



**Black soldiers** from the 107th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment in Virginia



**A freed slave** in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, April 1863. He later became a corporal in the Union Army.

so he proceeded cautiously. He also felt constrained by the Constitution, which deliberately avoided using the term slavery but contained clauses that implicitly protected slavery in the states where it already existed.

In August 1861, Lincoln signed the First Confiscation Act. It said any slaves being used to support the rebellion who came within Union lines would be emancipated. But Union soldiers in the South were forbidden to entice slaves working on farms and plantations to leave.

A year later, in July 1862, Lincoln signed an even stronger Second Confiscation Act. It authorized him to issue an order freeing slaves in Confederate territory. Sometime over the following weekend, Lincoln drafted the Emancipation Proclamation and read it to his cabinet on July 22.

William Seward, the secretary of state, urged Lincoln to wait before issuing it. The Union Army had recently suffered a humiliating setback in Virginia, where it had failed to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond. If you release an Emancipation Proclamation now, Seward told Lincoln, "it may be viewed as the last measure of an exhausted government—a cry for help." Wait, Seward urged the president, and release it after the Union achieves a clear military victory. That way emancipation will look like a sign of the Union's strength and superior moral principles.

Lincoln agreed. He put the proclamation in his drawer and waited.

Some people began to wonder what was taking him so long. In an open letter to the president published in *The New York Tribune* in August 1862, Horace Greeley, an abolitionist and the editor of the newspaper, wrote how "sorely disappointed and deeply pained" he was by Lincoln's failure to act more decisively on slavery.

Lincoln's response, also published in *The Tribune* that month, suggested that his interest in ending slavery hinged on preserving the Union.

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave,

March 4, 1861, six other states had seceded and four more threatened to leave. These 11 states would eventually become the Confederacy under President Jefferson Davis. On April 12, the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, marked the beginning of the Civil War.

Lincoln had run for president promising to contain the spread of slavery. But he believed the Union couldn't survive without the loyalty of the slave-holding border states (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri),

## Abolitionists were 'sorely disappointed' by Lincoln's failure to end slavery more quickly.