AMERICAN HISTORY

A BRIEF VIEW THROUGH RECONSTRUCTION

H. L. INGLE/JAMES A. WARD

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A Brief View through Reconstruction

H. L. Ingle / James A. Ward
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

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To our students from whom
we have learned so much

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COVER KEY

1 Shirley Temple
2 Richard M. Nixon
3 Louis Armstrong
4 George Washington
5 Walt Whitman
6 Susan B. Anthony
7 Robert Fulton
8 John Paul Jones
9 Eleanor Roosevelt
10 Theodore Roosevelt
11 Margaret Fuller
12 Abraham Lincoln
13 Sojourner Truth
14 Chief Joseph (Nez Percé)
15 Wild Bill Hickok
16 Jacqueline Onassis
17 Coretta King
18 Frederick Douglass
19 John Adams
20 Emily Dickinson
21 Whaling Captain

Preface

WOODY GUTHRIE roamed the length and breadth of America during the dust bowl years of the 1930s talking and singing to the down-trodden and dispossessed. After years of hop-ping frieght trains, eating from tin cans with other "knights of the road," and singing for his room, he be-came convinced that beneath the physical suffering and de-privation he saw lay a powerful belief in America's great-ness and mission. He put it to music:

> This land is your land
> This land is my land
> From California
> To the New York Island
> From the red wood forests
> To the gulf stream waters;
> This land was made for you and me.*

Guthrie's tune became a classic because it touched a re-sponsive chord in the collective American psyche and echoed a firm belief that there was and is something intrin-sically special about this land and its people. It reflected the notion that Americans have been endowed with a high moral purpose to show the rest of the world how to be happy and prosperous—in short, that we believe in our own moral superiority. John Winthrop articulated this notion as early as 1630 when he told his fellow Puritans, bound for Mas-sachusetts Bay, that "wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us." We took his words seriously.

The Founding Fathers believed that Americans would

*"This Land Is Your Land," Words and Music by Woody Guthrie; TRO-© Copyright 1956, 1958 and 1970 Ludlow Music, Inc., New York, New York. Used by Permission.

need only a few broad rules to guide them because they believed, above all, that individuals have the right to determine their own destinies. This cult of individualism is the foundation on which we have built our form of capitalism. Just as surely, it has affected our exploitation of natural resources and the environment, our elective, supermarket system of education, even the way we rear our children. And, of course, American foreign policy has sought to internationalize and protect this central assumption.

Our strong belief in competitive individualism coexists with our contention that we are a nation of people holding common ideals. And that is what this book is all about: the story of our struggle of over three-and-one-half centuries to live with both our commitment to high ideals, which unites us, and our exaltation of the individual, which drives us apart and ultimately fosters class antagonisms, racial discord, sexual discrimination, and religious bigotry. It is this natural cleavage that divides Americans in crises. During the Revolution, throughout the process of writing and ratifying the Constitution, amid the struggle over states' rights and slavery, in the depths of depressions and two world wars, through racial unrest, prolonged conflict over Vietnam, and the Watergate crimes, Americans fought among themselves. What made these struggles so terribly intense and divisive was that each side laid legitimate claim to being true to the country's basic ideals; the conflict is inherent in the ideals themselves. The continuing struggle to bring our ideals into line with our actions is an important part of what makes American history so fascinating.

In *American History* we have sought to portray, in as few words as possible, some of the high drama, color, pathos, and optimism that has molded America. The book is not an encyclopedic history in short form; history as a mass of data to be memorized and spewed back on exams is meaningless. Rather, we have selectively presented facts and topics that we feel are essential to some understanding of our heritage. Our organization, presentation, and interpretation are largely the result of our experiences in teaching American history to large classes of predominantly nonhistory majors. The book is directed to the student who quite likely is taking

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history because it fills an empty time slot in his schedule, because the instructor has a good reputation, or because the course is required. We believe that no substantial learning can take place in such classes if the instructor or the assigned reading do not in some degree generate student enthusiasm. So we have written a sprightly book filled with enthusiasm, humor, and verve. At the same time, we make no attempt to talk down to students. This book contains some words and phrases possibly unfamiliar to undergraduates. If the student looks them up, we have generated interest; we think this is what education is all about.

As an interpretative history, this book has a flow that is sometimes chronological and sometimes topical. For purposes of clarity and convenient reference we have inserted topical headings, but not so many as to chop up the narrative. To further help the student put American history into chronological perspective we have provided at the opening of each chapter a "time line," which lists important events and their dates. We have included photographs for visual relaxation and maps where they will be useful. Because we cover no historical episodes in great depth, we have added at the end of each chapter a list of good books for further reading. The list is certainly not all-inclusive; it is merely a starting point for motivated students who want to learn more about a specific topic. The books included are ones that our own undergraduates have told us they enjoyed and, to be frank, books that we like as well.

As all histories do, this one covers the "movers and shakers" in America, the people who made decisions that have affected us all. In addition, we have tried to give the flavor of what it has meant to be poor, black, Indian, female, Chicano, or Puerto Rican in a predominantly WASP, male-dominated society. After all, nobody can move and shake unless there are people to be moved and shaken. We have also woven economic and social discussions into the American fabric to give some idea of the complex nature of our nationhood. If we have slighted issues, periods, groups, or ideologies that an instructor believes are important, *American History* is brief enough to allow leeway to assign several outside works that emphasize particular interests.

American History, then, is a concise, provocative, and interpretative book written for undergraduate nonhistory majors in the hope that it will motivate such students to at least reflect on their past and perhaps excite them enough to elect to take additional history courses. Bound into the back of the book is a questionnaire that will enable you to tell us how successful our efforts have been. We would appreciate hearing from instructors and students alike.

Acknowledgments

No book is written in a vacuum, and over the past two years we have piled up personal debts to those that helped in this venture. James S. Donnelly, Sr., gave us invaluable tips at the start of the project. Diana G. Powell typed, retyped, deciphered some of the most wretched handwriting on record, and looked up all our misspellings. Reed Sanderlin worked relentlessly on a title, and although he never came up with an acceptable one, he sparked our thinking. Jan Prince was a veritable font on the history of the feminist movement and enlightened two male chauvinists over numerous enjoyable lunches. Neil Coulter chased down all sorts of esoterica in the library for us; if given enough time the man seems to be capable of finding any information. Student assistants Susan Schneider, Karen Greene, and Jeff Green performed dozens of routine tasks and commented endlessly on the progress of the book. Finally, we wish to thank our wives, Rebecca and Roberta, who provided encouragement and time for us to write.

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Contents

1

Genesis 1

The First Americans *3*
The New World Beckons *7*
Conquest and Colonization *14*
The Colony of Virginia *20*
The Settlement of Pennsylvania *31*
The Puritan Heritage *35*
Growth and Development *45*
The French and Indian War *49*
Good Books *52*

2

Revolutionary Ferment 55

The Seeds of Revolt *60*
First Outbreaks of Violence *66*
The First Continental Congress *71*
The War for Independence *73*
The Articles of Confederation *84*
The Constitutional Foundation *92*
Good Books *100*

Experiment in Nation Building 103

Strong Leaders Mold the Nation *105*
Washington and Foreign Affairs *116*
The Emergence of a Two-Party System *119*
"The Revolution of 1800" *126*
The War of 1812 *136*
The Evolution of a National Character *146*
Good Books *155*

Toward a National Unity 157

The Era of Good Feelings *159*
The Rise of Jacksonian Democracy *165*
The Controversial Jackson *170*
Growth and Industrialization *178*
Changing American Lifestyles *183*
Popular Culture *193*
The End of National Unity *198*
Good Books *203*

Toward Sectional Division 205

South Carolina and Nullification *207*
Debate over Slavery *211*
Manifest Destiny *226*
Slavery Becomes the Key Issue *232*
Good Books *244*

Civil War and Beyond 247

"Bleeding Kansas" and the Threat of War *249*
Secession and War *259*
Reconstruction *269*
Good Books *290*

General Books i

The Declaration of Independence iii

The Constitution of the United States vii

Admission of States xxv

Presidential Elections (1789–1976) xxvii

Index xxxiii

Genesis

1

1001 *Leif Ericson explored America*

1453 *France unified*

1492 *Spain unified; Columbus "rediscovered" America*

1512 *America named*

1517 *Martin Luther sparked Reformation*

1534 *King Henry VIII took control of English church*

1587 *Sir Walter Raleigh established colony of Roanoke*

1607 *Jamestown, Virginia settled*

1619 *First experiment in colonial self-government*
Blacks first brought to Virginia

1620 Mayflower *landed at Plymouth*

1622 *Indians decimated Jamestown*

1624 *Virginia became first crown colony*

1630 *Massachusetts Bay colony settled*

1661 *First legal definition of slavery in Virginia*

1662 *Puritans created Half-Way Covenant*

1681 *William Penn received grant of Pennsylvania*

1689 *King William's War started*

1710 *Queen Anne's War started*

1733 *Molasses Act*

1739 *War of Jenkins' Ear started*

1744 *King George's War started*

1754 *French and Indian War (America) started*

1756 *Seven Years' War (Europe) started*

1763 *Treaty of Paris*

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HAD THE EARTH remained as it was hundreds of millions of years ago this book would have been much longer, for the history of this land would encompass the entire history of man. At that time all dry land was a single mass scientists call "Pangaea." Fulfilling the biblical injunction in Genesis 1:9, "let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place," Pangaea was surrounded by a single ocean. Some primeval force, as yet still not fully understood, caused cracks to develop in the one huge land mass. Slowly, as parts of the giant plates of the earth's crust rubbed against each other, they began to drift outward. Over the eons, they created the seven continents. As generations have noticed, the world map is like a puzzle whose pieces are permanently separated: if joined, the continents would fit neatly together.

By the Christian era, the Western Hemisphere, over 3000 miles from Europe, remained unknown to European civilizations. But there were hints that something lay to the west. Plato hypothesized that the mythical city of Atlantis was somewhere in the Atlantic. Chinese tales related that Buddhist missionaries explored and mapped the west coast of North America. European legends told of an Irish Catholic monk, St. Brendan, who in the sixth century crossed the Atlantic in an open boat with seventeen followers. More insistent are the sagas that tell of Leif Ericson, son of the Norwegian discoverer of Greenland, who explored the New England coastline and built a temporary settlement there in about 1001. He named the area Vinland, perhaps because wild red currants covered the site; although they made a poor wine, Leif decided a little favorable publicity would not hurt. Around 1364, a party of Norwegian explorers may have journeyed to the new world, where, according to the controversial text inscribed on a stone found in 1898 in Minnesota, most lost their lives. The new world swallowed them up just as it later would thousands of other hardy Europeans. For the next 128 years, until Columbus "rediscovered" it, the new world again lived only in the fantasyland of European legend.

The First Americans

As every American schoolchild knows, Columbus discovered America while searching for a western sea route to China. When he landed at the Caribbean island of San Salvador, he believed that he was in the East Indies. Hence, the native inhabitants, whom Columbus found to be gentle and generous people, came to be called "Indians."

It is not known when the Indians first arrived in the Americas, but it is estimated that they were living here anywhere between 12,000 and 35,000 years before the Europeans arrived. Early Indians migrated from what is now Russian Siberia across a bridge of land that probably connected Asia and Alaska. Or they may have sailed or paddled across the then-much-narrower Bering Straits. As the climate in the northern latitudes cooled, or perhaps as the Indian population rapidly grew, they were forced south until they inhabited all of the Western Hemisphere down to Cape Horn.

If the Indians had known Columbus was coming, nobody knows with any certainty how many could have been on hand to greet him. Estimates of the number of Indians in both North and South America range all the way from 8 to 75 million, with the best guesses centering around 20 million. Of these about a million or more lived in what is now the United States. The history of Indian population from the earliest American settlements to almost the present has been one of continuous decline; by the Civil War only 340,000 red men lived in what became the United States; by 1910 that figure had shrunk to 220,000. Since then, however, the high Indian birth rate has almost tripled their numbers in the United States, although their population remains significantly below what it was in 1492.

Both Indians and Europeans must have greeted each other with a mixture of curiosity and fear of the unknown. Certainly early colonists found the Indian culture most unfamiliar, and with few exceptions, notably William Penn and Roger Williams, they considered the native Americans hopelessly backward and inferior. Yet the multitude of tribes scattered across the continent had adapted to widely

different environments with a degree of success that allowed them to flourish. Depending on their native habitats, they hunted, gathered wild berries and nuts, fished, or farmed, and left the land very much as they found it. They cultivated an almost mystical relationship with the land and nature, believing that a special spirit infused both animate and inanimate objects and affected or acted on humans to determine individual destinies. Some tribes believed in one Great Spirit who was responsible for creation; others believed the sum of human spirits pervaded the world and determined the fate of individuals, and one Algonquian group identified their supreme being with the caribou. Almost all tribes counted intermediaries who mediated between earthlings and the various spirits, cured the sick, and petitioned the spirits for good crops, victory in war, or good luck. Most Indians had a conception of life after death, not the "happy hunting ground" attributed to them by whites, but rather another physical world where existence would be considerably easier.

Indian society revolved around the family and clan within the various larger tribes. These relationships were traced back through bloodlines, on the fathers' side or, among Siouan tribes, on the mothers' side. The clans often assumed responsibilities and duties within the tribes that elsewhere would be the function of a family. Frequently clan activities were of such a cooperative nature that some clans assumed responsibility for the care, training, and discipline of all the tribe's children. In only a few tribes, such as the Natchez in the lower Mississippi valley, did a rigid class system exist.

Contrary to common Western beliefs, Indians did not spend all their time fighting. Indian conflicts, however, were frequent, often developing over territory, horses, women, pride, or innumerable other reasons. The wars themselves did not last long, although tribal hatreds and feuds sometimes lingered for centuries. And often, killing the enemy was not the goal. On the plains, Indian warriors gained honor by "counting a coup": physically touching their opponents and escaping alive. Other Indians, particularly those in the Caribbean and in South America, killed their enemies in order to eat them. Elsewhere some Indians ate their victims' hearts, be-

lieved to be a means to acquire some of the courage of those who had fought bravely.

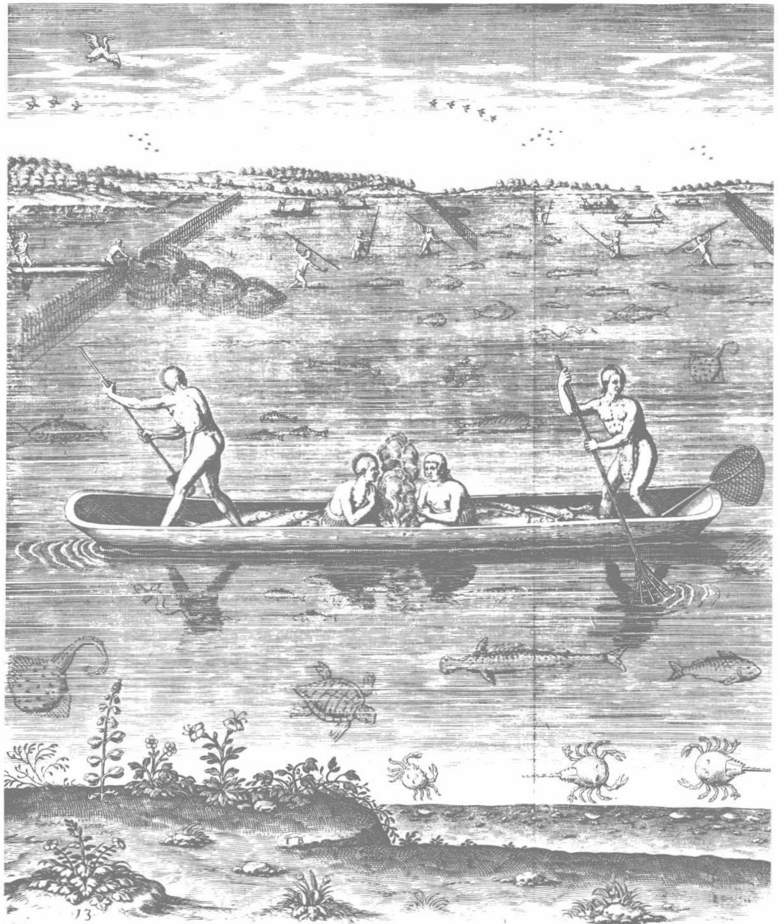
European settlers were fortunate in that the Indians they first encountered were smaller and militarily weaker than many of the more powerful tribes of the interior. Had the earliest English settlers encountered the powerful Southeastern Creek confederation or the Iroquois Nation—an advanced league of five northern tribes, the Oneida, Mohawk, Onadaga, Seneca, and Cayuga, in which women had the power to depose sachems or chiefs—they might never have gotten a toehold in the new world. The coastal tribes, however, could never unite against the colonists while they were still badly outnumbered; in fact, many tribes allied with white settlers against their traditional enemies. Moreover, the Algonquians, the most widespread tribe along the coast, had relatively permanent villages, which made them particularly vulnerable to attack.

The Indians faced distinct military disadvantages against the ever-encroaching colonists because of their almost anarchic forms of tribal government. In many tribes, especially in the middle Atlantic and southeastern areas, councils made decisions on the basis of consensus; even war chiefs were often elected. Such customs allowed great individual freedom to tribal members, and in times of battle warriors had the right to withdraw from the fighting if they so desired. Such democratic procedures made long wars or protracted seiges difficult. Confronted with organized European armies and more centralized colonial militia units, the Indians, although man for man as tough and courageous as their white opponents, fought under obvious handicaps.

Despite their frequent hostilities, many colonists conceded that they owed their very survival to the help of the Indians. The story of Squanto and his friends who helped the Pilgrims endure that first desperate winter in Massachusetts and then taught the settlers to plant and fertilize crops the following spring shows that relations between the native Americans and whites could be friendly, at least in the early days. Likewise, for survival if nothing else, the settlers quickly adopted many Indian foods and words. Corn

and potatoes, unfamiliar to the Europeans, became staples the world over. Other now commonplace foods—peanuts, sweet potatoes, squash, pumpkins, peppers, tomatoes, and baked beans—came to grace American tables from Indian gardens.

American colonists were also quick to adopt numerous Indian devices well suited to the new world's environment: canoes, toboggans, moccasins, snowshoes, hammocks, kayaks, and ponchos. The Indian rubber ball made numerous popular American pastimes possible. Settlers also as-



Detail from an engraving made during the colonial period shows Algonquian Indians on a fishing expedition. (Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

similated many Indian words, such as that mainstay of the southern diet, hominy, and others like chipmunk, moose, opossum, skunk, raccoon, and tomahawk. The colonists simply could not live in close proximity with native Americans very long and not adopt some of their superior techniques.

The cultural exchange worked both ways. From the white man the Indians quickly picked up gunpowder and firearms, the horse, metal utensils from knives to pots, woolen clothing, blankets, in some cases the ability to read and write, facets of Christianity, liquor, and the lethal and infectious smallpox virus. Furs, trapped during the winter when coats were thick and sleek, paid for purchases and revolutionized clothing styles in Europe; beaver hats, for example, became a rage all across the continent. Throughout the colonial period, fur trading remained one of the mainstays of the colonial economy, particularly in New York and the Carolinas.

The New World Beckons

Columbus arrived in the new world at just the right moment and was immediately followed by a flood of adventurers, who within another century charted the entire eastern and a portion of the western coastlines of North and South America. The Spanish and the French quickly founded permanent settlements, established a vigorous trans-Atlantic trade, and whetted Europeans' interest in all things American. Europeans certainly had not ventured out with such enthusiasm after the earlier Scandinavian discoveries. Europe was in the throes of dramatic changes. Aggravated by the multitude of small warring principalities, the old society built on the ruins of the Roman Empire was in an advanced state of decay. The modern world was struggling to emerge in the fifteenth century, complete with larger countries, new religious beliefs, and bold ideas. Vital for the Americas, the Renaissance—the intellectual revolution—created a "new man," one who, instead of concentrating on the life hereafter, expected his rewards now; a man with a newly found confidence in his own worth and abilities; a man always testing his own physical limitations; an acquisi-

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