

Third Edition

THE GREAT REPUBLIC

A History of the American People

Volume 2



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BERNARD BAILYN

Harvard University

ROBERT DALLEK

University of California, Los Angeles

DAVID BRION DAVIS

Yale University

DAVID HERBERT DONALD

Harvard University

JOHN L. THOMAS

Brown University

GORDON S. WOOD

Brown University

D. C. HEATH AND COMPANY

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Publisher's Foreword

In the fall of 1982, as our thoughts turned to planning for the third edition of *The Great Republic*, we discussed at some length how to make an excellent text and supplement package even better. Recalling how enthusiastically the first two editions were received, we resolved fully to maintain their great strengths—authoritative scholarship, interpretive approach, and comprehensive integration of the many strands of American history—in this third edition.

At the same time, we, along with the authors, felt a need for making *The Great Republic* more accessible to present-day undergraduates, many of whom have had little high-school preparation in history. For this reason the entire text has been redrafted and carefully edited, on a line-by-line basis. Throughout, the third edition employs a less complex vocabulary and sentence structure. At numerous points definitions and background information have been added. This edition follows a more straightforward chronological structure than did its predecessors, and three of the sections have been thoroughly reorganized. And we are proud to announce a new contributor to this edition, Professor Robert Dallek of the University of California, Los Angeles, who has recast and greatly expanded the chapters in Part 6, on the period from 1920 to the present.

In order to personalize the story told in these pages and to emphasize the strong coverage of social history, stimulating primary source documents have been added throughout the book.

Further, we have greatly expanded the supplement package. We have thoroughly revised the Student Guide and the Instructor's Guide and have increased the number of questions in the latter to more than a thousand. We have added new components to the supplement package, including thirty-five two-color map and chart transparencies and the Archive testing program, a computerized test bank for the Apple® IIe microcomputer that offers instructors a

flexible means of test production with 1000+ questions.

We hope that you will agree that the new *Great Republic* is not only a rich and authoritative account of American history, but also a highly effective teaching tool.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful, as are the authors of *The Great Republic*, to the many historians who offered their reactions to the second edition, whether through letters or through discussions with our representatives and editors on campus and at professional meetings. We especially wish to thank the following for their sensitive and perceptive comments and suggestions regarding the revision:

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Introduction

This book is a history of the American people, from the earliest European settlements in the New World to the present. We call our book “The Great Republic,” adopting a phrase that Winston Churchill used to describe the United States. No one can doubt the greatness of the American Republic if it is measured by the size of our national domain, the vastness of our economic productivity, or the stability of our governmental institutions. Less certain has been its greatness in the realm of culture, in the uses of power, and in the distribution of social justice. Our purpose has been to present a balanced story of American development—a story of great achievement, of enormous material success, and of soaring idealism, but also one of conflict, of turbulent factionalism, and of injustice, rootlessness, and grinding disorder.

Three general themes unify the six sections of this book. The first is the development of free political institutions in America. Understanding the United States today requires a knowledge of conditions in the colonial period that made popular self-government at first possible, then likely, and in the end necessary. In the American Revolution the longings of provincial Britons for a total reformation of political culture were implemented in American political institutions. During the first half of the nineteenth century, democratic institutions and practices expanded to the limits of the continent, and they received their crucial testing in the American Civil War. By the twentieth century, urbanization and industrialization profoundly changed American society, but our democracy survived all of these changes, as well as depressions, international crises, and world wars. To understand why today, in the ninth decade of the twentieth century, no significant groups of Americans question our free institutions requires an understanding of how these institutions evolved from eighteenth-century republicanism to modern mass democracy.

Our second theme is the tension that has always existed in America between the interests of groups

with special goals and needs and those of the society as a whole. From the beginning the New World, with its abundant resources, stimulated ambitions among the shrewd, the enterprising, and the energetic that often conflicted with the shared needs of the entire populace. The enormous expanse of the country and the admixture of peoples from every quarter of the world encouraged social fragmentation and fostered cultural diversity. But from colonial times to the present, there have been countervailing forces working for social stability and cultural homogeneity.

The Founding Fathers of the Republic were aware that there would be no automatic harmonizing of regional, economic, and social interests, and they worried that minorities might become subject to the tyranny of majorities. At the same time, they feared a centralized government powerful enough to impose order on these conflicting and local interests and active enough to defend the weak against the powerful. In the national and state constitutions they devised a mechanism for the mediation of struggles and for the protection of human rights. In the years since, the balance between the general welfare and the welfare of regions, states, and economic and social groups has often been precarious, and our book shows how, from time to time, that balance has tipped, sometimes in the direction of social order and stability, sometimes in favor of minority interests and individual rights. Much of our story deals with successive attempts, never fully satisfactory, to reconcile the needs of the whole country with the interests of the parts.

Our third theme reflects our recognition that the history of the United States has always been part of a larger history. Except for the native Americans, who had developed a complex and diverse indigenous civilization, the early settlers in America were all immigrants who brought with them the beliefs, values, and cultural legacy of the European and African societies in which they had been born. Naturally, then, developments in America have been closely and inex-

tricably related to those abroad. We believe that the American Revolution, for all of its distinctiveness, needs to be viewed as one in a series of great democratic revolutions that swept the Western world. We think the leveling of social distinctions and the democratization of political life in Jacksonian America are closely related to similar contemporary movements in Europe. And we have stressed that the urbanization, mechanization, and bureaucratization of the United States by the end of the nineteenth century paralleled, copied, and influenced like transformations in the other modernizing nations.

By the twentieth century the connections between developments in the United States and those in the world at large became even closer, and the final sections of our book trace the emergence of the United States as a world power. We have told the story of our involvement in two devastating world wars, in addition to other, smaller conflicts all over the globe, from Korea to Vietnam to Lebanon. We have shown how, in recent decades, the president of the United States has become the most influential political leader in the world, how variations in the American economy have affected the well-being of all other nations, and how, for better or worse, American popular culture has reached a global audience. At the same time, we have emphasized that changes in other parts of the world have profoundly affected American political life, economic growth, and social organization. In short, we have written an American history that is part of world history.

In presenting these three themes, the authors have started from a shared view of the nature of history. We all believe that history is a mode of understanding, not merely a collection of information about the past. Our obligation is not simply to describe what happened, but to explain it, to make clear why things developed as they did. We share, too, an aversion to any deterministic interpretation of history. At certain times economic and demographic forces are dominant, but

they are themselves shaped by cultural forces. Great political events are sometimes triggered by economic drives, but at other times they are responses to ideologies.

We do not believe, then, that the course of American history was predetermined. The present condition

of our national life has to be explained historically, stage by stage. In the pages that follow, we present both a narrative and an analysis of how the United States has come to be what it is today—a great power, but still a Great Republic, where freedom and equality are dreams that can become realities.

B. B	D. H. D.
R. D.	J. L. T.
D. B. D.	G. S. W.

UNITING THE REPUBLIC, 1860-1877

David Herbert Donald

*W*as the Civil War a turning point in American history? Obviously in some important ways it was. It established beyond question the integrity and perpetuity of the American union. Never again did a state attempt to secede from the nation. It marked the end of Southern dominance of the national government. Not until the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson in 1913 was there another Southern-born president. It ended slavery. As Charles and Mary Beard have said, the emancipation, without compensation to the owners, of black slaves valued at about \$4 billion was "the most stupendous act of sequestration [of property] in the history of Anglo-American jurisprudence." The Civil War era witnessed a shift in the balance of power in American government. After the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, in 1868, there was no question that the nation was superior to the state and that local governments could not abridge the "privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States."

But in another sense the changes brought about by the Civil War were neither radical nor revolutionary. Although some Republicans desired a complete transformation of the social and economic system of the conquered Confederacy, there were relatively few, and only limited, social experiments or political innovations during the Reconstruction years after the war. In both the North and the South, shared beliefs in limited government, in economic laissez-faire, and in the superiority of the white race blocked drastic change. Meanwhile shared economic in-

Overleaf: "The Grand Review, 1865." Library of Congress.

terests and national political parties pulled the sections back into a common pattern of cooperation.

What the Union victory in the Civil War did do was to allow the emergence of new social and economic issues. During the long period of sectional controversy, when both the North and the South had had to maintain a façade of unity, internal dissensions within these sections had largely been ignored or suppressed. Now in the postwar years anti-expansionists were free to clash with those who desired to add further territory to the American domain. Native Americans tried to defend their tribal lands from white encroachers. Small businesses fought to keep from being swallowed up by monopolies. Farmers struggled to break the power of the railroads and grain elevators that controlled their access to markets. Seeking fairer wages, hours, and conditions of work, labor came into conflict with capital.

These postwar issues not merely replaced the old controversies between North and South; they helped place those controversies in perspective. Thoughtful observers came to realize that the Civil War had not been so much a conflict between two separate nations. It had instead been just one of the many continuing struggles within the American nation to define a boundary between the centralizing, nationalizing tendencies of American life and the opposing tendencies toward localism, parochialism, and fragmentation.

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