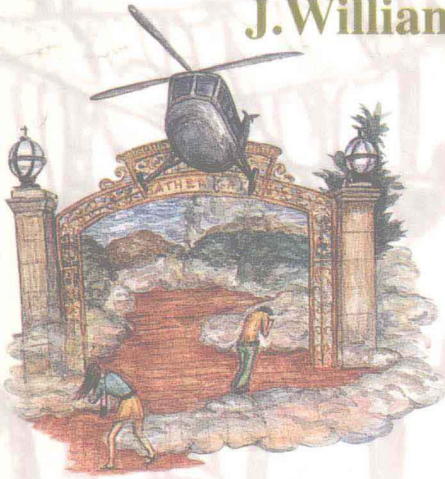


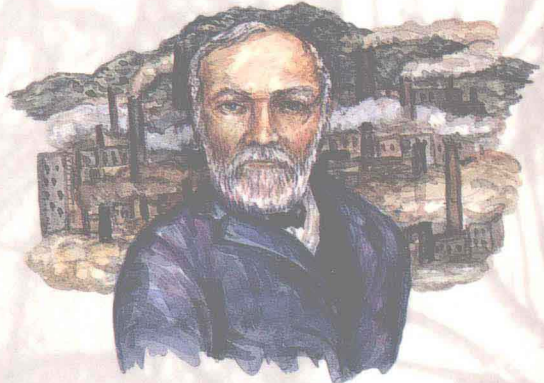
J. William T. Youngs



# American Realities

Volume 2

Fourth  
Edition



Historical Episodes

*from Reconstruction to the Present*

# AMERICAN REALITIES

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HISTORICAL  
EPISODES

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VOLUME II

*From Reconstruction  
to the Present*

Fourth Edition

J. WILLIAM T. YOUNGS

*Eastern Washington University*

*Cover and text illustrations by Cecily Moon*



LONGMAN

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*To my mother  
and the memory of my father*

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## CREDITS

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## *Preface*

American history is an epic composed of many events: colonists made their homes in a new world; soldiers fought for independence; capitalists built giant industries; civil rights activists struggled for equality. In such episodes we encounter the emotions, thoughts, and experiences that made up the distinct worlds of the past. In the two volumes of *American Realities* my goal has been to re-create some of those worlds, to capture the immediacy—the reality—of life as lived in other eras. I have not tried to reduce all these events to a single pattern, but in the aggregate the chapters trace the course of American history from the distant past to the present.

Each chapter is designed to lead the reader to a better understanding of major themes in United States history. Each volume can be read by itself or in tandem with a conventional American history textbook. The standard surveys present the general patterns of the past; this book reveals in greater depth the life beneath those patterns.

These stories reveal the broad contours of American history as well as the illustrative particulars. The death of Thomasine Winthrop leads us to know Puritanism better, and the flight of the *Enola Gay* to Hiroshima exhibits the harsh outlines of total war. The Lewis and Clark Expedition reveals the marvelous land upon which the nation developed, and Joseph McCarthy's career illuminates the turmoil of Cold War politics.

While writing *American Realities* I have often wished I had the novelist's poetic license to fill gaps not covered by the sources. But fortunately, facts can be as engaging as fiction. Documents are often colorful and evocative, allowing us to listen to the deathbed conversation of John and Thomasine Winthrop, to see the light of the South Pacific from a B-29, to enter imaginatively into the realities of other men and women.

Like ourselves the people of the past were immersed in their times. But even while living fully in their own worlds, they bequeathed us ours. We can find historical kinship in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. George Washington is comprehensible because he was stunned when his army in Manhattan collapsed. John Muir is like most of us because he was troubled once about choosing a career. My touchstone in choosing topics for *American*

*Realities* was that each should suggest our common humanity even while revealing worlds distinct from our own. More simply, I had to care about the subjects and believe others could care about them as well. Through such sympathy we come actually to live in history and feel our involvement with the past: his story and her story become our story.

The fourth edition of *American Realities* includes two new chapters and revisions in four others. In Volume I, I have added a passage from Thomas Jefferson's letters to the essay on the Cherokee removal, and I have included a description of Sante Fe before the American conquest. In Volume II, "The New Deal: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Politics of Compassion" tells the story of her contribution to American reform during and after the Great Depression. "Turmoil on the Campuses: Berkeley in the Sixties" describes a university and its students at the heart of the student movement and cultural revolution of the time.

The effort in these chapters to re-create history in words is supplemented by the imaginative drawings of Cecily Moon. Ms. Moon based her illustrations on careful reading of each chapter and on personal research in historical paintings and photographs. Each drawing highlights a major theme in the chapters.

For the instructor we have prepared a manual with chapter summaries, identification topics, multiple-choice and discussion questions, and suggested research projects.

#### AMERICAN REALITIES AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB

When I first began work on *American Realities*, I used a fountain pen, a modern version of the quill pen John Winthrop used 380 years ago when writing about the death of his wife Thomasine. I also used a typewriter, an instrument that would have been familiar to John Muir, Booker T. Washington, and Andrew Carnegie a century ago. When working on the second edition, I used a cranky word processor. As I complete the fourth edition — with a much better computer — I am beginning work on a Web site for the book. The site will include expanded bibliographies for each essay, photographs of places discussed in the book, links to related Web sites, and many other resources. The site will also allow interaction with students and teachers using *American Realities*. I plan, for example, to feature photographs of locales mentioned in the book. Some will be my pictures of places like Santa Fe, but I hope that other people may be interested in submitting their own pictures — in this case, perhaps, of Bent's Fort and other locales on the Santa Fe Trail. With the Web site, John Winthrop, Mary Antin, and other historical figures who never travelled more than a few miles per hour during their own lifetimes, will have the opportunity to travel at the speed of light to the computer screens of interested readers. I hope they benefit from this journey

into cyberspace—and that you do too. At this writing the address for the site has not been determined. But by the time you read this, the *American Realities* home page should be on-line. If you would like to learn the URL, contact me at the e-mail address listed below.

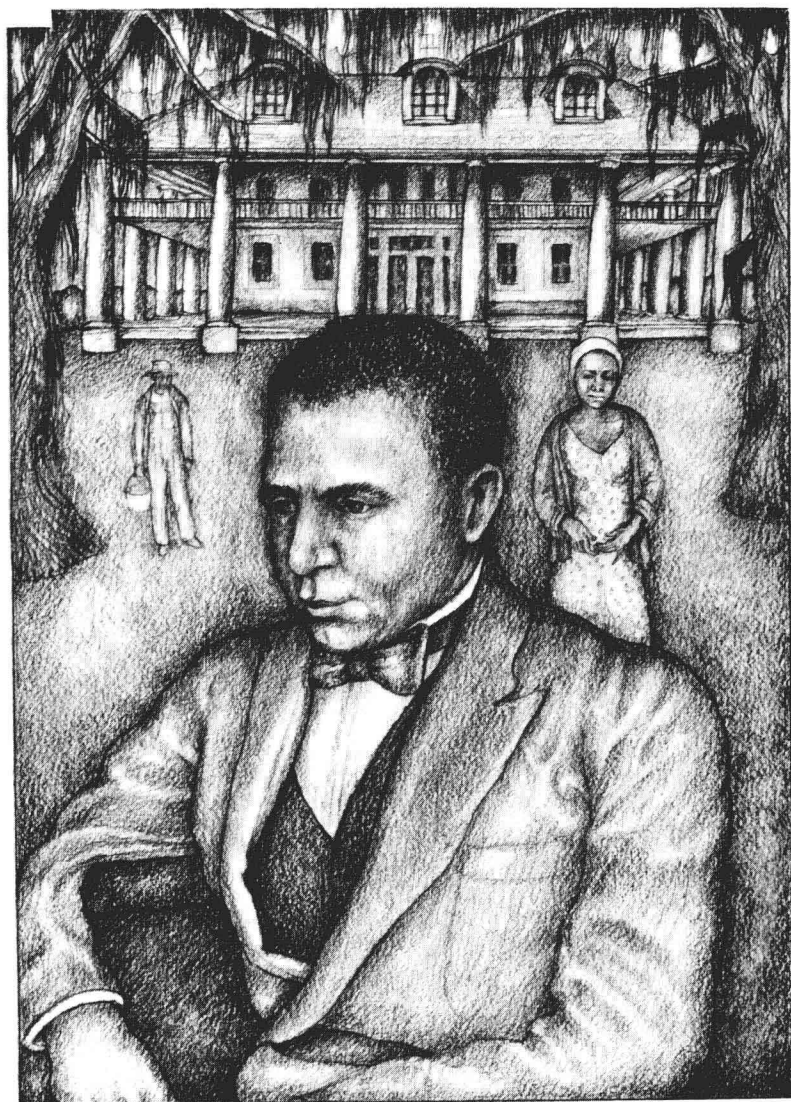
#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*American Realities* arrived at its present form with the help of many other scholars, writers, and editors. I am particularly grateful to Marian Ferguson, Dave Lynch, and Katie Carlone for their help on the first edition and to Brad Gray, Barbara Breese, and Dave Lynch for their work on the second. A writer could not ask for more congenial and intelligent assistance in nurturing his ideas than these editors provided. The book also owes a great deal to the assistance of Clair Seng-Niemoeller and Frank Kirk; to Lois Banner, Ron Benson, Peter Carroll, Joseph H. Cartwright, David Coon, Doris Daniels, Emmett M. Essin, Don Glenn, James Hunt, Donald M. Jacobs, Maury Klein, Ralph Shaffer, and Julius Weinberg; and to Charles Baumann, Joseph Corn, James Gale, Richard Johnson, William Kidd, Nancy Millard, Sue Murphy, Robert Toll, Albert Tully, and my students in American History. For their help on the previous revisions I am particularly grateful to Linda Stowe, Jay Hart, Russ Tremayne, Madeleine Freidel, August W. Giebelhaus, Emmett M. Essin, Paul W. Wehr, James L. Gormly, Guy R. Breshears, Larry Cebula, Matthew A. Redinger, Jason Steele, Brenda Cooper, David Danbom, Paul Mertz, Carole Shelton, Bruce Borland, Michele DiBenedetto, Carol Einhorn, and David Nickol. In preparing the fourth edition, I have benefited from the advice and encouragement of other editors, scholars, and students, notably Bruce Borland, Matthew Kachur, Lily Eng, Margaret Rizzi, Jessica Bayne, Peter S. Field, Jim Hunt, Timothy Koerner, Jeffrey Roberts, Tom Russell, Laura White, Laura Loran, and Jim Keenan. In typesetting the fourth edition I am grateful to Dan Davie, who has taught me over the years that desktop publishing is an art as well as a science. The copyeditor, Jennifer Ahrend, brought to her work both a proofreader's sense of precision and a writer's taste for good prose.

My wife, Linda, gave me many valuable suggestions when I began writing the book while she was busy pursuing her own schedule as a mother and an attorney. Finally, in dedicating *American Realities* to my mother, Marguerite Youngs, and to the memory of my father, J. W. T. Youngs, I wish to recognize their part in helping me find my own place in history.

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*Booker T. Washington  
and the  
Atlanta Compromise*

In 1865 the long ordeal of slavery came to an end for 4 million African Americans. Suddenly the freedom they had longed for during two centuries of bondage was theirs. The world opened before them: they could freely visit loved ones, attend schools, or run for public office. Blacks soon realized, however, that chains other than slavery still held them. Penniless, they could not afford to buy farms; untrained, they could not move into better jobs. In the 1870s and 1880s they lost many of the privileges they had gained when freed, including the right to vote. Booker T. Washington grew to maturity in years when blacks experienced both the exhilaration of freedom and the humiliation of segregation. He proved in his early life that an ex-slave could prosper by hard work. When in his later years he saw the cords of prejudice tightening around his people, he responded in the best way he knew, advocating self-help in the face of prejudice and segregation.

As the parade moved through the streets of Atlanta on its way to the opening of the Cotton States Exposition, Booker T. Washington, riding in a carriage near the end of the procession, was deeply troubled. He was a black man who would soon address a white audience, and in the South of 1895 he could not be certain of a friendly reception. Washington's fears contrasted strangely with the jubilation around him. Here in a city that Sherman had laid in ruins only thirty years before, the buildings were decorated with American flags, and the citizens stood cheering a parade that symbolized the birth of a "new South." The procession ahead of Washington moved proudly along: white dignitaries in fine carriages, military officers glittering with gold trim and white helmets, rows of soldiers marching with bayonets gleaming in the sun, and cannon rumbling jauntily over rough cobblestones.

Sitting in the hot sun at the back of this long parade with a cluster of black soldiers and dignitaries, Washington felt the courage drain from his body. Thousands of blacks lining the road cheered when they saw him. But while their hands reached out to encourage him, they seemed to burden him with a heavy responsibility. How could he speak in a manner that would please whites while doing justice to his own race?

The Atlanta Exposition had been designed to celebrate the achievements of both races. But blacks had been accepted grudgingly. The committee that had invited Washington to speak had done so reluctantly, anticipating at first that he would take part only in the opening of a separate "Negro Building." Although Washington was belatedly included in the opening day ceremonies, his people would be segregated into a "jim crow" section of the auditorium, just as their exhibits were segregated in a separate hall. Booker T. Washington knew that he could easily alienate the whites and damage his people if he spoke carelessly. If he simply flattered the whites, however, he would let down his black supporters.

Washington's carriage entered the fairgrounds, a magical place with 189 acres of grounds set off by a white fence three miles long. Hillsides at its edge sloped down to a flat green plain dotted with pine trees. He saw a broad lake, speckled with gondolas, rowboats, and steam launches; buildings covered with domes, minarets, and angels; and a midway crowded with Germans, Mexicans, plantation blacks, and Native Americans dressed in traditional costumes.

The parade wound through this festive scene to the auditorium, a large building packed with noisy spectators who had waited an hour or more for the speakers to arrive. They yelled as the dignitaries entered and took their seats on a broad platform, cheering boisterously for Rufus Brown Bullock, a popular former governor of the state, and for Charles A. Collier, who had inspired the exhibition. When Booker T. Washington entered the hall, the jim crow section of the audience applauded wildly, but there was only

scattered applause among the whites: "What's that nigger doing on the stage?" several asked.

Washington felt faint as he took his seat and glanced over the large audience. A bishop in a colorful robe gave an invocation. A man read a poem celebrating the opening of the fair. These rather conventional performances made Washington feel all the more uneasy about the unusual speech he would soon present. When Charles Collier spoke, he must have given Washington heart. He discussed the genesis of the fair and praised various groups of people who had helped. Women had proved by their part in the exposition that they deserved wider horizons for their work. Blacks had given proof "of the progress they have made as freemen." The audience listened politely.

Washington continued to wait for his turn to speak. The setting sun filled the windows of the auditorium, casting its beams on the speaker's platform. Another speaker, Mrs. Joseph Thompson, talked about the women's part in the fair. Her hands trembled as she spoke in a low, timid voice. Washington knew how she felt.

When she finished there was a musical interlude. A band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the audience cheered happily. Then the band played "Dixie," and the auditorium was filled with rebel yells. As his time to speak neared, Washington reflected: in a moment he would seek to compress a lifetime of experience into a ten-minute oration. Perhaps he thought about his own journey — his odyssey of hardship and triumph — to this place.

Booker T. Washington was born the property of James Borroughs on a plantation near Hale's Ford, Virginia, on April 5, 1856. His mother, Jane Ferguson, had "high ambitions for her children." Washington did not know who his father was, assuming merely that he lived on a neighboring plantation. He knew even less about his ancestors but remembered "whispered conversations among the colored people" about the hardships endured by their forebears on slaveships in the Middle Passage to America.

His world was the daily life on a small plantation in Virginia. His mother was cook for the estate, preparing meals for the big house in the fireplace in her own small cabin. From childhood Washington was put to work, cleaning the yard, carrying water to the men in the fields, and taking corn to the mill. In later years he could not recall any period of his life that had been devoted to play.

His home was a log cabin with a dirt floor. The wind blew freely through cracks in the walls and doorway, making it bitterly cold in the winter. At night the children lay on the dirt floor with only a pile of rags as bedding. They ate no regular meals as a family — snatching a bite here and there, eating from the skillet or from a pan balanced on their knees. Even the



*Booker T. Washington's childhood home. This drafty one-room slave cabin had a dirt floor and cracks large enough for a cat to pass through.*

young slave's clothes were a burden: his wood-soled shoes hurt his feet, and his rough flax shirts pricked his skin like "a hundred small pin-points."

Despite such hardships, Washington recalled that the slaves felt affection toward their owners. Slaves guarded the big house when the whites went off to fight in the Civil War, and Washington believed that they would have died to protect their masters. Slaves mourned almost as much as the whites when young "Mars Billy," eldest son of the owner, was killed in the war, and they competed with each other for the opportunity to watch over two other wounded sons. With the end of the conflict in sight, the slaves could be trusted to help their masters hide their valuables from marauding soldiers.

Memories of plantation hardships blended in Washington's mind with memories of a sentimental kinship between slave and owner. But such mutual affection did not dispel the blacks' desire for freedom — a desire that had grown year by year over the previous decades. Even before the war the slaves had heard about abolitionist activities in the North through a grapevine that reached even the most isolated blacks. They had learned about the election of Abraham Lincoln and followed the progress of the Civil War.

Out of deference to their southern masters, and perhaps from fear of punishment, they did not openly express their northern sympathies. But

their excitement grew with each year of the war. Washington remembered awakening one night in his bed of rags and seeing his mother kneeling over her three children praying for the success of Lincoln's armies. The yearning for freedom pulsed through the slave quarters. Night after night blacks stayed up late to sing their plantation songs, which contained words about freedom. The slaves had once associated these words — for their master's benefit — with the next world, but now the songs took on a new, bolder tone; the slaves "were not afraid to let it be known that the 'freedoms' in these songs meant freedom of the body in this world."

At the end of the war the blacks were told to assemble outside the great house for an announcement. The master's family stood on the veranda while a visitor representing the U.S. government read the Emancipation Proclamation and told the slaves they were free. The blacks were ecstatic. Jane Ferguson kissed Booker and his brother and sister as tears ran down her face. All the newly freed blacks shouted and hugged one another, wild with joy.

Then a strange thing happened. Within a few hours the people became serious, even gloomy. Previously they had always thought of freedom merely as the removing of shackles. Without chains, it had seemed, life would be glorious. But now that the fetters had been removed, the people began to wonder what they would do with their lives. They realized that new trials would follow the blessing of freedom. Now they must plan for themselves. "It was very much like suddenly turning a youth of ten or twelve years out into the world to provide for himself," recalled Washington. "In a few hours the great questions with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these people to be solved. These were the questions of a home, a living, the rearing of children, education, citizenship, and the establishment and support of churches."

Not all of these questions, of course, had to be settled at once. But the slaves did have to consider what they would do with their freedom. For the older people it was especially hard to contemplate moving. They had spent their lives on the plantation, and "deep down in their hearts," said Washington, "there was a strange and peculiar attachment to 'Old Marster' and 'Old Missus.'" Moreover, when the proclamation was read the owners themselves had seemed sad at the approaching loss of their people, at the departure of friends as well as workers. One by one the older slaves went up to the big house and carried on "whispered conversations" with their former masters. On the James Borroughs plantation and on other estates throughout the South some slaves chose to stay in their old homes, contracting with the owners to work on the lands with which they were so familiar.

But most ex-slaves wanted to do something to celebrate and observe their new freedom. Washington remarked that some blacks were content to leave the plantation for only a few days or weeks, simply "that they might



really feel sure that they were free.” Others reminded themselves of their new estate by changing their names. Throughout the South thousands of blacks took on names of their Civil War heroes, including Sherman and Lincoln. Washington had been named Booker Taliaferro by his mother but chose the additional surname by which he became famous.

Many slaves tested their new independence by going west as pioneers in Oregon, Washington, and other distant places, or riding the range as cowboys. Others went north to join relatives in the old free states; still others simply migrated within the South looking for free land or city jobs.

Booker T. Washington and his family left the Borroughs's lands. His mother had married a man on a neighboring plantation who had already fled from slavery on the heels of the Union army. Now this man, named Washington Ferguson, sent word from the Kanawah Valley in West Virginia that the family should join him. They set out across the mountains, traveling on foot and carrying their few possessions in a cart.

The family settled in Malden, West Virginia, in circumstances that showed little improvement over the years in slavery. They lived in a small cabin in an impoverished neighborhood where sanitary facilities were primitive and drunkenness was common. The boys worked long hours in the local salt furnaces and coal mines with their stepfather. Washington might easily have been overcome by poverty and hard work, but for the vision of a better life that drove him to improve himself.

Ever since he was a child on the plantation he had yearned for an education. When carrying books for the master's children, he had sometimes looked into the school and felt that “to get into a schoolhouse and study in this way would be about the same as getting into paradise.” In his new home he used every opportunity to learn to read, first memorizing the number 18 marked on his stepfather's salt barrels, then pestering his mother until she bought him a copy of Webster's “blue-black” spelling book. When a young black man from Ohio opened a new school, he was one of its most enthusiastic students.

There was no uniform pattern of free education for blacks in the South, but the federal government's Freedman's Bureau supported many educational programs for the ex-slaves, and in time the bureau would contribute to the support of the Malden school. The school's funding came mostly from black families, who pledged cash support and took turns boarding the teacher. Washington felt that the desire to learn was not unusual among the newly freed blacks. Most had been denied an education under slavery, and now that they were free, literacy seemed one of the precious opportunities of their new condition. Not only did the children attend the new schools, but many older people went, hoping to read the Bible before they died. “It was,” said Washington, “a whole race trying to go to school.”