Confrontations over the issue of slavery shaped the course and outcome of the presidential election of 1860. The Republican Party, formed by antislavery advocates in the wake of the Kansas-Nebraska controversy, adopted as part of its platform an unambiguous statement against the extension of slavery—the “normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom”—and nominated Abraham Lincoln as its candidate. The Democratic Party, split along sectional lines, ultimately settled for two candidates chosen at separate conventions: Stephen Douglas for the northern Democrats and John C. Breckinridge for the southern. Finally, men dissatisfied with all of the existing choices hastily formed the Constitutional Union Party and selected John Bell as their candidate.

Dividing the “National” map was a crude but effective representation of the 1860 presidential contest. Lincoln and Douglas are battling over the West, while Breckinridge tears away the South and Bell attempts to use some Spaulding’s glue to hold the nation together.

In “Storming the Castle,” a “wide-awake” Lincoln foils an attempt by Bell, Douglas, and Breckinridge to enter the White House. In this drawing, Bell is a timid lookout, Douglas is distraught because none of his keys—labeled “Regular Nomination,” “Non Intervention,” and “Nebraska Bill”—can unlock the White House door, and Breckinridge is too weak to climb through the window, even with the help of a sympathetic President James Buchanan.
TEXT OF DIALOGUE FROM "STORMING THE CASTLE"

Lincoln: Ah! Ha! Gentlemen! You needn't think to catch me napping; for I am a regular Wide awake.

John Bell: Hurry up Douglas! And get the door open, so that I can get in, for the watchman is coming.

Stephen A. Douglas: Confound it! None of these keys will unlock this door so I'd better be off, for old Abe is after me with a sharp stick.

James Buchanan: I'll do all I can to help you Breck, but my strength is failing and I'm afraid you'll pull me out before I can pull you in.

John C. Breckinridge: Ah, Mr. Buck! I'm too weak to get up—and we shall be compelled to dissolve the Union.