



# James Buchanan

15th President

Born: April, 23, 1791

Birthplace: Franklin Co., PA

Died: June 1, 1868

Burial Site: Lancaster, PA

Spouse: None

Occupation: Lawyer

Political Party: Democratic

Term: 1857-1861

Vice President: John Breckenridge

James Buchanan, this nation's 15th president, was criticized as no other president had been because near the close of his administration, the southern states seceded from the union.

Buchanan, who was born April 23, 1791, near Mercersburg, PA, had served long in the U.S. Senate and House and had been minister to Russia and England and secretary of state under President Polk.

Buchanan presided over a nation that was being split apart by the slavery question. His own party disintegrated into sections, a vigorous new Republican party rose, the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott decision upheld slavery, Minnesota and Oregon came in as free states, the South encouraged filibusters who promised to annex Cuba as a slave state, and John Brown staged his raid at Harper's Ferry.

Buchanan sought compromise, but to no avail. When Republicans won a plurality in the House in 1858, every significant bill they passed fell before southern votes in the Senate or a presidential veto.

President Buchanan said Southern states did not have the right to secede, but also said the federal government could not legally prevent them from doing it. In the end, South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and the rest of the states that were to make up the Confederacy voted to withdraw from the Union.