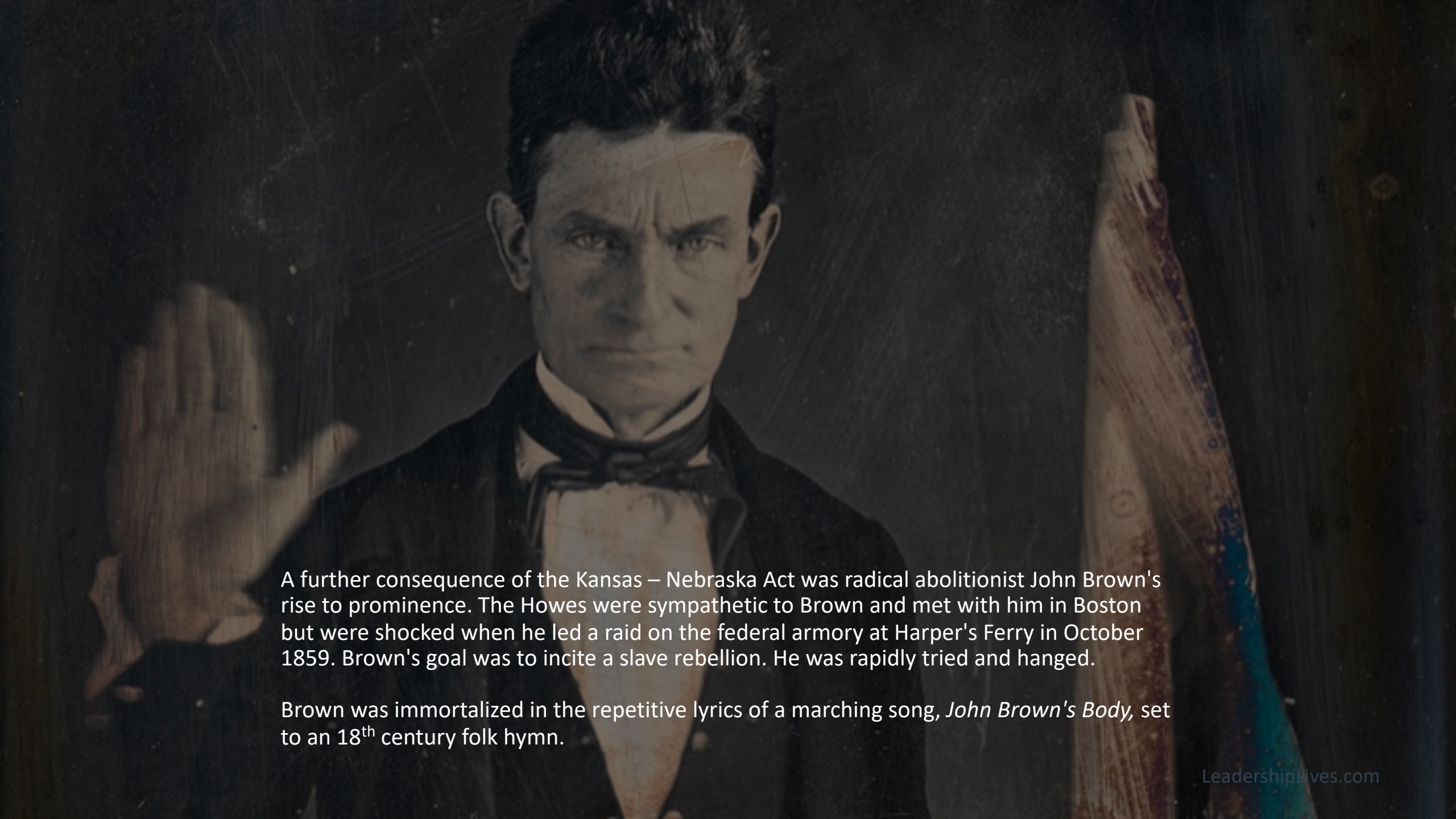
Missouri was a slave state, but it had two statutes that were the basis of Scott's suit. One allowed anyone to sue for wrongful enslavement. The other stated that any slave taken to a free territory was automatically freed.

Dred Scott's owner had taken him to the free states of Illinois and Wisconsin.

On March 6, 1857, Roger B. Taney, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, handed down his infamous Dred Scott decision. Taney declared Scott was not free and went further declaring that all African Americans were not U.S. citizens and therefore not protected by the Constitution.

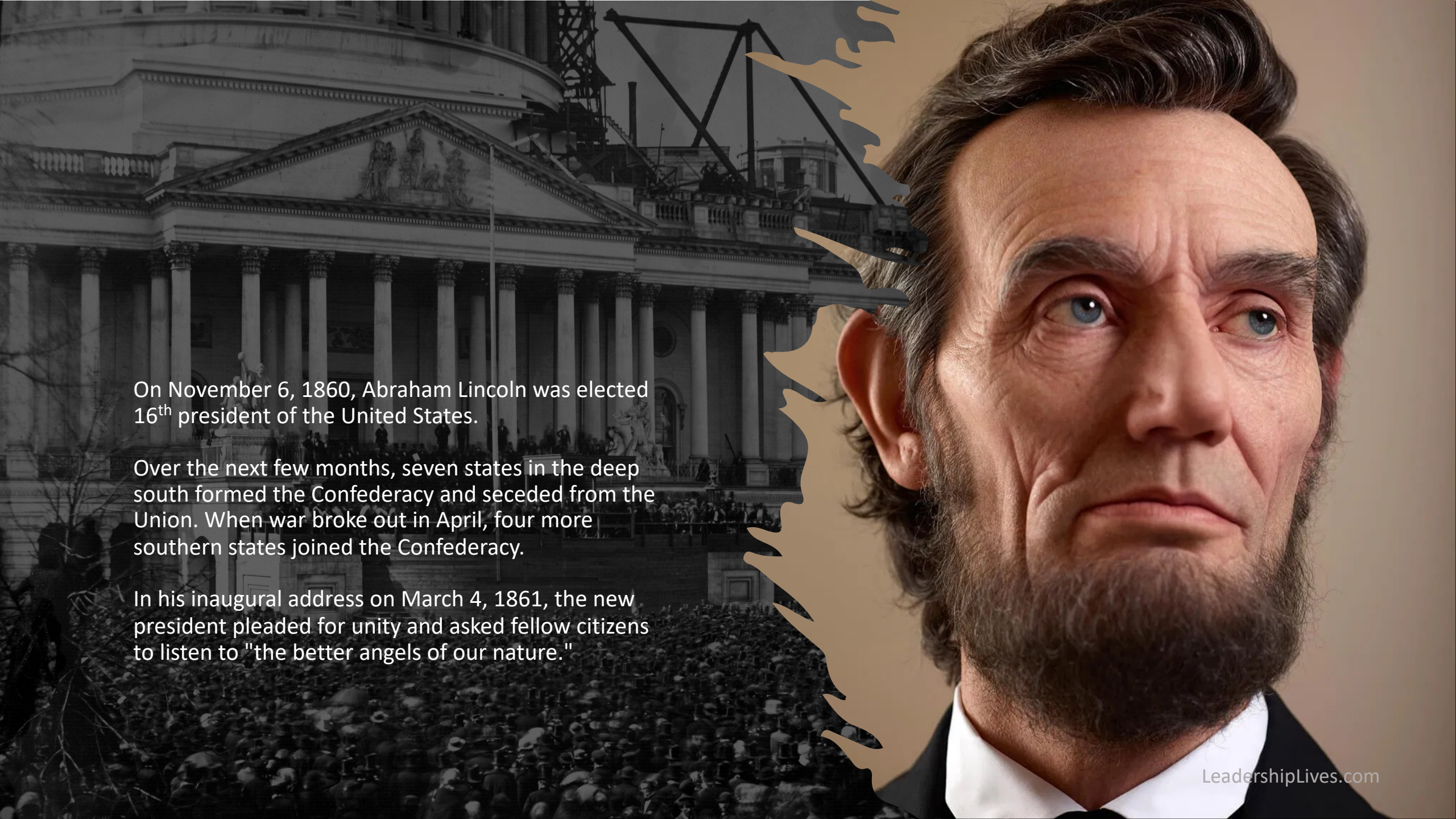
With that ruling, Taney, in effect, elected Abraham Lincoln president of the United States.





A further consequence of the Kansas – Nebraska Act was radical abolitionist John Brown's rise to prominence. The Howes were sympathetic to Brown and met with him in Boston but were shocked when he led a raid on the federal armory at Harper's Ferry in October 1859. Brown's goal was to incite a slave rebellion. He was rapidly tried and hanged.

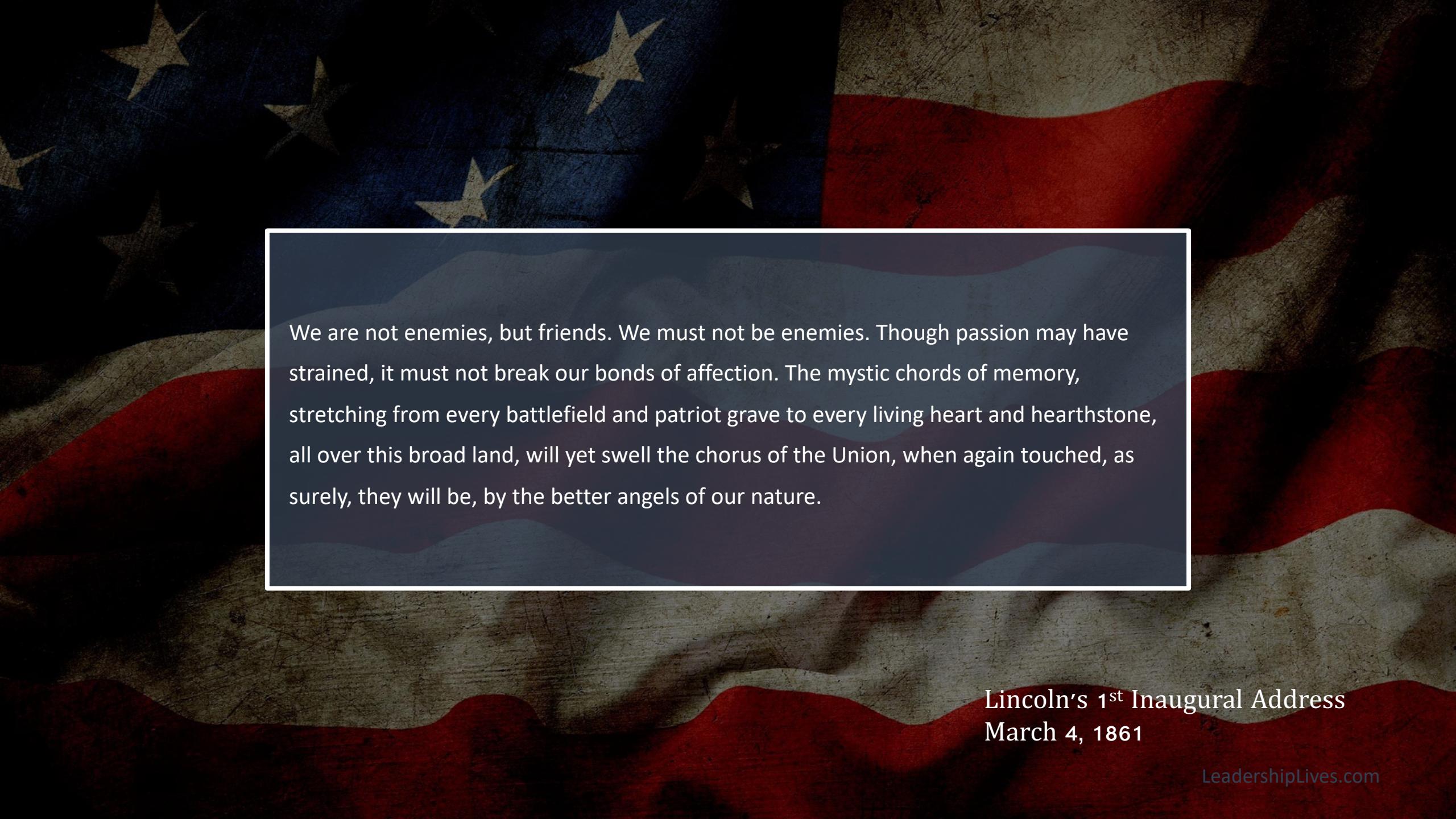
Brown was immortalized in the repetitive lyrics of a marching song, *John Brown's Body*, set to an 18th century folk hymn.



On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected 16th president of the United States.

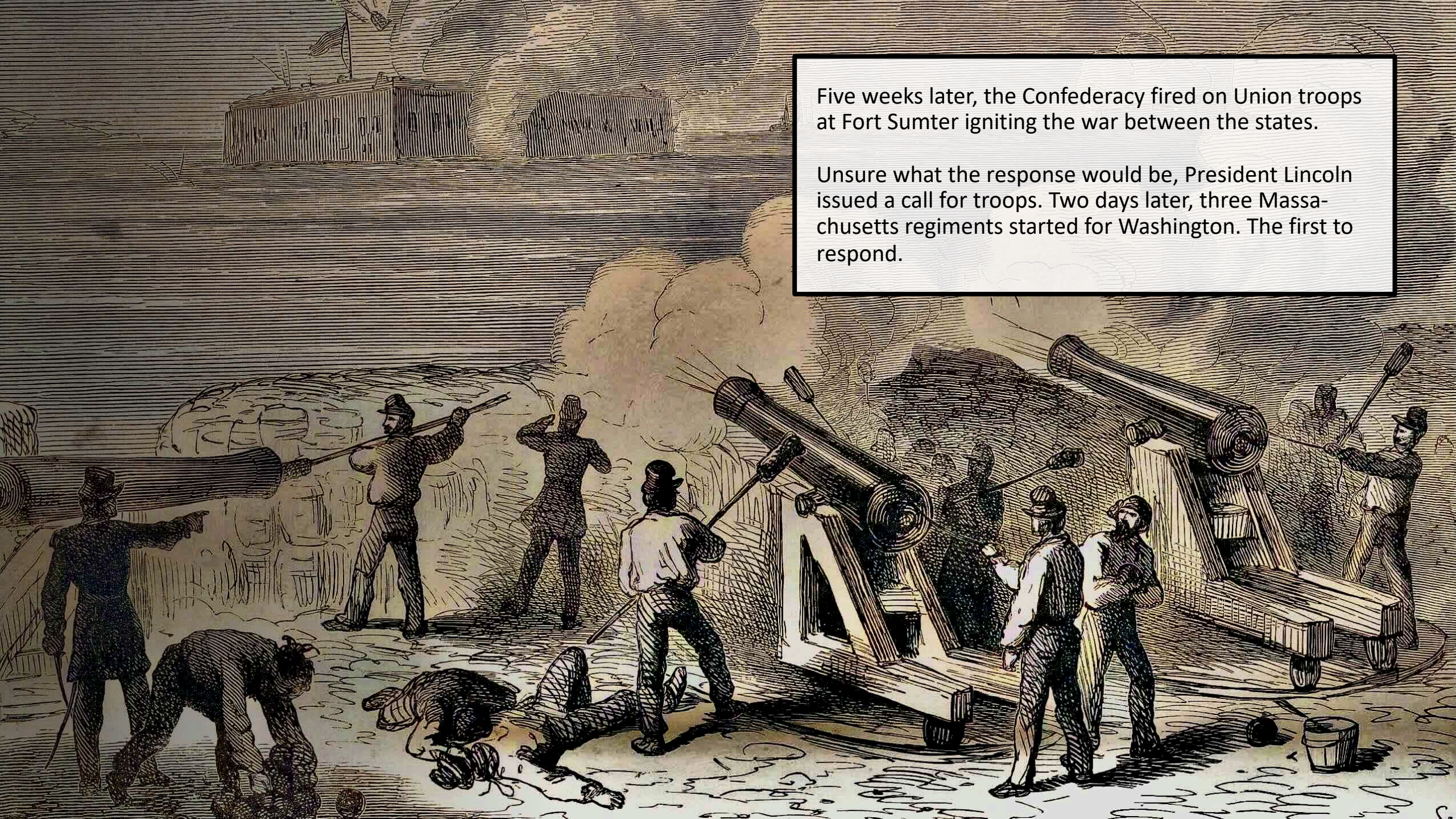
Over the next few months, seven states in the deep south formed the Confederacy and seceded from the Union. When war broke out in April, four more southern states joined the Confederacy.

In his inaugural address on March 4, 1861, the new president pleaded for unity and asked fellow citizens to listen to "the better angels of our nature."



We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely, they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Lincoln's 1st Inaugural Address
March 4, 1861



Five weeks later, the Confederacy fired on Union troops at Fort Sumter igniting the war between the states.

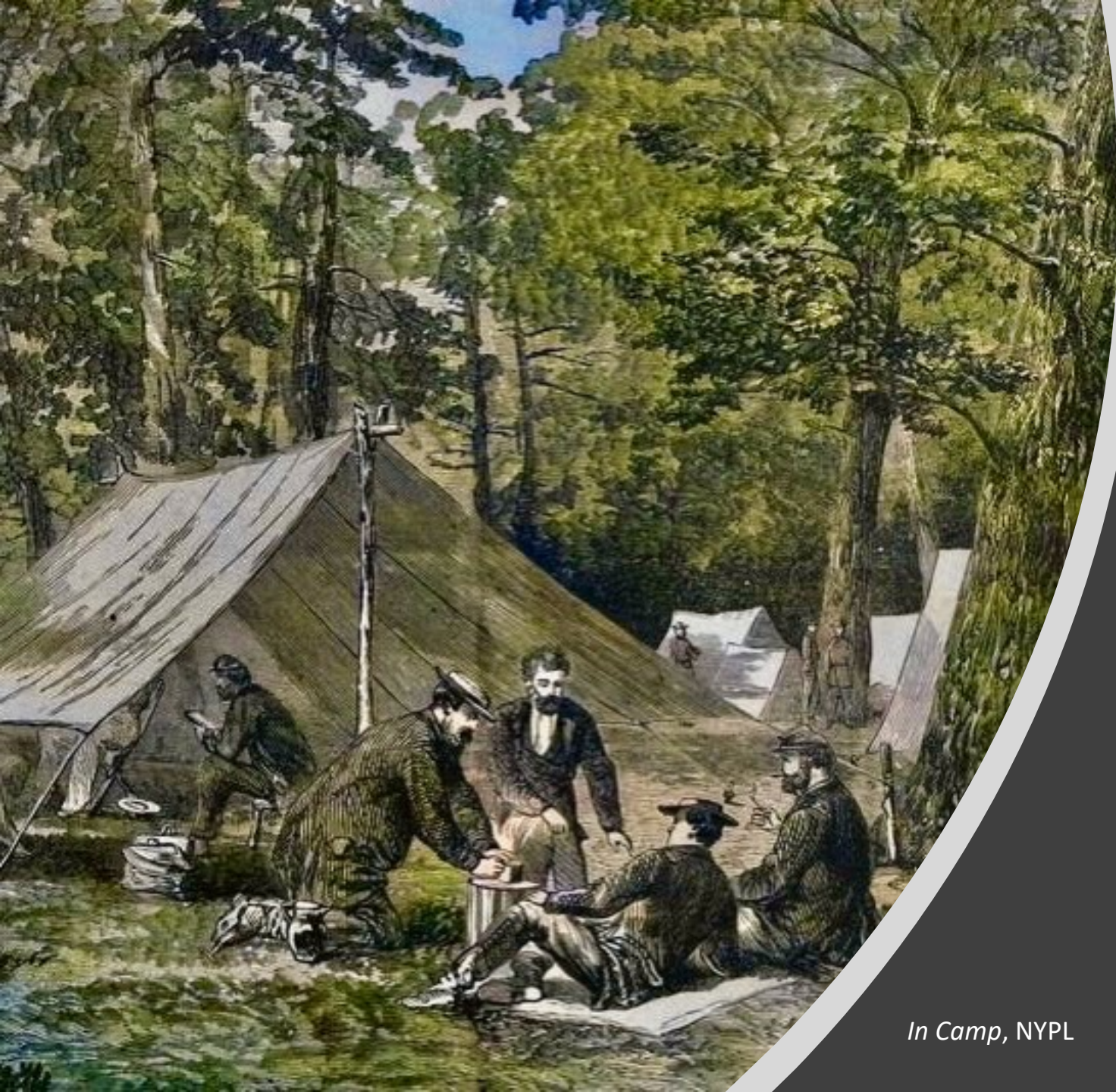
Unsure what the response would be, President Lincoln issued a call for troops. Two days later, three Massachusetts regiments started for Washington. The first to respond.

Samuel Howe wrote to Governor Andrew to offer his services. On May 2nd, Gen. Winfield Scott, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Governor Andrew asked Dr. Howe to survey the sanitary conditions of the Massachusetts troops at and near Washington.

After the 1st Battle of Bull Run, the U.S. Sanitary Commission was rapidly organized to distribute food, medical supplies and clothing to sick and wounded troops.

Dr. Howe was among the first appointed to the Commission by President Lincoln.





In connection with the Sanitary Commission, SGH travelled to Washington in November 1861 with JWH, and Governor and Mrs. Andrew and Rev. James Freeman Clarke. The Andrews and JWH were long-standing members of Rev. Clarke's church.

As the train neared Washington, JWH noticed the soldiers clustered around campfires - "the Army of the Potomac lying like a steel girdle about Washington to protect it."

This first glimpse of the Union Army "made such a deep impression upon her mind and heart."

The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic
Florence Howe Hall

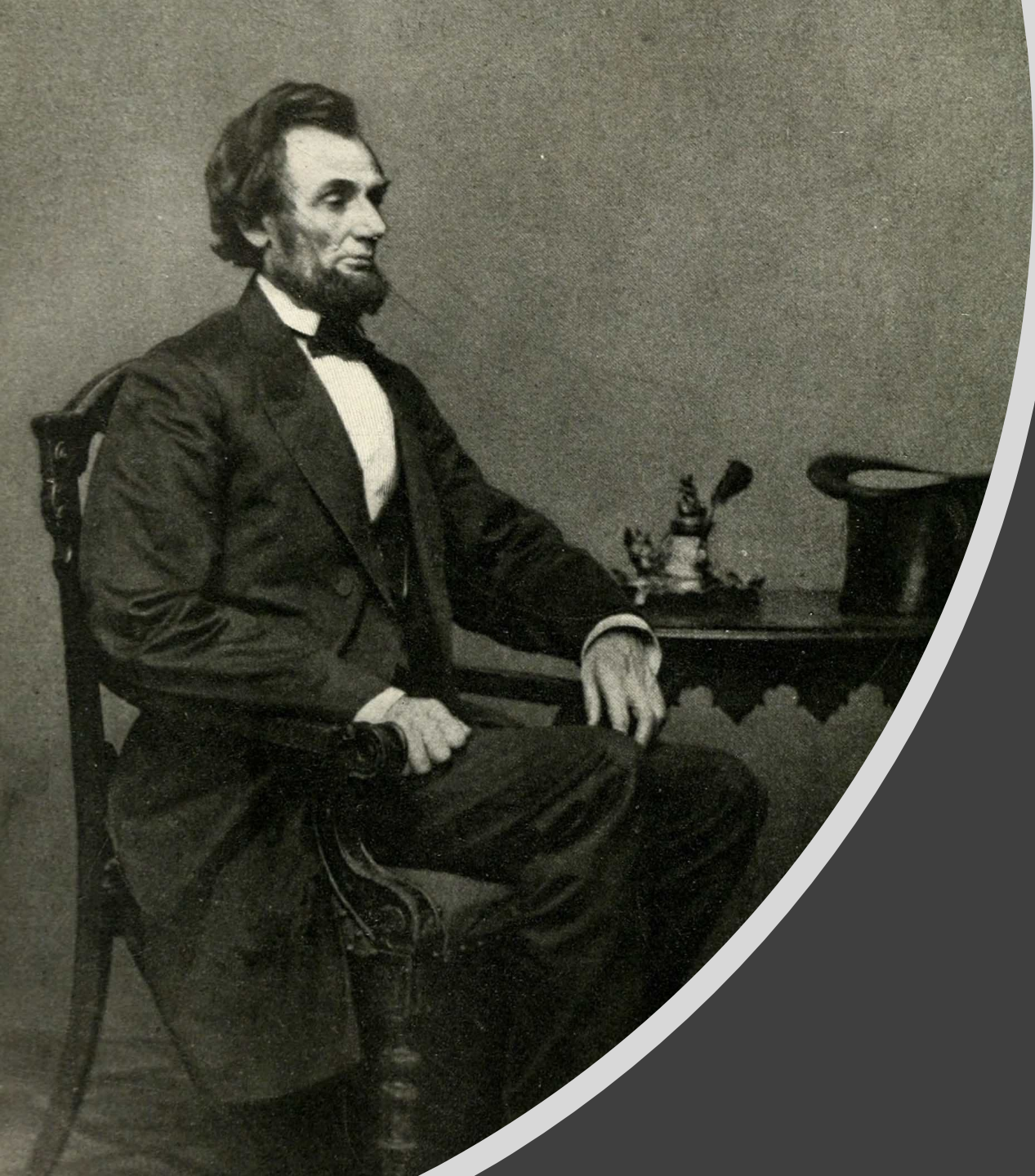


The Howes stayed at the Willard Hotel overlooking the White House.

From the hotel, Julia Ward Howe watched army officers galloping by and ambulances rushing through the streets.

She noted a “ghastly advertisement” for embalming and shipping bodies.

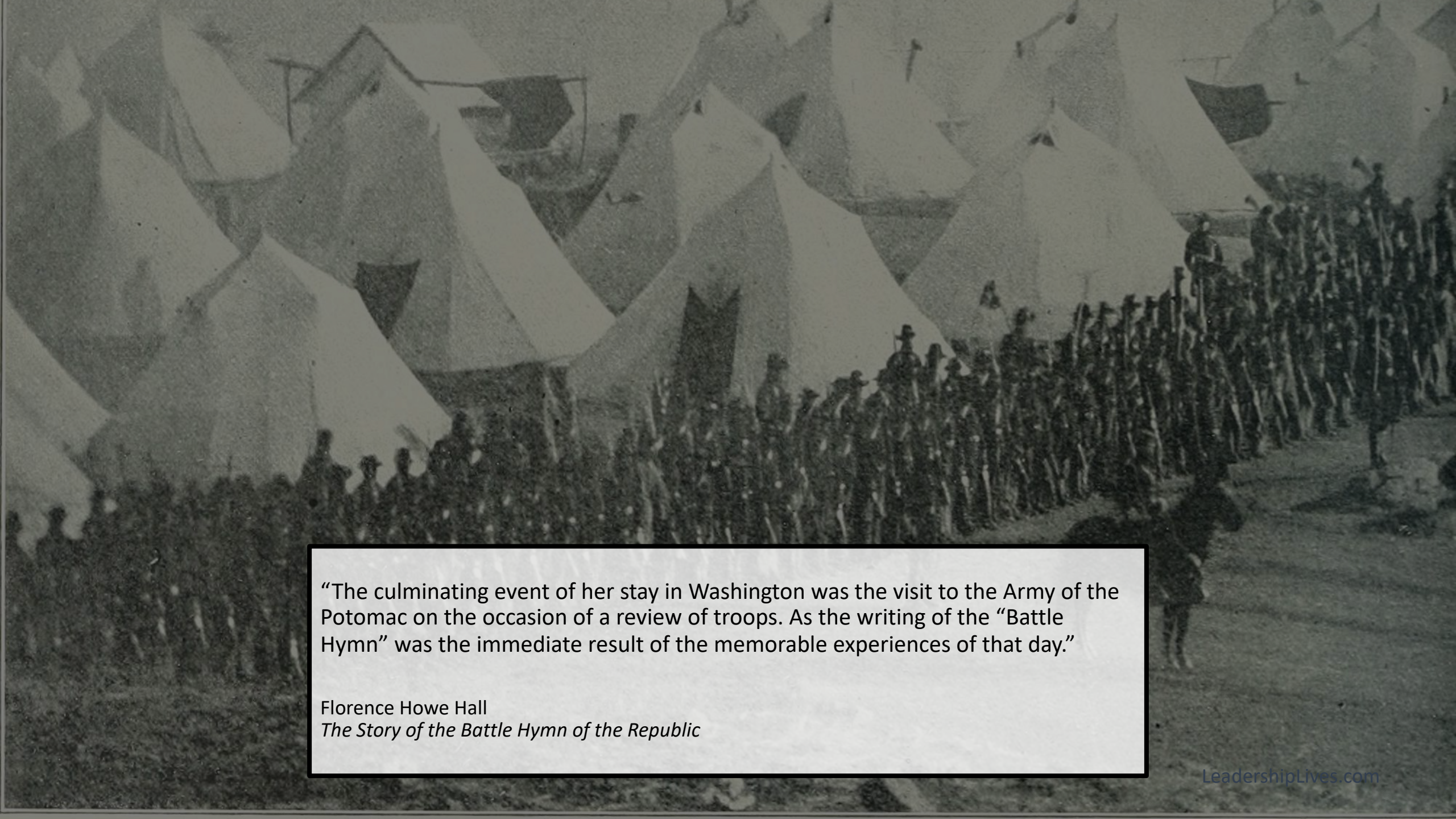
View from the Willard Hotel,
ca. 1860.



“Among her cherished memories of this visit was an interview with Abraham Lincoln, arranged for the party by Governor Andrew.

‘I remember well the sad expression of Mr. Lincoln’s deep blue eyes, the only feature of his face which could be called other than plain . . . The President was laboring at this time under a terrible pressure of doubt and anxiety.’”

The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic
Florence Howe Hall



“The culminating event of her stay in Washington was the visit to the Army of the Potomac on the occasion of a review of troops. As the writing of the “Battle Hymn” was the immediate result of the memorable experiences of that day.”

Florence Howe Hall
The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic

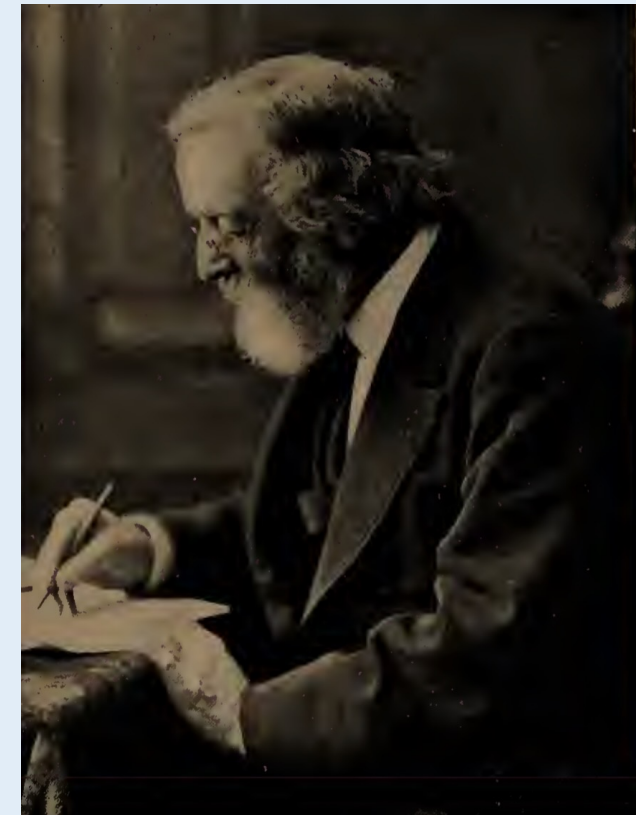


On Saturday, November 16, 1861, Julia Ward Howe was invited to visit the headquarters of the First Massachusetts Heavy Artillery with Governor and Mrs. Andrew and Rev. James Freeman Clarke.

Stationed near where the Pentagon now stands, the regiment was Washington, DC's first line of defense against an invasion from the south.

The officer in charge, Col. William Greene, an old friend from Boston, asked Mrs. Howe to address the troops. Her daughter later wondered what he saw in her face that sparked such an unusual request.

Caught off guard, JWH demurred twice. At Col. Greene's insistence, she spoke briefly saying how glad she was "to meet the brave defenders of our cause and how constantly they were in my thoughts."



Rev. James Freeman Clarke

Returning to their hotel, five miles away, their progress was slowed by Union troops responding to a skirmish.

To pass the time, they began singing *John Brown's Body*. Soldiers passing their carriage heard the singing and joined in.



On that prolonged ride, perhaps Julia Ward Howe was thinking about what she would have liked to have said to the troops.

She might have mentioned the Union pickets, gathered around the campfires, that had made such a strong impression on her.

Her daughter wrote, "She had been a part of the great procession of 'burnished rows of steel' when her carriage was surrounded by the Army."

Then Rev. Clarke suggested she write new lyrics for the melody.

Julia Ward Howe, ca. 1860

eviling camps

They have builded here an altar in the morning
dews and damps,

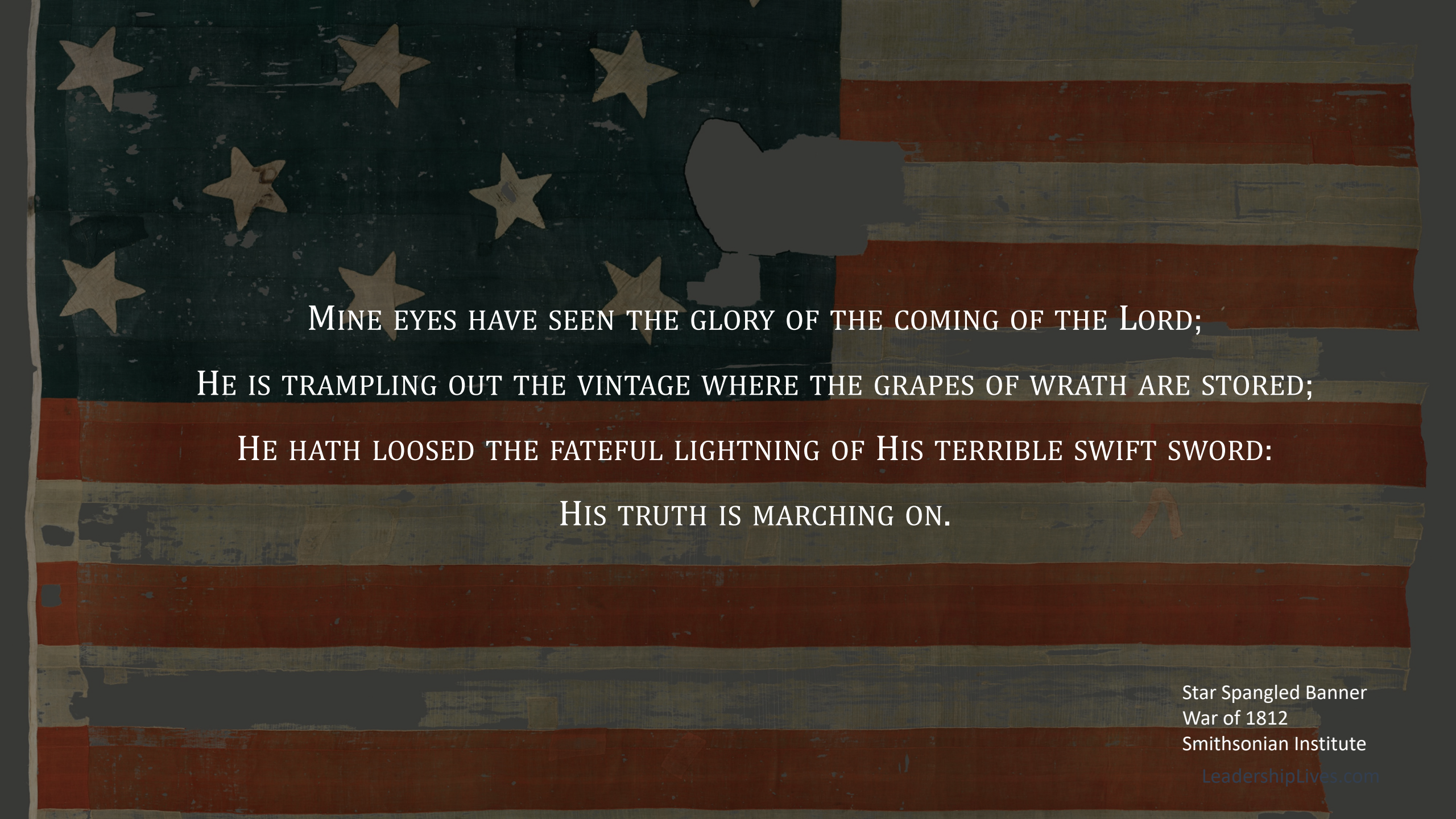
I can read his righteous sentence by the dim
and flaring lamps

This day is marching on.

I have said a burning rebel sits in every row of
your ranks.

The next morning, Julia Ward Howe woke early and in the dim light scribbled down the words of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* on Sanitary Commission letterhead.

grace. shall deal



MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY OF THE COMING OF THE LORD;
HE IS TRAMPLING OUT THE VINTAGE WHERE THE GRAPES OF WRATH ARE STORED;
HE HATH LOOSED THE FATEFUL LIGHTNING OF HIS TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD:
HIS TRUTH IS MARCHING ON.

Star Spangled Banner
War of 1812
Smithsonian Institute

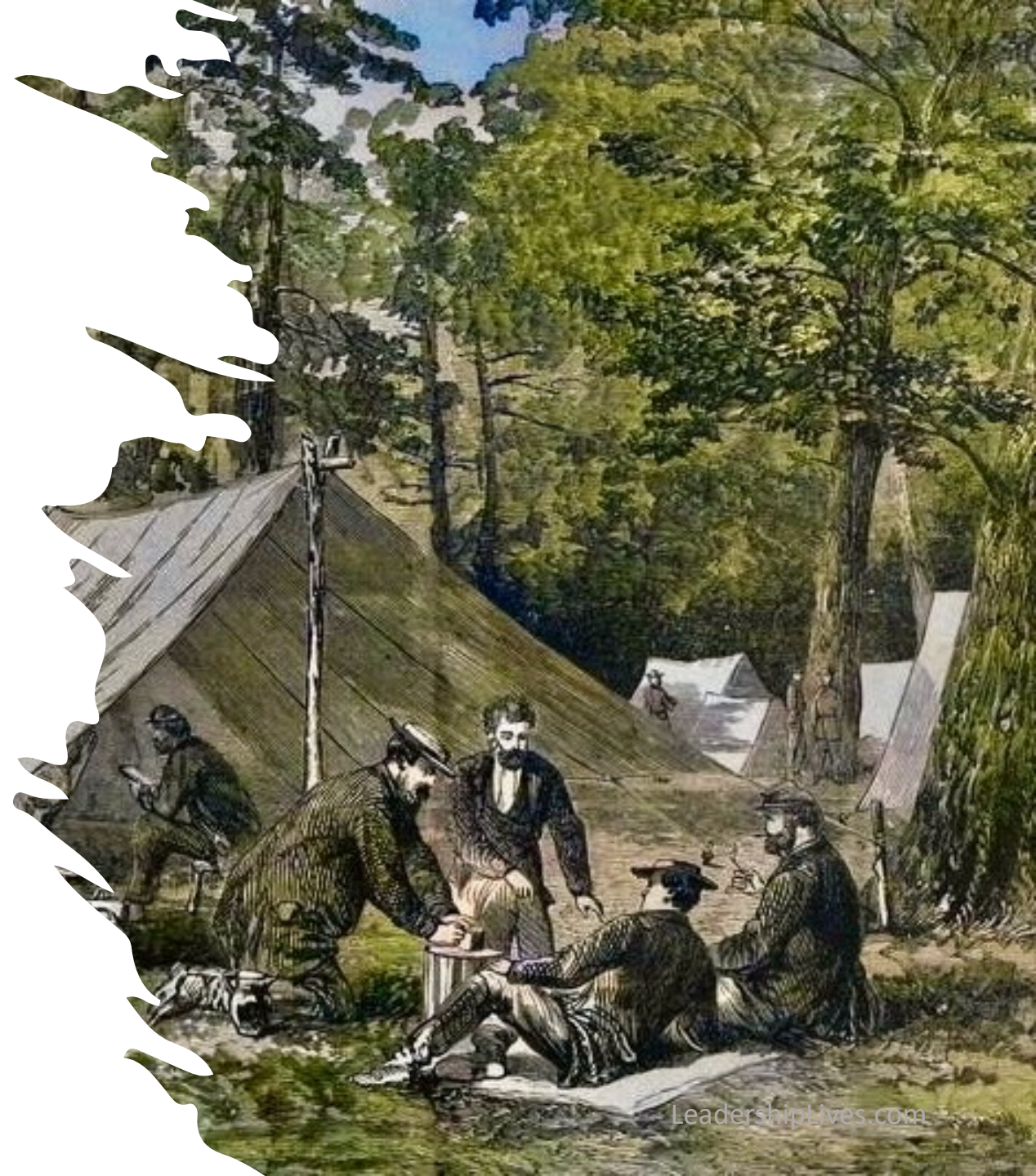
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I HAVE SEEN HIM IN THE WATCH-FIRES OF
A HUNDRED CIRCLING CAMPS,

THEY HAVE BUILDDED HIM AN ALTAR IN
THE EVENING DEWS AND DAMPS;

I CAN READ HIS RIGHTEOUS SENTENCE BY
THE DIM AND FLARING LAMPS:

HIS DAY IS MARCHING ON.



I HAVE READ A FIERY GOSPEL WRIT IN
BURNISHED ROWS OF STEEL:

"AS YE DEAL WITH MY CONTEMNERS, SO
WITH YOU MY GRACE SHALL DEAL";

LET THE HERO, BORN OF WOMAN, CRUSH
THE SERPENT WITH HIS HEEL,

SINCE GOD IS MARCHING ON.



HE HAS SOUNDED FORTH THE TRUMPET THAT
SHALL NEVER CALL RETREAT;

HE IS SIFTING OUT THE HEARTS OF MEN
BEFORE HIS JUDGMENT-SEAT;

OH, BE SWIFT, MY SOUL, TO ANSWER HIM!
BE JUBILANT, MY FEET!

OUR GOD IS MARCHING ON.





IN THE BEAUTY OF THE LILIES CHRIST WAS BORN ACROSS THE SEA,
WITH A GLORY IN HIS BOSOM THAT TRANSFIGURES YOU AND ME.
AS HE DIED TO MAKE MEN HOLY, LET US DIE TO MAKE MEN FREE.
WHILE GOD IS MARCHING ON.

THE

ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE, ART, AND POLITICS.

VOL. IX.—FEBRUARY, 1862.—NO. LII.

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC.

MINE eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord :
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored ;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword :
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps ,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps ;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps :
His day is marching on.

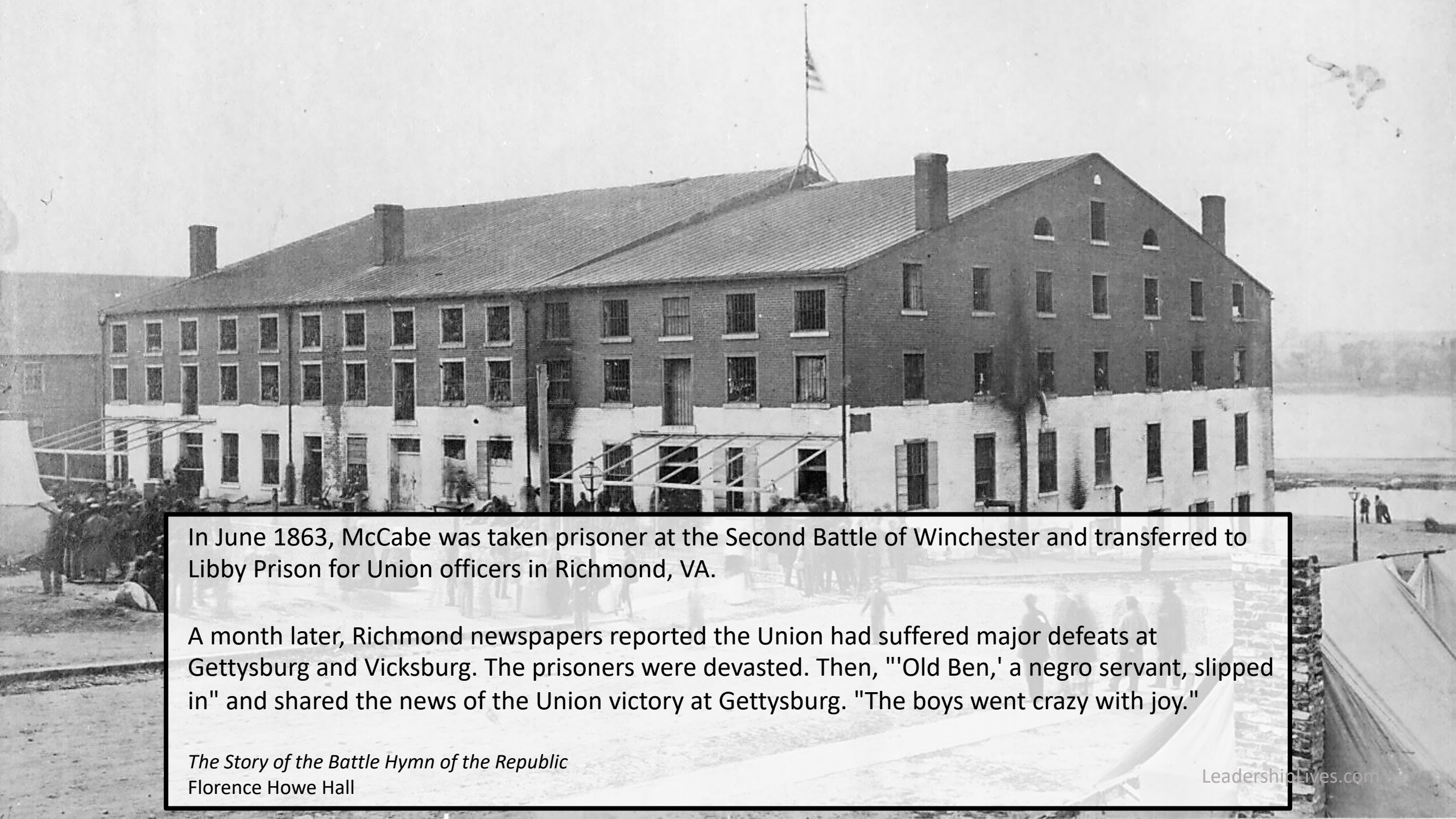
I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel :
“ As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal ;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on.”

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat ;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat :
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him ! be jubilant, my feet !
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me :
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

Three months later, Julia Ward Howe's lyrics were published on the front page of the influential *Atlantic Monthly*.

Ohio native, Rev. Charles Cardwell McCabe, gifted with a deep faith, a cheerful personality and a beautiful baritone, spotted the song in the magazine. Known as the "singing chaplain," of the 122nd Ohio Infantry, McCabe liked the new hymn so much he immediately committed the words to memory. A notation indicated the words should be sung to the tune of *John Brown's Body*.



In June 1863, McCabe was taken prisoner at the Second Battle of Winchester and transferred to Libby Prison for Union officers in Richmond, VA.

A month later, Richmond newspapers reported the Union had suffered major defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The prisoners were devastated. Then, "'Old Ben,' a negro servant, slipped in" and shared the news of the Union victory at Gettysburg. "The boys went crazy with joy."



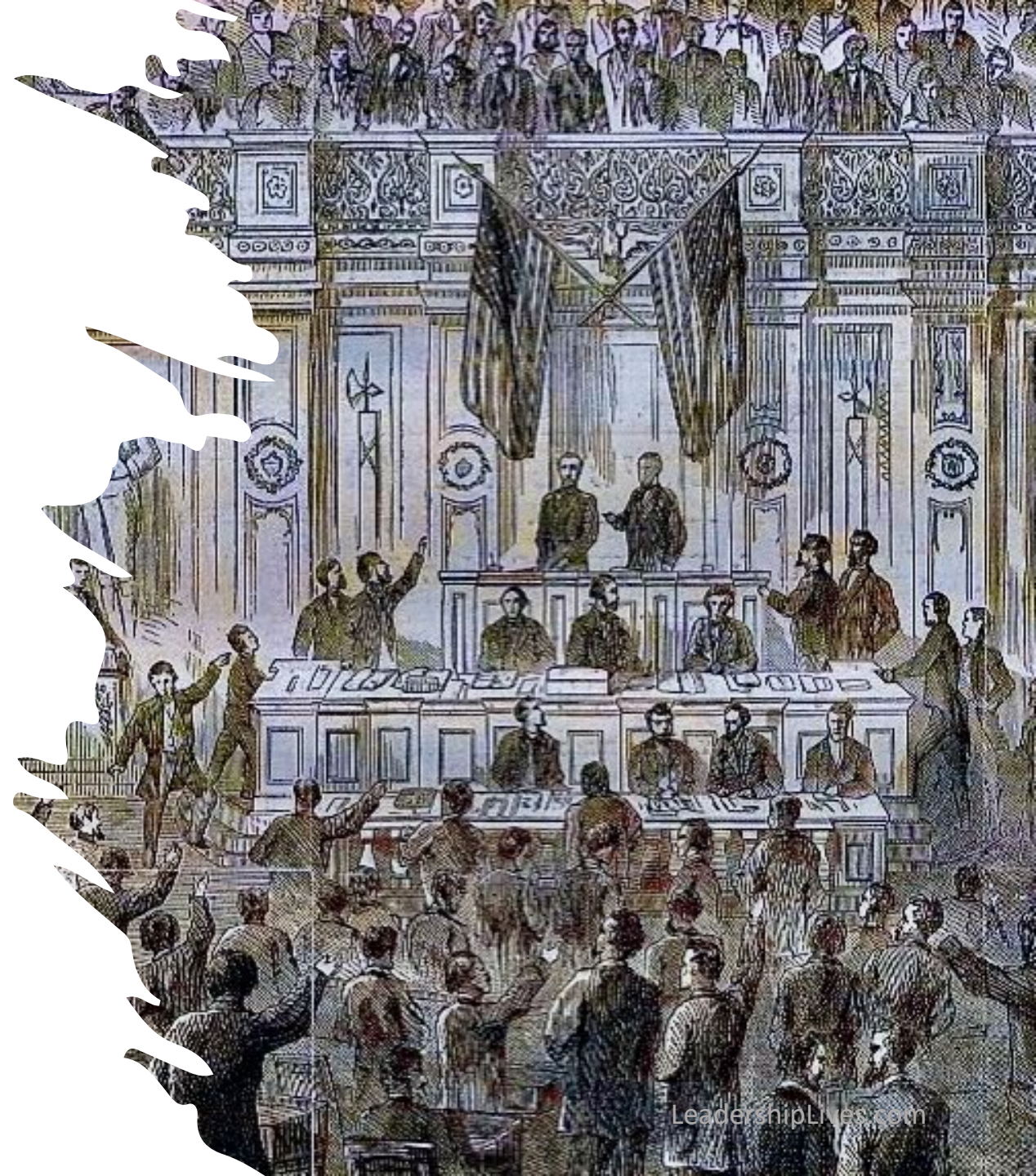
Chaplain McCabe jumped on a box and began singing "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord..."
Five hundred voices joined him in singing the chorus.

On February 2, 1864, a meeting was held at the U.S. House of Representatives to honor the U.S. Christian Commission which was providing medical supplies for Union and Confederate troops.

“Abraham Lincoln was present, and an immense audience filled the hall. Various men spoke; then Chaplain McCabe made a short speech and, ‘by request,’ sang the ‘Battle Hymn.’ The effect on the great throng was magical.

Men and women sprang to their feet and wept and shouted and sang, as the chaplain led them in that glorious ‘Battle Hymn’; they saw Abraham Lincoln’s tear-stained face light up with a strange glory as he cried out, ‘Sing it again!’ and McCabe and all the multitude sang it again.”

The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic
Florence Howe Hall





Maryland Monument, Gettysburg, PA
small bones Via Creative Commons.



MANY THANKS TO:

Hall, Florence Howe, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic*, Harper & Bros., 1916.

Howe, Julia Ward, *Reminiscences*, Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1899.

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Senate.gov

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center

Julia Ward Howe, 1897