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- Kansas Historical Society The campaign for ratification of the Wyandotte Constitution was a bitter partisan contest. On October 4, 1859, however, supporters won by nearly a 2 to 1 margin – 10,421 to 5,530. On December 6, an election for state offices was held. In the gubernatorial contest, Dr. Charles Robinson of Lawrence defeated the incumbent territorial governor, Samuel Medary. Republicans also won 86 of 100 seats in the legislature.

After the October vote, official copies of the proposed constitution were prepared and sent to the president of the United States, the president of the U.S. Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives. The House acted first. A bill for Kansas admission was introduced on February 12, 1860. Within two months, the congressmen voted 134 to 73 to admit Kansas under the Wyandotte Constitution.

William H. Seward of New York introduced a separate bill in the Senate on February 21, 1860. A long-time champion of the free-state cause in Kansas, Seward appealed for immediate action. But the admission bill was referred to committee and finally carried over to the next session.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln, Southern states began to leave the Union and opposition to Kansas admission decreased. The senators from South Carolina were the first to withdraw from Congress. Those from Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida followed them. These last six senators left their seats on January 21, 1861. Later that same day, the Senate passed the Kansas bill. A week later the House passed the bill as amended and it was sent to the president for his signature.

Most free-state settlers in Kansas despised President James Buchanan. Ironically, it was he who signed the bill making Kansas the thirty-fourth state on January 29, 1861.

Kansans were overjoyed with the news, but there was little time for celebration. Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, as Southern states continued to secede. The first Kansas State Legislature convened on March 26. South Carolina troops fired on Fort Sumter on April 12. The battle for Kansas was finally over. But the conflict, which for the past six years had caused the shedding of Kansas blood, now engulfed an entire nation.

The Kansas Historical Society was founded in 1875 and is the agency charged with actively safeguarding and sharing the state's history to facilitate government accountability, economic development, and the education of Kansans. Go to: www.kshs.org.

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