



# **Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol (Southern biography series)**

*William C. Davis*

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At the age of thirty-five, John C. Breckinridge was the vice president of the United States. Later he came closest to defeating Abraham Lincoln for the presidency in 1860. In a short time he became secretary of war in the Confederate cabinet. This -- the first -- comprehensive biography of this remarkable man and his generation covers one of the turbulent eras of the American past.

Breckinridge was a Kentucky lawyer and veteran of the Mexican War when he was elected to the state legislature in 1849. Soon thereafter he was elected to Congress and in 1856 became James Buchanan's running mate. After his defeat by Lincoln in the 1860 election, he took his seat in the Senate and supported the Union on the question of succession. Because he opposed most of Lincoln's other policies, he was considered dangerous. When Lincoln ordered him arrested, even though no charges had been filed against him, Breckinridge escaped to the South and joined the Confederate army as a brigadier general. Later he was appointed secretary of war by Jefferson Davis.

Prominent in every field he entered, Breckinridge was a leading statesman and soldier. As a moderate and earnest supporter of compromise, he became the symbol of peaceful reconciliation between the states after the Civil War.

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