

# Voting shifts signal end to Civil War in Missouri

By PETER KINDER AND STEVE EHLMANN

Scholars have often noted that one can't begin to understand historical voting patterns in Missouri without an understanding of the Civil War in our state.

In Missouri, open warfare commenced not in 1861, but seven years earlier with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. An increasingly bloody war erupted between Missourians and Kansans over the issue of slavery.

At that time, three-fourths of Missourians traced their roots to Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee, where slavery was legal. Distinct from this statewide majority were those settlers who hailed from the Appalachian foothills and mountains of eastern Tennessee and who mostly shared three traits: They were small farmers. They didn't own slaves. And they had moved to Southwest Missouri. As was true of the region they had left in eastern Tennessee, the majority in Southwest Missouri remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War. Another group that remained loyal to the Union consisted of German immigrants who had settled in and around St. Louis.

Most of the rest of the state sympathized with the Confederacy as guerrilla warfare spread across the state.

These Confederate-sympathizing, slave-holding areas were fiercely loyal to the Democratic Party in the postwar period. Southwest Missouri, St. Louis and a few Missouri River counties near St. Louis with large German-American populations became the only pockets of Republican voting strength in Missouri.

The 1992 Senate district map of Missouri demonstrates that little had changed in 125 years. The republican seats were still almost entirely in southwest Missouri and the suburbs surrounding the City of St. Louis.

Since 1930, Republicans had lost the urban and minority votes in St. Louis and across the nation. The GOP had steadily gained ground in conservative rural areas across America, but not so much in Missouri as the Civil War-era loyalties persisted, leading commentators such as Michael Barone to observe, "You vote as your great-great-granddaddy fought."

From and after the middle of the 20th century, many in outstate Missouri were beginning to vote Republican in presidential elections but continued to vote overwhelmingly Democratic in local races,

including those for the Missouri Senate and House of Representatives. Republicans languished in the minority for all but a couple of two-year periods in the 20th century, the most recent from 1946-48.

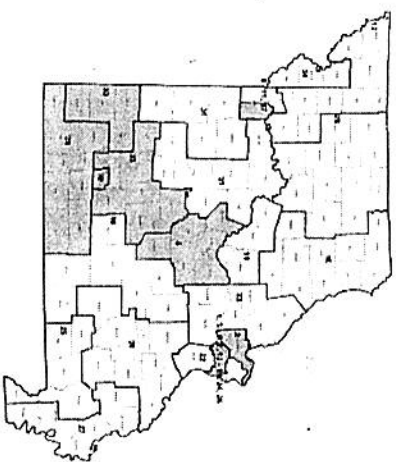
Things began to change in 1990 as the first GOP Senate victories were aided by redistricting. Many Democratic areas were losing population. Growth began to accelerate in Republican-leaning St. Charles County and in Southwest Missouri. New districts created in St. Charles and Southwest Missouri were taken away by Republicans Steve Ehlmann of St. Charles in 1992 and by Morris Westfall of Southwest Missouri in 1994.

In 1992, Republican Peter Kinder won a redrawn 27th District that had eliminated New Madrid County (Old Cotton South) and added Republican Perry County (heavy German settlement). Kinder's win was the first crack in rural Democratic dominance.

In 1994, Sam Graves of Atchison County, named after pro-slavery Sen. David Atchison, replaced a Democrat in the 12th District in Northwest Missouri. Voters were beginning to realize that conservative Democrats simply kept a more liberal Democratic majority in power in Jefferson City. In 1998, Republican Sarah Steelman beat a Democratic incumbent to take the 16th District. In the process of winning all eight counties, she swept Callaway County, whose residents had been so devoted to the Confederate cause that the county declared itself the "Kingdom of Callaway" and attempted to secede from Missouri. Callaway had been a Democratic stronghold and archetypal Little Dixie County where conservatives couldn't bring themselves to vote Republican.

The Bootheel of Missouri is an area geographically, economically, socially and demographically very much a part of the Old South. Democratic voting patterns had begun to break down, at least at the presidential level, as early as the 1960s and at the congressional level from 1980 on. But even these notably conservative voters still couldn't bring themselves to send any but a rare Republican to Jefferson City. The breakthrough here came in 2000 when Republican Bill Foster defeated an incumbent Democratic senator.

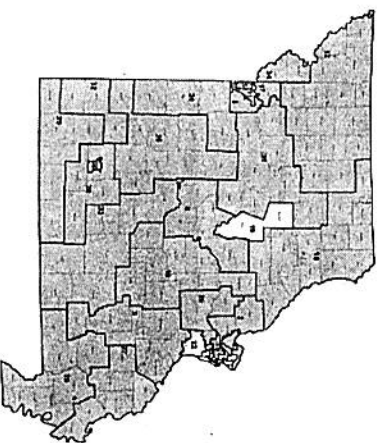
Anyone who has read "Tom Sawyer" or "Huckleberry Finn" can imagine where the 18th Senate District's sympathies lay during the Civil War. Northeast Missouri had been the locale of guerrilla warfare that subsided only when the Union commander brutally executed 10 men in the Palmyra Massacre. No Republican had ever repre-



**Missouri Senate districts in 1992**

Republican

Democrat



**Missouri Senate districts in 2005**

Republican

Democrat

Platte and Clay counties finally began to suburban counties they had become, rather the fiercely anti-Union strongholds they had been. As a result, Republicans Charles (2002) and Luann Ridgeway (2004) have to represent the 34th and 17th Senate districts.

The 21st Senate District, in the heart of Dixie, includes Lafayette County, where Gen. Sterling Price won the Battle ofton against Union troops in 1861. When its forced the longtime Democratic incumbent, Republican Bill Stouffer won the

The place where Civil War memories est was the 31st Senate District, a cluster south of Kansas City, which includes counties known as the Burnt District. the Infamous Order No. 11, Union forces through in 1863 and forcibly removed farmers and burned their homes and barns was seen as the only way to keep them ing with and slaughtering their pro-Union across the line in Kansas.

As a small girl, Harry Truman's not seen her entire family forcibly ejected farm and their house burned by Mr. Li army of occupation. Invited by her soldier, decades later, to spend the night in coin Bedroom, his mother replied: "I'd on the floor." Voters' preference for De here ended only on Nov. 2 this year, when Chris Koster won the open seat.

The newly redrawn 3rd Senate District es rural Ozark counties stretching south from Jefferson County's southern tip to on the Current River. It includes Iron County of the Battle of Pilot Knob in 1864, where General Price, clashed with Union forces south of the city, and ended in a Union 3rd District, so long in Democratic hands aggressive campaign by Republican Kinder in 2004.

Today, as with the rest of rural and s America, all of rural Missouri is red, decades after Appomattox, the Missouri Republican by a 23-11 margin.

The Civil War era has finally ended!

Peter Kinder of Cape Girardeau is former of the Missouri Senate and will be tenant governor in January. Steve Ehlmann of St. Charles is a former state senator. Republican.