

Cause of the Civil War
↓

DRED SCOTT V. SANFORD (1857)

Case Background

1791 - 1861

The period between the ratification of the Constitution and the Civil War was marked by increased efforts for the abolition of slavery. As the country grew, free states began to outnumber slave states in number and population. The abolitionist forces gained political strength. The Northwest Ordinance and the Missouri Compromise created vast new territories which Congress declared must be free states upon admission to the Union.

However, slave states remained steadfast in their claim that slavery was a state issue and helped pass two federal fugitive slave laws, gaining national recognition of their legal rights against abolitionists who helped slaves escape. Federal law now required the return of the slaves to their owners.

1793
1850

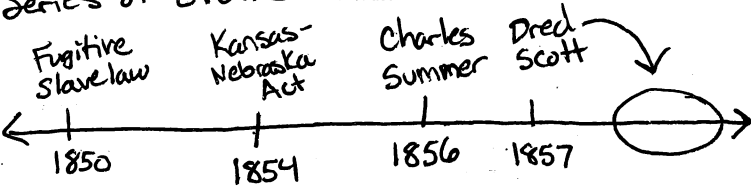
Into the midst of this turmoil, Dred Scott, a slave filed a case in Federal Circuit Court in St. Louis, Missouri. Scott claimed that because he had lived for ten years in both a free state (Illinois) and a free territory (Wisconsin), he had been made a free man. His owner did not deny that Scott and his family had resided in Wisconsin and Illinois, but claimed Scott lacked standing to sue, as he was not a citizen of the United States.

Problem →

Constitutional Issues *

The Court looked at the case in the broadest possible terms, using it as a platform to decide: 1) Did Scott have standing to sue? 2) Were blacks entitled to rights as citizens? And, 3) Could Congress restrict the rights of states to decide if they would be slave or free?

Series of Events



- Slave Power Conspiracy
 - ↳ slavery would be forever in U.S.
 - ↳ Powerful people