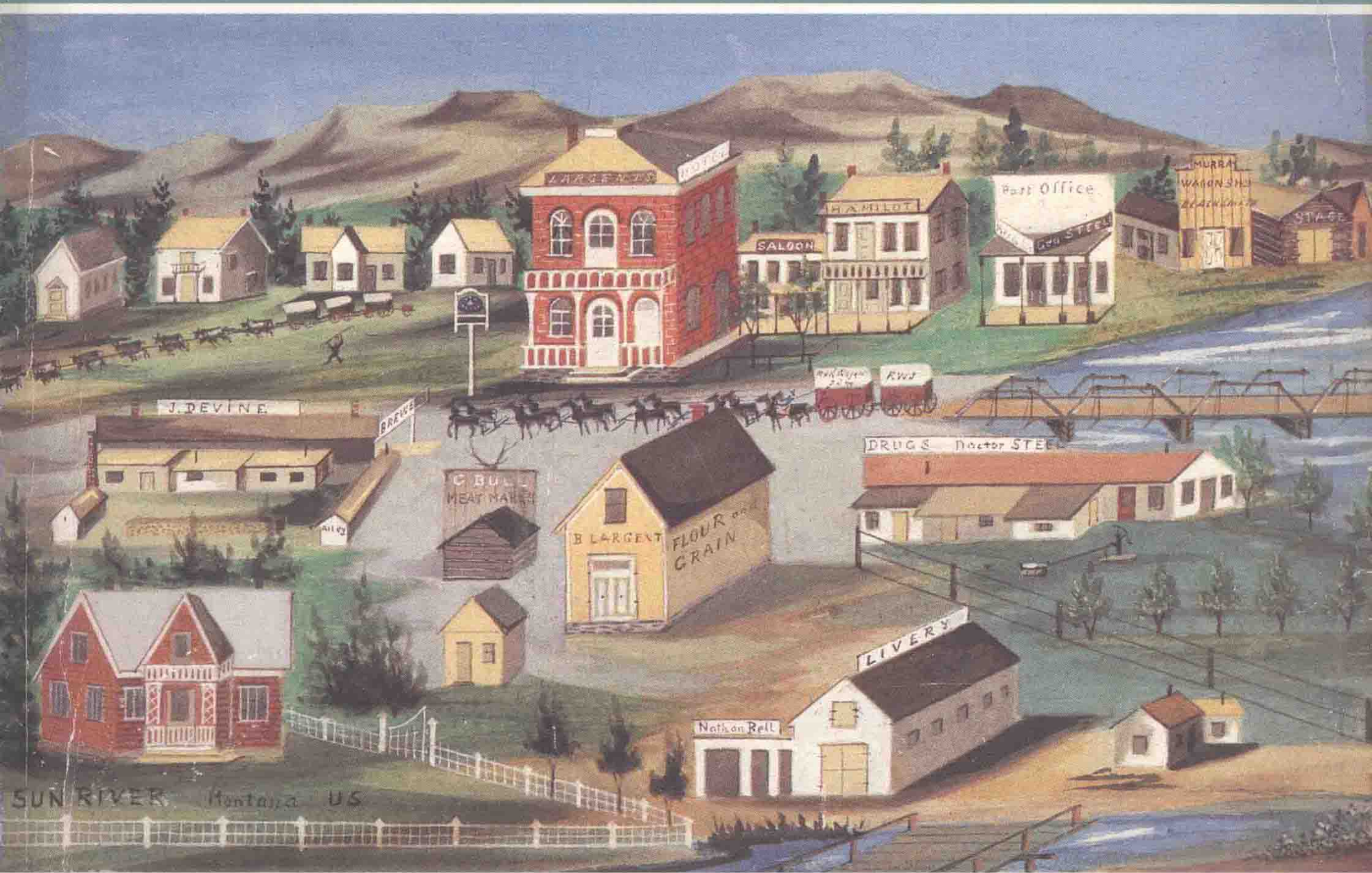
VOLUME II

The Brief AMERICAN PAGEANT

Second Edition



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The Brief American Pageant

A HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC

Second Edition

VOLUME II

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PREFACE

The American Pageant has long enjoyed a deserved reputation as one of the most accessible, popular, and effective textbooks in the field of American history. Thomas A. Bailey gave to the book a distinctive personality that mirrored his vast learning and the sparkling classroom style that he had cultivated during his nearly four decades of teaching at Stanford University. Every page of the text captures the charm of his inventive prose, his passion for clarity, his disdain for clutter, and his mastery of the narrative form.

The Brief American Pageant, Second Edition, seeks to preserve the outstanding attributes of the parent text in a format suitable for one-semester courses in American history, as well as for courses that rely heavily on readings in primary sources or specialized monographs. Like the longer Eighth Edition from which it is drawn, it preserves the basic features that have made *The American Pageant* unique, while incorporating the rich, new scholarship in social, economic, cultural, and intellectual history that has appeared in the last generation. This edition of the text reflects the new historical emphasis on the experience of people—including women, the poor, blacks, Hispanics, and certain religious groups—who until recently were often neglected by historians. It is also shaped by the belief that the main drama and the urgent interest of American history reside in the public arena in which these and other groups contend and cooperate with one another. Public affairs, in short, form the spine of the text's account of American history.

This edition includes much new material on the history of the family from colonial times to the twentieth century; on the influence of religion in American life; on the role of ideas in the making of the Revolution, the Constitution, and the two-party system, and in the struggle for women's rights; on the effects of urbanization and suburbanization; and on the causes and consequences of immigration, old and new.

Readers will also find completely new or substantially revised chapters on seventeenth-century American society, the Jacksonian period, the growth of the market economy, slavery and abolitionism, Reconstruction, and the rise of the city in post–Civil War America. The coverage of twentieth-century American history includes a fresh discussion of the domestic and diplomatic dimensions of World War I; new material on the home front during World War II; an updated account of the origins of the Cold War; and a substantial reworking of the entire post-1945 portion of the text.

Most of the "Varying Viewpoints" essays have been substantially revised to reflect recent scholarship and to better stimulate classroom discussion. The end-of-chapter bibliographies include an added subsection recommending primary-source documents for further study. An expanded appendix features tables and graphs with valuable information on American social and economic history.

This *Brief American Pageant,* Second Edition, presents the subject of American history in an engaging and lively way, without distorting the sober reality of the

past. Brevity, Shakespeare noted, is the soul of wit. Though condensed, this edition seeks to preserve the bright personality that has led generations of students to discover in *The American Pageant* what Thomas A. Bailey so exuberantly taught—that the pages of history need not be dull. We hope that readers of this book will enjoy learning from it, and that they will come to savor the pleasures and rewards of historical study.

D. M. K.

M. P.

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The Ordeal of Reconstruction

**With malice toward none, with charity for all,
with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us
strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds,
to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for
his widow and orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish
a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.**

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural, March 4, 1865

The Problems of Peace

The battle was done, the buglers silent. Bone-weary and bloodied, the American people, North and South, now faced the staggering challenges of peace. Four questions loomed large. How would the South, physically devastated by war and socially revolutionized by emancipation, be rebuilt? How would the liberated blacks fare as free men and women? How would the Southern states be reintegrated into the Union? And who would direct the process of Reconstruction—the Southern states themselves, the president, or the Congress?

Other questions clamored for answers. What should be done with the captured Confederate ringleaders? During the war a popular song had been "Hang Jeff Davis to a Sour Apple Tree," and some Northerners did think Davis and others should be tried for treason. But no trials were ever held. Davis served only two years in prison, and President Johnson pardoned all "rebel" leaders as a Christmas present in 1868. Congress removed their civil disabilities thirty years later.

The Prostrate South

Dismal indeed was the picture presented by the war-racked South when the rattle of musketry faded. Not only had an age perished, but a civilization had collapsed, in both its economic and its social structure. The moonlight-and-magnolia Old South, largely imaginary in any case, had gone forever with the wind.

Handsome cities of yesteryear, such as Charleston and Richmond, were gutted. An Atlantan returned to his once-fair home town and

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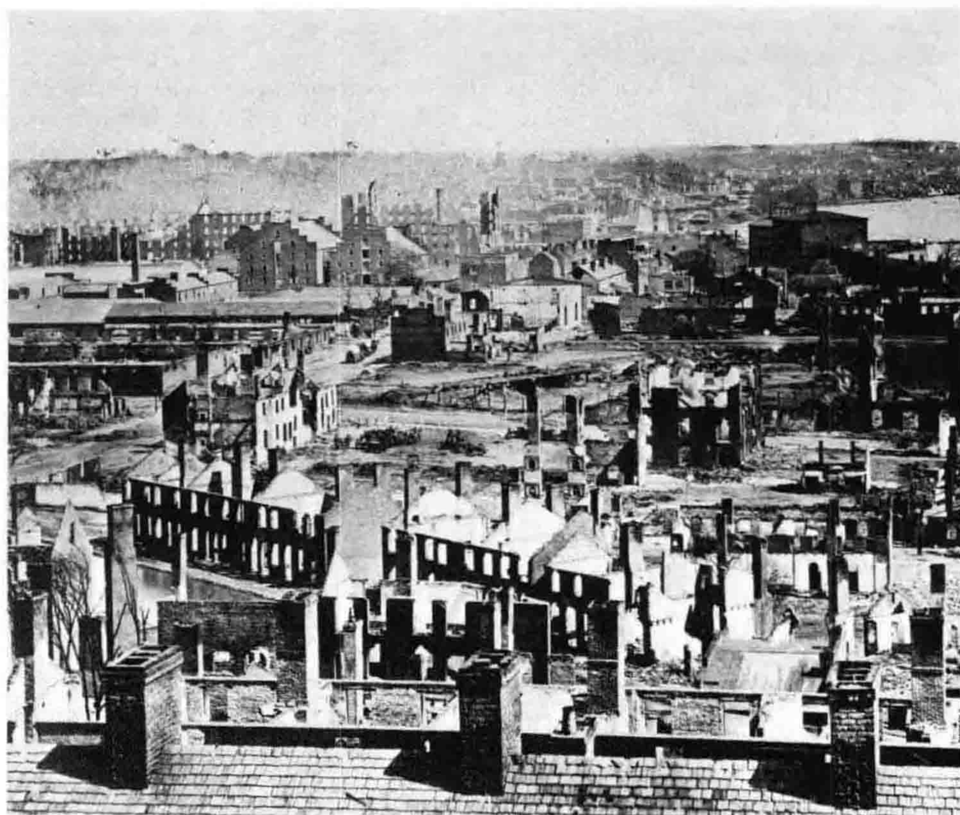


Richmond Devastated. *Charleston, Atlanta, and other Southern cities looked much the same, resembling bombed-out Berlin and Munich in 1945. (Library of Congress)*

remarked, "Hell has laid her egg, and right here it hatched."

Economic life had creaked to a halt. Banks and business houses had locked their doors, ruined by runaway inflation. Factories were smokeless, silent, dismantled. The transportation system had broken down completely. Efforts to untwist the rails corkscrewed by Sherman's soldiers were bumpily unsatisfactory.

Agriculture—the economic lifeblood of the South—was almost hopelessly crippled. Once-white cotton fields now yielded a lush harvest of nothing but green weeds. Seed was scarce, and livestock had been driven off by plundering Yankees. Pathetic instances were reported of men hitching themselves to plows, while women and children gripped the handles.

The princely planter aristocrats were humbled by the war—at least temporarily. Reduced to proud poverty, they faced charred and gutted mansions, lost investments, and almost worthless land. Their investment of more than $2 billion in slaves, their primary form of wealth, had evaporated with emancipation.

Beaten but unbent, many high-spirited white Southerners remained dangerously defiant. They cursed the "damnyankees" and spoke of "your government" in Washington instead of "our government." Conscious of no crime, these former Confederates continued to believe that their view of

secession was correct and that the "lost cause" was still a just war. One popular anti-Union song ran:

> I'm glad I fought agin her, I only wish we'd won,
> And I ain't axed any pardon for anything I've done.

Such attitudes boded ill for the prospects of painlessly binding up the Republic's wounds.

Unfettered Freedmen

Confusion abounded in the still-smoldering South about the precise meaning of "freedom" for blacks. Emancipation took effect haltingly and unevenly in different parts of the conquered Confederacy, and in some regions planters stubbornly protested that slavery was legal until state legislatures or the Supreme Court might act. For many bondsmen, the shackles of slavery were not struck off in a single mighty blow; long-suffering blacks often had to struggle out of their chains link by link.

The variety of responses to emancipation, by whites as well as blacks, illustrated the sometimes startling complexity of the master-slave relationship. Unbending loyalty to "ole Massa" prompted many slaves to help their owners resist the liberating Union armies. Blacks blocked the door of the "big house" with their bodies, or stashed the plantation silverware under mattresses in their own humble huts, where it would be safe from the plundering "bluebellies." On other plantations, pent-up bitterness burst violently forth on the day of liberation. A group of Virginia slaves laid twenty lashes on the back of their former master—a painful dose of his own favorite medicine. Newly emancipated slaves sometimes eagerly accepted the invitation of Union troops to join in the pillaging of their master's possessions. One freedman said that he felt that he was entitled to steal a chicken or two, since the whites had robbed him of his labor and his children.

Emancipation followed by reenslavement, or worse, was the bewildering lot of many blacks, as Union armies marched in and out of various localities. A North Carolina slave estimated that he had celebrated emancipation about twelve times. As blacks in one Texas county flocked to the free soil of the liberated county next door, their owners bushwacked them with rifle fire as they swam for

Free at Last. *A black family in South Carolina photographed just after emancipation. Three generations are apparently present here, suggesting the cohesiveness and endurance of the Afro-American family, despite the harshness of slavery. (Library of Congress)*

freedom across the river that marked the county line. The next day, trees along the riverbank were bent with swinging corpses—a grisly warning to others dreaming of liberty.

Prodded by the bayonets of Yankee armies of occupation, all masters were eventually forced to recognize their slaves' permanent freedom. The once-commanding planter would assemble his former human chattels in front of the porch of the "big house," and announce their liberty. This "Day of Jubilo" was the occasion of wild rejoicing. Tens of thousands of blacks naturally took to the roads. They sought long-separated loved ones, as formalizing a "slave marriage" was the first goal of many newly free men and women. Others traveled in search of economic opportunity in the towns or in the still-wild West. Many moved simply to test their new freedom.

Desperately trying to bootstrap themselves up from slavery, blacks assembled in "Conventions of Freedmen" to fight for their newly gained rights. Led by ministers of God and freeborn blacks from the North, these conventions expressed surprisingly moderate views. But moderation could not guarantee a warm reception by embittered white Southerners. The freed blacks would need all the friends—and the power—they could find in Washington.

The Freedmen's Bureau

Abolitionists had long preached that slavery was a degrading institution. Now the emancipators had to face the brutal truth that the former slaves were in many ways indeed degraded. The freedmen were overwhelmingly unskilled, unlettered, without property or money, and with scant knowledge of how to survive as free persons. To cope with this problem throughout the conquered South, Congress created the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865.

On paper at least, the bureau was intended to be a kind of primitive welfare agency. It was to provide food, clothing, and education both to freedmen and to white refugees. It was also authorized to distribute up to forty acres of abandoned or confiscated land to black settlers. The bureau achieved its greatest successes in education. It taught an estimated 200,000 blacks to read. Many former slaves had a passion for learning, partly because they wanted to close the gap between themselves and the whites and partly because they longed to read the Word of God.

But in other areas the Bureau's accomplishments were meager—or even mischievous. It distributed virtually no land. Its local administrators often collaborated with planters in expelling blacks from towns and cajoling them into signing labor contracts to work for their former masters. Yet the white South resented the bureau as a meddlesome federal interloper that threatened to upset white racial dominance. President Andrew Johnson, who shared the white-supremacist views of most white Southerners, repeatedly tried to kill it, and it expired in 1872.

Johnson: The Tailor President

Few Presidents have ever been faced with a more perplexing sea of troubles than that confronting Andrew Johnson. What manner of man was this medium-built, dark-eyed, black-haired Tennessean, now chief executive by virtue of the bullet that killed Lincoln?

No citizen, not even Lincoln, has ever reached the White House from humbler beginnings. Born to impoverished parents in North Carolina and early orphaned, Johnson never attended school but was apprenticed to a tailor at age ten. Ambitious to get ahead, he taught himself to read, and later his wife taught him to write and do simple arithmetic. Like many another self-made man, he was inclined to overpraise his maker.

Johnson early became identified with politics in Tennessee, to which he had moved when seventeen years old. He shone as an impassioned champion of the poor whites against the planter aristocrats and excelled as a two-fisted stump speaker before angry and heckling crowds. Elected to Congress, he refused to secede with his state, and was then appointed war governor after Tennessee was partially "redeemed" by Union armies.

Destiny next thrust Johnson into the vice-presidency. Lincoln's Union party in 1864 needed to attract support from the War Democrats and other

pro-Southern elements, and Johnson, a Democrat, seemed to be the ideal man.

"Old Andy" Johnson was no doubt a man of parts—unpolished parts. He was intelligent, able, forceful, and steadfastly devoted to duty and the Constitution. Yet the man who had raised himself from the tailor's bench to the president's chair was a misfit. A Southerner who did not understand the North, a Tennessean who had earned the distrust of the South, a Democrat who had never been accepted by the Republicans, a president who had never been elected to the office, he was not at home in a Republican White House. Hotheaded, contentious, and stubborn, he was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time. A Reconstruction policy devised by the angels might well have failed in his tactless hands.

Presidential Reconstruction

Even before the shooting war had ended, the political war over Reconstruction had begun. Abraham Lincoln believed that the Southern states had never legally withdrawn from the Union. Their formal restoration to the Union would therefore be relatively simple. Accordingly, Lincoln in 1863 proclaimed his "10 per cent" Reconstruction plan. It decreed that a state could be reintegrated into the Union when 10 percent of its voters in the presidential election of 1860 had taken an oath of allegiance to the United States and pledged to abide by emancipation. The next step would be formal erection of a state government. Lincoln would then recognize the purified regime.

Lincoln's proclamation provoked a sharp reaction in Congress, where Republicans feared the restoration of the planter aristocracy to power and the possible re-enslavement of the blacks. Republicans therefore rammed through Congress in 1864 the Wade-Davis Bill, which required that 50 percent of a state's voters take an oath of allegiance and demanded stronger safeguards for emancipation than Lincoln's as the price of readmission. Republicans were outraged when Lincoln "pocket-vetoed" this bill by refusing to sign it after Congress had adjourned.

The controversy surrounding the Wade-Davis Bill had revealed deep differences between the president and Congress. Unlike Lincoln, many in Congress insisted that the seceders had indeed left the Union—had "committed suicide" as republican states—and had therefore forfeited all their rights. They could be readmitted only as "conquered provinces" on such conditions as Congress should decree.

The episode further revealed differences among two emerging Republican factions, moderates and radicals. The majority moderate group tended to agree with Lincoln that the seceded states should be restored to the Union as simply and swiftly as reasonable—though on Congress's terms, not the president's. The minority radical group believed that before the South could be restored its social structure should be uprooted, the haughty planters punished, and the helpless blacks protected by federal power.

Some radicals hoped that spiteful "Andy" Johnson, who shared their hatred for the planter aristocracy, would also share their desire to reconstruct the South with a rod of iron. But Johnson soon disillusioned them. He quickly recognized several of Lincoln's 10 percent governments, and on May 29, 1865, he issued his own Reconstruction proclamation. It disfranchised certain leading Confederates, though they might petition him for personal pardons, and called for special state conventions, which were required to repeal secession, repudiate all Confederate debts, and ratify the slave-freeing Thirteenth Amendment.

Johnson, savoring his dominance over the high-toned aristocrats who now begged his favor, granted pardons in abundance. Bolstered by the political resurrection of the planter elite, the recently rebellious states moved rapidly in the second half of 1865 to organize governments. But as the pattern of the new governments became clear, Republicans of all stripes grew furious.

The Baleful Black Codes

Among the first acts of the new Southern regimes sanctioned by Johnson was the passage of the iron-toothed Black Codes. These laws were designed to regulate the affairs of the emancipated blacks, much as the slave statutes had done in pre–Civil War days. The Black Codes aimed, first of all, to

ensure a stable labor supply. Severe penalties were therefore imposed on blacks who "jumped" their labor contracts, which usually committed them to work for the same employer for one year, and generally at pittance wages.

The codes also sought to restore as nearly as possible the pre-emancipation system of race relations. Freedom was legally recognized, as were some other privileges, such as the right to marry. But all the codes forbade blacks to serve on juries or vote, and some even barred them from renting or leasing land.

These oppressive laws mocked the ideal of freedom, so recently purchased by buckets of blood. The Black Codes imposed terrible burdens on the blacks, struggling against ignorance and poverty to make their way as free persons. Thousands of impoverished former slaves, as well as many landless whites, slipped into virtual peonage as indebted sharecrop farmers.

The Black Codes made an ugly impression in the North. If the former slaves were being re-enslaved, people asked one another, had not the Boys in Blue spilled their blood in vain? Had the North really won the war?

Congressional Reconstruction

These questions grew more insistent when the congressional delegations from the newly reconstituted Southern states presented themselves in the Capitol in December 1865. To the shock and disgust of the Republicans, many former Confederate leaders were on hand to claim their seats.

The appearance of these ex-rebels was a natural but costly blunder. Voters of the South, seeking able representatives, had turned instinctively to their experienced statesmen. But most of the Southern leaders were tainted by active association with the "lost cause." Among them were four former Confederate generals, five colonels, and various members of the Richmond cabinet and Congress. Worst of all, there was the shrimpy but brainy Alexander Stephens, ex-vice-president of the Confederacy, still under indictment for treason.

The presence of these "whitewashed rebels" infuriated the Republicans in Congress. The war had been fought to restore the Union, but not on these kinds of terms. Many Republicans balked at giving up the political advantage they had enjoyed while the South had been "out" from 1861 to 1865. On the first day of the congressional session, December 4, 1865, they banged shut the door in the face of the newly elected Southern delegations.

Looking to the future, Republicans had good reason to fear that a restored South would be stronger than ever in national politics. Before the war a black slave had counted as three-fifths of a person in apportioning Congressional representation, but now, owing to full counting of free blacks, the eleven rebel states were entitled to twelve more votes in Congress, and twelve more electoral votes, than they had previously enjoyed. Again, angry voices in the North raised the cry: Who won the war, anyway?

Republicans had good reason to fear that ultimately they might be elbowed aside. Southerners might join hands with Democrats in the North and win control of Congress or maybe even the White House. If this happened, they could perpetuate the Black Codes, perhaps even formally re-enslave the blacks. They could dismantle the economic program of the Republican party, and possibly repudiate the national debt. President

Principal Reconstruction Proposals and Plans

Year	*Proposal or Plan*
1864–1865	Lincoln's 10 percent proposal
1865–1866	Johnson's version of Lincoln's proposal
1866–1867	Congressional plan: 10 percent plan with Fourteenth Amendment
1867–1877	Congressional plan of military Reconstruction: Fourteenth Amendment plus black suffrage, later established nationwide by Fifteenth Amendment

Johnson thus deeply provoked the congressional Republicans when he announced on December 6, 1865, that the recently rebellious states had satisfied his conditions and that in his view the Union was now restored.

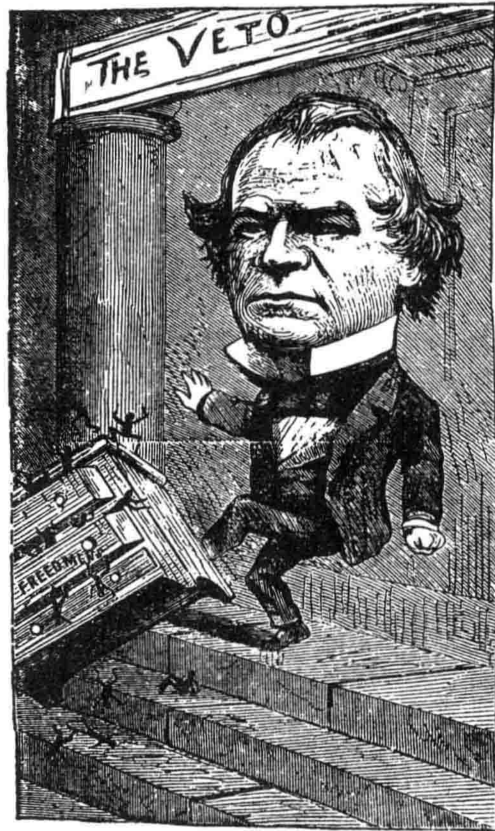
Johnson Clashes With Congress

A clash between president and Congress was now inevitable. It exploded into the open in February 1866, when the president vetoed a bill (later repassed) extending the life of the controversial Freedmen's Bureau.

Aroused, the Republicans swiftly struck back. In March 1866 they passed the Civil Rights Bill, which conferred on the blacks the privileges of American citizenship and struck at the Black Codes. President Johnson resolutely vetoed this forward-looking measure, but in April congressmen steamrollered it over his veto—something they repeatedly did henceforth. The hapless president, dubbed "Sir Veto" and "Andy Veto," had his presidential wings clipped short, as Congress assumed the dominant role in running the government.

The Republicans now undertook to rivet the principles of the Civil Rights Bill into the Constitution as the Fourteenth Amendment. The proposed amendment, as approved by Congress and sent to the states in June 1866, was sweeping. It (1) conferred civil rights, including citizenship but excluding the franchise, on the freedmen; (2) reduced proportionately the representation of a state in Congress and in the Electoral College if it denied the blacks the ballot; (3) disqualified from federal and state office former Confederates who as federal officeholders had once sworn to "support the Constitution of the United States"; and (4) guaranteed the federal debt, while repudiating all Confederate debts. (See text of Fourteenth Amendment in the Appendix.)

The radical faction was disappointed that the Fourteenth Amendment did not grant the right to vote, but all Republicans agreed that no state should be welcomed back into the Union fold without first ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment. Yet



An Inflexible President. *This Republican cartoon shows Johnson knocking blacks out of the Freedmen's Bureau by his veto. (Thomas Nast,* Harper's Weekly, *1866)*

President Johnson advised the Southern states to reject it, and all of the "sinful eleven," except Tennessee, defiantly spurned the amendment.

Swinging 'Round the Circle with Johnson

As 1866 lengthened, the battle grew between the Congress and the president. Now the issue was whether Reconstruction was to be carried on with or without the drastic Fourteenth Amendment. The Republicans would settle for nothing less.

The crucial congressional elections of 1866—more crucial than some presidential elections—

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