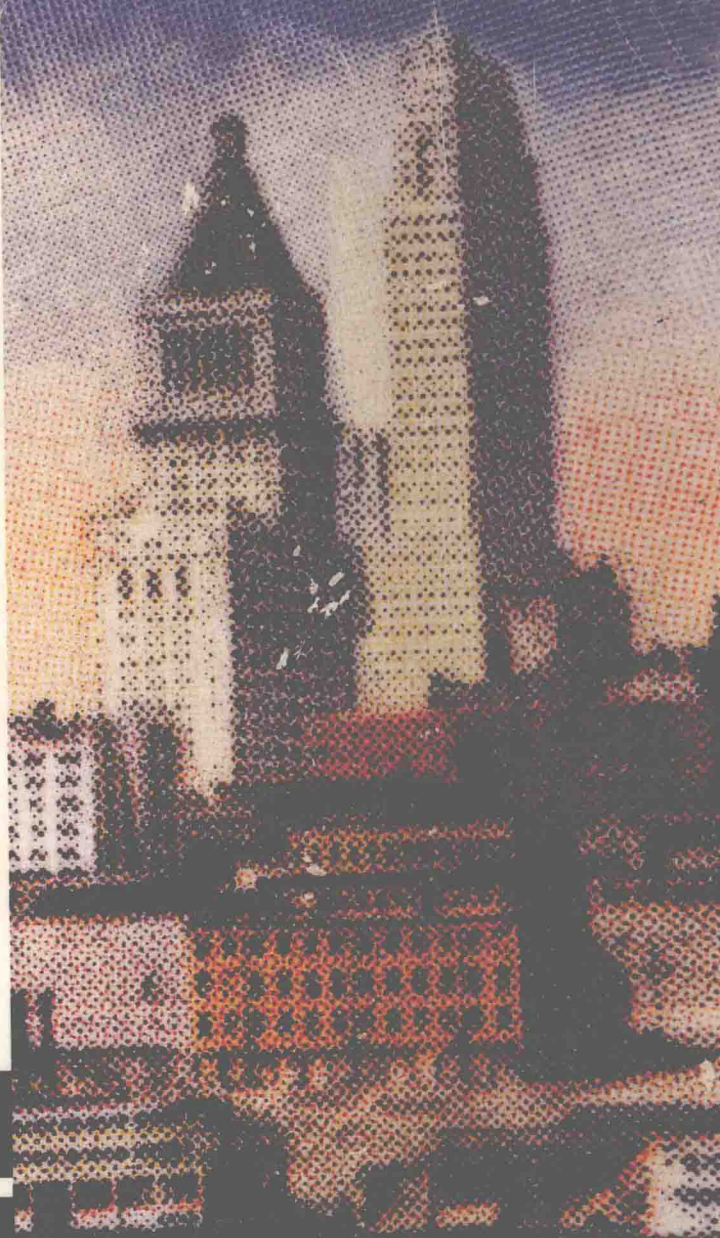


WHEELER • BECKER

COVERING THE
AMERICAN PAST

LOOK AT
EVIDENCE

Third Edition



VOLUME II SINCE 1865

DISCOVERING THE AMERICAN PAST

A LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE

THIRD EDITION

∞ VOLUME II: SINCE 1865 ∞

William Bruce Wheeler

University of Tennessee

Susan D. Becker

University of Tennessee

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CHAPTER ONE

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P R E F A C E

This book is based on the premise that students have a strong desire to learn about United States history and will put forth considerable effort to do so, provided the nation's history is presented in a challenging and stimulating way. Students tell us they enjoy "doing history" rather than simply being told about it and welcome the opportunity to become "active learners" rather than passive notetakers.

The third edition of *Discovering the American Past: A Look at the Evidence* follows, both in spirit and in format, the effective approach established by its predecessors. The unique structure of this book clusters primary sources around a set of historical questions

that students are asked to "solve." Unlike a source reader, this book prompts students to actually *analyze* a wide variety of authentic primary source material, to make inferences, and to draw conclusions in much the same way that historians do.

As in previous editions, we expose students to the broad scope of the American experience by providing a mixture of types of historical problems and a balance among political, social, diplomatic, economic, intellectual, and cultural history. This wide variety of historical topics and events engages students' interest and rounds out their view of American history.

F O R M A T O F T H E B O O K

Historians are fully aware that everything that is preserved from the past can be used as evidence to solve historical problems. In that spirit, we have included as many different *types* of historical evidence as we could. Almost every chapter gives students the opportunity to work with a different type of evidence: works of art, first-person accounts, trial transcripts, sta-

tistics, maps, letters, charts, biographical sketches, court decisions, music lyrics, prescriptive literature, newspaper accounts, congressional debates, speeches, diaries, proclamations and laws, political cartoons, photographs, architectural plans, advertisements, posters, film reviews, fiction, memoirs, oral interviews, and interpretations by past historians. In this book, then,

we have created a kind of historical sampler that we believe will help students learn the methods and skills historians use, as well as help them learn historical content.

Each type of historical evidence is combined with an introduction to the appropriate methodology in an effort to teach students a wide variety of research skills. As much as possible, we have tried to let the evidence speak for itself and have avoided leading students to one particular interpretation or another. This approach is effective in many different classroom situations, including seminars, small classes, discussion sections, and large lecture classes. Indeed, we have found that the first and second editions of *Discovering the American Past* have proven themselves equally stimulating and effective in very large classes as well as very small ones. An Instructor's Resource Manual that accompanies the book offers numerous suggestions on how *Discovering the American Past* can be used effectively in large classroom situations.

Each chapter is divided into six parts: The Problem, Background, The

Method, The Evidence, Questions to Consider, and Epilogue. Each of the parts relates to or builds upon the others, creating a uniquely integrated chapter structure that helps guide the reader through the analytical process. "The Problem" section begins with a brief discussion of the central issues of the chapter and then states the questions students will explore. A "Background" section follows, designed to help students understand the historical context of the problem. The section called "The Method" gives students suggestions for studying and analyzing the evidence. "The Evidence" section is the heart of the chapter, providing a variety of primary source material on the particular historical event or issue described in the chapter's "Problem" section. The section called "Questions to Consider" focuses students' attention on specific evidence and on linkages among different evidence material. The "Epilogue" section gives the aftermath or the historical outcome of the evidence—what happened to the people involved, who won the election, the results of a debate, and so on.

❧ CHANGES IN THE THIRD EDITION ❧

In response to student and faculty reactions, we have made significant alterations in the content of this edition. Six new chapters have been written, three for Volume I and three for Volume II. As with all other chapters, the six new chapters have been tested extensively in the classroom.

Volume I begins with a completely revised chapter on Europeans' first encounters with Native Americans. The first chapter now includes Native American as well as European accounts of the same event: the encounter between the Aztecs and Hernando Cortés and his troops. Chapter 6 is en-

tirely new, an examination of Chief Justice Taney's decision in the *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge* Supreme Court case (1837). The chapter focuses on the issue of the proper role of government in the private economic sector, a continuing controversy in America's past and present. Chapter 9 is also new. This chapter examines the difficult problem of the responsibilities of Americans during wartime, in this case the Mexican War. Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" is juxtaposed against President James Knox Polk's Second Annual Message and Stephen A. Douglas's speech on that subject in the House of Representatives.

New chapters in Volume II include Chapter 6, which uses popular fiction and memoirs to examine the "new" woman of the 1920s. Fictional portrayals of women are presented side-by-

side with selected women's own memories of the "roaring" decade. Chapter 7, a new treatment of the Great Depression of the 1930s, uses photographic evidence from the archives of the Farm Security Administration to discuss the problems of work, unemployment, and poverty during that difficult era. Finally, Chapter 11, on cultural diversity and American history, is entirely new. In this chapter, students will read five distinctly different accounts of the same event written by six historians (George Bancroft, Charles and Mary Beard, John A. Garaty, Howard Zinn, and their own textbook) to see how historical treatments have changed during the past century.

In addition to these six new chapters, all the chapters from the second edition have been rethought, discussed, revised, and tested in classrooms.

INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL

An Instructor's Resource Manual suggests ways that might be useful in guiding students through the evidence, provides answers to questions students often ask, and explains a variety of ways in which the students' learning may be evaluated. Many of

those ideas have come from instructors who have used the first and second editions. For this edition, we have added a new section explaining how this book can be used with large classes, based on the authors' own experience with the text.

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As with our first and second editions, we dedicate this effort to our colleagues who seek to offer a challenging and stimulating academic experience to their students and to those students themselves, who make all our efforts so worthwhile.

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CHAPTER

1

RECONSTRUCTING RECONSTRUCTION: THE POLITICAL CARTOONIST AND THE NATIONAL MOOD

☞ THE PROBLEM ☞

The Civil War took a tremendous toll on North and South alike. In the defeated South, more than one-fourth of all men who had borne arms for the Confederacy died, and an additional 15 percent were permanently disabled. Indeed, in 1865 Mississippi spent one-fifth of the state's total revenue on artificial arms and legs for Confederate veterans. Combined with the damage to agriculture, industry, and railroads, the human cost of the Civil War to the South was nearly catastrophic. For its part, the North had suffered frightful human losses as well, although proportionately less than those of the South.

And yet the Civil War, although appalling in its human, physical, and psychological costs, did settle some important issues that had plagued the

nation for decades before that bloody conflict. First, the triumph of Union arms had established the United States as "one nation indivisible," from which no state could secede.¹ No less important, the "peculiar institution" of slavery was eradicated, and African Americans at last were free. In truth, although the Civil War had been costly, the issues it settled were momentous.

1. In response to President Benjamin Harrison's 1892 appeal for schoolchildren to mark the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery with patriotic exercises, Bostonian Francis Bellamy composed the pledge of allegiance to the American flag, from which the phrase "one nation indivisible" comes. In 1942, Congress made it the official pledge to the flag, and in 1954 Congress added the words "under God" in the middle of Bellamy's phrase.

CHAPTER 1

RECONSTRUCTING RECONSTRUCTION: THE POLITICAL CARTOONIST AND THE NATIONAL MOOD

The victory of the United States, however, raised at least as many questions as it settled. There was the question of what should happen to the defeated South. Should the states of the former Confederacy be permitted to take their natural place in the Union as quickly and smoothly as possible, with minimum concessions to their northern conquerors? Or should the North insist on a thorough reconstruction of the South, with new economic and social institutions to replace the old? Tied to this issue was the thorny constitutional question of whether the South actually had left the Union at all in 1861. If so, then the southern states in 1865 were territories, to be governed and administered by Congress. If not, then the Civil War had been an internal insurrection and the president, as commander in chief, would administer the South's re-entry into the Union.

Perhaps the most difficult question the Union's victory raised was the status of the former slaves. To be sure, they were no longer in bondage. But should they possess all the rights that whites had? Should they be assisted in becoming landowners; if not, how would they earn a living? Should they be allowed to vote and run for elective office? Indeed, no more complex and

difficult issue confronted the country than the "place" of the newly freed slaves in the nation.

In all these questions, public opinion in the victorious North was a critical factor in shaping or altering the policies designed to reconstruct the South. Earlier democratic reforms made it unlikely that either the president or Congress could defy public opinion successfully. Yet public opinion can shift with remarkable speed, and political figures forever must be sensitive to its sometimes fickle winds.

Among the many influences on public opinion in the second half of the nineteenth century were writers and artists who worked for newspapers and magazines. In this chapter, you will be examining and analyzing the work of one man who attempted to shape public opinion in the North: editorial cartoonist Thomas Nast (1840–1902). Nast was not the only person who attempted to influence public opinion in the North, but at the peak of his career, he and his cartoons were well-known and widely appreciated. What were Nast's views on the controversial issues of the Reconstruction era, and how did he try to influence public opinion?

BACKGROUND

By early 1865, it was evident to most northerners and southerners that the Civil War was nearly over. While Grant was hammering at Lee's depleted forces in Virginia, Union

general William Tecumseh Sherman broke the back of the Confederacy with his devastating march through Georgia and then northward into the Carolinas. Atlanta fell to Sherman's

troops in September 1864, Savannah in December, and Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina, in February 1865. Two-thirds of Columbia lay in ashes. Meanwhile, General Philip Sheridan had driven the Confederates out of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, thus blocking any escape attempts by Lee and further cutting southern supply routes. The Union naval blockade of the South was taking its fearful toll, as parts of the dying Confederacy were facing real privation. Hence, although northern armies had suffered terrible losses, by 1865 they stood poised on the brink of victory.

In the South, all but the extreme die-hards recognized that defeat was inevitable. The Confederacy was suffering in more ways than militarily. The Confederate economy had almost completely collapsed, and Confederate paper money was nearly worthless. Slaves were abandoning their masters and mistresses in great numbers, running away to Union armies or roaming through the South in search of better opportunities. In many areas, civilian morale had almost totally deteriorated, and one Georgian wrote, "The people are soul-sick and heartily tired of the hateful, hopeless strife. . . . We have had enough of want and woe, of cruelty and carnage, enough of cripples and corpses."² As the Confederate government made secret plans to evacuate Richmond, most southerners knew that the end was very near.

Yet even with victory almost in hand, many northerners had given little thought to what should happen after the war. Would southerners accept the changes that defeat would almost inevitably force on them (especially the end of slavery)? What demands should the victors make on the vanquished? Should the North assist the South in rebuilding after the devastation of war? If so, should the North dictate how that rebuilding, or reconstruction, should take place? What efforts should the North make to ensure that the former slaves were receiving the rights of free men and women? During the war, few northerners had seriously considered these questions. Now that victory was within their grasp, they could not avoid them.

One person who had been wrestling with these questions was Abraham Lincoln. In December 1863, the president announced his own plan for reconstructing the South, a plan in keeping with his later hope, as expressed in his second inaugural address, for "malice toward none; with charity for all; . . . Let us . . . bind up the nation's wounds."³ In Lincoln's plan, a southern state could resume its normal activities in the Union as soon as 10 percent of the voters of 1860 had taken an oath of loyalty to the United States. High-ranking Confederate leaders would be excluded, and some blacks might gain the right to vote. No men-

2. The letter probably was written by Georgian Herschel V. Walker. See Allan Nevins, *The Organized War to Victory, 1864-1865*, Vol. IV of *The War for the Union* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 221.

3. The full text of Lincoln's second inaugural address, delivered on March 4, 1865, can be found in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. VIII (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), pp. 332-333.

CHAPTER 1

RECONSTRUCTING

RECONSTRUCTION:

THE POLITICAL

CARTOONIST

AND THE

NATIONAL MOOD

tion was made of protecting the civil rights of former slaves; it was presumed that this matter would be left to the slaves' former masters and mistresses.

To many northerners, later known as Radical Republicans, Lincoln's plan was much too lenient. In the opinion of these people, a number of whom had been abolitionists, the South, when conquered, should not be allowed to return to its former ways. Not only should slavery be eradicated, they claimed, but freed blacks should be assisted in their efforts to attain economic, social, and political equity. Most of the Radical Republicans favored education for African Americans, and some advocated carving the South's plantations into small parcels to be given to the freedmen. To implement these reforms, Radical Republicans wanted detachments of the United States Army to remain in the South and favored the appointment of provisional governors to oversee the transitional governments in the southern states. Lincoln approved plans for the Army to stay and supported the idea of provisional governors. But he opposed the more far-reaching reform notions of the Radical Republicans, and as president he was able to block them.

In addition to having diametrically opposed views of Reconstruction, Lincoln and the Radical Republicans differed over the constitutional question of which branch of the federal government would be responsible for the reconstruction of the South. The Constitution made no mention of secession, reunion, or reconstruction. But Radical Republicans, citing passages in the Constitution giving Congress the

power to guarantee each state a republican government, insisted that the reconstruction of the South should be carried out by Congress.⁴ For his part, however, Lincoln maintained that as chief enforcer of the law and as commander in chief, the president was the appropriate person to be in charge of Reconstruction. Clearly, a stalemate was in the making, with Radical Republicans calling for a more reform-minded Reconstruction policy and Lincoln continuing to block them.

President Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865 (one week after Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House),⁵ brought Vice President Andrew Johnson to the nation's highest office. At first, Radical Republicans had reason to hope that the new president would follow policies more to their liking. A Tennessean, Johnson had risen to political prominence from humble circumstances, had become a spokesperson for the common white men and women of the South, and had opposed the planter aristocracy. Upon becoming president, he excluded from amnesty all former Confederate political and military leaders as well as all southerners who owned taxable property worth more than \$20,000 (an obvious slap at his old planter-aristocrat foes). Moreover, Johnson issued a proclamation setting up provisional mil-

4. See Article IV, Section 4, of the Constitution. Later Radical Republicans also justified their position using the Thirteenth Amendment, adopted in 1865, which gave Congress the power to enforce the amendment ending slavery in the South.

5. The last Confederate army to give up, commanded by General Joseph Johnston, surrendered to Sherman at Durham Station, North Carolina, on April 18, 1865.

itary governments in the conquered South and told his cabinet he favored black suffrage, although as a states' rightist he insisted that states adopt the measure voluntarily. At the outset, then, Johnson appeared to be all the Radical Republicans wanted, preferable to the more moderate Lincoln.

Yet it did not take Radical Republicans long to realize that President Johnson was not one of them. Although he spoke harshly, he pardoned hundreds of former Confederates, who quickly captured control of southern state governments and congressional delegations. Many northerners were shocked to see former Confederate generals and officials, and even former Confederate vice president Alexander Stephens, returned to Washington. The new southern state legislatures passed a series of laws, known collectively as black codes, that so severely restricted the rights of former slaves that they were all but slaves again. Moreover, Johnson privately told southerners that he opposed the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which was intended to confer full civil rights on the newly freed slaves. He also used his veto power to block Radical Republican Reconstruction measures in Congress and seemed to do little to combat the general defiance of the former Confederacy (exhibited in many forms, including insults thrown at Union occupation soldiers, the desecration of the United States flag, and the formation of organized resistance groups such as the Ku Klux Klan).

To an increasing number of northerners, the unrepentant spirit of the South and Johnson's acquiescence to it were nothing short of appalling.

Had the Civil War been fought for nothing? Had more than 364,000 federal soldiers died in vain? White southerners were openly defiant, African Americans were being subjugated by white southerners and virtually ignored by President Johnson, and former Confederates were returning to positions of power and prominence. Radical Republicans had sufficient power in Congress to pass harsher measures, but Johnson kept vetoing them, and the Radicals lacked the votes to override his vetoes.⁶ Indeed, the impasse that had existed before Lincoln's death continued.

In such an atmosphere, the congressional elections of 1866 were bitterly fought campaigns, especially in the northern states. President Johnson traveled throughout the North, defending his moderate plan of Reconstruction and viciously attacking his political enemies. However, the Radical Republicans were even more effective. Stirring up the hostilities of wartime, they "waved the bloody shirt" and excited northern voters by charging that the South had never accepted its defeat and that the 364,000 Union dead and 275,000 wounded would be for nothing if the South was permitted to continue its arrogant and stubborn behavior. Increasingly, Johnson was greeted by hostile audiences as the North underwent a major shift in public opinion.

The Radical Republicans won a stunning victory in the congressional elections of 1866 and thus broke the stalemate between Congress and the

6. Congress was able to override Johnson's vetoes of the Civil Rights Act and a revised Freedmen's Bureau bill.