TAKING SIDES

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Clashing Views in
United States History
Volume 1
The Colonial Period to Reconstruction

FIFTEENTH EDITION

Larry Madaras • James M. SoRelle

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United States History, Volume 1, The Colonial Period to Reconstruction

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Selected, Edited, and with Introductions by

Larry Madaras
Howard Community College

and

James M. SoRelle
Baylor University

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TAKING SIDES: CLASHING VIEWS IN UNITED STATES HISTORY, VOLUME 1, THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO RECONSTRUCTION, FIFTEENTH EDITION

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Members of the Academic Advisory Board are instrumental in the final selection of articles for each edition of TAKING SIDES. Their review of articles for content, level, and appropriateness provides critical direction to the editors and staff. We think that you will find their careful consideration well reflected in this volume.

TAKING SIDES: Clashing Views in UNITED STATES HISTORY, VOLUME 1, THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO RECONSTRUCTION

Fifteenth Edition

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Larry Madaras
Howard Community College

and

James M. SoRelle
Baylor University

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Preface

Since 1985, our aim has been to create an effective instrument to enhance classroom learning and to foster critical thinking in the subject area of United States history. Historical facts presented in a vacuum are of little value to the educational process. For students, whose search for historical truth often concentrates on *when* something happened rather than on *why*, and on specific events rather than on the *significance* of those events, *Taking Sides* is designed to offer an interesting and valuable departure. The understanding arrived at based on the evidence that emerges from the clash of views encourages the reader to view history as an *interpretive* discipline, not one of rote memorization. The success of the past 14 editions of *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in United States History* has encouraged us to remain faithful to its original objectives and methods, but previous users of this reader will notice several changes in the format of this new edition.

As in previous editions, the 17 issues and 34 essays that follow are arranged in chronological order and can be incorporated easily into any American history survey course. Each issue has an *Introduction*, which sets the stage for the debate that follows in the pro and con selections and provides historical and methodological background to the problem that the issue examines. For this new edition, each introduction has been expanded to focus more intentionally on *alternative perspectives* that are applicable to the question at hand in order to demonstrate that these issues contain a level of complexity that cannot be addressed fully in a simple Yes/No format. Additionally, each introduction is accompanied by a set of student-focused *Learning Outcomes* which are designed to highlight what knowledge the reader should take away from reading and studying the issue.

The traditional *Postscript* from previous editions has been replaced by several new features. First, there are several questions that relate to the learning outcomes and to the material in the preceding essays that are designed to stimulate *Critical Thinking and Reflection*. Second*, Is There Common Ground?* attempts to encourage students to think more deeply about the issue by highlighting points shared by scholars on the subject at hand and tying the readings to alternative perspectives within the debate. Third, *Additional Resources* offers a brief annotated bibliography of important books and essays relating to the issue. Also, Internet site addresses (URLs), which should prove useful as starting points for further research, have been provided on the *Internet References* page that accompanies each unit opener.

Another new feature to this edition is the *Topic Guide*, a list of topics covered in the issues comprising this volume. At the back of the book, as in previous editions, is a listing of all the *contributors to this volume* with a brief biographical sketch of each of the authors whose views are debated here.

Changes to this edition In this edition, we have continued our efforts to maintain a balance between traditional political, diplomatic, and cultural issues and the new social history, which depicts a society that benefited from the presence of Native Americans, African Americans, women, and workers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. With this in mind, we present six new issues: Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco? (Issue 2); Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable? (Issue 3); Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power? (Issue 4); Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes? (Issue 7); Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period? (Issue 8); and Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"? (Issue 15).

A word to the instructor An *Instructor's Resource Guide with Test Questions* (multiple-choice and essay) is available through the publisher for the instructor using *Taking Sides* in the classroom. A general guidebook, *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom*, which discusses methods and techniques for integrating the pro-con approach into any classroom setting, is also available. An online version of *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom* and a correspondence service for *Taking Sides* adopters can be found at www.mhhe.com/cls.

Acknowledgments Many individuals have contributed to the successful completion of this edition. We appreciate the evaluations submitted to McGraw-Hill Contemporary Learning Series by those who have used *Taking Sides* in the classroom. Special thanks to those who responded with specific suggestions for past editions.

We are particularly indebted to Maggie Cullen, Cindy SoRelle, the late Barry Crouch, Virginia Kirk, Joseph and Helen Mitchell, and Jean Soto, who shared their ideas for changes, pointed us toward potentially useful historical works, and provided significant editorial assistance. Lynn Wilder performed indispensable typing duties connected with this project. Ela Ciborowski, James Johnson, and Sharon Glover in the library at Howard Community College provided essential help in acquiring books and articles on interlibrary loan. Finally, we are sincerely grateful for the commitment, encouragement, advice, and patience provided in recent years by Jill Meloy, senior development editor for the *Taking Sides* series, and the entire staff of McGraw-Hill Contemporary Learning Series.

Larry Madaras
Emeritus, Howard Community College

James M. SoRelle
Baylor University

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UNIT 1 COLONIAL SOCIETY 1

Issue 1. Did the Chinese Discover America? 2

YES: Gavin Menzies, from *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (William Morrow, 2003) *5*

NO: Robert Finlay, from "How Not to (Re)Write World History: Gavin Menzies and the Chinese Discovery of America," *Journal of World History* 15 (June 2004, pp. 229–242) *14*

Gavin Menzies surmises that between 1421 and 1423 a Chinese fleet spent four months exploring the Pacific coastline of North America and leaving behind substantial evidence to support his contention that the Chinese discovered America long before the arrival of European explorers. Robert Finlay accuses Menzies of ignoring the basic rules of historical study and logic to concoct an implausible interpretation of Chinese discovery based upon a misreading of Chinese imperial policy, misrepresentation of sources, and conjecture that has no evidentiary base.

Issue 2. Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco? 24

YES: Edmund S. Morgan, from *American Slavery, American Freedom* (W. W. Norton, 1975) *28*

NO: Karen Ordahl Kupperman, from *The Jamestown Project* (Harvard University Press, 2007) *37*

Professor Edmund S. Morgan argues that Virginia's first decade as a colony was a complete "fiasco" because the settlers were too lazy to engage in the subsistence farming necessary for their survival and failed to abandon their own and the Virginia's company's expectations of establishing extractive industries such as mining, timber, and fishing. Professor Karen Ordahl Kupperman argues that Jamestown was America's first successful colony because in its first decade of trial and error "the ingredients for success—widespread ownership of land, control of taxation for public obligations through a representative assembly, the institution of a normal society through the inclusion of women, and development of a product that could be marketed profitably to sustain the economy—were beginning to be put in place by 1618 and were in full operation by 1620, when the next successful colony, Plymouth, was planted."

Issue 3. Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable? 50

YES: Kevin Kenny, from *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (Oxford University Press, 2009) *54*

NO: **Cynthia J. Van Zandt**, from *Brothers Among Nations: The Pursuit of Intercultural Alliances in Early America, 1580–1660* (Oxford University Press, 2008) *60*

Kevin Kenny argues that European colonists' demands for privately owned land condemned William Penn's vision of amicable relations with local Native Americans to failure and guaranteed hostilities that ultimately destroyed Indian culture and produced the extermination of even the most peaceful tribes in Pennsylvania. Cynthia J. Van Zandt claims that trade alliances between English colonists and Native Americans continued even despite military hostilities between the two groups and fell victim not to racial or cultural differences, but rather from conflicts among the various European nations vying for hegemony in the New World.

Issue 4. Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power? 72

YES: **Lyle Koehler**, from *A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England* (University of Illinois, 1980) *75*

NO: **Laurie Winn Carlson**, from *A Fever in Salem: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials* (Ivan R. Dee, 1999) *84*

Lyle Koehler argues that the Salem witchcraft hysteria is best understood from the perspective of differential relationships in a patriarchal Puritan society whereby the female accusers of "witches" exercised an unconscious search for power to overcome their own subordination in a rapidly hanging world. Laurie Winn Carlson believes that the witchcraft hysteria in Salem was the product of people's responses to physical and neurological behaviors resulting from an unrecognized epidemic of encephalitis.

Issue 5. Was There a Great Awakening in Mid-Eighteenth-Century America? 97

YES: **Thomas S. Kidd**, from *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (Yale University Press, 2007) *101*

NO: **Jon Butler**, from "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *Journal of American History* (September 1982) *110*

Thomas Kidd insists that preachers such as George Whitefield engineered a powerful series of revivals in the mid-eighteenth century that influenced all of the British North American colonies and gave birth to a spirit of evangelicalism that initiated a major alteration of global Christian history. Jon Butler claims that to describe the religious revival activities of the eighteenth century as the "Great Awakening" is to seriously exaggerate their extent, nature, and impact on prerevolutionary American society and politics.

UNIT 2 REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION 123

Issue 6. Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces? 124

YES: **T. H. Breen**, from *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2004) *128*

NO: Carl Degler, from *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*, 2nd ed. (Harper Collins Publishers, 1959, 1970) *137*

Professor T. H. Breen maintains that "the colonists' shared experiences as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest"—the nonimportation agreements which provided "a necessary if not causal link" to the break with England. Professor Carl N. Degler argues that the American Revolution was a political rebellion led by a group of reluctant revolutionaries who opposed parliament's attempt to impose taxes without the consent of the colonists.

Issue 7. Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes? 146

YES: Howard Zinn, from *A People's History of the United States* (Harper Collins, 1999) *150*

NO: Gordon S. Wood, from "Democracy and the Constitution," in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, eds., *How Democratic is the Constitution?* (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980) *161*

According to radical historian Howard Zinn, the Founding Fathers were an elite group of northern money interests and southern slaveholders who used Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts as a pretext to create a strong central government, which protected the property rights of the rich to the exclusion of slaves, Indians, and non-property-holding whites. Professor of history Gordon S. Wood views the struggle for a new constitution in 1787–1788 as a social conflict between upper-class Federalists who desired a stronger central government and the "humbler" Anti-Federalists who controlled the state assemblies.

Issue 8. Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period? 173

YES: John Steele Gordon, from *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Powers* (Harper Collins, 2004) *177*

NO: Joyce Appleby, from *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (The Belknap Press, 2000) *186*

Historian John Steele Gordon claims that Hamilton's policies for funding and assuming the debts of the confederation and state governments and for establishing a privately controlled Bank of the United States laid the foundation for the rich and powerful national economy Americans enjoy today. Joyce Appleby argues that Jefferson democratized Hamilton's accomplishments, dismantled the Federalist fiscal program, reduced taxes, and freed money and credit from national control.

Issue 9. Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans? 202

YES: Robert V. Remini, from *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (Viking Penguin, 2001) *206*

NO: Alfred A. Cave, from "Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830," *The Historian* (Winter 2003) *215*

Robert V. Remini insists that President Andrew Jackson demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of Native Americans by proposing a voluntary program that would remove the Five Civilized Tribes west of the Mississippi River where they could avoid dangerous conflict with white settlers and preserve their heritage and culture. Alfred A. Cave accuses Andrew Jackson of abusing his power as president by failing to adhere to the letter of the Indian Removal Act by transforming a voluntary program into a coercive one and by ignoring the provisions in his own removal treaties that promised protection to the various southern tribes.

Issue 10. Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s? 225

YES: Nancy F. Cott, from *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (Yale University Press, 1977, 1997) *229*

NO: Gerda Lerner, from "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *The Majority Finds It's Past: Placing Women in History* (Oxford University Press, 1979) *240*

According to Professor Nancy F. Cott, when merchant capitalism reached its mature phase in the 1830s, the roles of the middle-class family became more clearly defined, and new economic opportunities opened within a limited sphere outside the home. According to Professor Gerda Lerner, while Jacksonian democracy provided political and economic opportunities for men, both the "lady" and the "mill girl" were equally disenfranchised and isolated from vital centers of economic opportunity.

UNIT 3 ANTEBELLUM AMERICA 255

Issue 11. Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism? 256

YES: W. J. Rorabaugh, from *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1979) *259*

NO: John J. Rumbarger, from *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (State University of New York Press, 1989) *266*

W. J. Rorabaugh points out that in the first half of the nineteenth century evangelical Christian ministers portrayed liquor as the tool of the Devil and developed temperance societies as socializing institutions to ease social tensions and anxieties that contributed to alcohol consumption. John J. Rumbarger concludes that nineteenth-century temperance reform was the product of a pro-capitalist market economy whose entrepreneurial elite led the way toward abstinence and prohibition campaigns in order to guarantee the availability of a more productive work force.

Issue 12. Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism? 278

YES: Walter Nugent, from "California and New Mexico, 1846–1848: Southward Aggression II," *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008) *282*

NO: Norman A. Graebner, from "The Mexican War: A Study in Causation," *Pacific Historical Review* (August, 1980) *295*

Professor Walter Nugent argues that President James K. Polk was a narrow-minded, ignorant but not stupid individual with one big idea: use the power of the presidency to force Mexico to cede California and the current Southwest to the United States. Professor of diplomatic history Norman A. Graebner argues that President James Polk pursued an aggressive policy that he believed would force Mexico to sell New Mexico and California to the United States and to recognize the annexation of Texas without starting a war.

Issue 13. Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist? 308

YES: James N. Gilbert, from "A Behavioral Analysis of John Brown: Martyr or Terrorist?" in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005) *311*

NO: Scott John Hammond, from "John Brown as Founder: America's Violent Confrontation with Its First Principles," in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005) *317*

James N. Gilbert says that John Brown's actions conform to a modern definition of terrorist behavior in that Brown considered the United States incapable of reforming itself by abolishing slavery, believed that only violence would accomplish that goal, and justified his actions by proclaiming adherence to a "higher" power. Scott John Hammond insists that John Brown's commitment to higher moral and political goals conformed to the basic principles of human freedom and political and legal equality that formed the heart of the creed articulated by the founders of the American nation.

UNIT 4 CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION 329

Issue 14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War? 330

YES: Charles B. Dew, from *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (University of Virginia Press, 2001) *334*

NO: Marc Egnal, from "Rethinking the Secession of the Lower South: The Clash of Two Groups," *Civil War History* 50 (September 2004) *342*

Charles B. Dew uses the speeches and public letters of 41 white southerners who, as commissioners in 1860 and 1861, attempted to secure support for secession by appealing to their audiences' commitment to the preservation of slavery and the doctrine of white supremacy. Marc Egnal argues that the decision of Lower South states to secede from the Union was determined by an economically-based struggle between residents with strong ties to the North and Upper South who embraced an entrepreneurial outlook, on one hand, and those who were largely isolated from the North and who opposed the implementation of a diversified economy, on the other hand.

Issue 15. Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"? 352

YES: Mark E. Neely, Jr., from "Was the Civil War a Total War?" *Civil War History* 50 (2004) *355*

NO: James M. McPherson, from "From Limited to Total War: Missouri and the Nation, 1861–1865," *Gateway Heritage Magazine* (vol. 12, no. 4, Spring, 1992) *366*

Professor Mark E. Neely, Jr., argues that the Civil War was not a total war because President Lincoln and the Union military leaders, such as General William T. Sherman, respected the distinction between soldiers and civilians, combatants and noncombatants. In addition, the North did not fully mobilize its resources nor engage in centralized planning and state intervention as was typical of twentieth-century wartime economies. Professor James M. McPherson argues that the Civil War was a total war. While conceding the distinction between combatants and noncombatants, he insists that the war accomplished the abolition of slavery and the extinction of a national state system—the Confederacy.

Issue 16. Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President? 382

YES: Phillip Shaw Paludan, from *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (University Press of Kansas, 1994) *385*

NO: Melvin E. Bradford, from *Remembering Who We Are: Observations of a Southern Conservative* (University of Georgia Press, 1985) *392*

Phillip Shaw Paludan contends that Abraham Lincoln's greatness exceeds that of all other American presidents because Lincoln, in the face of unparalleled challenges associated with the Civil War, succeeded in preserving the Union and freeing the slaves. Melvin E. Bradford characterizes Lincoln as a cynical politician whose abuse of authority as president and commander-in-chief during the Civil War marked a serious departure from the republican goals of the Founding Fathers and established the prototype for the "imperial presidency" of the twentieth century.

Issue 17. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism? 403

YES: LeeAnna Keith, from *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 2008) *407*

NO: Heather Cox Richardson, from *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Harvard University Press, 2001) *416*

LeeAnna Keith characterizes the assault on the Grant Parish courthouse in Colfax, Louisiana on Easter Sunday in 1873 as a product of white racism and unwillingness by local whites to tolerate African American political power during the era of Reconstruction. Heather Cox Richardson argues that the failure of Radical Reconstruction was primarily a consequence of a national commitment to a free labor ideology that opposed an expanding central government that legislated rights to African Americans that other citizens had acquired through hard work.

Contributors 427

Correlation Guide

The *Taking Sides* series presents current issues in a debate-style format designed to stimulate student interest and develop critical thinking skills. Each issue is thoughtfully framed with an issue summary, an issue introduction, learning outcomes, and critical thinking and reflection questions. The pro and con essays—selected for their liveliness and substance—represent the arguments of leading scholars and commentators in their fields.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views in United States History, Volume 1, The Colonial Period to Reconstruction, 15/e is an easy-to-use reader that presents issues on important topics such as *colonial society, revolution, antebellum*, and *conflict and resolution*. For more information on *Taking Sides* and other *McGraw-Hill* Contemporary Learning Series titles, visit http://www.mhhe.com/cls.

This convenient guide matches the issues in **Taking Sides: United States History, Volume 1, The Colonial Period to Reconstruction, 15/e** with the corresponding chapters in three of our best-selling McGraw-Hill History textbooks by Davidson et al., Davidson et al., and Brinkley.

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Issue 4: Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power?	**Chapter 4:** Colonization and Conflict in the North, 1600–1700	**Chapter 4:** Colonization and Conflict in the North, 1600–1700	**Chapter 1:** The Collision of Cultures
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Issue 10: Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?	**Chapter 17:** Reconstructing the Union (1865–1877)	**Chapter 10:** The Opening of America, 1815–1850	**Chapter 7:** The Jeffersonian Era
Issue 11: Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?	**Chapter 12:** The Fires of Perfection (1820–1850)	**Chapter 12:** The Fires of Perfection, 1820–1850	**Chapter 12:** Antebellum Culture and Reform
Issue 12: Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism?	**Chapter 14:** Western Expansion and the Rise of the Slavery Issue (1820–1850)	**Chapter 14:** Western Expansion and the Rise of Slavery, 1820–1850	**Chapter 13:** The Impending Crisis
Issue 13: Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?	**Chapter 15:** The Union Broken (1850–1861) **Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic (1861–1865)	**Chapter 15:** The Union Broken, 1850–1861 **Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic, 1861–1865	**Chapter 12:** Antebellum Culture and Reform **Chapter 13:** The Impending Crisis
Issue 14: Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?	**Chapter 15:** The Union Broken (1850–1861) **Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic (1861–1865)	**Chapter 15:** The Union Broken, 1850–1861 **Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic, 1861–1865	**Chapter 14:** The Civil War
Issue 15: Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"?	**Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic (1861–1865)	**Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic, 1861–1865	**Chapter 14:** The Civil War
Issue 16: Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President?	**Chapter 15:** The Union Broken (1850–1861) **Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic (1861–1865)	**Chapter 15:** The Union Broken, 1850–1861 **Chapter 16:** Total War and the Republic, 1861–1865	**Chapter 13:** The Impending Crisis **Chapter 14:** The Civil War
Issue 17: Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?	**Chapter 17:** Reconstructing the Union (1865–1877)	**Chapter 17:** Reconstructing the Union, 1865–1877	**Chapter 15:** Reconstruction and the New South

Topic Guide

This topic guide suggests how the selections in this book relate to the subjects covered in your course. You may want to use the topics listed on these pages to search the Web more easily. On the following pages a number of Web sites have been gathered specifically for this book. They are arranged to reflect the issues of this Taking Sides reader. You can link to these sites by going to http://www.mhhe.com/cls.

All issues and their articles that relate to each topic are listed below the bold-faced term.

African Americans

14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?
17. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?

Biography

8. Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period?
9. Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?
13. Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?
16. Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President?

Economics

2. Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco?
6. Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces?
7. Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes?
8. Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period?
10. Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?
14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?

Global

1. Did the Chinese Discover America?

Native Americans

3. Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable?
9. Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?

Political

6. Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces?
7. Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes?
8. Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period?
9. Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?
11. Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?
12. Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism?
13. Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?
14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?
15. Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"?
16. Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President?
17. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?

Religion

5. Was There a Great Awakening in Mid-Eighteenth-Century America?

(Continued)

11. Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?

Social

2. Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco?
4. Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power?
9. Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?
10. Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?
11. Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?
13. Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?
14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?
17. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?

War and Diplomacy

3. Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable?
12. Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism?
14. Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?
15. Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"?

Women

4. Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power?
10. Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?

Introduction

The Study of History

Larry Madaras
James M. SoRelle

In a pluralistic society such as ours, the study of history is bound to be a complex process. How an event is interpreted depends not only on the existing evidence but also on the perspective of the interpreter. Consequently, understanding history presupposes the evaluation of information, a task that often leads to conflicting conclusions. An understanding of history, then, requires the acceptance of the idea of historical relativism. Relativism means that redefinition of our past is always possible and desirable. History shifts, changes, and grows with new and different evidence and interpretations. As is the case with the law and even with medicine, beliefs that were unquestioned 100 or 200 years ago have been discredited or discarded since.

Relativism, then, encourages revisionism. There is a maxim that "the past must remain useful to the present." Historian Carl Becker argued that every generation should examine history for itself, thus ensuring constant scrutiny of our collective experience through new perspectives. History, consequently, does not remain static, in part because historians cannot avoid being influenced by the times in which they live. Almost all historians commit themselves to revising the views of other historians, synthesizing theories into macro-interpretations, or revising the revisionists.

Schools of Thought

Three predominant schools of thought have emerged in American history since the first graduate seminars in history were given at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in the 1870s. The *progressive* school dominated the professional field in the first half of the twentieth century. Influenced by the reform currents of Populism, progressivism, and the New Deal, these historians explored the social and economic forces that energized America. The progressive scholars tended to view the past in terms of conflicts between groups, and they sympathized with the underdog.

The post-World War II period witnessed the emergence of a new group of historians who viewed the conflict thesis as overly simplistic. Writing against the backdrop of the Cold War, these *neoconservative,* or *consensus,* historians argued that Americans possess a shared set of values and that the areas of agreement within our nation's basic democratic and capitalistic framework are more important than the areas of disagreement.

In the 1960s, however, the civil rights movement, women's liberation, and the student rebellion (with its condemnation of the war in Vietnam) fragmented the consensus of values upon which historians and social scientists of the 1950s had centered their interpretations. This turmoil set the stage for the emergence of another group of scholars. *New Left* historians began to reinterpret the past once again. They emphasized the significance of conflict in American history, and they resurrected interest in those groups ignored by the consensus school. In addition, New Left historians critiqued the expansionist policies of the United States and emphasized the difficulties confronted by Native Americans, African Americans, women, and urban workers in gaining full citizenship status.

Progressive, consensus, and New Left history is still being written. The most recent generation of scholars, however, focuses upon social history. Their primary concern is to discover what the lives of "ordinary Americans" were really like. These new social historians employ previously overlooked court and church documents, house deeds and tax records, letters and diaries, photographs, and census data to reconstruct the everyday lives of average Americans. Some employ new methodologies, such as quantification (enhanced by advancing computer technology) and oral history, whereas others borrow from the disciplines of political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology for their historical investigations.

The proliferation of historical approaches, which are reflected in the issues debated in this book, has had mixed results. On the one hand, historians have become so specialized in their respective time periods and methodological styles that it is difficult to synthesize the recent scholarship into a comprehensive text for the general reader. On the other hand, historians know more about the American past than at any other time in history. They dare to ask new questions or ones that previously were considered to be germane only to scholars in other social sciences. Although there is little agreement about the answers to these questions, the methods employed and issues explored make the "new history" a very exciting field to study.

The topics that follow represent a variety of perspectives and approaches. Each of these controversial issues can be studied for its individual importance to our nation's history. Taken as a group, they interact with one another to illustrate larger historical themes. When grouped thematically, the issues reveal continuing motifs in the development of American history.

The New Social History

Some of the most innovative historical research over the last 40 years reflects the interests of the new social historians. The work of several representatives of this group who treat the issues of race, gender, and class appears in this volume. For example, the English efforts to establish a permanent colony at Jamestown beginning in 1607 are addressed in Issue 2. Edmund S. Morgan emphasizes the difficulties involved in that project and is critical of the settlers' unwillingness to abandon the Virginia Company's goals of establishing extractive industries such as mining, timber, and fishing when their own physical preservation required their attention to subsistence farming. Karen Ordahl Kupperman believes that Morgan overlooks the fact that by 1618 the Jamestown settlers had achieved the main ingredients for success through a program of widespread land ownership, the creation of representative government, and the development of a marketable cash crop—tobacco—to sustain the colony.

Two issues examine the interactions of Native Americans with whites. Issue 3 focuses on the nature of the relationship between European settlers and the indigenous peoples with whom they came in contact. In his study of colonial Pennsylvania, Kevin Kenny claims that founder William Penn's vision of a "peaceable kingdom" fell victim to land lust that produced inevitable hostilities culminating in the Paxton Boys' extermination of the peaceful Conestogas in 1763. Cynthia J. Van Zandt's essay, however, reveals the potential for cordial and mutually beneficial relations between English colonists and Native Americans based on trade alliances. The more consequential barrier to peaceful relations between these two peoples, she insists, were the conflicts among various European nations vying for hegemony in the New World.

Issue 9 blends social history with politics in Jacksonian America by examining the motivation behind the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Robert V. Remini insists that President Andrew Jackson demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of Native Americans by proposing a voluntary program that would remove the Five Civilized Tribes west of the Mississippi River, where they could avoid dangerous conflict with white settlers and preserve their heritage and culture. Alfred A. Cave accuses Jackson of abusing his power as president by failing to adhere to the letter of the Indian Removal Act by transforming a voluntary program into a coercive one and by ignoring the provisions in his own removal treaties that promised protection to the various southern tribes.

Another two issues explore the field of women's history. Study of the Salem witch trials has produced several quite imaginative scholarly explanations for this episode in New England's history. In Issue 4, Lyle Koehler examines the witchcraft hysteria from the perspective of women's powerlessness in a patriarchal Puritan environment. Not only were most of the accused females who did not fit the ideal image of femininity, but also their accusers were women who sought to conquer their own felling of powerlessness in a rapidly changing world. Laurie Winn Carlson takes the matter of witchcraft hysteria in an entirely different direction. She concludes that what happened in Salem in 1692 was the product of people's responses to physical and neurological behaviors resulting from an undiagnosed epidemic of encephalitis.

Issue 10 addresses the economic opportunities available to women in the 1830s. According to Nancy F. Cott, when merchant capitalism reached its mature phase in the 1830s, the roles of the middle-class family became more clearly defined, and new economic opportunities opened for women within a limited sphere outside the home. Gerda Lerner counters this more optimistic view of women's status by concluding that most women in Jacksonian America were disfranchised and isolated from vital centers of economic opportunity.

Revolution, Religion, and Reform

Issue 6 provides a discussion of the factors contributing to the American colonists' decision to seek independence through a war with England. T. H. Breen maintains that the American Revolution was the product of a larger "market revolution" that led the colonists, who shared experiences as consumers, to break with England. Carl N. Degler argues that the American Revolution was a political rebellion led by a group of reluctant revolutionaries who opposed Parliament's attempt to impose taxes without the consent of the colonists.

Religion has played a significant role in the development of American society from the earliest colonial beginnings. In Issue 5, Thomas S. Kidd and Jon Butler debate whether it is appropriate to identify revival activity in the mid-eighteenth century as "The Great Awakening." Kidd insists that preachers such as George Whitefield engineered a powerful series of revivals in the 1730s and 1740s that influenced all of the British North American colonies and gave birth to a spirit of evangelicalism that initiated a major alteration of global Christian history. Jon Butler claims that to describe the religious revival activities of the eighteenth century as the "Great Awakening" is to seriously exaggerate their extent, nature, and impact on pre-revolutionary American society and politics.

Issue 11 also concerns the influence of religious impulses. W. J. Rorabaugh says that the nineteenth-century temperance movement was launched by evangelical ministers in an effort to gain converts who were liberated from "demon rum." John J. Rumbarger, however, concludes that nineteenth-century temperance reform was the product of a pro-capitalist market economy whose entrepreneurial elite led the way toward abstinence and prohibition campaigns in order to guarantee the availability of a more productive work force.

The major and most controversial reform effort in the pre-Civil War period was the movement to abolish slavery. Issue 13 examines the terrorist activities carried out by John Brown and his followers. James N. Gilbert says that John Brown's actions conform to a modern definition of terrorist behavior in that Brown considered the United States incapable of reforming itself by abolishing slavery, believed that only violence would accomplish that goal, and justified his actions by proclaiming adherence to a "higher" power. Scott John Hammond insists that Brown's commitment to higher moral and political goals conformed to the basic principles of human freedom and political and legal equality that formed the heart of the creed articulated by the founders of the American nation.

War, Leadership, and Resolution

As a nation committed to peace, the United States has faced some of its sternest tests in times of war. Such conflicts inevitably have challenged the leadership abilities of the commanders in chief, the commitment of the nation to involve itself in war, and the ideals of the republic founded on democratic principles. Several issues in this volume address the response to war and its aftermath. In Issue 12, Walter Nugent and Norman Graebner debate the rationale behind the war between the United States and Mexico in 1846. Walter Nugent argues that President James K. Polk was an imperialist motivated to use the power of the presidency to force Mexico to cede California and the current Southwest to the United States. Graebner contends that President Polk pursued an aggressive (but not imperialistic) policy that would force Mexico to recognize U. S. annexation of Texas and to sell New Mexico and California to its northern neighbor without starting a war.

Two issues cover topics relating to the Civil War and its consequences. In Issue 14, Charles B. Dew and Marc Egnal debate the causes of the Civil War. Dew employs the words of white southerners whose job it was to promote the cause of secession following Abraham Lincoln's election by appealing to their audiences' commitment to the preservation of slavery and the doctrine of white supremacy. Egnal argues that the decision of Lower South states to secede from the Union was determined by an economically-based struggle between residents with strong ties to the North and Upper South who embraced an entrepreneurial outlook, on one hand, and those who were largely isolated from the North and who opposed the implementation of a diversified economy, on the other hand.

Issue 15 assesses the validity of characterizing the American Civil War as a "total war." Mark Neely challenges the argument that the War Between the States accurately represented a "total war" because the North did not fully mobilize its resources nor engage in centralized planning and state intervention to defeat the Confederacy. James McPherson, however, strongly disagrees with Neely and insists that the twin goals of restoring the Union and freeing the slaves required the United States to conduct a "total war" on its opponent.

With the end of slavery, one of the most controversial questions confronting those responsible for reconstructing the nation following the war involved the future of African Americans. Perhaps no other period of American history has been subjected to more myths than has this postwar era. Even though most scholars today recognize that Reconstruction did not achieve its most enlightened economic and social goals, they differ in their explanations about the source of this failure. In Issue 17, LeeAnna Keith relates the details of the Colfax massacre, an assault carried out by white Louisianans to eliminate Radical Republican rule in their state which had empowered local African Americans. The military attack on the Grant Parish courthouse in Colfax on Easter Sunday 1973, Keith says, was directed toward removing the all-black militia unit guarding the courthouse and reinstituting white supremacy in the Pelican State. Heather Cox Richardson, on the other hand, argues that the failure of Radical Reconstruction was primarily a consequence of a national commitment to a free-labor ideology that opposed an expanding central government that legislated rights to African Americans that other citizens had acquired through hard work.

Politics in America

The American people gave legitimacy to their revolution through the establishment of a republican form of government. The United States has operated under two constitutions: the first established the short-lived confederation from 1781 to 1789; the second was written in 1787 and remains in effect over two hundred years later. In Issue 7, Howard Zinn describes the founders as members of an economic elite who desired a stronger central government to protect their property rights. Gordon Wood stresses social and ideological, not economic, motivations. Wood argues that the Federalists were upper-class aristocrats who, at both the Philadelphia and the state ratifying conventions, employed "democratic" language to argue that the new national government was as democratic as the Confederation government it would replace.

Alexander Hamilton was one of the most significant leaders of the early national period. Issue 8 explores Hamilton's skills as the primary architect of the nation's economic policies. John Steele Gordon views Hamilton as the person most responsible for the powerful national economy we enjoy today. Joyce Appleby disagrees with Gordon and argues that Thomas Jefferson, rather than simply acquiescing to Hamilton's policies, democratized Hamilton's accomplishments, dismantled the Federalist fiscal program, reduced taxes, and freed money and credit from national control.

No discussion of American politics is complete without examining some of the individuals who have served as president of the United States. Andrew Jackson's leadership already has been discussed above in connection with his policy toward the removal of Native Americans from the southeastern United States (Issue 9). In Issue 16, Philip Shaw Paludan and M. E. Bradford debate Abraham Lincoln's presidential legacy. Paludan contends that Lincoln deserves to be recognized as the nation's greatest president for facing the unparalleled challenges associated with the Civil War, preserving the Union, and freeing the slaves. M. E. Bradford characterizes Lincoln as a cynical politician whose abuse of authority as president and commander-in-chief during the Civil War marked a serious departure from the republican goals of the Founding Fathers and established the prototype for the "imperial presidency" of the twentieth century.

Comparative History: America in a Global Perspective

The role of American history within the larger framework of world history is central to the discussion presented in Issue 1 of this volume. In sharp contrast to our traditional understanding of the "discovery" of the New World, Gavin Menzies surmises that between 1421 and 1423, a Chinese fleet spent four months exploring the Pacific coastline of North America and leaving behind substantial evidence that supports his contention that the Chinese discovered America long before the arrival of European explorers. Robert Finlay accuses Menzies of ignoring the basic rules of historical study and logic to concoct an implausible interpretation of Chinese discovery based upon a misreading of Chinese imperial policy, misrepresentation of sources, and conjecture that has no evidentiary base.

Conclusion

The process of historical study should rely more on thinking than on memorizing data. Once the basics of who, what, when, and where are determined, historical thinking shifts to a higher gear. Analysis, comparison and contrast, evaluation, and explanation take command. These skills not only increase our knowledge of the past but also provide general tools for the comprehension of all the topics about which human beings think.

The diversity of a pluralistic society, however, creates some obstacles to comprehending the past. The spectrum of differing opinions on any particular subject eliminates the possibility of quick and easy answers. In the final analysis, conclusions often are built through a synthesis of several different interpretations, but, even then, they may be partial and tentative.

The study of history in a pluralistic society allows each citizen the opportunity to reach independent conclusions about the past. Since most, if not all, historical issues affect the present and future, understanding the past becomes essential to social progress. Many of today's problems have a direct connection with the past. Additionally, other contemporary issues may lack obvious direct antecedents, but historical investigation can provide illuminating analogies. At first, it may appear confusing to read and to think about opposing historical views, but the survival of our democratic society depends on such critical thinking by acute and discerning minds.

Internet References . . .

The Columbus Navigation Homepage

This noted site by Keith A. Pickering examines the history, navigation, and landfall of Christopher Columbus. Click on "Links to other sites about Columbus and his times" to find dozens of sites on Columbus, including scholarly papers on Columbus's treatment of the American Indians.

http://www.columbusnavigation.com/

Virtual Jamestown

This site includes a digital archive of primary sources along with a re-creation of early European settlements.

www.virtualjamestown.org

Virginia's Indians, Past and Present

Drawn from collections at James Madison University, under the Internet School Library Media Center, this site provides links to historical information, lesson plans, and bibliographies as well as links to tribal home pages.

http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/IndianVirginians.pdf

American Women's History: A Research Guide: Colonial America

This site at Middle Tennessee State University includes valuable links to both archival and digital primary source collections in addition to lists of important bibliographical sources.

http://frank.mtsu.edu/~kmiddlet/history/women/wh-colonial.html

Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive

This collection at the University of Virginia provides access to documents and links to archives relating to the Salem witchcraft trials.

http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/

The First Great Awakening

This site is maintained by the National Endowment for the Humanities and includes teacher lesson plans and links to important primary resources related to this event.

http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=698

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

Sponsored by Emory University, this website contains access to information on some 37,000 ships that sailed to the Americas with human cargo from Africa. The site includes maps, timelines, and databases.

www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces

UNIT 1

Colonial Society

The exploration and settlement of North America took place in the context of regional conditions that varied in time and place. The ethnic identity of the European colonists affected their relations with Native Americans and Africans, as well as with each other. Many of the attitudes, ideals, and institutions that emerged from the colonial experience served the early settlers well and are still emulated today.

- Did the Chinese Discover America?
- Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco?
- Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable?
- Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power?
- Was There a Great Awakening in Mid-Eighteenth-Century America?

ISSUE 1

Did the Chinese Discover America?

YES: Gavin Menzies, from *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (William Morrow, 2003)

NO: Robert Finlay, from "How Not to (Re)Write World History: Gavin Menzies and the Chinese Discovery of America," *Journal of World History* 15 (June 2004, pp. 229–242)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Explore the kinds of arguments historians use to support their conclusions
- Evaluate the evidence provided by scholars with two very different notions of historical truth
- Consider evidence that challenges the traditional views of New World discovery
- Understand the nature of the challenge to a Eurocentric perspective of historical development
- Realize that historians do not always agree on what happened in the past

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Gavin Menzies surmises that between 1421 and 1423 a Chinese fleet spent four months exploring the Pacific coastline of North America and leaving behind substantial evidence to support his contention that the Chinese discovered America long before the arrival of European explorers.

NO: Robert Finlay accuses Menzies of ignoring the basic rules of historical study and logic to concoct an implausible interpretation of Chinese discovery based upon a misreading of Chinese imperial policy, misrepresentation of sources, and conjecture that has no evidentiary base.

In fourteen hundred ninety-two/Columbus sailed the ocean blue." For generations of school children in the United States in the twentieth century, these two lines marked their introduction to American history. What followed from their teachers was a recounting of a story that the vast majority of Americans still accept as true. We do know that on October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus (Cristobal Colon; Cristoforo Colombo), a Genoese mariner sailing under the flag and patronage of the Spanish monarchy, made landfall on a tropical Caribbean island, which he subsequently named San Salvador. This action established for Columbus the fame of having discovered the New World and, by extension, America. Of course, this "discovery" was ironic because Columbus and his crew members were not looking for a new world but, instead, a very old one—the much-fabled Orient. By sailing westward instead of eastward, Columbus was certain that he would find a shorter route to China. He did not anticipate that the landmass of the Americas would prevent him from reaching this goal or that his "failure" would guarantee his fame for centuries thereafter.

Over the course of the five centuries that have followed, there have been efforts to revise the historical record pertaining to Columbus's voyages (there were four that took place between 1492 and 1504) as a means of calling into question this traditional portrait of discovery. First, none of Columbus's expeditions explored the coastlines of the region that would become the United States. That particular credit went to Amerigo Vespucci, although modern scholars question whether he, in fact, explored the coasts of Central America, the Gulf of Mexico, and the South Atlantic shoreline of North America in the late 1490s. True or not, it was Vespucci's name that was attached to this landmass in 1507 by cartographer Martin Waldseemüller. Second, even earlier, the Norsemen had visited the eastern coasts of present-day Canada and perhaps even New England during a series of voyages from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. Third, Columbus's encounter with indigenous peoples whom he named "Indians" (*los indios*) raises obvious questions about the validity of the traditional Eurocentric model of discovery. The presence of significant numbers of these Indians (or Native Americans) provides very strong evidence that Europeans had not discovered America.

Anthropological studies tell us that these "Indians" were descendants of the first people who migrated from Asia at least 30,000 years earlier and fanned out in a southeasterly direction until they had populated much of North and South America. By the time of Columbus, Native Americans numbered approximately 40 million, 3 million of whom resided in the continental region north of Mexico.

None of this, however, should dilute the significance of Columbus's explorations which were representative of a wave of Atlantic voyages emanating from Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Spawned by the intellectual ferment of the Renaissance in combination with the rise of the European nation-state, these voyages of exploration were made possible by advances in shipbuilding, improved navigational instruments and cartography, the desirability of long-distance commerce, support from ruling monarchs, and, to be sure, the courage and ambition of the explorers themselves.

The consequences of Columbus's expeditions attracted a significant amount of scholarly and media attention in 1992 in connection with the quincentennial celebration of Columbus's first voyage. More recently, however, the story of American discovery has taken a dramatically different turn with the fanfare surrounding the argument that it is the Chinese, not the Europeans, who deserve recognition as the discoverers of America. If, as Robert Finlay suggests, Gavin Menzies' book amounts to little more than a historical hoax, it would not be the first such publication. Menzies, however, appears undeterred by the fact that no academic specialist in fifteenth-century Chinese history subscribes to his conclusions. He argues, instead, that these scholars are embarrassed that he has discovered evidence that was right under their noses, or that he has the skill that others do not to read the navigational maps upon which his study is based. Moreover, Menzies maintains a website connected to this research project, and a paperback edition of his book was published in 2008. Nor is he without his defenders. See, for example, Anatole Andro, *The 1421 Heresy: An Investigation into the Ming Chinese Maritime Survey of the World* (AuthorHouse, 2005) which supports some but not all of Menzies' contentions, and Paul Chiasson, *The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered America* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2007) which claims to identify an ancient Chinese colony on Cape Breton Island.

There are a number of other studies that make cases for pre-Columbian contacts in the Americas from Europeans and non-Europeans alike. These include Alexander von Wuthenau, *Unexpected Faces in Ancient America, 1500 BC–AD1500: The Historical Testimony of Pre-Columbian Artists* (Outlet, 1975); Barry Fell, *America BC: Ancient Settlers in the New World* (rev. ed.; Artisan Publishers, 2008), which suggests Celtic influences in the eleventh century; and Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* (Random House, 1976) provides an Afrocentric perspective that is perhaps as controversial as the speculations of Menzies.

In the first of the essays that follow, Gavin Menzies, a retired British submarine officer, contends that in 1421, seven decades before Columbus set sail from Spain, the Chinese armada, comprised four fleets of ships, departed on a voyage around the world that would take two and a half years. During this voyage, Menzies argues, one of the fleets under the direction of Admiral Zhou Man spent four months exploring the Pacific coastline of North America, including present-day California, and left behind evidence of Chinese colonization in the form of Chinese plants, animals, and ceramics.

Robert Finlay, in a rejoinder that is at times humorous and at others blistering, assails Menzies for ignoring the most basic precepts of scholarly research, and in a point-by-point critique, concludes that the voyages described by Menzies are not supported by surviving documentation but rather are the product of baseless conjecture.

YES

Gavin Menzies

1421: The Year China Discovered America

The Emperor's Grand Plan

On 2 February 1421, China dwarfed every nation on earth. On that Chinese New Year's Day, kings and envoys from the length and breadth of Asia, Arabia, Africa and the Indian Ocean assembled amid the splendours of Beijing to pay homage to the Emperor Zhu Di, the Son of Heaven. A fleet of leviathan ships, navigating the oceans with pinpoint accuracy, had brought the rulers and their envoys to pay tribute to the emperor and bear witness to the inauguration of his majestic and mysterious walled capital, the Forbidden City. No fewer than twenty-eight heads of state were present, but the Holy Roman Emperor, the Emperor of Byzantium, the Doge of Venice and the kings of England, France, Spain and Portugal were not among them. They had not been invited, for such backward states, lacking trade goods or any worthwhile scientific knowledge, ranked low on the Chinese emperor's scale of priorities. . . .

This array of foreign heads of state kow-towing before the emperor was the culmination of fifteen years' assiduous diplomacy. Chinese foreign policy was quite different from that of the Europeans who followed them to the Indian Ocean many years later. The Chinese preferred to pursue their aims by trade, influence and bribery rather than by open conflict and direct colonization. Zhu Di's policy was to despatch huge armadas every few years throughout the known world, bearing gifts and trade goods; the massive treasure ships carrying a huge array of guns and a travelling army of soldiers were also a potent reminder of his imperial might: China alone had the necessary firepower to protect friendly countries from invasion and quash insurrections against their rulers. The treasure ships returned to China with all manner of exotic items: 'dragon saliva [ambergris], incense and golden amber' and 'lions, gold spotted leopards and camel-birds [ostriches] which are six or seven feet tall' from Africa; gold cloth from Calicut in south-west India, studded with pearls and precious stones; elephants, parrots, sandalwood, peacocks, hardwood, incense, tin and cardamom from Siam (modern Thailand). . . .

For a further month after the inauguration of the Forbidden City, the rulers and envoys in Beijing were provided with lavish imperial hospitality—the finest foods and wines, the most splendid entertainments and the most

From *1421: The Year China Discovered America* by Gavin Menzies (William Morrow, 2003), pp. 19, 33, 37–38, 42–43, 199–200, 201–204, 206–210 (excerpts). Copyright © 2003 by Gavin Menzies. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

beautiful concubines, skilled in the arts of love. Finally, on 3 March 1421, a great ceremony was mounted to commemorate the departure of the envoys for their native lands. . . . The emperor appeared, striding through the smoke to present the departing ambassadors with their farewell gifts—crates of blue and white porcelain, rolls of silk, bundles of cotton cloth and bamboo cases of jade. His great fleets stood ready to carry them back to Hormuz, Aden, La'Sa and Dhofar in Arabia; to Mogadishu, Brava, Malindi and Mombasa in Africa; to Sri Lanka, Calicut, Cochin and Cambay in India; to Japan, Vietnam, Java, Sumatra, Malacca and Borneo in south-east Asia, and elsewhere.

Admiral Zheng He, dressed in his formal uniform, a long red robe, presented the emperor with his compliments and reported that an armada comprising four of the emperor's great fleets was ready to set sail; the fifth, commanded by Grand Eunuch Yang Qing, had put to sea the previous month. The return of the envoys to their homelands was only the first part of this armada's overall mission. It was then to 'proceed all the way to the end of the earth to collect tribute from the barbarians beyond the seas . . . to attract all under heaven to be civilised in Confucian harmony'. Zheng He's reward for his lifelong, devoted service to his emperor had been the command of five previous treasure fleets tasked with promoting Chinese trade and influence in Asia, India, Africa and the Middle East. Now he was to lead one of the largest armadas the world had ever seen. Zhu Di had also rewarded other eunuchs for their part in helping him to liberate China. Many of the army commanders in the war against the Mongols were now admirals and captains of his treasure fleets. Zheng He had become a master of delegation. By the fourth voyage fleets were sailing separately. On this great sixth voyage loyal eunuchs would command separate fleets. Zheng He would lead them to the Indian Ocean then return home confident that they would handle their fleets as he had taught them. . . .

As the admirals and envoys embarked, and the armada was readied for sea, the water around the great ships was still black with smaller craft shuttling from ship to shore. For days the port had been in turmoil as cartloads of vegetables and dried fish and hundreds of tons of water were hauled aboard to provision this armada of thirty thousand men for their voyage. Even at this late hour, barges were still bringing final supplies of fresh water and rice. The great armada's ships could remain at sea for over three months and cover at least 4,500 miles without making landfall to replenish food or water, for separate grain ships and water tankers sailed with them. The grain ships also carried an array of flora the Chinese intended to plant in foreign lands, some as further benefits of the tribute system and others to provide food for the Chinese colonies that would be created in new lands. Dogs were also taken aboard as pets, others to be bred for food and to hunt rats, and there were coops of Asiatic chickens as valuable presents for foreign dignitaries. Separate horse-ships carried the mounts for the cavalry.

The staggering size of the individual ships, not to mention the armada itself, can only be understood in comparison with other navies of the same era. In 1421, the next most powerful fleet afloat was that of Venice. The Venetians possessed around three hundred galleys—fast, light, thin-skinned ships built with softwood planking, rowed by oarsmen and only suitable for island-hopping in the calm of a Mediterranean summer. The biggest Venetian galleys were some 150 feet long and 20 feet wide and carried at best 50 tons of cargo. In comparison, Zhu Di's treasure ships were ocean-going monsters built of teak. The rudder of one of these great ships stood 36 feet high—almost as long as the whole of the flagship the *Niña* in which Columbus was later to set sail for the New World. Each treasure ship could carry more than two thousand tons of cargo and reach Malacca in five weeks, Hormuz in the Persian Gulf in twelve. They were capable of sailing the wildest oceans of the world, in voyages lasting years at a time. That so many ships were lost on the Chinese voyages of discovery testifies not to any lack of strength in their construction but rather to the perilous, uncharted waters they explored, from rocky coasts and razor-sharp coral reefs to the ice-strewn oceans of the far north and far south. Venetian galleys were protected by archers; Chinese ships were armed with gunpowder weapons, brass and iron cannon, mortars, flaming arrows and exploding shells that sprayed excrement over their adversaries. In every single respect—construction, cargo capacity, damage control, armament, range, communications, the ability to navigate in the trackless ocean and to repair and maintain their ships at sea for months on end—the Chinese were centuries ahead of Europe. Admiral Zheng He would have had no difficulty in destroying any fleet that crossed his path. A battle between this Chinese armada and the other navies of the world combined would have resembled one between a pack of sharks and a shoal of sprats.

By the end of the middle watch—four in the morning—the last provisions had been lashed down and the armada weighed anchor. A prayer was said to Shao Lin, Taoist goddess of the sea, and then, as their red silk sails slowly filled, the ships, resembling great houses, gathered way before the winds of the northeast monsoon. As they sailed out across the Yellow Sea, the last flickering lights of Tanggu faded into the darkness while the sailors clustered at the rails, straining for a last sight of their homeland. In the long months they would spend travelling the oceans, their only remaining links to the land would be memories, keepsakes and the scented roses many brought with them, growing them in pots and even sharing their water rations with them. The majority of those seamen at the rails would never see China again. Many would die, many others would be shipwrecked or left behind to set up colonies on foreign shores. . . .

The First Colony in the Americas

. . . I knew that Zhou Man had arrived in Nanjing on 8 October 1423, carrying no foreign envoys. What had he been doing and where had he sailed in the four months he had been in the Pacific?

The north Pacific is a vast circulatory system, with winds constantly blowing in a clockwise oval direction. In June, the prevailing wind off Leyte is to the north. As Admiral Zhou Man's fleet entered the Pacific, the Kuroshio or Japanese current would also have carried them northwards before starting a clockwise sweep towards the coast of North America. In fact, had Zhou Man simply unfurled his sails off Leyte, the winds and currents would have carried him to the Pacific coast of modern Canada. The California current would then have taken over, sweeping the fleet southwards down the western seaboard of the United States to Panama. From there, the north equatorial current would carry a square-rigged ship back across the Pacific towards the Philippines. The whole round trip, before the wind and current all the way, would have been about sixteen thousand nautical miles. At an average of 4.8 knots, the voyage would have taken some four months, matching the date of Zhou Man's return to Nanjing in October. My surmise . . . was that squadrons of ships from the main fleet were detached to establish colonies along the Pacific coast from California down to Ecuador.

I began the search for corroboration that Zhou Man's fleet had indeed reached the Pacific coast of North America. The first European to explore that coast was Hernando de Alarcón in 1540. Having sought fame and fortune in New Spain, he left Acapulco on 9 May of that year in command of a fleet supporting the conquistador Coronado's expedition to New Mexico. Alarcón first charted the peninsula of Bahía California, and then California itself. I knew that he was the first European to chart it, for neither Columbus nor any of the other early explorers reached any part of the west coast of North America, so any map of the Pacific coast pre-dating Alarcón's voyage would be powerful evidence that he was not the first to reach it.

Such evidence does exist in the form of the Waldseemüller world map, a beautifully coloured large map published in 1507 and the first to chart latitude and longitude with precision. Originally owned by Johannes Schöner (1477–1547), a Nuremberg astronomer and geographer, it had long been thought lost and was only rediscovered in 1901 in the castle of Wolfegg in southern Germany. It remained there in relative obscurity until 2001, when in a blaze of publicity the US Library of Congress acquired it from Prince Johannes Waldburg-Wolfegg for ten million dollars. The man who drew the map, Martin Waldseemüller (c. 1470–1518), was German-born and one of the foremost cosmographers—combining the study of geography and astronomy—of his era. . . .

The Pacific coast of America is strikingly drawn on the Waldseemüller chart and the latitudes correspond to those of Vancouver Island in Canada right down to Ecuador in the south. This is completely consistent with a cartographer aboard a ship sailing down the Pacific coast, but not charting the coast in great detail. Oregon is clearly identifiable, and several very old wrecks have been discovered there on the beach at Neahkahnie. One was of teak with a pulley for hoisting sails made of caeophyllum, a wood unique to south-east Asia. The wood has yet to be carbon-dated, but if it proves to be from the early fifteenth century it will provide strong circumstantial evidence that one of Zhou Man's junks was wrecked in Neahkahnie Bay. Some examiners of the wreckage there claim to have found paraffin wax, which was used by Zheng He's fleet to desalinate sea-water for the horses.

Even without finds from wrecked junks, the Pacific coasts of Central and South America are full of evidence of Chinese voyages. The Asiatic chickens found from Chile to California . . . and many other flora and fauna were carried across the globe by the Chinese fleets. On my first visit to California many years ago, I remember coming across a bank of beautiful camellia roses (*Rosa laevigata*). It was a still summer's evening and their lovely fragrance filled the air around me. In 1803, European settlers found a beautiful fragrant rose growing wild; they named it the Cherokee Rose. Yet it was indigenous to south-east China and had been illustrated in a twelfth-century Chinese pharmacopoeia. 'When and by what means it reached America is one of the unsolved problems of plant introductions,' but it was a common practice for sailors aboard Zheng He's junks to keep pots of roses, their scent an enduring reminder of home. The Chinese also took plants and seeds home with them. Amaranth, a native North American grain with a high protein content, was brought from America to Asia in the early fifteenth century, as of course was maize—brought to the Philippines and seen there by Magellan. Coconuts, native to the South Pacific, were found by the first Europeans on the Pacific coasts of Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador and on Cocos Island west of Costa Rica. The carriers of grain from the Americas to Asia, of roses and chickens from China to the Americas, and coconuts from the South Pacific to Ecuador can only have been the Chinese.

San Francisco and Los Angeles are clearly depicted at the correct latitudes on the Waldseemüller chart, and I was certain that Zhou Man must have sailed down that coast. Crossing such an enormous expanse of ocean after two years at sea must have left some of his junks in bad condition and in urgent need of repair. Even the best-built ships could not remain at sea for such long periods without suffering at least some damage from storms and the pounding of the waves. At the very least they would have required running repairs and careening—scraping the barnacles from their hulls—and the most badly damaged might well have been cannibalized to repair the others. If so, the remains of these wrecked ships should have been found off the coast of California, just as other wrecks had been in Australia and other parts of the globe.

My enquiries into strange wrecks on the coast of California drew a blank, but I did discover that museums there held substantial quantities of Ming blue and white ceramics. The accepted wisdom is that these items were brought to California in the holds of Spanish galleons, but a number of medieval Chinese anchors have been found off the California coast, and these are unlikely to have been brought by Spanish ships. I began to question seriously the provenance of the Ming porcelain; had it really been brought by the Spanish? Medieval Chinese porcelain can be dated by its cobalt content: the greater the amount of iron in the cobalt, the deeper blue the glaze. The dark cobalt of the Mongol era came from Persia, also ruled by the Mongols, but Zhu Di's father sealed the Chinese borders after he drove out the Mongols in 1368 and Persian cobalt was no longer available. However, Zhu Di reopened the frontiers and restored trade along the Silk Road through Asia allowing Persian cobalt to be imported once more. The period when Chinese pale blue porcelain was produced and used in Ming China is thus limited, and the colour of the porcelain held by Californian museums would indicate whether or not it was made during this period in China's history.

I was certain that a great treasure fleet had discovered the Pacific coasts of North and South America, but my researches failed to uncover conclusive evidence such as the wreck of a Chinese junk. In the hope that others might have found traces I had missed, I decided to 'go public' on the issue in a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in London in March 2002. It was broadcast around the world; within forty-eight hours reports began to come in from California, drawing my attention to the wreck of a medieval Chinese junk buried under a sandbank in the Sacramento River off the north-east corner of San Francisco Bay. My first reaction was to discount the reports—the site was more than a hundred miles from open sea and the discovery seemed too good to be true—but over the next few days more e-mails describing the same junk continued to arrive. As soon as I had carried out some preliminary research, I discovered that the prevailing north-easterly winds on this coast could have blown a junk straight across the bay and into the Sacramento River. Six centuries ago the river was broader and deeper than today, for deforestation has reduced rain- and snowfall in the area causing the water level to fall. It was indeed possible, if not probable, that a junk entering San Francisco Bay would have been driven by the winds into the Sacramento River.

Dr John Furry of the Natural History Museum of Northern California first became aware of the junk twenty years ago when he read an account of the strange armour that once had been found in its hold (the wreck was then evidently less deeply buried in sand and silt than it is now). The armour was of an unusual metal (native Americans did not know how to forge metal) and curiously silver-grey in colour. It was shown to a local expert who is said to have identified it as of medieval Chinese origin. Dr Furry's attempts to pursue the story met a brick wall—the expert had died in the intervening years, and the armour had been lent to a local school and was now lost—but he was sufficiently intrigued to begin investigating the wreck-site.

The site was covered with a 40-foot layer of the accumulated sand and silt of centuries, so Dr Furry began by taking magnetometer readings of the area. These showed a strong magnetic anomaly outlining a buried object 85 feet long and 30 feet wide, very similar in size and shape to the trading junks that accompanied Zheng He's fleets. Core samples were then extracted from the site. The fragments of wood brought up were carbon-dated to 1410, indicating that the junk was built in that year, 'a period that included a maritime highpoint for the ancient Chinese', as local newspapers laconically reported.

The evidence from the carbon-dating encouraged Dr Furry to drill again with more sophisticated equipment. This yielded much larger samples including further pieces of wood and a compacted 80lb mass of millions of black seeds. He sent fragments of the wood and the seeds to China for analysis, and according to Dr Furry, the Chinese Academy of Forestry have provisionally identified the wood as Keteleria, a conifer native to south-east China but not to North America. In the Middle Ages, the Chinese cultivated Keteleria for shipbuilding. Dr Furry also told me that Dr Zhang Wenxu, a former professor at the Chinese Agricultural University in Beijing and the leading Chinese expert on ancient seeds, had provisionally identified four different types of seeds in the black mass brought up from the wreck-site. Three were native to both China and North America, but the other was found only in China. Most interesting of all, however, was Dr Furry's further discovery of rice grains and the body of a beetle among the material raised. Rice, indigenous to Africa and China, was unknown in the Americas in the fifteenth century. Further analysis of the rice and the beetle is being carried out as I write, but to date no written reports on the analysis of the wood or the seeds have been received from China.

I now had little doubt that the site contained the wreck of a Chinese junk; it was exactly the evidence I had been looking for. It seemed highly improbable that the crew would have drowned when the junk grounded on the sandbank in the Sacramento River. It was far more likely that they had come ashore onto the lush, fertile lands of the valley. Their first task would have been to rescue as much rice as possible from the holds of the ship. Much would have been needed to meet their short-term food requirements, but they would also have set some aside as seed and planted it in a suitable location—the floodplain of the Sacramento River.

It has long been claimed that rice was introduced to West Africa by Europeans and then to the Americas by the Spanish, but Professor Judith A. Carney of the University of California has argued that this thesis is fundamentally flawed. It is widely accepted that the Chinese made a major contribution to developing agriculture in the rich soils of California, particularly the cultivation of rice in the swamplands of the lower Sacramento. By the 1870s, 75 percent of the farmers in California were of Chinese origin. 'The Chinese actually taught the American farmer how to plant, cultivate and harvest.' But were these Chinese working in the fields and plantations of the Sacramento Valley all part of the great nineteenth-century waves of immigration into the United States, or could some have been descendants of settlers left on the banks of the Sacramento by Zhou Man in 1423? I found a clue to this mystery in an unlikely source.

In 1874, Stephen Powers, an official inspector appointed by the government of California who had spent years collecting data on the languages of the tribes of California, published an article claiming that he had found linguistic evidence of a Chinese colony on the Russian River in California, some seventy miles north-west of the Sacramento junk. Powers also claimed that diseases brought by European settlers had decimated this Chinese colony as well as the other Indian people of California, '[the] remittent fever which desolated the Sacramento valleys in 1833 and reduced these great plains from a condition of remarkable populousness to one of almost utter silence and solitude . . . there was scarcely a human being left alive'. Powers' report was badly received by his government employers, and although he courteously and bravely attempted to maintain his position, his official report, published in 1877, is a watered-down version of his claims. Nonetheless, it makes for fascinating reading.

Quite apart from his claim of a Chinese colony based on linguistic evidence, Powers described Chinese settlers as having intermarried with local Indians over centuries. Their descendants were paler than the people of the coast, and, unlike other Indian tribes, the older generation had magnificent beards while the women 'are as proud of their black hair as the Chinese'. Rather than skins, women wore 'a single garment in the shape of a wool sack, sleeveless and gathered at the neck, more or less white once'. They were 'simple, friendly, peaceable and inoffensive'. After death, 'they generally desire like the Chinese to be buried in the ancestral soil of their tribe'. Again like the Chinese, but unlike other hunter-gatherer tribes of North America, the peoples around the Sacramento and Russian Rivers were sedentary: 'at least four fifths of their diet was derived from the vegetable kingdom . . . They knew the qualities of all herbs, shrubs, leaves, having a command of much greater catalogue of [botanical] names than nine tenths of Americans.' Their ancestors' legacy could also be seen in pottery beautifully formed in classic Chinese shapes, whereas the '[modern] Indian merely picks up a boulder of trap [a dark, igneous rock] or greenstone and beats out a hollow leaving the outside rough'. The ancestors of the Sacramento and Russian River tribes also used 'long, heavy knives of obsidian or jasper' their descendants, Powers found, no longer knew how to make. And while the ancestors had fashioned elegant tobacco pipes from serpentine, their descendants made use of simple wooden ones. They had also 'developed a Chinese inventiveness' in devising methods of snaring wildfowl using decoy ducks—a Chinese custom, but one not found among the Indians. Like the Chinese, they ate snails, slugs, lizards and snakes, and built large middens of clam shells.

On the eastern side of San Francisco Bay, some seventy miles south of the site of the Sacramento junk, there is a small, stone-built village with low walls. In 1904, Dr John Fryer, Professor of Oriental Languages at University College, Berkeley, California, stated, 'This is undoubtedly the work of Mongolians . . . The Chinese would naturally wall themselves in, as they do in all their towns in China.' This accords with Powers's succinct description of Chinese people who had created a colony and then intermarried with native Americans.

It certainly seems that Zhou Man's fleet left a settlement in California. Were they the first to cultivate rice in the Americas? And was the wealth of blue and white Ming porcelain found in California really brought by Spanish galleons, as conventional wisdom has it, or was it carried in the holds of the junks of Zhou Man's fleet? . . .

After emerging from the bay, Zhou Man's fleet would have been carried southwards by the wind and current to New Mexico. The Waldseemüller map shows the coast with reasonable accuracy, charted just as one would expect from a ship passing by, but there is a gap at the latitude of the Gulf of Tehuantepec in Guatemala, as if the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans met there, which of course is not the case. This is consistent with the Chinese having sailed into the Gulf, but finding it too shallow to proceed, turning back and then drawing what they could see from the entrance: water stretching away for miles in front of them, marking an apparent opening between North and South America.

I made the assumption that they had sailed beyond the isthmus of Panama, clearly shown on the Waldseemüller, and then been driven back across the Pacific towards China by the winds and current, as one would expect with a square-rigged sailing ship. But on their way down that coast they would have been swept across the Gulf of California and could have made a landfall on the Mexican coast somewhere near Manzanillo in the modern province of Colima. Here a spectacular volcano, the Colima, some 12,700 feet high and clearly visible for miles out to sea, would have attracted them.

I decided to make a search for another wreck between Manzanillo and Acapulco, a stretch of coastline only around three hundred miles long and again clearly shown on the Waldseemüller map. I started my search with the accounts of the first Spaniards to reach that coast in the 1520s, Fra Bernardino de Sahagún and Bernal Diaz del Castillo, both of whom described the exotic Mayan civilization, still surviving in 1421 but in decline when they arrived. Many of the things de Sahagún and del Castillo described—chickens, lacquer boxes, dye-stuffs, metalwork and jewellery—seemed to have the imprint of China all over them.

As in California, when they arrived in Mexico the conquistadors found Asiatic chickens quite different from the European fowl they had left behind. The Mayan names for the birds, *Kek* or *Ki,* were identical to those used by the Chinese; like the Chinese but unlike the Europeans, Mexicans used chickens only for ceremonial purposes such as divination, not for eggs or meat. These were such remarkable similarities that for these reasons alone I felt a visit to that small strip of the Mexican coast was justified.

Before departing, I also investigated whether plants originating in China grew in New Mexico or western Mexico. The Chinese Rose did, but that could have been propagated southwards from California. Other than the rose, I found no plants growing in Mexico that had originated in China, but I did find the opposite; plants indigenous to Central America had found their way across the world before the European voyages of discovery. Sweet potatoes, tomatoes and papayas were found in Easter Island, sweet potatoes in Hawaii, and maize in China and the Philippines. Maize could have come from South or North America, but the other plants had come from a much narrower area, from what we now call Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua. . . .

Robert Finlay **NO**

How Not to (Re)Write World History: Gavin Menzies and the Chinese Discovery of America

In *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (2002), Gavin Menzies aspires to rewrite world history on a grand scale. He maintains that four Chinese fleets, comprising twenty-five to thirty ships and at least 7,000 persons each, visited every part of the world except Europe between 1421 and 1423. Trained by Zheng He, the famous eunuch-admiral, Chinese captains carried out the orders of Zhu Di (r. 1402–1424), the third Ming emperor, to map coastlines, settle new territories, and establish a global maritime empire. According to Menzies, proof of the passage of the Ming fleets to the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and Polynesia is overwhelming and indisputable. His "index of supporting evidence" includes thousands of items from the fields of archaeology, cartography, astronomy, and anthropology; his footnotes and bibliography include publications in Chinese, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, German, Arabic, and Hebrew.

Menzies claims that Chinese mariners explored the islands of Cape Verde, the Azores, the Bahamas, and the Falklands; they established colonies in Australia, New Zealand, British Columbia, California, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Rhode Island; they introduced horses to the Americas, rice to California, chickens to South America, coffee to Puerto Rico, South American sloths to Australia, sea otters to New Zealand, and maize to the Philippines. In addition, Chinese seamen toured the temples and palaces of the Maya center of Palenque in Mexico, hunted walruses and smelted copper in Greenland, mined for lead and saltpeter in northern Australia, and established trading posts for diamonds along the Amazon and its tributaries.

Inasmuch as Menzies believes that he has collected a veritable mountain of evidence, he is not disheartened by skepticism about some of his astonishing assertions. As he told *People Magazine* (24 February 2003) after *1421* hit the New York Times bestseller list, "[t]here's not one chance in a hundred million that I'm wrong!" He regards his investigation as an ongoing project: a website (www.1421.tv) provides yet more evidence, . . ., and a team of researchers currently is assisting him in combing medieval Spanish and Portuguese documents for added proof of his contentions. . . .

Menzies is contemptuous of professional historians who ignore evidence of Chinese influence in the Americas, "presumably because it contradicts the

From *Journal of World History* by Robert Finlay, vol. 15, no. 2, June 2004, pp. 229–42 (refs. omitted). Copyright © 2004 by University of Hawaii Press. Reprinted by permission.

accepted wisdom on which not a few careers have been based." He explains that he has uncovered information that has eluded many eminent historians of China, even though it was right before their eyes, "only because I knew how to interpret the extraordinary maps and charts that reveal the course and the extent of the voyages of the great Chinese fleets between 1421 and 1423." A former submarine commander in the British Royal Navy, he has sailed in the wake of Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan, and James Cook, hence he recognizes that those mariners, who navigated with copies of Chinese maps in hand, were themselves merely sailing in the backwash of Zheng He's fleets.

Menzies intends his work for the general reader, and his style is vigorous, clear, and informal. Most strikingly, he makes his own search for evidence of the Ming fleets the narrative framework for recounting their achievements. He describes his frustrations and triumphs as he travels everywhere following "an elusive trail of evidence," sometimes discouraged but never defeated. He also brings his narrative to life by recounting his own experiences in places visited by the fleets of Zheng He, including savoring rum toddies and roast lobster on Guadeloupe beaches, braving the dangers of the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, and rounding the Cape of Good Hope into the South Atlantic. The underlying message of these frequent vignettes is that the author's astonishing conclusions are validated by the unique personal experience he brings to his research as well as by his transparent account of how he struggled toward those conclusions. This approach makes for a lively, engaging work that surely will attract many readers who otherwise would never open a 500-page tome on Chinese maritime enterprise and European exploration.

The good news conveyed by *1421* is that there are big bucks in world history: Menzies received an advance of £500,000 ($825,000) from his British publisher, whose initial printing runs to 100,000 copies. The bad news is that reaping such largesse evidently requires producing a book as outrageous as *1421*. Menzies flouts the basic rules of both historical study and elementary logic. He misrepresents the scholarship of others, and he frequently fails to cite those from whom he borrows. He misconstrues Chinese imperial policy, especially as seen in the expeditions of Zheng He, and his extensive discussion of Western cartography reads like a parody of scholarship. His allegations regarding Nicolò di Conti (c. 1385–1469), the only figure in *1421* who links the Ming voyages with European events, are the stuff of historical fiction, the product of an obstinate misrepresentation of sources. The author's misunderstanding of the technology of Zheng He's ships impels him to depict voyages no captain would attempt and no mariner could survive, including a 4,000-mile excursion along the Arctic circle and circumnavigation of the Pacific after having already sailed more than 42,000 miles from China to West Africa, South America, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

Portraying himself as an innocent abroad, forthrightly seeking truths the academic establishment has disregarded or suppressed, Menzies in fact is less an "unlettered Ishmael" than a Captain Ahab, gripped by a mania to bend everything to his purposes. His White Whale is Eurocentric historiography, which celebrates Columbus . . . and Vasco da Gama . . . without realizing they merely aped the epic deeds of the Chinese. More generally, Menzies, in an unacknowledged echo of Joseph Needham, laments that China did not become "mistress of the world," with Confucian harmony and Buddhist benevolence uniting humankind. Instead, the cruel, barbaric West, secretly and fraudulently capitalizing on Chinese achievements, imposed its dominion around the globe.

The wounded leviathan of Eurocentricism no doubt deserves another harpoon, but *1421* is too leaky a vessel to deliver it. Examination of the book's central claims reveals they are uniformly without substance: first, that the 1421–1423 voyages Menzies describes could not have taken place; second, that Conti played no role in transmitting knowledge of Chinese exploration to European cartographers; and third, that all Menzies's evidence for the presence of the Chinese fleets abroad is baseless.

1421 concentrates on what Menzies terms "the missing years" of the sixth voyage of Zheng He, that is, the two and a half years between March 1421 and October 1423, during which the fleets of Zheng He supposedly roamed the globe. Menzies is not interested in the well-known, much-studied voyages of Zheng He, and he ignores the extensive literature on them. He dispenses with six of the seven expeditions (between 1405 and 1433) in one page. He singles out the sixth voyage because it was the only one in which Zheng He returned to China early, leaving his subordinate eunuch-captains to carry out their mission of returning tribute envoys to their kingdoms. This circumstance offers Menzies a window of opportunity to imagine that the armada left the Indian Ocean to seek new lands in the Atlantic and Pacific. Since he claims that the mariners sailed about 40,000 miles in their world-girdling odysseys, two and a half years is just barely enough time for them to journey such a vast distance while also charting coasts, mining ore, meeting alien peoples, and founding colonies.

In addition, Menzies feels free to speculate about "missing years" because of a presumed dearth of sources. He casually dismisses the principal source of information on Zheng He's voyages, Ma Huan's *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan* [The overall survey of the ocean's shores], by declaring that its author, an official translator on the staff of Zheng He in 1421, "left the treasure fleets at Calicut" (a port on the Malabar coast in southwestern India), hence he did not take part in the global exploration. Menzies provides no evidence for his assertion, which, in any case, mistakes the nature of Ma's account. The author sailed on three of the Ming expeditions, and his book is a protoethnographic survey of the places visited by the fleets over several decades, not "diaries" of his participation in a specific voyage. He incorporated information on countries he did not visit, and he apparently continued making revisions to his book until it was published about thirty years after the last expedition. Menzies does not address the awkward question of why Ma, a stickler for detail and an aficionado of novelties, never mentions the wondrous excursion of his comrades to the Americas and Australia.

Throughout *1421,* Menzies places great emphasis on imperial officials in 1477 destroying many of the documents regarding the Ming expeditions in order to prevent a renewal of the project. In a manner of speaking, the author sails the ships of Zheng He through that supposed evidentiary void.

There are plentiful surviving documents on the expeditions, however, that prove there were no "missing years." The sources indicate that an imperial order for the sixth voyage was issued in March 1421, although the flotilla did not leave China until the turn of the year. It reached Sumatra around July 1422, after many stops in Southeast Asia; Zheng He returned home to Nanjing by September 1422, leaving his subordinates to sail on to thirty-six ports in Ceylon, India (both Bengal and the Malabar coast), the Persian Gulf, and East Africa. The last of the squadrons returned to China on 8 October 1423, having completed their journey of some 11,000 miles in the expected time, about one year and three months after departing Sumatra. Thus there are no "missing years" for the Ming fleets, no time for even a portion of the extraordinary exploits narrated in *1421*.

Even taking Menzies's account at face value, however, it is far-fetched. The author asserts that Zheng He arrived home in November 1421 and that his captains completed their errands in the Indian Ocean in July of the same year, a mere three months after departing Sumatra. After rendezvousing at Sofala (across from Mozambique on the East African coast), they doubled the Cape of Good Hope in August and headed north to the Cape Verde Islands, reaching them in late September; a month later, they made landfall off the Orinoco River in Brazil, and by November they were approaching Cape Horn in the South Atlantic. In other words, Menzies proposes that Zheng He's captains completed a voyage of some 17,000 miles in mainly unknown seas in seven months, including dozens of stops in the Indian Ocean, while Zheng He took the same amount of time to journey about 3,500 miles from Sumatra to Nanjing.

By this account, then, Zheng He sailed sluggishly but his captains made spectacularly rapid progress. Menzies claims that the average speed of Zheng He's vessels over their seven voyages in the Indian Ocean was 4.8 knots (or 132 miles per day). Menzies has no basis for this estimate since an average speed can be calculated only for the 1431–1433 expedition, for which a detailed itinerary survives. Naturally, speeds differed considerably, depending on the time of year and the passage being traversed. In the seventh voyage, distances covered varied from a high of 106 miles per day (3.8 knots) to a low of 37.5 miles per day (1.4 knots), with an average of 69 miles per day (or 2.5 knots). Menzies assumes, however, that his undocumented estimate of 4.8 knots for the Indian Ocean voyages holds as well for the global cruises of the Ming fleets. His calculation helps him narrowly fit the agenda of the fleets into the alleged "missing years": having doubled the time the junks actually were away from China (from fifteen months to thirty), he also hurries the ships along by granting them an average speed 52 percent higher than what they generally achieved in the steady, familiar monsoon winds of the southern seas. On its own terms, then, Menzies's scenario is highly implausible. Taking into account the surviving evidence for the timetable of the sixth expedition, it is impossible.

Menzies's evidence for the role of Conti in transmitting Chinese geographical knowledge to European cartographers is even flimsier than his argument for "missing years." A native of Venice, Conti lived in Asia for some thirty-five years, and when he returned to Europe around 1441, he sought absolution from Pope Eugenius IV (r. 1431–1447) for having converted to Islam. As instructed by the pope, Conti told the story of his travels to the humanist Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), who incorporated it into his *De Varietate Fortunae,* completed in 1448. His account was widely read, for Conti provided the best source of information on the East, especially India and Southeast Asia, that Europe had received since Marco Polo's *Travels* (c. 1298).

Conti is essential to Menzies's argument since he represents the sole vehicle by which Chinese geographical knowledge reached the West. Much of *1421* is devoted to interpreting European maps in the light of that knowledge, and without Conti as "the crucial link" in the chain of evidence, the central thesis of the book collapses.

To establish the relevance of Conti, Menzies splices into one quotation a passage from Poggio and another from Pero Tafur (c. 1410–c. 1484), a Spaniard who met Conti at Mt. Sinai (Egypt) in 1437, when the Venetian was planning to return home. Poggio refers to large Indian ships, with five sails, many masts, and hull compartments. Since only Chinese ships possessed the latter, it is generally assumed that Conti actually described Chinese vessels, evidently without knowing their origins. Tafur writes of ships "like very large houses" [*como casas muy grandes*], with ten or more sails and large cisterns of water inside, that delivered cargo to Mecca. Neither Poggio nor Tafur refer to Calicut in connection with the large ships, to Chinese vessels visiting India, or to the fleet of Zheng He; neither chronicler provides a date for Conti's stay in Calicut. Still, Menzies takes for granted that Conti was in Calicut in 1421 when the Ming armada anchored there, and since both Conti and Ma Huan describe similar scenes in Calicut, Menzies surmises that Conti must have met the Chinese chronicler in that port.

Based on these presumptions, Menzies creates an incredible scenario: he declares that Conti boarded Zheng He's junks for their voyages to the Cape Verde Islands, Brazil, Patagonia, Australia, New Zealand, North America, and Mexico. Moreover, after the fleet returned to Southeast Asia and China in late 1423, Conti dashed home to Venice, where in 1424 he was "debriefed" by the Infante Dom Pedro of Portugal (d. 1449), older brother of Prince Henry (1394–1460), the so-called "Navigator," and where Conti handed over copies of Chinese charts produced during the great voyage. Those charts, Menzies asserts, formed the basis for all subsequent European maps that showed lands across the Atlantic, including, inter alia, the Pizzigano map (1424), the (disputed) Vinland map (1420–1440?), the Cantino planisphere (1502), and the Waldseemuller maps (1507, 1513). Furthermore, Conti's information prompted Prince Henry to secretly dispatch settlers to Puerto Rico in 1431, where (Menzies suggests) they perhaps found evidence of a previous Chinese colony. European copies of Ming charts also explain Columbus's ambition to voyage across the Ocean Sea, Magellan's conviction that he could sail around South America, and Cook's alleged "discovery" of Australia.

Even though "The Travels of Nicolò di Conti" is silent about the global journey of the Venetian—one wonders why he kept that thrilling news from Poggio—Menzies repeatedly claims the document proves that Conti "sailed with the Chinese fleet from India to Australia and China." Thus with no more warrant than a passing mention by Poggio and Tafur of large ships in the Indian Ocean, Menzies concocts a scenario in which Conti tours the world on Zheng He's junks, collecting information that transforms European cartography and inspires European overseas expansion. In a book bloated with extravagant arguments, Menzies's assertions regarding Poggio's well-known text stand out for their obdurate distortion of evidence.

Menzies's claims regarding the fleet's "missing years" and Conti's global cruise clearly cannot be sustained. The author's proof for the presence of the Ming argosy in new lands also lacks substance. In his first two chapters, he lays the groundwork for his claims when describing Zheng He's fleet before its departure from Nanjing. Although the portrait lacks any documentation, it provides the foundation for virtually all the evidence Menzies later cites for Chinese exploration. His depiction, then, does not represent mere scene setting aimed at engaging the reader—a rhetorical tactic that perhaps does not call for footnotes—but assumptions read back into the narrative itself. In effect, the author stocks the ships on their exodus from China with the very items that will confirm that the mariners reached their far-flung destinations.

Thus while no evidence survives of the garb worn by Zheng He's sailors, Menzies describes them as wearing long white robes because legends and folklore from Australia and the New World speak of visits from white-robed aliens. Although sources are silent on the presence of women in the fleet, Menzies assumes that many prostitutes were aboard because the colonies supposedly founded during the voyages required Chinese mates for the men. In like fashion, he infers that many coops of Asiatic chickens were loaded on the junks (as "valuable presents for foreign dignitaries,") because the presence of chickens in the New World is a central part of his proof of the passage of the Ming fleets. Since Central American natives used chicken entrails for divination, Menzies presumes they were "indoctrinated" in the practice by the fowl-bearing colonists of Zheng He.

There is no evidence for masons and stone carvers in Zheng He's flotilla, but Menzies believes they were aboard because no one else could have carved the numerous stone markers supposedly left behind by the fleets in the Cape Verde Islands and other landing spots, and they must have built the "pyramids" and astronomical "observation platforms" found just about everywhere else. The latter, Menzies claims, were needed by Chinese astronomers, indispensable passengers in the fleet since they had to carry out the (undocumented) imperial command to detect "guiding stars" in order to "correctly locate the new territories." Teak was not used in building Zheng He's fleets, as sources supposedly consulted by Menzies make clear, yet he regards any appearance of teak in marine excavations as marking the presence of the Ming vessels. It is highly unlikely that the Chinese junks (or any ships at any time) carried specially carved stones for ballast, as Menzies imagines, yet he elaborately describes how the mariners built a slipway to refloat grounded junks at Bimini in the Bahamas, the evidence for which is "tongued and grooved" rectangular rocks found underwater there—ballast, the author declares, from the Ming ships.

Zheng He's armada almost certainly included some horses used by the admiral and other high commanders. Menzies claims, however, that thousands of horses were transported, many being used to stock the Americas and to explore the interior of Australia. At sea for months at a time, the mariners allegedly nourished the horses with boiled, mashed rice and with water distilled from seawater, "using paraffin wax or seal blubber for fuel." Although Needham states that there is no evidence that the Chinese knew how to desalinate seawater, Menzies asserts that a ship wrecked off the Oregon coast is reported to have carried paraffin wax, hence he regards the rumor as implicit verification of his contentions about both desalination and hordes of junk-journeying steeds.

The seamen, prostitutes, and eunuchs were kept in fresh fish at sea by "trained otters, working in pairs to herd shoals into the nets . . ." These marvelous creatures, alas, remain unheralded in any document, but since some wild ones "have been seen swimming in the fjords of South Island" (New Zealand), Menzies infers that their forbearers must have jumped Zheng He's ships there. Chinese shar-peis must have sailed with the Ming flotilla because an animal resembling the dog appears in a Mexican painting discovered in the nineteenth century. One audacious shar-pei, Menzies proposes, absconded from the junks in the Falklands and mated with an indigenous fox, giving birth to a now-extinct animal called a warrah—DNA results, the author promises, will be posted on the website.

Menzies also goes beyond his portrait of Zheng He's armada in Nanjing to point to evidence deriving from its global adventures. He suggests that the Chinese captured a few giant South American sloths (or mylodons) in Patagonia. This deduction arises from the author's notion that a "dog-headed man" depicted on the Piri Reis map of 1513—which, of course, Menzies regards as based upon a copy of a Chinese map from Conti's collection—is in fact a mylodon, an animal (he assumes) that Zheng He's captains desired for the emperor's zoo. He further supposes that one of the sloths aroused itself enough to escape Chinese incarceration in Australia because a stone carving near Brisbane (he thinks) looks something like the Patagonian beast.

It is impossible to keep track of how many self-confirming assumptions are at work in such citations of alleged evidence. Piling supposition upon supposition, Menzies never considers a question that he does not beg: every argument in *1421* springs from the fallacy of petitio principii. The author's "trail of evidence" is actually a feedback loop that makes no distinction between premise and proof, conjecture and confirmation, bizarre guess and proven fact.

Thus just as Menzies describes the junks as supplied with all the paraphernalia that will prove they sailed where he contends, he also reconstructs the routes of the voyages by treating European maps, supposedly based on Conti's cache, as the by-product of those very voyages. This inevitably leads to some curious conclusions. Since the Waldseemüller map of 1507 seems to show an open sea passage between the Arctic Circle and Eurasia from the Barents Sea to the Bering Straits, a distance of more than 4,000 miles, Menzies concludes that the route was surveyed by a Ming fleet taking a shortcut home after its exploration of Greenland, boldly going where no eunuch had gone before.

The author, however, does not discuss this epic voyage except to observe that the Waldseemüller map proves it took place.

Similarly, since Menzies believes that the Chinese first navigated around South America and that the Piri Reis map is proof of that achievement, he declares that the map does not show a landlocked Atlantic, with an eastward extension of the Americas linking up with the peninsula of Southeast Asia, but, rather, "what appears to be ice connecting the tip of South America to Antartica." Rivaling his mistreatment of Poggio's "Travels," Menzies makes this claim even though his own reproductions of the Piri Reis chart patently contradict it. Not only that, Piri Reis himself states the contrary, for he noted on his map that Spanish and Portuguese explorers "have found out that coasts encircle this sea [that is, the Atlantic], which has thus taken the form of a lake. . . ." Menzies does not think it necessary to inform his readers of this evidence.

Unfortunately, this reckless manner of dealing with evidence is typical of *1421,* vitiating all its extraordinary claims: the voyages it describes never took place, Chinese information never reached Prince Henry and Columbus, and there is no evidence of the Ming fleets in newly discovered lands. The fundamental assumption of the book—that Zhu Di dispatched the Ming fleets because he had a "grand plan," a vision of charting the world and creating a maritime empire spanning the oceans—is simply asserted by Menzies without a shred of proof. It represents the author's own grandiosity projected back onto the emperor, providing the latter with an ambition commensurate with the global events that Menzies presumes *1421* uniquely has revealed, an account that provides evidence "to overturn the long-accepted history of the Western world." It is clear, however, that textbooks on that history need not be rewritten. The reasoning of *1421* is inexorably circular, its evidence spurious, its research derisory, its borrowings unacknowledged, its citations slipshod, and its assertions preposterous.

Still, it may have some pedagogical value in world history courses. Assigning selections from the book to high-schoolers and undergraduates, it might serve as an outstanding example of how not to (re)write world history. . . .

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Did the Chinese Discover America?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What evidence does Gavin Menzies present to validate his argument in support of the Chinese discovery of America?
2. What specific criticisms does Robert Finlay present in his review of Menzies's argument?
3. If Menzies is, in fact, wrong, could you still conclude that America was discovered by Asians?
4. What does it mean to offer a Eurocentric interpretation of history? Is Finlay's review of Menzies's work Eurocentric?

Is There Common Ground?

There are at least two important directions that the Menzies and Finlay essays can take us. The first concerns the craft of the historian. What are the key elements of historical research? Is some evidence better than others? Why is corroboration of sources so important? What should it tell us that researchers can interpret the same factual evidence in widely different ways without destroying historical truth? Finlay's charge is that Menzies has murdered truth, but that position should not end all debate on the subject and, in fact, opens up a second avenue of inquiry. We know, for example, that Columbus was not the first European to make his way to the New World. What about the Norsemen (or Vikings), some of whom explored Greenland, Canada, and perhaps parts of present-day New England during the tenth to twelfth centuries? By studying other peoples who preceded Columbus and his peers, we may call into question standard historical interpretations while, at the same time, accepting the possibility that history is not immutable.

Additional Resources

Despite the harsh response by historians to the work of Gavin Menzies, it is worth noting that China did possess a powerful naval force in the fifteenth century. The most respected scholarly work on Chinese maritime history is Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433* (Simon & Schuster, 1994).

Suggestions regarding the influence of Norse settlements in the Americas are presented in David Goudsward, *Ancient Stone Sites of New England and the Debate Over Early European Explorations* (MacFarland, 2006). The era of European exploration during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries is covered in J. H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration, and Settlement, 1450 to 1650* (Praeger, 1963) and Boies Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance, 1420–1620* (Harvard University Press, 1952). Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (Oxford University Press, 1971); David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481–1620* (Harper & Row, 1974); Wallace Notestein, *The English People on the Eve of Colonization, 1603–1630* (Harper & Brothers, 1954); Charles Gibson, *Spain in America* (Harper & Row, 1966); and W. J. Eccles, *France in America* (Harper & Row, 1972) all discuss European contacts in North America. Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World* (1964) describes the impact of North American images on the European mind.

The longtime standard biographical treatment of Columbus is Samuel Eliot Morison's generally sympathetic *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus,* 2 vols. (Little, Brown, 1942). For more recent objective and scholarly studies, see Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Columbus* (Oxford University Press, 1991), and William D. Phillkips, Jr. and Carla Ruhn Phillips, *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

ISSUE 2

Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco?

YES: Edmund S. Morgan, from *American Slavery, American Freedom* (W. W. Norton, 1975)

NO: Karen Ordahl Kupperman, from *The Jamestown Project* (Harvard University Press, 2007)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Critically analyze whether the settlement of Jamestown was a complete "fiasco" or an eventual successful model for other English colonies to follow.
- Explore how the introduction of Indians, Blacks (both slaves and free), and women changes earlier interpretations of colonial history.
- Explore how the work of archeologists and scientists change our interpretation of history.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Professor Edmund S. Morgan argues that Virginia's first decade as a colony was a complete "fiasco" because the settlers were too lazy to engage in the subsistence farming necessary for their survival and failed to abandon their own and the Virginia's company's expectations of establishing extractive industries such as mining, timber, and fishing.

NO: Professor Karen Ordahl Kupperman argues that Jamestown was America's first successful colony because in its first decade of trial and error "the ingredients for success—widespread ownership of land, control of taxation for public obligations through a representative assembly, the institution of a normal society through the inclusion of women, and development of a product that could be marketed profitably to sustain the economy—were beginning to be put in place by 1618 and were in full operation by 1620, when the next successful colony, Plymouth, was planted."

Until the 1970s American history textbooks ignored the seventeenth century once the colonies were founded. The new social history that has incorporated ordinary people—not just elite white males, but common white males, females, African Americans, women, and Indians—has added a whole new dimension to the colonial period. Racial, class, gender, and sectional differences emerge, and for the first time historians clearly distinguished the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In the 1990s archeologists have pointed colonial history in a new and exciting direction. Working with teams of forensic scientists, nuclear physicists, and anthropologists, recent digs have pinpointed the exact locations of St. Mary's City, Maryland, and Jamestown, Virginia. William Kelso, chief archeologist of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities since 1993 has published his findings in *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* (University of Virginia Press, 2006). Encouraged by clues long embedded in a Spanish map of 1608, Kelso and his team have not only located the earliest fort, but also unearthed armaments, trash, food, and remains of devoured horses, cats, dogs, and rats, which speak of the starving time. The remains of mats and beads indicate the trade between Indians and the settlers. Through techniques of imaging and facial reconstruction of surviving skeletons, we know more about the aches and pains and diseases these settlers suffered unnecessarily if penicillin, Excedrin, or even a good dentist had been available. Kelso may have exaggerated in arguing that democracy was born at Jamestown, but the work of the archeologist sheds a whole new light on history.

The first permanent English settlement was established in the Chesapeake Bay region in 1607. They were latecomers in colonizing the new world. Earlier voyages by John Cabot in 1497 and 1498 around Canada were not followed up in the same way the Spaniards had established colonies in Latin America. Before Jamestown there were notable failures at colonization in Newfoundland and Roanoke, the lost colony.

The Virginia colony had a very shaky start. The Jamestown settlement, which the 105 colonists (39 died at sea) had established in May 1607, bartered with the Indians for corn, but even Captain John Smith could not trade for enough food or force the settlers to stop arguing among themselves and plant crops. Only 38 of the original settlers survived until January 1608 when a fresh supply of food and 120 new settlers arrived from England. Still the experiences of the first year did not prevent the "starving time" of the winter of 1609–1610 when several of the inhabitants resorted to eating their deceased family members.

The Virginia Colony might have collapsed except for two reasons. First was the fact that the stockholding company continued to send over people to replace those who died. Mortality rates were higher in the new world than in England because of the hot climates and concomitant rampant diseases, so few lived past the age of 45. Combined with late marriages, the population growth was low. Only sustained immigration from England prevented the colony from collapsing in its first 15 years. Second, the development of the cash crop of tobacco improved the colony's trade relations and prevented an economic breakdown.

Professor Edmund S. Morgan is the preeminent colonial American historian who has trained three generations of scholars at Yale University. Now in his nineties, Morgan is still a productive scholar writing books and review essays for the *New York Review of Books* on the latest output of scholarship in the field. For a convenient compilation of Morgan's essays, see *The Genuine Article: A Historian Looks at Early America* (Norton, 2004).

Morgan's chapter on the "Jamestown Fiasco" is important for several reasons. First of all, he rejects the New England model of colonization as being typical. Earlier generations of colonial historians wrote a lot about the Puritans because they kept extensive written legal and church records as well as diaries—all of which provided historians with an abundance of traditional historical sources. Morgan anticipated the framework of Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and others who see the Chesapeake settlements (and not New England) as typical of the expansionist policies of the British Empire in Ireland and the West Indies. He also implies that the original colonists were trying to imitate the Spaniards to the extent that they hoped to extract mineral wealth from the colonies. Unfortunately, the original Virginia settlements did not possess these desirable resources.

Professor Morgan also dispatches the romantic view that many historians attributed to the colonists. He discusses in other parts of his book the "guerilla warfare" that existed between the first European settlers and the Indians. Though earlier historians have focused on the hardships of the first Virginians and the starving time of the winter of 1609–1610 that led to cannibalism, Morgan blames the colonists themselves for their plight. The colonists did not take advantage of the abundance of fish and game in Virginia nor did they plant enough grain and corn to feed themselves. Why this occurred was partly due to the social background of the earliest settlers—too many "gentlemen" and not enough farmers. But Morgan extends his argument even further. The colonists modeled themselves after their English kin and hoped to set up small industries producing exports with agriculture as only a minor part of the economy. As previously mentioned, the mineral resources did not exist, and Virginia became a productive colony only in later decades when tobacco became the export of salvation.

Professor Karen Kupperman's analysis of *The Jamestown Project* is much more upbeat than Morgan's account. As an author of numerous works on seventeenth-century America, she places Jamestown within the context of a half century of Atlantic ventures into Newfoundland, Ireland, the lost colony of Roanoke, and the sustained contacts with Islamic states in the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire. Within this international context, Kupperman pronounces the Jamestown colony a success. Despite the earlier struggles with diseases and food shortages, which she attributes more to the unfriendly forces of nature rather than the lazy and unskilled backgrounds of the early immigrants, Kupperman sees the ability to survive, the creation of a workable governmental structure, and the development of tobacco as an exportable cash crop as a model for the other colonies which followed.

Kupperman is correct in arguing that some of the lessons from "the Virginia project" were adopted by the settlers in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. For one thing, these settlers came as families and established sizeable towns from their very beginnings. They also farmed and fished and avoided the starving time.

But it can be argued that the wrong lessons were learned in relations with the Indians. Constant raids on both sides led to an all-out war with the Powhatans in Virginia in 1624, which nearly wiped out the colony. In Plymouth, relations soon deteriorated after "the first happy thanksgiving" dinner. In Massachusetts Bay, the Pequot War of the 1630s decimated the tribe, whose survivors were sold into slavery. By the 1670s, Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia and King Phillip's War in Massachusetts set the model of Indian-White relations for the next two centuries.

In the first selection, Edmund Morgan is highly critical of the first settlers of Virginia. Others have pointed out that the earliest immigrants came from the "gentlemen" class and lacked the farming skills necessary for survival. But Morgan puts as much of the blame on the policies of the Virginia Company and the London government as he does on the settlers. Even after the "starving time," the survivors and the new immigrants continued to pursue extraction industries such as gold, silver, iron mining, fishing, lumber, and silk binding at the expense of subsistence agriculture.

In the second selection, Karen Ordahl Kupperman disagrees with the negative view of early Virginia. Jamestown, she argues, was America's first successful colony because in its first decade of trial and error the ingredients for success—widespread ownership of land, development of a cash crop, establishing a representative assembly, setting up permanent families—were beginning to be put into place in 1618 and became a model for the next successful colony—Plymouth in 1620.

YES

Edmund S. Morgan

The Jamestown Fiasco

The first wave of Englishmen reached Virginia at Cape Henry, the southern headland at the opening of Chesapeake Bay, on April 26, 1607. The same day their troubles began. The Indians of the Cape Henry region (the Chesapeakes), when they found a party of twenty or thirty strangers walking about on their territory, drove them back to the ships they came on. It was not the last Indian victory, but it was no more effective than later ones. In spite of troubles, the English were there to stay. They spent until May 14 exploring Virginia's broad waters and then chose a site that fitted the formula Hakluyt had prescribed. The place which they named Jamestown, on the James (formerly Powhatan) River, was inland from the capes about sixty miles, ample distance for warning of a Spanish invasion by sea. It was situated on a peninsula, making it easily defensible by land; and the river was navigable by oceangoing ships for another seventy-five miles into the interior, thus giving access to other tribes in case the local Indians should prove as unfriendly as the Chesapeakes.

Captain Christopher Newport had landed the settlers in time to plant something for a harvest that year if they put their minds to it. After a week, in which they built a fort for protection, Newport and twenty-one others took a small boat and headed up the river on a diplomatic and reconnoitering mission, while the settlers behind set about the crucial business of planting corn. Newport paused at various Indian villages along the way and assured the people, as best he could, of the friendship of the English and of his readiness to assist them against their enemies. Newport gathered correctly from his attempted conversations that one man, Powhatan, ruled the whole area above Jamestown, as far as the falls at the present site of Richmond. His enemies, the Monacans, lived above the falls (where they might be difficult to reach if Powhatan proved unfriendly). Newport also surmised, incorrectly, that the Chesapeake Indians who had attacked him at Cape Henry were not under Powhatan's dominion. He accordingly tried to make an alliance against the Chesapeakes and Monacans with a local chief whom he mistook for Powhatan. At the same time, he planted a cross with the name of King James on it (to establish English dominion) and tried to explain to the somewhat bewildered and justifiably suspicious owners of the country that one arm of the cross was Powhatan, the other himself, and that the fastening of them together signified the league between them.

From *American Slavery, American Freedom* by Edmund S. Morgan (W.W. Norton, 1975). Copyright © 1975 by W. W. Norton. Reprinted by permission.

If the Indians understood, they were apparently unimpressed, for three days later, returning to Jamestown, Newport found that two hundred of Powhatan's warriors had attacked the fort the day before and had only been prevented from destroying it by fire from the ships. The settlers had been engaged in planting and had not yet unpacked their guns from the cases in which they were shipped. That was a mistake they were not likely to repeat. But for the next ten years they seem to have made nearly every possible mistake and some that seem almost impossible. It would take a book longer than this to recount them all, and the story has already been told many times. But if we are to understand the heritage of these ten disastrous years for later Virginia history, we should look at a few of the more puzzling episodes and then try to fathom the forces behind them.

Skip over the first couple of years, when it was easy for Englishmen to make mistakes in the strange new world to which they had come, and look at Jamestown in the winter of 1609–10. It is three planting seasons since the colony began. The settlers have fallen into an uneasy truce with the Indians, punctuated by guerrilla raids on both sides, but they have had plenty of time in which they could have grown crops. They have obtained corn from the Indians and supplies from England. They have firearms. Game abounds in the woods; and Virginia's rivers are filled with sturgeon in the summer and covered with geese and ducks in the winter. There are five hundred people in the colony now. And they are starving. They scour the woods listlessly for nuts, roots, and berries. And they offer the only authentic examples of cannibalism witnessed in Virginia. One provident man chops up his wife and salts down the pieces. Others dig up graves to eat the corpses. By spring only sixty are left alive.

Another scene, a year later, in the spring of 1611. The settlers have been reinforced with more men and supplies from England. The preceding winter has not been as gruesome as the one before, thanks in part to corn obtained from the Indians. But the colony still is not growing its own corn. The governor, Lord De la Warr, weakened by the winter, has returned to England for his health. His replacement, Sir Thomas Dale, reaches Jamestown in May, a time when all hands could have been used in planting. Dale finds nothing planted except "some few seeds put into a private garden or two." And the people he finds at "their daily and usuall workes, bowling in the streetes."

It is evident that the settlers, failing to plant for themselves, depend heavily on the Indians for food. The Indians can finish them off at any time simply by leaving the area. And the Indians know it. One of them tells the English flatly that "we can plant any where . . . and we know that you cannot live if you want [i.e., lack] our harvest, and that reliefe we bring you." If the English drive out the Indians, they will starve. . . .

It is not easy to make sense out of the behavior displayed in these episodes. How to explain the suicidal impulse that led the hungry English to destroy the corn that might have fed them and to commit atrocities upon the people who grew it? And how to account for the seeming unwillingness or incapacity of the English to feed themselves? Although they had invaded Indian territory and quarreled with the owners, the difficulty of obtaining land was not great. The Indians were no match for English weapons. Moreover, since the Indians could afford to give up the land around Jamestown as well as Henrico without seriously endangering their own economy, they made no concerted effort to drive the English out. Although Indian attacks may have prevented the English from getting a crop into the ground in time for a harvest in the fall of 1607, the occasional Indian raids thereafter cannot explain the English failure to grow food in succeeding years. How, then, can we account for it?

The answer that comes first to mind is the poor organization and direction of the colony. The government prescribed by the charter placed full powers in a council appointed by the king, with a president elected by the other members. The president had virtually no authority of his own; and while the council lasted, the members spent most of their time bickering and intriguing against one another and especially against the one man who had the experience and the assurance to take command. The names of the councillors had been kept secret (even from themselves) in a locked box, until the ships carrying the first settlers arrived in Virginia. By that time a bumptious young man named John Smith had made himself unpopular with Captain Christopher Newport (in command until their arrival) and with most of the other gentlemen of consequence aboard. When they opened the box, they were appalled to find Smith's name on the list of councillors. But during the next two years Smith's confidence in himself and his willingness to act while others talked overcame most of the handicaps imposed by the feeble frame of government. It was Smith who kept the colony going during those years. But in doing so he dealt more decisively with the Indians than with his own quarreling countrymen, and he gave an initial turn to the colony's Indian relations that was not quite what the company had intended. . . .

In their relations to the Indians, as in their rule of the settlers, the new governing officers of the colony were ruthless. The guerrilla raids that the two races conducted against each other became increasingly hideous, especially on the part of the English. Indians coming to Jamestown with food were treated as spies. Gates had them seized and killed "for a Terrour to the Reste to cawse them to desiste from their subtell practyses." Gates showed his own subtle practices by enticing the Indians at Kecoughtan (Point Comfort) to watch a display of dancing and drumming by one of his men and then "espyeinge a fitteinge oportunety fell in upon them putt fyve to the sworde wownded many others some of them beinge after fownde in the woods with Sutche extreordinary Lardge and mortall wownds that itt seemed strange they Cold flye so far." It is possible that the rank and file of settlers aggravated the bad relations with the Indians by unauthorized attacks, but unauthorized fraternization seems to have bothered the governors more. The atrocities committed against the queen of the Paspaheghs, though apparently demanded by the men, were the work of the governing officers, as were the atrocities committed against the Englishmen who fled to live with the Indians.

John Smith had not had his way in wishing to reduce the Indians to slavery, or something like it, on the Spanish model. But the policy of his successors, though perhaps not with company approval, made Virginia look far more like the Hispaniola of Las Casas than it did when Smith was in charge. And the company and the colony had few benefits to show for all the rigor. At the end of ten years, in spite of the military discipline of work gangs, the colonists were still not growing enough to feed themselves and were still begging, bullying, and buying corn from the Indians whose lands they scorched so deliberately. We cannot, it seems, blame the colony's failures on lax discipline and diffusion of authority. Failures continued and atrocities multiplied after authority was made absolute and concentrated in one man.

Another explanation, often advanced, for Virginia's early troubles, and especially for its failure to feed itself, is the collective organization of labor in the colony. All the settlers were expected to work together in a single community effort, to produce both the food and the exports that would make the company rich. Those who held shares would ultimately get part of the profits, but meanwhile the incentives of private enterprise were lacking. The work a man did bore no direct relation to his reward. The laggard would receive as large a share in the end as the man who worked hard.

The communal production of food seems to have been somewhat modified after the reorganization of 1609 by the assignment of small amounts of land to individuals for private gardens. It is not clear who received such allotments, perhaps only those who came at their own expense. Men who came at company expense may have been expected to continue working exclusively for the common stock until their seven-year terms expired. At any rate, in 1614, the year when the first shipment of company men concluded their service, Governor Dale apparently assigned private allotments to them and to other independent "farmers." Each man got three acres, or twelve acres if he had a family. He was responsible for growing his own food plus two and a half barrels of corn annually for the company as a supply for newcomers to tide them over the first year. And henceforth each "farmer" would work for the company only one month a year.

By this time Gates and Dale had succeeded in planting settlements at several points along the James as high up as Henrico, just below the falls. The many close-spaced tributary rivers and creeks made it possible to throw up a palisade between two of them to make a small fortified peninsula. Within the space thus enclosed by water on three sides and palisaded on the fourth, the settlers could build their houses, dig their gardens, and pasture their cattle. It was within these enclaves that Dale parceled out private allotments. Dignified by hopeful names like "Rochdale Hundred" or "Bermuda City," they were affirmations of an expectation that would linger for a century, that Virginia was about to become the site of thriving cities and towns. In point of fact, the new "cities" scarcely matched in size the tiny villages from which Powhatan's people threatened them. And the "farmers" who huddled together on the allotments assigned to them proved incapable of supporting themselves or the colony with adequate supplies of food.

At first it seemed to sympathetic observers that they would. Ralph Hamor, in an account of the colony published in 1615, wrote, "When our people were fedde out of the common store and laboured jointly in the manuring of the ground and planting corne, glad was that man that could slippe from his labour, nay the most honest of them in a generall businesse, would not take so much faithfull and true paines in a weeke, as now he will doe in a day, neither cared they for the increase, presuming that howsoever their harvest prospered, the generall store must maintain them, by which meanes we reaped not so much corne from the labours of 30 men, as three men have done for themselves."

According to John Rolfe, a settler who had married John Smith's fair Pocahontas, the switch to private enterprise transformed the colony's food deficit instantly to a surplus: instead of the settlers seeking corn from the Indians, the Indians sought it from them. If so, the situation did not last long. Governor Samuel Argall, who took charge at the end of May, 1617, bought 600 bushels from the Indians that fall, "which did greatly relieve the whole Colonie." And when Governor George Yeardley relieved Argall in April, 1619, he found the colony "in a great scarcity for want of corn" and made immediate preparations to seek it from the Indians, If, then, the colony's failure to grow food arose from its communal organization of production, the failure was not overcome by the switch to private enterprise.

Still another explanation for the improvidence of Virginia's pioneers is one that John Smith often emphasized, namely, the character of the immigrants. They were certainly an odd assortment, for the most conspicuous group among them was an extraordinary number of gentlemen. Virginia, as a patriotic enterprise, had excited the imagination of England's nobility and gentry. The shareholders included 32 present or future earls, 4 countesses, and 3 viscounts (all members of the nobility) as well as hundreds of lesser gentlemen, some of them perhaps retainers of the larger men. Not all were content to risk only their money. Of the 105 settlers who started the colony, 36 could be classified as gentlemen. In the first "supply" of 120 additional settlers, 28 were gentlemen, and in the second supply of 70, again 28 were gentlemen. These numbers gave Virginia's population about six times as large a proportion of gentlemen as England had.

Gentlemen, by definition, had no manual skill, nor could they be expected to work at ordinary labor. They were supposed to be useful for "the force of knowledge, the exercise of counsell"; but to have ninety-odd wise men offering advice while a couple of hundred did the work was inauspicious, especially when the wise men included "many unruly gallants packed thether by their friends to escape il destinies" at home.

What was worse, the gentlemen were apparently accompanied by the personal attendants that gentlemen thought necessary to make life bearable even in England. The colony's laborers "were for most part footmen, and such as they that were Adventurers brought to attend them, or such as they could perswade to goe with them, that never did know what a dayes worke was." Smith complained that he could never get any real work from more than thirty out of two hundred, and he later argued that of all the people sent to Virginia, a hundred good laborers "would have done more than a thousand of those that went." Samuel Argall and John Rolfe also argued that while a few gentlemen would have been useful to serve as military leaders, "to have more to wait and play than worke, or more commanders and officers than industrious labourers was not so necessarie."

The company may actually have had little choice in allowing gentlemen and their servants to make so large a number of their settlers. The gentlemen were paying their own way, and the company perhaps could not afford to deny them. But even if unencumbered by these volunteers, the colony might have foundered on the kind of settlers that the company itself did want to send. What the company wanted for Virginia was a variety of craftsmen. Richard Hakluyt had made up a list for Walter Raleigh that suggests the degree of specialization contemplated in an infant settlement: Hakluyt wanted both carpenters and joiners, tallow chandlers and wax chandlers, bowstave preparers and bowyers, fletchers and arrowhead makers, men to rough-hew pikestaffs and other men to finish them. In 1610 and again in 1611 the Virginia Company published lists of the kind of workers it wanted. Some were for building, making tools, and other jobs needed to keep the settlers alive, but the purpose of staying alive would be to see just what Virginia was good for and then start sending the goods back to England. Everybody hoped for gold and silver and jewels, so the colony needed refiners and mineral men. But they might have to settle for iron, so send men with all the skills needed to smelt it. The silk grass that Hariot described might produce something like silk, and there were native mulberry trees for growing worms, so send silk dressers. Sturgeon swam in the rivers, so send men who knew how to make caviar. And so on. Since not all the needed skills for Virginia's potential products were to be found in England, the company sought them abroad: glassmakers from Italy, millwrights from Holland, pitch boilers from Poland, vine dressers and saltmakers from France. The settlers of Virginia were expected to create a more complex, more varied economy than England itself possessed. As an extension of England, the colony would impart its variety and health to the mother country.

If the company had succeeded in filling the early ships for Virginia with as great a variety of specialized craftsmen as it wanted, the results might conceivably have been worse than they were. We have already noticed the effect of specialization in England itself, where the division of labor had become a source not of efficiency but of idleness. In Virginia the effect was magnified. Among the skilled men who started the settlement in 1607 were four carpenters, two bricklayers, one mason (apparently a higher skill than bricklaying), a blacksmith, a tailor, and a barber. The first "supply" in 1608 had six tailors, two goldsmiths, two refiners, two apothecaries, a blacksmith, a gunner (i.e., gunsmith?), a cooper, a tobacco pipe maker, a jeweler, and a perfumer. There were doubtless others, and being skilled they expected to be paid and fed for doing the kind of work for which they had been hired. Some were obviously useful. But others may have found themselves without means to use their special talents. If they were conscientious, the jeweler may have spent some time looking for jewels, the goldsmiths for gold, the perfumer for something to make perfume with. But when the search proved futile, it did not follow that they should or would exercise their skilled hands at any other tasks. It was not suitable for a perfumer or a jeweler or a goldsmith to put his hand to the hoe. Rather, they could join the gentlemen in genteel loafing while a handful of ordinary laborers worked at the ordinary labor of growing and gathering food.

The laborers could be required to work at whatever they were told to; but they were, by all accounts, too few and too feeble. The company may have rounded them up as it did in 1609 when it appealed to the mayor of London to rid the city of its "swarme of unnecessary inmates" by sending to Virginia any who were destitute and lying in the streets.

The company, then, partly by choice, partly by necessity, sent to the colony an oversupply of men who were not prepared to tackle the work essential to settling in a wilderness. In choosing prospective Virginians, the company did not look for men who would be particularly qualified to keep themselves alive in a new land. The company never considered the problem of staying alive in Virginia to be a serious one. And why should they have? England's swarming population had had ample experience in moving to new areas and staying alive. The people who drifted north and west into the pasture-farming areas got along, and the lands there were marginal, far poorer than those that awaited the settlers of tidewater Virginia. Though there may have been some farmers among the early settlers, no one for whom an occupation is given was listed as a husbandman or yeoman. And though thirty husbandmen were included in the 1611 list of men wanted, few came. As late as 1620 the colony reported "a great scarcity, or none at all" of "husbandmen truely bred," by which was meant farmers from the arable regions. In spite of the experience at Roanoke and in spite of the repeated starving times at Jamestown, the company simply did not envisage the provision of food as a serious problem. They sent some food supplies with every ship but never enough to last more than a few months. After that people should be able to do for themselves.

The colonists were apparently expected to live from the land like England's woodland and pasture people, who gave only small amounts of time to their small garden plots, cattle, and sheep and spent the rest in spinning, weaving, mining, handicrafts, and loafing. Virginians would spend their time on the more varied commodities of the New World. To enable them to live in this manner, the company sent cattle, swine, and sheep: and when Dale assigned them private plots of land, the plots were small, in keeping with the expectation that they would not spend much time at farming. The company never intended the colony to supply England with grain and did not even expect that agricultural products might be its principal exports. They did want to give sugar, silk, and wine a try, but most of the skills they sought showed an expectation of setting up extractive industries such as iron mining, smelting, salt-making, pitch making, and glassmaking. The major part of the colonists' work time was supposed to be devoted to processing the promised riches of the land for export; and with the establishment of martial law the company had the means of seeing that they put their shoulders to the task.

Unfortunately, the persons charged with directing the motley work force had a problem, quite apart from the overload of gentlemen and specialized craftsmen they had to contend with. During the early years of the colony they could find no riches to extract. They sent back some cedar wood, but lumber was too bulky a product to bear the cost of such long transportation to market. Sassafras was available in such quantities that the market for it quickly collapsed. The refiners found no gold or silver or even enough iron to be worth mining. Silk grass and silk proved to be a will-o'-the-wisp.

The result was a situation that taxed the patience both of the leaders and of the men they supervised. They had all come to Virginia with high expectations. Those who came as servants of the company had seven years in which to make their employers rich. After that they would be free to make themselves rich. But with no prospect of riches in sight for anybody, it was difficult to keep them even at the simple tasks required for staying alive or to find anything else for them to do.

The predicament of those in charge is reflected in the hours of work they prescribed for the colonists, which contrast sharply with those specified in the English Statute of Artificers. There was no point in demanding dawn-to-dusk toil unless there was work worth doing. When John Smith demanded that men work or starve, how much work did he demand? By his own account, "4 hours each day was spent in worke, the rest in pastimes and merry exercise." The governors who took charge after the reorganization of 1609 were equally modest in their demands. William Strachey, who was present, described the work program under Gates and De la Warr in the summer of 1610:

> It is to be understood that such as labor are not yet so taxed but that easily they perform the same and ever by ten of the clock they have done their morning's work: at what time they have their allowances [of food] set out ready for them, and until it be three of the clock again they take their own pleasure, and afterward, with the sunset, their day's labor is finished.

The Virginia Company offered much the same account of this period. According to a tract issued late in 1610, "the setled times of working (to effect all themselves, or the Adventurers neede desire) [require] no more pains then from sixe of clocke in the morning untill ten and from two of the clocke in the afternoone till foure." The long lunch period described here was spelled out in the *Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall.* If we calculate the total hours demanded of the work gangs between the various beatings of the drum, they come to roughly five to eight hours a day in summer and three to six hours in winter. And it is not to be supposed that these hours refer only to work done in the fields and that the men were expected to work at other tasks like building houses during the remainder of the day. The *Laws* indicate that at the appointed hours every laborer was to repair to his work "and every crafts man to his occupation, Smiths, Joyners, Carpenters, Brick makers, etc." Nor did military training occupy the time not spent in working. The *Laws* provided for different groups to train at different times and to be exempt from work during the training days. Although colonists and historians alike have condemned the *Laws* as harsh, and with reason, the working hours that the code prescribed sound astonishingly short to modern ears. They certainly fell way below those demanded at the time in English law; and they seem utterly irrational in a chronically starving community.

To have grown enough corn to feed the colony would have required only a fraction of the brief working time specified, yet it was not grown. Even in their free time men shunned the simple planting tasks that sufficed for the Indians.

And the very fact that the Indians did grow corn may be one more reason why the colonists did not. For the Indians presented a challenge that Englishmen were not prepared to meet, a challenge to their image of themselves, to their self-esteem, to their conviction of their own superiority over foreigners, and especially over barbarous foreigners like the Irish and the Indians.

If you were a colonist, you knew that your technology was superior to the Indians'. You knew that you were civilized, and they were savages. It was evident in your firearms, your clothing, your housing, your government, your religion. The Indians were supposed to be overcome with admiration and to join you in extracting riches from the country. But your superior technology had proved insufficient to extract anything. The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did. They even furnished you with the food that you somehow did not get around to growing enough of yourselves. To be thus condescended to by heathen savages was intolerable. And when your own people started deserting in order to live with them, it was too much. If it came to that, the whole enterprise of Virginia would be over. So you killed the Indians, tortured them, burned their villages, burned their cornfields. It proved your superiority in spite of your failures. And you gave similar treatment to any of your own people who succumbed to the savage way of life. But you still did not grow much corn. That was not what you had come to Virginia for.

By the time the colony was ten years old and an almost total loss to the men who had invested their lives and fortunes in it, only one ray of hope had appeared. It had been known, from the Roanoke experience, that the Indians grew and smoked a kind of tobacco; and tobacco grown in the Spanish West Indies was already being imported into England, where it sold at eighteen shillings a pound. Virginia tobacco had proved, like everything else, a disappointment; but one of the settlers, John Rolfe, tried some seeds of the West Indian variety, and the result was much better. The colonists stopped bowling in the streets and planted tobacco in them—and everywhere else that they could find open land. In 1617, ten years after the first landing at Jamestown, they shipped their first cargo to England. It was not up to Spanish tobacco, but it sold at three shillings a pound.

To the members of the company it was proof that they had been right in their estimate of the colony's potential. But the proof was bitter. Tobacco had at first been accepted as a medicine, good for a great variety of ailments. But what gave it its high price was the fact that people had started smoking it for fun. Used this way it was considered harmful and faintly immoral. People smoked it in taverns and brothels. Was Virginia to supplement England's economy and redeem her rogues by pandering to a new vice? The answer, of course, was yes. But the men who ran the Virginia Company, still aiming at ends of a higher nature, were not yet ready to take yes for an answer.

Karen Ordahl Kupperman **NO**

The Jamestown Project

Introduction: Creation Myths

In May 1607 a party of just over a hundred men and boys landed on the James River in Virginia and planted the colony they named Jamestown in honor of the English king. The little colony struggled through a horrible first decade in which it barely held on before the settlers began to find their footing on the path that would lead to stability and, eventually, success. Jamestown has always occupied an equivocal position in American history. It is celebrated as the first permanent English settlement in the territory that would become the United States. These colonists planted the tiny seed from which would grow a powerful nation where all the world's people would mingle.

And yet Jamestown makes us uncomfortable. The portrait of it that has come down to us depicts greedy, grasping colonists in America and their arrogant backers in England. The settlement's first years were marked by belligerent intrusions on the Chesapeake Algonquians which manifested mainly the ignorance of the English. Within Jamestown, life degenerated into a shambles of death and despair. When John Rolfe finally developed a marketable crop—tobacco—the colonists exploited the land and one another in the scramble for profits. Ultimately they would institute slavery for imported Africans in their insatiable search for profits. This is the creation story from hell.

Americans prefer to think of Plymouth colony in New England as our true foundation. This 1620 settlement, also composed of just over a hundred people, was a puritan foundation; about half of the settlers were separatists, that is, puritans who considered the Church of England so hopelessly corrupt that they separated themselves from it completely. By contrast, the puritans who settled Massachusetts Bay a decade later remained nominally within the established church. The Pilgrims at Plymouth, in our agreed-upon national story, are portrayed as the direct opposites of the Jamestown group. They were humble people who wanted only a place to worship God as they saw fit, and they lived on terms of amity with one another and with the neighboring Indians, relationships memorialized in the First Thanksgiving. They occupied family farms and were content with self-sufficiency. These are the forebears we prefer to acknowledge.

The good origins versus bad origins dichotomy is a false one based on a whole series of faulty premises. *The Jamestown Project* reconstructs America's

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origin story by placing the Virginia colony within its true context. By examining the maelstrom of previous plans and experiences that converged on the James, we can see the genuine accomplishment that emerged from the apparent wreckage wrought by the planters, and the efforts of the rank and file who largely brought it about.

In fact, through a decade's trial and error, Jamestown's ordinary settlers and their backers in England figured out what it would take to make an English colony work. This was an enormous accomplishment achieved in a very short period of time, a breakthrough that none of the other contemporaneous ventures was able to make. The ingredients for success—widespread ownership of land, control of taxation for public obligations through a representative assembly, the institution of a normal society through the inclusion of women, and development of a product that could be marketed profitably to sustain the economy—were beginning to be put in place by 1618 and were in full operation by 1620, when the next successful colony, Plymouth, was planted. Thus the Pilgrims were able to be relatively successful (after a disastrous first year) because they had studied Jamestown's record and had learned its lessons. Jamestown was not just the earliest English colony to survive; its true priority lies in its inventing the archetype of English colonization. All other successful English colonies followed the Jamestown model.

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England was a laggard in overseas ventures. By 1606, when the Virginia Company was organized and plans for the colony were laid, English merchants in collaboration with political leaders had begun to establish a role for their nation in the newly opening trades around the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and in the East. In these endeavors they were attempting to emulate, and often intrude on, the Spanish and Portuguese, united under the Spanish crown since 1580, who were the pioneers in creating the connections and bases through which trading operations were carried on.

New Spain was almost a century old when Jamestown was founded, and French traders had established firm partnerships with Indian nations in the fur trade along the St. Lawrence to the north. Spanish ships had scouted Chesapeake Bay repeatedly before concluding that the region would not repay the effort required to sustain settlement. The Spanish had planted St. Augustine on the Florida coast, and this, not Jamestown, was actually the first permanent European colony within the future United States; it was settled in 1565, almost half a century before Jamestown. And Santa Fe in New Mexico was founded shortly after Jamestown.

By 1607 English fishermen had been visiting the Newfoundland Banks and the New England coast for a century or more, and they built temporary settlements there, but no permanent English presence existed. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, a time when England and Spain were at war, English ships participated enthusiastically in privateering—licensed piracy against Spanish fleets traveling from the Caribbean to Seville. In the 1580s Sir Walter Ralegh's colony at Roanoke, within the Outer Banks of North Carolina, was initially designed to serve as a base for those patriotic privateers.

The first group of settlers sent to Roanoke in 1585 conformed to the classic model: a group of young men under military authority. Their governor was Captain Ralph Lane. As always with such a design, Lane found the settlers, whom he characterized as the "wylde menn of myne owene nacione," hard to control and motivate. By the end of the colony's first winter, relationships with the coastal Carolina Algonquians, on whom they depended for food, had broken down completely. They deserted the site early the next summer, and Lane scorned the whole enterprise, writing that "the discovery of a good mine by the goodnesse of God, or a passage to the Southsea, or someway to it, and nothing els can bring this country in request to be inhabited by our nation."

Ralegh and his associates did not give up on Roanoke. In fact, they were the first to try the successful model. In 1587 they sent a new colony composed of families under civil government, and each family was promised a large estate to own in the new land. They were intended to settle on Chesapeake Bay near where Jamestown would eventually be planted; the Lane colony's explorations had convinced them that this would be a better location from which good commodities could be produced. But this plan had no lasting influence, for the colony was abandoned, and the planters became famous as the Lost Colonists of Roanoke. Ralegh, meanwhile, was overwhelmed by other commitments and, ultimately, by loss of his favored status at court. So although Roanoke's failure only temporarily dampened English enthusiasm for establishing American colonies, Jamestown had to learn its lessons anew.

England's late entry into the American sweepstakes spawned myriad ventures. The stark dichotomy of Jamestown and Plymouth would have been unintelligible to contemporaries. Virginia was one of many attempts, now largely forgotten, all up and down the coast as far north as the Arctic Circle and south into the Caribbean, floated by English promoters in the last years of Queen Elizabeth's reign and the early years under James I, who succeeded her in 1603. But colonization was expensive and had to be financed by private enterprise. In the absence of any sure source of return on that investment, America took last place in most promoters' minds, after endeavors in the Mediterranean, Africa, and the East, where profits were much more certain. The voyages actually sent out were a fraction of the number of schemes proposed by that class of people who became known as "projectors"—those who made a career out of spinning projects.

English venturers were very conscious of being newcomers in all these places where they sought a foothold, and the keynote of their activities was improvisation. Everywhere they went, they necessarily employed trial and error—and error often predominated. Promoters laid plans, but the ordinary people who carried them out, often very young men and women, were the ones who had to deal with realities on the ground and who ultimately founded a successful colony. Many involved in early-seventeenth-century America—Indians, Europeans, and Africans—had had experience of other Atlantic and Mediterranean regions before they came together on the James River. Often their experience was as captives, or as individuals left behind when the ships on which they had arrived departed hurriedly in the face of dangers ranging from armed resistance to violent Atlantic storms. Those who could improvise were the ones who survived. And the knowledge of transatlantic others gained from these people informed planning and responses on all sides when Europeans attempted to create bases in America. All players brought vast experience, some relevant and some irrelevant, to the changed situations that European ventures created; and they drew on this experience, for good or ill, when confronted by the necessity of making choices.

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When James I came to the throne and inaugurated a policy of reconciliation with Spain that ended the lucrative privateering war, prominent policy makers and merchants decided that they would try to sustain a permanent foundation across the Atlantic in the form of a Chesapeake colony. England's being a latecomer meant that its colonists had to take the parts of North America that were left, the places that other countries had rejected as less promising for the kinds of rich products that made the expensive project of colonization worthwhile. Backers knew that the region was not the best choice for the goals they had in mind; at about the same time Jamestown was founded, other companies attempted to plant colonies in Guiana, on various islands in the Caribbean, and in Newfoundland, as well as a colony in Maine. Other locations had been tried in the last decades of the sixteenth century in addition to Roanoke. Jamestown did not stand out in people's minds as a uniquely important venture, as we might expect it to have done.

Jamestown's site, on a peninsula jutting out into the James River some fifty miles upstream from Chesapeake Bay, was chosen with defense against Spanish attack in mind. As far as the Spanish were concerned, the colony was within their territory. They had attacked and eliminated an earlier French settlement on the southern coast. Although Spain and England were officially at peace in 1607, no one expected it to last, and the Virginia Company believed that its little plantation would be a natural target. Although planners were concerned about the response of the Indians on whom they would intrude, their main fear lay in the rivalry with Spain.

The Spanish did make constant efforts to find out what was going on in Jamestown—much of the surviving information available today in actually in Spanish correspondence—and several times seriously considered mounting an attack. Expectations of such an assault also contributed to the composition of the early contingents and plans for governing them. Like Roanoke's backers, the Virginia Company assumed that a group of young men under the command of high-ranking governors was the structure that would work best in the uncertain world of American ventures. After all, such an arrangement would most closely resemble the English society from which they came. But these hierarchical arrangements did not survive the transatlantic passage well, primarily because the colony could not replicate the social relationships on which they traditionally rested. Just as Roanoke's governor, Ralph Lane, found dealing with English savages his biggest problem, ultimately the company deemed brute force under martial law necessary to keep the Jamestown colonists in line.

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It was the Chesapeake Algonquians who allowed Jamestown to become established as well as it did at the outset. The land on which the English settled belonged to the Paspahegh tribe, and the Paspaheghs, not surprisingly, deemed their presence unwelcome. Slowly the newcomers came to understand that many polities around Chesapeake Bay were under the influence of one great overlord, whom they came to know as Powhatan. The colonists called him an emperor, the closest European equivalent, but Powhatan was actually his title; eventually they were told that his given name was Wahunsenacawh. His daughter, whom we know by her nickname Pocahontas, became a principal intermediary between the cultures. Later the English learned two given names for her: Amonute and Matoaka.

Wahunsenacawh knew a great deal about Europeans in 1607. The Indians had seen many transatlantic voyagers over the course of the preceding century and understood well their strengths and weaknesses, and their aspirations and fears. They knew that Europeans, because they were so vulnerable, tended to overreact when they felt threatened, so American leaders had developed a series of strategies for handling them. Not only had these people encountered many ships that had sailed in and out of the bay in the sixteenth century, but also at least one man, Paquiquineo, had lived in Spanish colonies and even in Spain for a decade before returning in 1570 to his home at Paspahegh, the site of Jamestown. There is no question that the ramshackle Jamestown colony would have been cut off had the Indians decided to eliminate it. During the early years the men were dependent on the region's native people for their food supply, and relationships with the hard-pressed Indians grew increasingly tense, replicating the pattern at Roanoke.

The problems in the early years at Jamestown stemmed from actors on all sides drawing inappropriate lessons from previous encounters. Wahunsenacawh and his advisers did not foresee the eventual growth of the colony; they assumed that it would always be easy to manipulate this motley group, and that the little settlement could serve as a valuable source of tools, weapons, and other European manufactured goods. For their part, Jamestown's leaders, who were increasingly drawn from men with military experience in Europe's religious wars, believed that they could construct a society by enforcing sufficiently strict discipline, as they had done with English troops abroad. In the event, they were all wrong. Instead, the outcome grew from the trial-and-error efforts of the many ordinary people, most lost to the records, who found a way to build a society.

Only by examining the experience of all these people from around the Atlantic can we understand how and why Jamestown, however imperfectly, managed to hold on until it found the formula for recreating a successful version of English society abroad. Once that formula was devised, then all other colonies, beginning with Plymouth, had a much easier time of it and gained stability much more quickly. Jamestown's contribution was to develop the model for a true English colony, one that would actually work in America. This plan evolved out of the welter of failed experiments, false starts, and blind violence that characterized these early years. No one could say in 1607 how to make an English plantation in America function or even why investment in such a project was worthwhile. In the space of about a decade, some people, mainly those actually in Virginia, figured out what it would take and how to raise the revenue necessary to sustain English backers' interest. The results continued to be messy, and many people suffered. But the outlines of a genuinely American society, with all its virtues and defects, first emerged along the James.

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So, why does Virginia look so bad? One reason was its site, which proved to be a very poor choice for promoting the well-being of the people who tried to live there. The period during which both Roanoke and Jamestown were founded was a time of environmental crisis that made establishing thriving settlements even more difficult than it should have been. Alonso Suárez de Toledo urged Spain's King Philip II not to worry about other Europeans trying to settle on North America's east coast: "What would happen to foreigners there who must bring their subsistence from a great distance to an inhospitable coast? The land itself would wage war on them." Jamestown was notoriously unhealthy, and the colonists made it more unwholesome by the way they operated their little society. The Spanish never attacked them, and their relationships with Chesapeake area Indians were crucial to the life of the settlement.

Another reason for Jamestown's bad reputation lies in the nature of the records, which consist largely of complaints, special pleading, and excuses sent by colonists back to their patrons in England. Most of the surviving records, not surprisingly, were produced by leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. The migrants had been sent over with notoriously unrealizable goals: to find a good source of wealth, preferably precious metals, or a passage to the Pacific and the riches of Asia. Prominent men in the colony, faced with the problem of explaining why they were not sending back the rich products investors demanded, or why they had not found the passage to the Pacific, could not speak the simple truth: that getting started is extremely difficult, and they would need support for many years just to become established before any valuable products could be expected. Investors in the seventeenth century looked to the next quarterly report as much as those in the twenty-first, and they had the choice of many other potential ventures from which the returns were more secure. Had they known that Virginia would absorb money over many years with no profit, the colony would have been abandoned at the outset—as so many others were. From the company's point of view, the colony was nothing but a drain on its resources, eating up huge amounts of money in supplies and new settlers without ever repaying the backers' investment, much less returning a profit.

The colonists, for their part, desperately wrote letter after letter explaining that colonization was hard, that they had to get set up before they could become self-sustaining, and that they needed support while they did that. Once they were established, then there would be time to make the efforts required to find a source of profit; but it was foolish and counterproductive to pressure them to do it at the beginning. One unspoken message ran through all these reports: Please do not abandon us. Unable to tell the truth in the early struggling years—or even to be sure what the truth was—colonial leaders blamed one another, and especially the rank and file, who were characterized in much of the correspondence as "the scum of the earth." Elites did not know how to organize and motivate them for the necessary work; they simply blamed the men for not acting as they wanted them to. Difficulties in controlling the colonists exacerbated the worsening relationship between the settlers and the Indians on whom they depended, though the leaders blamed the Indians on whom they had intruded for not supporting the colony with food as they wished.

But these same records, if we read beyond the surface noise of complaint and charge and countercharge, demonstrate that some people on the ground were drawing on the Atlantic and Mediterranean experience many had brought to the colony and were improvising relationships with the people and the land that finally achieved a measure of stability and growth in the colony. Often it was just this sort of improvisation, undertaken by ordinary people, that made elites nervous brought forth their accusations of malfeasance. Whereas many of the leaders whose vitriol figures so prominently in the records left the Chesapeake to promote and participate in other ventures after a few years, ordinary colonists were the ones who set about the task of building families and family farms. The other ventures attempted in the first decade of the seventeenth century all failed. The truly remarkable thing about Jamestown is that it somehow survived through years of hardship and discouragement until a few settlers finally embarked on the course to success at the end of the 1610s. This book is an examination of the various kinds of experiences and backgrounds that came together in the Jamestown project to make this improbable survival—and the evolution of the successful archetype—possible. . . .

* * *

Underneath the flurry of charges and countercharges, and with new kinds of evidence becoming available, one can see signs that normal patterns were increasingly possible as colonists made lives for themselves. Archaeological investigation has demonstrated that the colonists really were engaged in the kinds of diversified production that the company kept calling for, and that this engagement actually intensified after company control ended. As Ralph Hamor had testified, a genuine town was begun to the east of the fort in about 1618; a trained surveyor laid out twelve-acre lots for "James Cittie" in the early 1620s, and settlers were soon moving out beyond the confines of the city to the island's eastern end. Moreover, they had started building in brick. All the leading colonists lived clustered together in the "New Town." Archaeologists have uncovered signs of extensive mercantile activity and have excavated the workshop of gunsmith John Jackson, who took pity on Richard Frethorne in Jamestown. Foundations of shops specializing in pottery making, brewing, and apothecary work have also been unearthed. Governor Wyatt and George Sandys fostered the beginning of some industries; the great period of varied production on the island occurred after 1625 and continued through the 1630s. John Harvey, who arrived in 1623 after three years in Guiana and became governor in 1628, particularly pushed for such development.

Moreover, documentary excavations have discovered records of genuine communities composed of families growing up away from Jemestown—near the mouth of the James River and upriver close to the falls, and on the Eastern Shore, where Thomas Savage had taken up residence and established a family. These communities, like contemporary Plymouth in New England, increasingly resembled English country villages. The census ordered in 1624 as part of the royal investigation revealed that the planters who had been in America the longest were most likely to have families. Although the planned college never materialized, Bernard Symmes, one of the separatist puritans in Virginia, endowed the first free school in English America in 1634.

As we draw conclusions about the nature of Virginia's founding years, Bernard Symmes presents a challenge to received wisdom. It is a shock to learn that that the first English commitment to provide free education was in Virginia. Moreover, the Virginia Company's great planned effort to carry Christianity to the Indians, with contributions from many people on both sides of the Atlantic, was unique. Nothing on that scale was thought of again until the creation of formal organizations such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at the end of the seventeenth century.

Because attention then focused on the revocation of the Virginia Company's charter and charges against the leadership, the first lesson of the great attack of 1622—that Chesapeake Algonquians might welcome an English presence for the "book of the world" but would resist attempts to introduce the "book of the spirit"—was lost, as it had been with the sixteenth-century Jesuit mission and Don Luis/Paquiquineo's rejection of Christianity. Instead colonists drew conclusions about the Indians' fundamental nature and foresaw a future of separation more than convergence.

The colonists' level of engagement in economic pursuits, together with their growing ability to produce a marketable tobacco crop, also led to the 1622 rupture as the Chesapeake Algonquians came to understand how threatening a fully established and expanding English presence would be to their traditional life and its necessary land base. It would have been extremely difficult to predict in 1617 that the colony would grow so dramatically in the coming years. Thus it was not their stupidity and fecklessness but the beginnings of colonists' success that led Opechancanough to try to extirpate them. The 1630s saw a massive English migration into the Chesapeake, overwhelming Indian attempts to control the terms of relationships.

The Chesapeake remained a dangerous place for newcomers, and many died in their first few years, the seasoning period. Those who survived to finish their terms of servitude joined or helped to establish the communities growing up along the James or on the Eastern Shore. Some men who had been able to establish themselves early on added incrementally to their acreage by paying servants' passage over; in gaining the fifty-acre headright for each servant, they laid the foundation for future large plantations. But in these decades most farms were a few hundred acres or less. For the fortunate ones who survived the early years and were able to marry, the opportunity to have a farm of their own represented realization of an American dream.

It was Captain John Smith who, most prominently among his contemporaries, drew the true lessons of the Jamestown experience. After he left Virginia he spent the rest of his life, except for a brief trip to New England in 1614, at home writing about colonization. New England, then called Norembega, had been deemed a hostile environment after the failure of the Sagadahoc colony in the frozen winter of 1607. Smith coined the name "New England," one of the great propaganda strokes in American history, to bolster his contention that the northern environment was healthier for English bodies and more conducive to English life than the Chesapeake. He wrote several books about his and others' American experiences and in 1624, as the government was investigating the Virginia Company, he expanded on all he had written in his great work, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England and the Summer Isles*. This was the first book that analyzed the whole record of English colonization in America and drew its lessons; in its conclusion he lamented his own inability to convince investors of the right way to proceed. He wrote that American ventures had been "my children, for they have beene my Wife, my Hawks, Hounds, my Cards, my Dice, and in totall, my best content."

Smith died at the age of fifty-one in 1631. In his last years he published two smaller books. One was his autobiography, where he told the story of his early life and Turkish captivity for the first time and brought the *Generall Historie* up to date. Then in his final year, as the huge fleet for Massachusetts Bay was gathering, he wrote a more philosophical book, *Advertisements For the unexperienced Planters of New-England, or any-where*. In this book he reiterated a case he had been making for some time: that fishing, the economic base on which New England was to be founded, was far more secure than illusory searches for gold or a passage to Asia—or a nonessential product like tobacco. America needed people who were not afraid to get their hands dirty. "Let not the meanness of the word fish distaste you." He maintained that the sea was as rich as the great silver mine at Potosí, and the fish stocks, unlike mines, were a renewable resource.

Although his book was addressed to Massachusetts Bay's founders—and there is some evidence that they read his books—his plan was drawn from analysis of Virginia's record, especially the revised program after 1618. His central theme, the sum of all experience thus far, was that colonization succeeded only where each family had a stake in the outcome and where merchants rather than aristocrats did the planning. He counseled New England's leaders "not to stand too much upon the letting, setting, or selling those wild Countries, nor impose too much upon the commonalty . . . for present gain." Rather, they should weld colonists to the project by giving each man as much land as he could reasonably manage for "him and his heires for ever."

All colonization projects, whether in Ireland or in America, had grappled with the fundamental question of how policy makers could motivate and control populations of migrants. Virginia's early history, especially as it was formulated out of the complaints and unrealistic claims on all sides, has been deemed a dismal tale of failure. Even the most severe martial law could not force colonists to thrive and lead productive lives. But, as John Smith explained to this readers, the Jamestown experience had produced a fundamental understanding about human psychology. Devolution—transfer of control to America—and fostering initiative on colonists' own account were the answer to all those questions about how to motivate people and create new societies. The key to building English societies abroad, however messy and incomplete, was discovered in Virginia and all successful colonies henceforth followed its model.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was the Settlement of Jamestown a Fiasco?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. Professor Morgan argues that the earliest Virginia colonists were lazy and out of touch with the problems they encountered in adjusting to the new world environment. Critically analyze whether this was due to:
   a. An ethnocentric superior European worldview.
   b. Constant warfare with the Indians.
   c. Poor organization and direction of the colonies.
   d. Early attempts at communal farms.
   e. Lack of individual initiative.
   f. Lack of agriculture skills.
   g. Social class background as gentlemen rather than as farmers.
   h. Unrealistic attempts at developing extractive industries in mining without proper resources.
2. Critically analyze the following two statements by Professor Edmund S. Morgan:
   a. "The company, then, partly by choice, partly by necessity, sent to the colonies an oversupply of men who were not prepared to tackle the work essential to settling in a wilderness."
   b. "The colonists were apparently expected to live from the land like England's woodland and pasture people, who gave only small amounts of time to their small garden plots, cattle, and sheep and spent the rest in spinning, weaving, mining, handicrafts, and loafing."
3. Professor Kupperman argues that "the Jamestown Project" obtained a bad reputation in the history books unfairly because of the following:
   a. There was an environmental crisis in the colony.
   b. Starting any colony is difficult because of the necessity of trial and error methods.
   c. The historical records are full of letters of complaints and special pleading.
4. Critically evaluate this statement of Professor Kupperman: "The truly remarkable thing about Jamestown is that it somehow survived through years of hardship and discouragement until a few settlers finally embarked on the course to success at the end of the 1610s."
5. Compare, contrast, and critically evaluate the arguments of Morgan and Kupperman that consider Jamestown either a "fiasco" or a "successful project." Where do their arguments converge and diverge?

Is There Common Ground?

Both Morgan and Kupperman examine the Jamestown experiment from a European perspective. Was the colony a failure or did it establish a successful model for the other English colonies to follow? Newer interpretations based on social history utilize race, class, and gender perspectives. For example, how did the Indian tribes respond to the "discovery" of the new world? How important were women in populating a colony depleted by diseases? Was the slave system responsible for the economic success of the tobacco plantations? Did the slave system create a sizeable income inequality gap between the indentured servants, tenant farmers, and small landowners versus the large plantation owners?

Additional Resources

Five review essays are indispensable for students who are willing to tackle the latest scholarship. See Edmund S. Morgan and Marie Morgan, "Our Shaky Beginnings," *The New York Review of Books* (April 26, 2007); Alan Taylor, "The Other Founding," *The New York Republic* (September 24, 2007); Jill Lepore, "Our Town," *The New Yorker* (April 2, 2007). Laurie L. Mielke, "A Tale Both Old and New: Jamestown at 400," *The American Quarterly* (March 2008); and Natalie Zacek, "Review of Kupperman and Kelv . . . ," *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 2007).

Two popular essays on Jamestown celebrating the 400th anniversary are "America at 400: How Jamestown Made Us Who We Are," *Time Magazine* (May 7, 2007) and "The First Americans: What Really Happened at Jamestown," *U.S. News and World Report* (January 29–February 5, 2007).

For the latest scholarship which embraces both a multi-ethnic and global perspective see the essays on *The Atlantic World and Virginia 1550–1624,* ed., Peter C. Mancall (University of North Carolina Press, 2007) which had its origins in a conference held at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture held in Williamsburg, VA, March 4–7, 2004. See also Tim Hashaw, *The Birth of Black America: The First African Americans and the Pursuit of Freedom at Jamestown* (Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007).

Professor Edmund S. Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (Norton, 1975) remains the classic text on seventeenth-century Virginia even 30 years after it was first published. Recently, several books on Jamestown have been written which supplement but do not necessarily replace Morgan's narrative. In 1994, William M. Kelso, director of archeology for the Jamestown Rediscovery Project, oversaw the unearthing of the original Jamestown site. Not only was the palisade uncovered which surrounded the village, but also included were seven hundred thousand artifacts of human skeletons, dogs, armor, tools, and even a fancy silver "ear picker." Kelso's *Jamestown the Buried Truth* (University of Virginia Press, 2006) believes that the seeds of democracy lay not at Plymouth Rock, but rather are buried at Jamestown.

The merger between anthropology and history has caused historians to take a more sympathetic view of the early colonists' worldview and lifestyle than does Professor Morgan. See the works of James Horn, *A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (Basic Books, 2005); and Benjamin Wooley, *Savage Kingdom: The True Story of Jamestown, 1607 and the Settlement of America* (Harper Collins, 2006).

Two readable biographies of Jamestown's most flamboyant and important leader are Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler, *Captain John Smith: Jamestown and the Birth of the American Dream* (John Wiley & Sons, 2006) and the older but student-friendly *American Genesis: Captain John Smith and the Founding of Virginia* (Little, Brown and Company, 1975) written by Alden T. Vaughan for the Library of American Biography series and whose analysis remains poignant today: "In John Smith," says Vaughan, "young America found a prototype of itself; bold, energetic, and optimistic; at the same time, brash, intolerant, overly proud of its achievements and overly solicitous of approval. Such a symbol fit with ease the boundless land, so laden with riches, and the aggressive settlers who conquered it." Unlike most swashbucklers, Smith was a prolific writer. James Horn has compiled 1300 pages of *Captain John Smith: Writings with Other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown and the First English Settlement of America* (Library of America, 2007) and a shorter edition of the writings of *Captain John Smith*, edited by Karen Ordahl Kupperman (University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

ISSUE 3

Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable?

YES: Kevin Kenny, from *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

NO: Cynthia J. Van Zandt, from *Brothers Among Nations: The Pursuit of Intercultural Alliances in Early America, 1580–1660* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Understand the variety of responses between European colonists to the New World and Native Americans.
- Summarize William Penn's vision of Pennsylvania.
- Describe the differing world views held by Europeans and Native Americans regarding the concept of property.
- Identify the goals of the Paxton Boys.
- Discuss the nature of trade alliances in the colonial Chesapeake.
- Explain the ultimate reason for the failure of colonial trade alliances between Europeans and various Native American tribes.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Kevin Kenny argues that European colonists' demands for privately owned land condemned William Penn's vision of amicable relations with local Native Americans to failure and guaranteed hostilities that ultimately destroyed Indian culture and produced the extermination of even the most peaceful tribes in Pennsylvania.

NO: Cynthia J. Van Zandt claims that trade alliances between English colonists and Native Americans continued even despite military hostilities between the two groups and fell victim not to racial or cultural differences, but rather from conflicts among the various European nations vying for hegemony in the New World.

Relations between Native Americans and Europeans were marred by the difficulties that arose from people of very different cultures encountering each other for the first time. These encounters led to inaccurate perceptions, misunderstandings, and failed expectations. While at first the American Indians deified the explorers, experience soon taught them to do otherwise. European opinion ran the gamut from admiration to contempt; for example, some European poets and painters who expressed admiration for the Noble Savage while other Europeans accepted as a rationalization for genocide the sentiment that "the only good savage is a dead one."

Spanish, French, Dutch, and English treatment of Native Americans differed and was based to a considerable extent on each nation's hopes about the New World and how it could be subordinated to the Old. The Spanish exploited the Indians most directly, taking their gold and silver, transforming their government, religion, and society, and even occasionally enslaving them. The French were less of a menace than the others because there were fewer of them and because many French immigrants were itinerant trappers and priests rather than settlers. The Dutch presence in North America was relatively short-lived. In the long run, the emigration from the British Isles was the most threatening of all. Entire families came from England, and they were determined to establish a permanent home in the wilderness.

The juxtaposition of Native American and English from the Atlantic to the Appalachians resulted sometimes in coexistence, other times in enmity. William Bradford's account of the Pilgrims' arrival at Cape Cod describes the insecurity the new migrants felt as they disembarked on American soil. "[T]hey had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather beaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor. . . . Besides, what could they see but a hideous and deserted wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men. . . . If they looked behind them there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now a main bar and gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world." Historical hindsight, however, suggests that if anyone should have expressed fears about the unfolding encounter in the Western Hemisphere, it should have been the Native Americans because their numbers declined by as much as 95 percent in the first century following Columbus's arrival. Although some of this decline can be attributed to violent encounters with Europeans, there seems to have been a more hostile (and far less visible) force at work. As historian William McNeill has suggested, the main weapon that overwhelmed indigenous peoples in the Americas was the Europeans' breath which transmitted disease germs for which most American Indians had no immunities.

Upon arrival, English settlers depended on the Indians' generosity in sharing the techniques of wilderness survival. Puritan clergymen tried to save their neighbors' souls, going so far as to translate the Bible into dialects, but they were not as successful at conversion as the French Jesuits and Spanish Franciscans. Attempts at coexistence did not smooth over the tension between the English and the Indians. They did not see eye to eye, for example, about the uses of the environment. Indian agriculture, in the eyes of English settlers, was neither intense nor efficient. Native Americans observed that white settlers consumed larger amounts of food per person and cultivated not only for themselves but also for towns and villages that bought the surplus. Subsistence farming collided with the market economy.

Large-scale violence erupted in Virginia in the 1620s, the 1640s, and the 1670s. In the latter decade, frontiersmen in the Virginia piedmont led by Nathaniel Bacon attacked tribes living in the Appalachian foothills. In New England, from the 1630s through the 1670s, Pequots, Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Mohegans, Podunks, and Nipmunks united to stop the encroachments into their woodlands and hunting grounds. King Philip's War lasted from June 1675 to September 1676, with isolated raids stretching on until 1678. Casualties rose into the hundreds, and Anglo-Indian relations deteriorated.

In the next century Spain, France, and England disputed each other's North American claims, and Native Americans joined sides, usually as the allies of France against England. These great wars of the eighteenth century ended in 1763 with England's victory, but disputes over territorial expansion continued. Colonial officials objected to the Proclamation of 1763 by which King George III's imperial government forbade his subjects from settling west of the Appalachian watershed. The area from those mountains to the Mississippi River, acquired from France at the recently negotiated Peace of Paris, was designated as an Indian reservation. From 1763 to 1783, as Anglo-colonial relations moved from disagreement to combat to independence, the London government consistently sided with the Native Americans.

The full range of experiences of Europeans encountering Native Americans in the New World does not lend itself to easy, unalterable conclusions regarding the nature of those contacts. The consequences of these interactions depended upon when and where they took place and which particular groups were involved, and there was rarely any constant or consistent pattern of behavior. One tribe might experience cordial relations with European colonists at one point in time but not another. A particular tribe would get along well with the French but not the English or Dutch; in another generation, the same tribe might enter into an alliance with its former enemies. A case in point is the history of Indian–white relations in early Virginia. The colonists participating in the Jamestown expedition, for example, were attacked by a group of Indians almost as soon as they set foot on American soil. A few months later, however, Powhatan, the dominant chief in the region, provided essential food supplies to the Jamestown residents who were suffering from disease and hunger. By the latter part of 1608, however, the colonists, under the leadership of John Smith, had begun to take an antagonistic stance toward Powhatan and his people. Smith attempted to extort food supplies from the Indians by threatening to burn their villages and canoes. These hostilities continued long after Smith's departure from Virginia and did not end until the 1640s, when colonial leaders signed a formal treaty with the Powhatan Confederacy.

Was conflict inevitable? Some scholars clearly believe that differences in worldview, race, or culture placed European settlers on a crash course with the Native Americans they encountered. David E. Stannard, for example, in *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*

(Oxford University Press, 1992), examines conflicts between native Americans and colonists in Virginia and New England over the course of the first century of colonization in British North America and concludes that the English settlers followed a conscious, concerted effort to exterminate the indigenous peoples who stood in their way. On the other hand, Richard Johnson's essay "The Search for a Usable Indian: An Aspect of the Defense of Colonial New England," *Journal of American History* (December 1977) recognizes the sporadic clashes that occurred between Indians and colonists but demonstrates that some Native Americans adopted the white man's religion and provided military support to colonists that engendered lasting friendships and bonds of loyalty.

In the YES and NO selections, Kevin Kenny and Cynthia Van Zandt both recognize that amicable relations could be fleeting. Kenny examines the colony of Pennsylvania where founder William Penn attempted a "holy experiment" whereby Indians and colonists would live together in harmony. This utopian vision, however, fell apart against the backdrop of fraud, intimidation, and land lust and culminated in an armed assault by a group of frontier militiamen, the Paxton Boys, who annihilated a small community of harmless Conestoga Indians in 1763.

Cynthia Van Zandt's essay focuses upon a trade alliance established by William Claiborne with the Susquehannocks in Virginia in the 1630s. This alliance showcases English understanding of the benefits that could be derived from allying with powerful Indian nations in the early years of European settlement and challenges the notion that cultural differences made such agreements impossible to maintain. According to Van Zandt, not even military hostilities destroyed the desire by Europeans to form alliances with native peoples.

YES

Kevin Kenny

Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment

The Paxton Boys struck Conestoga Indiantown at dawn on December 14, 1763. "Fifty-seven Men, from some of our Frontier Townships, who had projected the Destruction of this little Commonwealth," Benjamin Franklin wrote in his *Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County*, "came, all well-mounted, and armed with Firelocks, Hangers [a kind of short sword] and Hatchets, having travelled through the Country in the Night, to *Conestogoe* Manor." Only six Indians were in the town at the time, "the rest being out among the neighbouring White People, some to sell the Baskets, Brooms and Bowls they manufactured." The Paxton Boys, frontier militiamen on an unauthorized expedition, killed these six and burned their settlement to the ground.

The Conestoga Indians lived on a 500-acre tract near the town of Lancaster, which William Penn had set aside for them seventy years earlier. By 1763 only twenty Conestogas were living there—seven men, five women, and eight children. They survived by raising a little corn, begging at local farms, soliciting food and clothing from the provincial government, and selling their homemade brooms and baskets. Rhoda Barber, born three years after the Paxton Boy massacres, recalled in old age what her family had told her about the Conestogas. They "were entirely peaceable," she wrote, "and seem'd as much afraid of the other Indians as the whites were." Her older brother and sisters used to spend whole days with them and were "so attached to them they could not bear to hear them refus'd anything they ask'd for." The Indians "often spent the night by the kitchen fire of the farms round about" and were "much attached to the white people, calling their children after their favorite neighbours."

Local magistrates removed the remaining fourteen Conestoga Indians to the Lancaster workhouse for their safety, but on December 27 the Paxton Boys rode into that town and finished the job they had started two weeks earlier. Fifty men, "armed as before, dismounting, went directly to the Work-house and by Violence broke open the Door," Franklin observed, "and entered with the utmost Fury in their Countenances." Within a matter of minutes they

From *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* by Kenny, Kevin, (Oxford University Press, 2009). Copyright © 2009 by Oxford University Press. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press (USA).

had slaughtered the fourteen Indians sheltering inside, including the eight children. After the massacres, the Paxton Boys claimed that Conestoga Indiantown was theirs by right of conquest. Some of them tried to settle on the site of the abandoned town, but provincial officials tore down their cabins and drove them off. The Paxton Boys did not succeed in their goal of seizing land, but by annihilating the Conestoga Indians they repudiated the utopian vision laid down by William Penn when he founded Pennsylvania eighty years before.

Inspired by Quaker principles of compassion and tolerance, Penn saw his colony as a "holy experiment" in which Christians and Indians could live together in harmony. He referred to this ideal society as the "Peaceable Kingdom." The nineteenth-century Quaker artist Edward Hicks produced a series of allegorical paintings of the Peaceable Kingdom, juxtaposing a theme from the Book of Isaiah with Penn's meetings with the Delaware Indians. In pursuit of this harmonious vision, Penn treated the Indians in his province with unusual respect and decency. The Conestogas called him "Onas" and the Delawares knew him as "Miquon"; both words mean "feather," referring to the mysterious new quill pen wielded at treaty negotiations. The Conestogas conferred the name Onas on Penn's children and grandchildren as well, in the hope that they might embody his benign spirit.

Yet for all Penn's decency, his holy experiment rested firmly on colonialist foundations. There would have been no Pennsylvania, after all, had he not received a gift of 29 million acres from Charles II in 1681—a gift that made him the largest individual landlord in the British Empire. Within his immense charter, Penn purchased land from Indians fairly and openly. But he did not do so simply out of benevolence. He needed to free the land of prior titles so that he could sell it to settlers and begin to recoup the vast expenses incurred in setting up his colony. As an English landlord, Penn naturally believed that land could be privately owned by individuals and that its occupants could permanently relinquish their title in return for money or goods. This idea ran counter to the ethos of Pennsylvania's Indians, who held their land in tribal trusts rather than as individuals and used it to sustain life rather than to make a profit. Indians often sold the same piece of land on multiple occasions, transferring rights of use and occupancy rather than absolute ownership. Penn wanted harmony with Indians, but he also needed to own their land outright. His holy experiment, therefore, never properly took root. But it left an enduring legacy: Pennsylvania did not fight its first war against Indians until the 1750s, when the Delawares and Shawnees, driven ever westward as they lost their land, launched devastating attacks on the province.

William Penn's holy experiment, already in decline by the time of his death in 1718, disintegrated gradually over the next few decades and collapsed during the Indian wars of the 1750s and 1760s. His son Thomas reverted to Anglicanism, casting off the Quaker faith that sustained his father's humane benevolence. Thomas Penn and his brothers continued to negotiate with Indians, but, unhampered by religious scruples, they did not hesitate to use fraud and intimidation. In 1737 they swindled the Delawares out of a tract of land almost as big as Rhode Island in a sordid transaction known as the "Walking Purchase." Although William Penn's legacy ensured that relations with Indians were at first more harmonious in Pennsylvania than in other American colonies, the eventual outcome was everywhere the same: expropriation, conquest, and extermination. The colony moved from the false dawn of Penn's holy experiment, through the avarice and subterfuge of his sons, to the carnage of the French and Indian War and the ruthless brutality of the Paxton Boys. By the end of 1763, with the annihilation of the Conestoga Indians, what was left of the Peaceable Kingdom had broken down entirely.

The Paxton Boys were Pennsylvania's most aggressive colonialists. Very little is known about them as individuals, but their general profile is clear. They lived in the hill country of northwestern Lancaster County and across the Susquehanna River in Cumberland County. Contemporaries referred to the region as the "frontier," and it was the first to be attacked during Indian wars. Some of the Paxton Boys were squatters, others farmed small plots of low-quality land; all of them hated Indians, and they detested the provincial government for failing to protect them during wartime. Those who were American-born—the great majority—were the children of settlers who came to Pennsylvania from the northern Irish province of Ulster. Contemporary accounts agree that all of them were Presbyterians.

On both sides of the Atlantic, Ulster Presbyterians served as a military and cultural buffer between zones of perceived civility and barbarity, separating Anglicans from Catholics in Ireland and eastern elites from Indians in the American colonies. What they wanted above all else was personal security and land to call their own. Ulster settlers began to arrive in Pennsylvania at the beginning of the eighteenth century, intruding on unpurchased Indian lands as squatters, to the consternation of the provincial government. As squatters they immediately came into conflict with the Penn family, who were simultaneously the rulers and landlords of the province. As early as 1730, a generation before the Paxton Boys, a group of Ulster squatters temporarily occupied Conestoga Manor, declaring that it was "against the Laws of God and Nature that so much Land Should lie idle while so many Christians wanted it to labour on and raise their Bread."

Idle land, hungry Christians, and the "Laws of God and Nature"—these were the words used to justify the dispossession of Indians in the eighteenth century. Together they gave rise to a powerful argument on the relationship between private property and colonialism. The English political philosopher John Locke stated the case cogently in 1690. God had given the earth "to mankind in common," Locke believed, but private property emerged when men applied their labor to nature. By rendering land more productive they gave it value, which properly belonged to the individuals who did the work. Making land productive was not just an opportunity for individual enrichment; it was also a religious obligation. "God, when he gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour, and the penury of his condition required it of him," Locke explained. "God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth, *i.e.* improve it for the benefit of life, and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour."

But what about those who did not wish to "subdue" the land and did not see it as a commodity to be exploited? What, in other words, of the Indians in the "wild woods and uncultivated waste of *America,*" as Locke put it, "left to nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry"? European settlers had the opportunity to seize this "waste" land for themselves; indeed, they were morally obliged to do so, provided they respected the property rights of other colonists. William Penn found this idea anathema. He had roo much respect for Indians to treat them in this way, and he protected their interests as well as his own by decreeing that settlers could acquire land only through his government rather than by direct purchase or seizure. For the Paxton Boys, on the other hand, the idea of seizing Indian land made perfect sense. They were not in the habit of reading John Locke in their spare time; their actions were driven not by political theory but by a desperate desire for land and safety during wartime. They scorned the property rights of other colonists, from the proprietary government downward.

The Paxton Boys used violence as their sale tactic. Locke, by contrast, had argued that violence toward Indians was unnecessary because English claims to American land already rested on impregnable economic and religious grounds. For the same reason, Indians deserved no compensation for idle land lost to industrious settlers. In practice this model of peaceful dispossession never worked; it was a smokescreen for forcing Indians off the land. The Paxton Boys pushed the logic of displacement to its most brutal extreme. Nobody was arrested or prosecuted after the massacres, which encouraged other settlers to behave in similar ways. The result was wave after wave of violence on the frontier, culminating in total war against Indians during the American Revolution. The Paxton Boys' brutality was anomalous as late as 1763, in Pennsylvania at least; by the time of the American Revolution, it had become commonplace.

During the Revolution waging total war against Indians became an act of patriotism. The anti-Indian campaigns of the Revolutionary War enacted the brutal logic of the Paxton Boys on a devastating scale. Now the violence was systematic rather than sporadic. In 1779 General John Sullivan led an expedition up the Susquehanna River to Iroquoia, where he waged a scorched-earth campaign against the Six Nations, destroying forty Iroquois villages, including the sacred ceremonial center of Onondaga. Pennsylvania militiamen similarly devastated the Ohio country. At the end of the war Britain transferred to the United States most of North America east of the Mississippi and south of Canada. Because four of the Iroquois nations had fought on the British side, the Iroquois confederacy forfeited all territory to which it laid claim. The United States assumed sovereignty over this vast expanse of Indian land by right of conquest.

A few years before the Revolution the Penn family gave exclusive use of the farm at Conestoga Indiantown to an Anglican minister named Thomas Barton as a reward for his years of service to the proprietary interest. Barton had outspokenly defended the Paxton Boys in a pamphlet published directly after the massacres, yet he had no sympathy for the idea that Conestoga Indiantown rightfully belonged to them. The Paxton Boys, he noted, "took possession of this Farm—built Cabbins and settled upon it under the ridiculous notion of a *right by Conquest.*" Yet this "ridiculous notion" was fast becoming ubiquitous on the frontier even as Barton wrote. When the newly founded

Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography published his letter in 1880, the editors noted that the Paxton Boys had believed "they stood in the same position of a nation who conquered its neighbors and enemies by force of arms." The editors also observed that "only a few years later this idea was carried to a successful conclusion by our patriotic forefathers." This statement was not intended ironically or critically. The Paxton Boys did more than declare an end to Pennsylvania's Peaceable Kingdom. They ushered in the new order that reached fruition during the American Revolution.

. . . In the opening decades of the eighteenth century Pennsylvania forged an alliance with the powerful Iroquois confederacy, which claimed the small Indian nations of Pennsylvania as "tributaries" by right of conquest. The Iroquois invariably claimed to have defeated the ancestors of the subordinate nations in battle; although details of a decisive military victory were often lacking, they backed up the claim with elaborate diplomacy and the threat of force. The Iroquois sometimes required the subject nations to pay a tribute in the form of wampum (beads made from polished shells, woven onto strings or belts and used for currency and ceremonial purposes) or other gifts. More important, they denied their tributaries two fundamental rights: the power to buy or sell land and the power to go to war. Pennsylvania's emerging alliance with the Iroquois, which gave both parties leverage against the colony of New York, hastened the dispossession of the Delaware Indians, most of whom moved across the Susquehanna River to the Ohio country.

. . . [T]he French and Indian War . . . set against the back-drop of the larger imperial conflict that engulfed North America between 1754 and 1763, . . . originated in the Ohio country, triggered in part by Virginian adventurers led by George Washington. When a British expedition under General Edward Braddock suffered catastrophic defeat near the French stronghold of Fort Duquesne in 1755, the western Delawares, led by three remarkable brothers, Shingas, Pisquetomen, and Tamaqua, went to war against Pennsylvania. By the end of the year Teedyuscung, the self-styled king of the eastern Delawares, had joined the campaign. In 1756 Pennsylvania took the fateful step of going to war for the first time in its history. The declaration of war, which included scalp bounties for Indians, signaled the collapse of the Peaceable Kingdom and provoked a crisis among Pennsylvania's small but influential faction of strict pacifist Quakers, led by Israel Pemberton Jr., who supported the Delawares' efforts to negotiate a peace with Pennsylvania. The treaty negotiations, combined with the conquest of Fort Duquesne, brought the fighting in Pennsylvania to an end in 1758. But memories of the French and Indian War died hard among frontier settlers, who blamed the Quakers for failing to provide adequate defense and harbored deep suspicions about local Indians, including the Conestogas.

No sooner had the French and Indian War ended with the first Peace of Paris in 1763 than the great Indian uprising known as Pontiac's War began. . . . After the massacres at Conestoga Indiantown and Lancaster, several hundred Paxton Boys marched on Philadelphia, threatening to sack the city. Due in large part to the efforts of Benjamin Franklin, the rebels chose to write down their grievances rather than proceed with their march. They submitted two documents, the *Declaration* and the *Remonstrance*, castigating the provincial government for its policies regarding Indians during wartime. Only one of their grievances was redressed before the American Revolution: the restoration in 1764 of scalp bounties for Indians killed or captured during wartime, which had been discontinued in 1758, when the Pennsylvania phase of the French and Indian War ended. But the Paxton Boys won a larger victory, escaping unpunished after exterminating a group of Indians who lived under the protection of the government.

The Paxton crisis unleashed an extraordinary exchange of pamphlets in Philadelphia. . . . The debate went beyond the massacres and the march on Philadelphia to address the fundamental question of how Pennsylvania ought to be governed. The Penn family, as proprietary governors of the province, controlled the executive branch; the Quaker party dominated the Assembly. From the mid-1750s onward the two branches were locked in disagreement, especially when it came to funding military defense. From the perspective of frontier settlers, the government seemed callously indifferent. In the political crisis triggered by the Paxton Boys, the Quaker party and its supporters squared off against an uneasy coalition of Presbyterians and Anglicans, ‘who rallied to the proprietary interest. Franklin's *Narrative of the Late Massacres,* attacking the Paxton Boys, Presbyterianism, and the Penn family, triggered a pamphlet war in 1764 that culminated in his ill-conceived proposal for royal government in Pennsylvania. Only twelve years later Franklin was at the forefront of the patriotic movement to rid the American colonies of monarchy. Yet he was consistent throughout this period in his contempt for archaic forms of power and privilege; he merely broadened his focus by 1776 to include George III as well as the Penns.

. . . After the Conestoga massacres the frontier descended into anarchy. John Penn's Quaker critics insisted that his failure to pursue the Paxton Boys had undermined the reputation of the provincial government and given carte blanche to like-minded frontier settlers, thereby threatening to provoke another Indian war. When the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768 cleared the way for large-scale settlement in Pennsylvania west of the Allegheny mountains, violent seizure of Indian land became the norm rather than the exception. Having disappeared from view for almost six years after the Conestoga massacres, the Paxton Boys reemerged in 1769. They offered their services as mercenaries to the Susquehannah Company, a Connecticut land speculation venture intent on planting a colony in the Wyoming Valley of northern Pennsylvania.

Lazarus Stewart, who led the attack on the Lancaster workhouse in 1763, brought a group of Paxton Boys into the Wyoming Valley, where they finally acquired the land they had long been fighting for. As the American Revolution approached, the Paxton Boys cast themselves as Yankee patriots doing battle against the arch-Tory Thomas Penn. They fought their last battle in July 1778, when an army of loyalists and Iroquois Indians invaded the Wyoming Valley. The Paxton Boys died as patriots—of a sort—fighting Indians over land. The Indians won the fight that day, but they could not hope to prosper in the world the Paxton Boys had helped create. Wholesale destruction of Indian culture came later in the Peaceable Kingdom than in other American colonies, bur Pennsylvania was the gateway to the west—and hence to the future.

Cynthia J. Van Zandt **NO**

Brothers Among Nations: The Pursuit of Intercultural Alliances in Early America, 1580–1660

Captain Claiborne's Alliance

Before tobacco, the fur trade not only gave Virginia its first major export product but also shaped many intercultural relations for the first thirty years of the colony's history, peaking in the 1630s. Indeed, throughout eastern North America, the 1630s witnessed a great increase in the fur trade. Native Americans and Europeans increasingly looked for additional or new trading partners as networks spread over greater distances and in new directions. Every trade relationship was evaluated according to its benefits to individual traders and its impacts on political and cultural affairs. In seventeenth-century North America, the fur trade at times provided the nexus for remarkable kinds of intercultural cooperation. In the end the promise of these alliances seldom lasted, but the short-lived nature of many of them was not necessarily apparent to anyone in the early seventeenth century.

The shifting web of alliances spanning eastern North America made it difficult for anyone at the time to foresee which ones would have the greatest staying power. What they were able to see was only that each new partnership had the potential to affect an entire sequence of other relationships. As it turned out, the fact that European settlements changed so dramatically in the 1630s meant that European power dynamics often interfered in otherwise flourishing intercultural connections.

The cultural and political landscape of eastern North America began to alter dramatically in the 1630s with alliance-changing shifts in several regions. The new colonies of Massachusetts Bay, New Haven, Maryland, and New Sweden appeared on the scene, and colonial populations increased and spread out. Any alteration in the network also invariably threatened a change in political power dynamics, and people became particularly alert to the impact of shifting relations as the movement of peoples accelerated and the fur trade expanded. In other words, intercultural relationships had to survive not only the constant challenge of cultural misunderstanding, but also the aggressions of other parties threatened by the new alliance. . . .

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In the 1630s the Chesapeake became the center of an extraordinary intercultural alliance organized around the fur trade. The Susquehannocks had long been looking for a reliable European trading ally and found one in an English colonist named William Claiborne. . . .

The Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance was extraordinarily influential, and its impact had both geographical and temporal dimensions. Geographically, the Susquehannock–Claiborne connection and its demise affected people and events from the Chesapeake to Iroquoia. Temporally, its effects lingered throughout the first half of the century.

The strategies that both parties used to create the alliance demonstrate the ways in which power and advantage shifted fluidly between Indians and Europeans in the 1630s. Moreover, the Susquehannock–Claiborne association had far-reaching consequences for other peoples from the Chesapeake to Iroquoia, and its disruption by Maryland at the end of the decade transferred the Susquehannocks' attention more fully to the mid-Atlantic and the people who lived there. . . .

In the early 1630s, however, the Susquehannocks looked with considerable interest at the English settlements in the Chesapeake, and William Claiborne helped to persuade them that they had finally found a willing and reliable European ally. To understand why such a collaborative effort seemed so beneficial to each side, we need to understand several events that took place in the 1610s and 1620s; indeed, the Susquehannocks' willingness to ally with Claiborne had everything to do with their relationship with the Five Nations or Haudenosaunee. Part of the Susquehannocks' Haudenosaunee strategy was to develop several other alliance configurations in the years before they agreed to one with Claiborne.

Moreover, Claiborne's willingness to ally with the Susquehannocks and the readiness of the Virginia governor and his council to allow it had much to do with the collapse of the Powhatan-English alliance. And in the midst of these shifting Susquehannock and English alignments, Dutch and Swedish colonizing activities helped to create the circumstances that shaped the beginning and the end of the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance.

In some ways, the Englishman who had played a crucial role in establishing the earlier Powhatan-English alliance also helped to lay the groundwork for a partnership between Virginia colonists and the Susquehannocks. Indeed, before Pocahontas came to call Captain John Smith "father," Smith had spent considerable time exploring the area to the north of Jamestown. . . .

Smith first met a group of Susquehannocks in the summer of 1608, and he reported that they were quite willing to establish a coalition with the Jamestown English. Although much has been made of the report that Smith was awestruck by the Susquehannocks' powerful stature—indeed, he portrayed them as giants—and of his claim that they were in awe of and tried to worship him, ultimately the key information he conveyed was that the Susquehannocks were a powerful nation and were willing to ally with the Jamestown English.

However, the English settlers at Jamestown never really followed through on Smith's early contacts with the Susquehannocks, in part because of the great stresses of Jamestown's early years and in part because of their careful monitoring of their connection with the powerful Powhatans. But over the years English colonists remembered the Susquehannocks and kept an eye on other Europeans' relations with them. In the twenty years after the first Smith-Susquehannock meeting, the English had few recorded dealings with them. Instead, the Susquehannocks made intermittent contact with French and Dutch colonists priests and traders and chose to pursue alliances alternately with New France and New Netherland.

The Susquehannocks' comparatively widespread contact with Europeans of different ethnicities resulted from their geographical position, which was almost in the center of the array of European colonial settlements on the east coast from the Chesapeake to the Saint Lawrence. It also resulted from two other factors. The first was the Susquehannock nation's size and strength. They were an Iroquoian speaking people and, like the members of the Huron and Haudenosaunee Five Nations confederacies, were more populous and militarily more powerful than most of the Algonquian peoples living near European settlements. The second, which helps to explain why the Susquehannocks had wide-ranging contacts with Europeans, was the fact that their network of alliances and enemies coincided in the early seventeenth century with the spread of European colonial settlement. For instance the Susquehannocks' ongoing enmity with members of the Five Nations Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee especially the Mohawks and the Senecas, was directly responsible for the Susquehannocks' choices in their dealings with French, Dutch, Swedish, and English colonists and traders. Furthermore, the changing nature of the Susquehannock–Five Nations rivalries also affected the Susquehannocks' relations with Algonquian peoples throughout the eastern seaboard. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Susquehannocks played a crucial role, culturally, politically, and geographically, between Algonquians, lroquoians, and Europeans. . . .

Because they were within relatively easy reach of Dutch and French colonial settlements, the Susquehannocks turned their attention first to them. In the summer of 1615 Samuel de Champlain first learned that the Susquehannocks could be impressive allies. That August, Champlain and Huron warriors were gathering their resources in order to attack the Onondagas. While they were still engaged in preparations, the Hurons received news from their allies, the Susquehannocks, who sent word that they would provide five hundred men to fight with the Hurons and Champlain against the Onondagas and that they desired friendship and an alliance with the French. The Susquehannocks also explained to the French that the Five Nations made war on them periodically and received assistance from the Dutch.

For the Susquehannocks to join in the upcoming strike against the Onondagas would satisfy two important requirements of alliance. First, it would fulfill their obligations to their existing Huron allies. Second, it would enable the Susquehannocks to extend their alliance networks to include Samuel de Champlain and the French newcomers. Champlain and his men must have seemed ideal new allies to the Susquehannocks because they already had sided with the Hurons against the Five Nations Iroquois and could provide both significant military assistance and new trade goods. In the end, the Susquehannocks apparently did not arrive in time for the attack on the Onondagas, but their offer is revealing of how Native American alliance and information networks functioned in the early colonial era and demonstrates that the Susquehannocks were well aware of colonial developments from Iroquoia to the Chesapeake Bay. . . .

Claiborne came to Virginia about five years after the Susquehannocks offered to fight with the Hurons and Champlain's forces against the Onondagas. When he arrived in the colony in 1621, he came with an appointment from James I as the colony's surveyor. Significantly, he came with good connections in the Virginia Company and at court and would use them both in the colony and in England in order to set up an extraordinary intercultural trade venture. It is also noteworthy that Claiborne arrived in Virginia on the eve of the final collapse of the Powhatan–English alliance. This too would bring important consequences for Claiborne's trading activities only a few years later.

In the period leading up to the 1622 Powhatan attack, English colonial policy increasingly attempted to undermine the Powhatan paramount chiefdom. Colonial officials sought every means they could to drive a wedge between the Powhatans and their allied nations. Recognizing that Wahunsonacock and his successor, Opechancanough, had the strongest hold on member nations that were geographically closest to the Powhatans, English colonial leaders focused on luring the more distant member nations away from the Powhatan alliance altogether. Although English efforts before 1622 were never completely successful at breaking up the Powhatan paramount chiefdom, the policy had the effect of increasing the degree of attention English colonial leaders paid to the areas farther from the James River.

The Powhatans' 1622 surprise attack did not succeed in destroying the colony of Virginia. However, it did stop English colonial expansion to the west for the foreseeable future, with the additional consequence of prompting English colonists working in intercultural trade to look to the northeast and the Chesapeake Bay as the best route for expansion. They discovered a flourishing exchange there. Indeed, John Pory reported that nearly a hundred European traders were active in the Chesapeake Bay intercultural commerce in the early 1620, William Claiborne was one of those who quicklysaw the promise of joining the English traders' push to the north.

Having survived the 1622 Powhatan attack, Claiborne found his personal circumstances in the colony steadily improving in several ways. In the aftermath of the attack James I rescinded the Virginia Company's charter and made Virginia the first English royal colony in North America. The new imperial structure meant changes in Jamestown, and Claiborne was appointed a member of the new Governor's Council and received additional land grants as partial payment for his new office. These land grants were in addition to the two hundred acres he had received in partial payment of his services as colony surveyor; his first grants were for lands on the eastern shore.

Moreover, Claiborne also had land on the western shore at Kecoughtan, which, by the early 1630s, he was able to use as an auxiliary base for his trading enterprise. Before then, however, his trade path toward the Susquehannocks was cleared as he obtained greater public power in Virginia and another colonial office. In 1625 he became secretary of the colony and received trading licenses as a result of his new office. William Claiborne was well positioned to move into the fur trade.

The following year Claiborne began making tangible moves toward developing trade contacts to the north, and the Susquehannocks began to focus their alliance-seeking efforts farther south than in previous years. Thus, they began to move toward each other in search of new intercultural allies. Armed with his new trading licenses, Claiborne set out on an exploratory trip to the Chesapeake Bay. He stopped to check on his property at Accomack on the way, where he discovered that squatters had taken up residence. Instead of having them either arrested or evicted, Claiborne realized that they might offer him just the additional assistance he would need in developing a thriving trade on the Chesapeake Bay if he were able to find suitable Native American trading partners. Thus Claiborne allowed the squatters to stay at Accomack. Within five years they would move to form a new community and provide crucial support for the Virginia side of the Claiborne-Susquehannock trade relationship.

Also in 1626, very near the time that Claiborne was exploring the possibilities for a trade on the Chesapeake Bay, a delegation of Susquehannocks explored the possibilities for a trade alliance with the colonists at the new Dutch West India Company colony of New Netherland. Although Dutch traders and explorers had been active in North America since the first decade of the seventeenth century, it was not until the 1620s that a Dutch colony was attempted under the sponsorship of the West India Company. . . .

In the end, the Dutch–Susquehannock alliance did not flourish in 1626 or 1627. The timing was not right for New Netherland's colonial officials. Little did they know it, but they needed to act quickly to secure a place as the Susquehannocks' premier European ally. They had lost a valuable opportunity, one with ramifications beyond a single trading season. Soon the Susquehannocks found themselves entertaining a proposition from a different European ally. The following year William Claiborne received a trading license from Virginia. He was just in time.

Claiborne pursued his hopes of moving further into the fur trade again the next year, in 1628, when he sailed to the Chesapeake on an exploratory voyage. He saw real opportunities for finding a niche in the intercultural fur exchange in Virginia's northern reaches because New Netherland abandoned Fort Nassau on the Delaware in 1628, choosing for the moment to concentrate its resources on building up the colony's Manhattan center. As the Dutch pulled back to the Hudson, Claiborne began lining up the necessary colonial approvals to press outward.

On January 31, 1629/1630, Virginia's governor and council granted Claiborne a commission to trade with the Susquehannocks until April 1. This was quite a limited trading license, though not an unusual one. The fur trading season would eventually stretch from March to June each year. In the Chesapeake Bay region, early English accounts reported that most Indian nations there were not yet accustomed to trading furs each year, and so the "trading season" was not yet a standard intercultural market period. Claiborne's 1629 license may also have been intentionally brief, intended to give him only enough time to prove whether such a venture was likely to succeed.

Having secured a trading license from Virginia and faced with the news that the Dutch settlement on the Delaware was no longer a competitor, William Claiborne established his first base in the Chesapeake region. He selected a small island in the north of the bay, near the mouth of the Susquehanna River, and called it Palmer's Island. This was an ideal preliminary meeting place for Claiborne's initial negotiations with the Susquehannocks. Ultimately, it was not large enough to support a full-time settlement, with all of the necessary supplies for trade and defense, but it was a strategic, neutral meeting ground, and Claiborne made sure he secured Palmer's Island from the outset.

Later the same year, several events affected intercultural alliances in the Chesapeake. The first was the threat of a new colony. After New Netherland pulled away from its settlement on the Delaware (at least temporarily), another English venturer appeared on the scene. Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, stopped in Jamestown after having visited Newfoundland, where he had originally intended to establish a haven for English Catholics. Lord Baltimore found the Chesapeake more inviting, and his visit threw the Virginia colonists into an uproar.

Panicking at the thought that Baltimore might try to move in on their colony, Virginia's leaders quickly sent William Claiborne to England to intervene on the colony's behalf and prevent Baltimore from creating another English Chesapeake plantation. Having survived a catastrophic Powhatan attack, epidemic disease, and years of malnutrition and economic failure, Virginia was finally operating on steadier footing. Yet it now appeared endangered from an entirely new direction: It was under threat from an English lord and a Roman Catholic, one with long-standing connections at court.

If William Ciaiborne seemed to Virginia's leaders to be an ideal choice to plead their case back home in England, the mission provided him with the perfect opportunity to put the financial elements of his trading plan into place. In this, Claiborne was remarkably like Isaac Allerton, who at nearly the same time was working to secure a new patent for Plymouth Colony while expanding his own trade contacts and arranging for additional financing for his growing ventures. Claiborne did much the same thing in 1629. He argued against Baltimore's plans and put forward Virginia's primacy to the region. However, while in England on behalf of the Virginia Colony, he also laid the foundations for his own expansion plan.

With an eye toward cornering the best market on the eastern seaboard south of the Saint Lawrence, Claiborne approached a firm of English investors with experience in speculating in North American trade. He established a partnership with William Cloberry and partners. Cloberry had already invested in the North American fur trade and had connections with the Kirk brothers, who seized Quebec from New France and held it as an English colony for two years. Accordingly, Cloberry knew how lucrative the North American fur trade could be; he needed only to be persuaded that the Chesapeake could offer a reliable source of high-quality furs. In addition, he evidently had already begun exploring that option because he had financed a trading mission in the Chesapeake under the leadership of Henry Fleet.

Claiborne, however, proposed a larger and longer-term venture and suggested using Kent Island as the group's main trading base. Kent Island was further south than Palmer's Island, but it was larger and more easily defended and would allow for easy access of trade boats and supplies. Using both islands would give Claiborne and his partners ready access to one of the eastern seaboard's most widely used routes into the interior, where the best furs were found. Furthermore, this area was far enough from New France to enable English traders to deal directly with Native American traders, especially if Claiborne could establish a lasting alliance with the Susquehannocks. Cloberry and his partners were swayed, and Claiborne secured the financing he needed. In typical seventeenth-century English entrepreneurial fashion, he ventured his person in the scheme, and Cloberry and the other England-based partners would open their purses.

Meanwhile, back in the colony of Virginia, relations with Algonquians near English settlements continued to worsen. In October the House of Burgesses called for regular military expeditions against the Pamunkeys and other Algonquians who were hostile to the colony and declared that the settlement would organize three strikes against them every year, one in November, one in March, and one in July. The relentless pace of these infrequent but regular attacks was designed to break the Indians once and for all, but it did not signal the end of Virginia's willingness to form alliances with native peoples.

While the new policy showed the hardening attitudes of Virginia's colonists toward many of the Algonquians who lived closest to them (and certainly toward any who had participated in the 1622 attack), it also reinforced the colony's shift in geographical emphasis. Intercultural alliances, particularly for trading purposes, were still of interest to Virginia's leaders, but only with native peoples who lived well beyond the limits of English settlement. As William Claiborne would soon show, the Susquehannocks would fit that bill.

Claiborne finally put all of the elements of his plan together in 1631, and for the next five years he based an interracial trading community on two islands in the Chesapeake Bay and developed a flourishing alliance with the powerful Susquehannocks, whose capital town lay just to the north of the bay on the Susquehanna River. Having persuaded his new English partners that Kent Island was an ideal location for an ongoing fur-trading enterprise in the Chesapeake Bay region, Claiborne returned to the Chesapeake in 1631 and settled Kent Island.

By October the Kent Island settlement had the rough outlines of a defensible colonial town, with a large, timber-framed house and several thatched-roof huts, all surrounded by palisades and four mounted guns. Claiborne's design was typical of early colonial settlements, especially their forts and trading posts. He had buildings in which to store his merchandise and to house and support his colonists, and he considered the importance of defending the community from the outset. Although Claiborne was probably not thinking in these terms, his Kent Island settlement would have looked familiar to the

Susquehannocks, whose reputation as a fearsome, powerful nation stemmed not only from their fighting expertise but also from the security of their well-defended and palisaded town.

From 1631 until 1638 Kent Island was the center of Claiborne's enterprise and was closely associated with him and his allies, the Susquehannocks. In 1631 he moved quickly to secure his position in the trade because he soon learned that Dutch traders were back in the region and had established a new settlement in the Delaware River valley in April. The new trading post was called Swaanendael, and Claiborne seems to have decided to neutralize Dutch competition by accommodating it.

In 1631 he received a commission from Virginia governor John Harvey to trade with the Dutch. In the end, Swaanendael did not last; conflict over a stolen tin coat of arms escalated in the chasm of intercultural misunderstanding, and neighboring Indians destroyed the settlement in retaliation for Dutch handling of the incident. Nevertheless, Claiborne knew that Dutch interest in the area and its native peoples would not end with Swaanendael's destruction; his best strategy to overcome this competition was to move quickly and claim a location where he could stay in regular contact with his native allies.

Thus in August the first ship supplied by Cloberry and Company, the *Africa*, arrived in the Chesapeake for Claiborne to use. After stopping first at Claiborne's plantation at Kecoughtan, the *Africa* sailed on into the Chesapeake Bay, and Claiborne and his crew went on to the Susquehannocks to trade. For the next several years, Claiborne's Kent Island crew maintained a successful alliance with the Susquehannocks, one that was quite lucrative for Claiborne but also appealed to Susquehannock interests. Moreover, the Susquehannocks' understanding of their alliance with Claiborne included a broad array of obligations. After Claiborne's community came under threat from Baltimore's new English colony in 1635, the Susquehannocks continued to fulfill their obligations to Claiborne's men for many years, long after Claiborne himself had moved back south of the Chesapeake Bay. But that came later. In the interim, the Susquehannock–Claiborne association had consequences for other Indian nations in the region.

When the Susquehannocks eventually formed their alliance with William Claiborne, various Indian nations around the Chesapeake felt the direct results of the shift in the Susquehannocks' attention. Claiborne and other English traders working with him established Kent Island and Palmer's Island in the Chesapeake Bay as fur-trading centers, which were well within reach of the Susquehannocks' major town at the mouth of the Susquehannock River, where it emptied into the bay. However, Claiborne's development of the trading centers at Kent and Palmer's islands had severe consequences for Indian nations on the upper eastern shore because these hubs encouraged the Susquehannocks to move farther south. Algonquians on the upper eastern shore found themselves largely unable to slow the advancing Susquehannocks.

The much more powerful Susquehannocks pushed the upper Eastern Shore Algonquians south from their early-seventeenth-century homelands into the Nanticokes' territory. They also cultivated a client relationship with the Algonquian Tockwoghs in the early seventeenth century, in which the Tockwoghs were subordinate to the Susquehannocks. In addition, the Susquehannocks and the Piscataways developed a strong rivalry, and Susquehannockwarriors raided Piscataway communities.

In much the same way that European colonies were gradually expanding along the Atlantic seaboard during the first three decades of the seventeenth century, so too were several Indian nations. Native peoples, such as the Susquehannocks, who were not devastated by disease epidemics often responded to the changing circumstances by expanding their power base and sometimes by moving into new territories. In other words, the Susquehannocks' movements and their alliance with William Claiborne reshaped native, European, and intercultural politics throughout the region. As we have seen, they were by no means the only Indian nation to expand in this way, nor were they the only one to have such a wide-ranging impact both culturally and geographically. But they were one of the most important players on the North American Atlantic seaboard during the first half of the seventeenth century, and their significance has often been underestimated, both at the time and by later generations of historians.

In the seventeenth century Lord Baltimore and his colonial officials were among those Europeans who failed to understand the strength and range of the Susquehannocks' influence. At first Baltimore truly did not comprehend the value of Claiborne's alliance with the Susquehannocks. Perhaps he believed that it was a relatively unimportant arrangement through which Claiborne and his London partners acquired North American furs.

Although there is little surviving evidence to tell us exactly what Calvert thought about Claiborne's affiliation with the Susquehannocks, the actions of Maryland Colony officials can explain a great deal because, regardless of how Calvert perceived the relationship, the actions of his colonists and colonial officials clearly indicate that they did not understand the larger North American context of alliances into which they had just stumbled.

Maryland's insistence that the Calverts claimed the entire region of the new colony, including Claiborne's island trading bases, failed to give credit to Claiborne's reasonable claims to the area even under English standards. Even more important, it failed to recognize the webs of alliances that already crisscrossed the area and paid no heed at all to the American conventions of diplomacy that governed them. Maryland's response to the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance is a clear example of the fact that it took actual North American experience and knowledge for Europeans to fully understand the necessity of allying with powerful Indian nations or at least to gain a more realistic appreciation of which Indian nations were the most powerful. This was true despite the fact that many colonial promoters expected some degree of alliance formation. It was one thing to advocate the need to understand and make alliances with native peoples; it was quite another to recognize the real thing when faced with Indian peoples themselves.

The reality was often more extensive and more essential than even the Europeans' theories of colonization and trade asserted. In the case of the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance of the 1630s, Lord Baltimore also obviously failed to understand that his actions against Claiborne would have consequences that would extend well beyond European control. Instead, Baltimore based his determination more on a sense of his power in England and in relation to colonists in Virginia. Nevertheless, it was a bad decision. As a result, his colony faced war with the Susquehannocks for nearly two more decades, and the legacy of those early years of conflict would reverberate throughout the 1670s.

The experiment at Kent Island did not fail because English alliances with native peoples collapsed. They did not. The Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance ended after fewer than ten years because of intra-English competition for favored status with the Susquehannocks. In the end, Kent Island could not survive the failure of competing English colonial interests to set aside their opposing claims. It was not an intercultural breakdown.

On the contrary, the Susquehannock–Claiborne alliance was extraordinarily successful. In the early seventeenth century, rivalries between Europeans, even those from the same general culture, played as important a role in shaping North America as rivalries between cultures did. In the context of early seventeenth-century North America the offer of alliance could come from any direction, and any new collaborative effort could be immediately challenged by Europeans or Native Americans who were threatened by the new alignment of interests.

The Susquehannocks' search for a reliable European ally and trading partner in the 1620s and 1630s was twice thwarted by internal European power struggles. First, the proposed Susquehannock–Dutch alliance was prevented from becoming more firmly established in 1626, a fact that enabled Claiborne to push himself as the Susquehannocks' primary European ally. Ten years later, intra-European conflict impeded the Susquehannocks again when Lord Baltimore forced Claiborne to abandon his Kent and Palmer's islands trading posts.

In both instances, these power struggles rather than any cultural differences between Indians and European allies were the reason intercultural alliances failed. Yet, to a significant degree, they were unintended consequences of Europeans' preoccupations with their own rivalries and interests. When Europeans focused their attention on mapping other European rivals without paying adequate notice to the webs of Native American connections, the effects could be extremely disruptive for Indians and European colonists alike. . . .

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was Conflict Between Europeans and Native Americans Inevitable?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What was William Penn's vision of harmony between European settlers and Native Americans in Pennsylvania, and what factors contributed to the destruction of this "holy experiment"?
2. Who were the Paxton Boys, what were their goals, and to what extent did they realize those goals?
3. Evaluate the relations between the Susquehannock Indians and various groups of European settlers in British North America.
4. What role did cultural differences play in the relationships between Native Americans and European colonists?
5. Analyze the inevitability of conflict between Native Americans and Europeans in the British North American colonies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Is There Common Ground?

The complexities associated with the relations between Native Americans and colonists from Europe are evident from the foregoing essays. Together they suggest the difficulty associated with efforts to generalize about the clash of cultures that occurred on New World shores.

By the end of the colonial period in British North America, the Native American populations in the original 13 colonies had been significantly reduced in terms of numbers and power. Was this reality an inevitable consequence of intercultural hostilities, or are their other viable explanations for Indian decline? Undoubtedly, many European colonists harbored attitudes that allowed them to rationalize aggressive action toward the indigenous peoples they encountered in America. As was the case with their European counterparts, Indians, too, saw themselves and their culture as superior to the new arrivals from across the Atlantic. Both sides viewed the other as uncivilized savages. These general attitudes, however, did not prevent cordial relations and other forms of beneficial alliances from developing. Trade alliances did not end conflict, but they did reinforce recognition of the mutual benefit derived from such connections.

As Gary Nash has observed, American culture derived much of its uniqueness from the interaction of Indian and European, as well as African, traditional folkways. The physical presence of each of these groups played a fundamental role in the emerging political, economic, and social development of early America. The day-to-day lives of the residents of the New World were dramatically affected by the presence of these various human populations and not solely in negative ways.

Additional Resources

Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (2nd ed.; Prentice-Hall, 1982) is an excellent survey for the colonial period. Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (Random House, 1978) provides a panoramic consideration of the stereotypes of Indians developed by Europeans and white Americans. Two works by James Axtell—*The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of British America, 1607–1789* (Oxford University Press, 1981) and *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford University Press, 1985)—are indispensable. Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580–1640* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1980) and Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge University Press, 1980) offer conflicting explanations for the nature of Indian–white relations in the colonies. The themes of coexistence and coercion in relation to contacts between Native Americans and Englishmen in New England are assessed in Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675* (Little, Brown, 1965), Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (University of North Carolina Press, 1975), Neal E. Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Beginnings of New England* (Oxford University Press, 1982), and William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (rev. ed.; Hill & Wang, 2003). A valuable introduction to the history of the Powhatan Confederacy can be found in Helen C. Rountree, *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). Douglas E. Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (rev. ed.; Norton, 1966) and Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) are excellent studies of that momentous clash.

ISSUE 4

Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power?

YES: Lyle Koehler, from *A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England* (University of Illinois, 1980)

NO: Laurie Winn Carlson, from *A Fever in Salem: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials* (Ivan R. Dee, 1999)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Discuss the importance of gender, class, and race in evaluating historical events.
- Recognize the role of gender relations in early America.
- Understand multicausal explanations of historical events.
- Appreciate the influence of power relationships and powerlessness in human society.
- Discuss the possible impact of biological and/or ecological forces in history.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Lyle Koehler argues that the Salem witchcraft hysteria is best understood from the perspective of differential relationships in a patriarchal Puritan society whereby the female accusers of "witches" exercised an unconscious search for power to overcome their own subordination in a rapidly changing world.

NO: Laurie Winn Carlson believes that the witchcraft hysteria in Salem was the product of people's responses to physical and neurological behaviors resulting from an unrecognized epidemic of encephalitis.

Although an interest in the occult, including witchcraft and devil worship, exists in modern society, for most of us the images of witches are confined to our television and movie screens or perhaps to the theatrical stage where a Shakespearean tragedy is being performed. We can watch the annual presentation of *The Wizard of Oz* and reruns of *Bewitched* or hear the cries of "Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble" in a scene from *Macbeth*, with as little concern for the safety of our souls as we exhibit when black-garbed, broomstick-toting children appear on our doorsteps at Halloween. But such was not always the case.

Prehistoric paintings on the walls of caves throughout Europe, from Spain to Russia, reveal that witchcraft was of immediate and serious concern to many of our ancestors. The most intense eruptions in the long history of witchcraft, however, appeared during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the British North American colonies, there were over 100 witchcraft trials in seventeenth-century New England alone, and 40 percent of those accused were executed. For most Americans the events that began in the kitchen of the Reverend Samuel Parris in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692 are the most notorious.

A group of young girls, with the assistance of Parris's West Indian slave, Tituba, were attempting to see into the future by "reading" messages in the white of a raw egg they had suspended in a glass. The tragic results of this seemingly innocent diversion scandalized the Salem community and reverberated all the way to Boston. One of the participants insisted she saw the specter of a coffin in the egg white, and soon after, the girls began to display the hysterical symptoms of the possessed. Following intense interrogation by adults, Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne were accused of practicing magic and were arrested. Subsequently, Tituba confessed her guilt and acknowledged the existence of other witches but refused to name them. Accusations spread as paranoia enveloped the community. Between May and September 1692 hundreds of people were arrested. Nineteen were convicted and hanged (not burned at the stake, as is often assumed), and another, a man who refused to admit either guilt or innocence, was pressed to death under heavy weights. Finally, Sir William Phips, the new royal governor of the colony, halted court proceedings against the accused (which included his wife), and in May 1693, he ordered the release of those who were still in jail. After 1692, a few witches were tried in the British North American colonies: in Virginia (1706), North Carolina (1712), and Rhode Island (1728). The last execution for witchcraft in England occurred in 1712 and in Scotland in 1727. On the Continent, royal edicts put an end to such persecutions before the close of the seventeenth century.

The Salem witch trials represent one of the most thoroughly studied episodes in American history. Throughout history, witchcraft accusations have tended to follow certain patterns, most of which were duplicated in Salem. Usually, they occurred during periods of political turmoil, economic dislocation, or social stress. In Salem, a political impasse between English authorities and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, economic tensions between commercial and agricultural interests, and disagreements between Salem Town and Salem Village all formed the backdrop to the legal drama of 1692. In addition, the events in Salem fit the traditional pattern that those accused were almost always women. To what extent did gender play the central role in the Salem witchcraft hysteria of 1692? Carol F. Karlsen, in *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (W. W. Norton, 1987) points out that negative views of women as the embodiment of evil were deeply embedded in the Puritan (and European) world view. But through most of the seventeenth century, according to Karlsen, New Englanders avoided explicit connections between women and witchcraft. Nevertheless, the attitudes that depicted witches as women remained self-evident truths and sprang to the surface in 1692.

Several scholars have concluded that the enthusiasm for learning more about the Salem witches and their accusers far outweighs the importance of the event; yet essays and books continue to roll off the presses. Those interested in pursuing this topic further should examine Marion Starkey's *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Enquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (Knopf, 1949), which blames the episode on the lies told by the accusers. An intriguing alternative is Chadwick Hansen's *Witchcraft at Salem* (George Braziller, 1969), in which the author insists that several Salem residents did practice black magic, thereby heightening the fears of their neighbors. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, in *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Harvard University Press, 1974), emphasize the conflicts between the residents of Salem Town and Salem Village. Responses to this important monograph can be found in "Forum: Salem Repossessed," *William & Mary Quarterly* (July 2008). Mary Beth Norton has postulated that borderland threats from Native Americans and the French were conflated by Salem and Essex County residents with alleged assaults by witches to explain problems confronting seventeenth-century residents of Massachusetts Bay Colony. John Putnam Demos's *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (Oxford University Press, 1982) applies theories and insights from the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology to explore the influence of witchcraft throughout New England. Also of value is Demos's earlier essay, "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth-Century New England," *American Historical Review* (June 1970).

In the YES and NO selections, Lyle Koehler and Laurie Winn Carlson offer two varying interpretations that seek to explain the events in Salem over three hundred years ago. For Lyle Koehler, gender is the key factor. Koehler points out that not only were three-fourths of the persons accused of witchcraft in Salem females but also, of the 56 men accused, half were related to accused women. In addition, most of the accused women in some way openly flouted the ideal role established for women in Puritan society. According to Koehler, the accusers were seeking to overcome their own feelings of personal powerlessness by speaking out in the patriarchal world in which they lived. Moreover, these women relished the sense of power they received from court officials' attention to their allegations designed to conquer the supernatural forces around them.

Laurie Winn Carlson, on the other hand, insists that previous explanations for the events in Salem fail to take into account the physical and neurological symptoms exhibited by many of the residents of the town. Those symptoms, she argues, correspond very closely to behaviors described during the pandemic of encephalitis lethargica that struck the United States in the early twentieth century and provide a reasonable explanation for many of the unanswered questions about the events in Salem.

YES

Lyle Koehler

A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England

The Salem Village Cataclysm: Origins and Impact of a Witch Hunt, 1689–92

. . .

An Epidemic of Witchcraft

The Salem Village witch mania began easily enough, when several young girls experimented with fortune-telling and read occult works. In late January 1692, these girls began creeping under chairs and into holes, uttering "foolish, ridiculous speeches," assuming odd postures, and, on occasion, writhing in agony. Their antics soon became full-fledged hysterical fits. Their tongues extended out to "a fearful length," like those of hanged persons; their necks cracked; blood "gushed plentifully out of their Mouths." A local physician named William Griggs, unable to explain the girls' behavior in medical terms, warned that it must be due to an "Evil hand." The fits quickly spread to other youngsters ranging in age from twelve to nineteen, as well as to married women like Ann Pope, Sarah Bibber, Ann Putnam, and "an Ancient Woman, named Goodall."

The afflicted girls initially charged Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and the minister's Indian slave Tituba with practicing *maleficium* upon them. Local magistrates served warrants on these designated witches, who faced a courtroom examination on March 1. Twenty days later, Deodat Lawson, an ex-Salem Village pastor visiting from Boston, delivered a rousing anti-witchcraft sermon after observing the convulsive fits of Mary Walcott and Abigail Williams. A week later, Samuel Parris called his congregation to search out the many devils in the church. Parris was an old-line Puritan—a man anxious about his declining ministerial power, intensely suspicious of his neighbors, obsessed with thoughts of his own filthiness, and fearing the subversion of the Biblical Commonwealth.

The half-dozen afflicted girls had accused only three witches in February and four in March, but after the ministers' warnings, no fewer than fifteen girls and women of Salem Village accused witches—at least twenty-five additional

From *A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England* by Lyle Koehler, pp. 108–129. Copyright © 1980 by Lyle Koehler.

during April, and fifty-one in May. "Witch" Martha Corey warned the authorities in March, "We must not believe all these distracted children say," but prosecutions continued. More persons from areas outside Salem Village were added to the list of accused witches—thirteen from Topsfield, most of whom had previously quarrelled with the Putnam family over land boundaries, twelve others from Gloucester; thirteen from the port of Salem; and fifty-five from Andover, a locale torn by land stress. Twenty-eight different persons, including four Andover women, fell subject to hysterical attacks in five outlying towns. Altogether, these ostensibly betwitched persons denounced almost all of the 56 men and 148 women accused of practicing witchcraft in 1692–93. Not only were three-quarters of the accused persons females, but of the 56 men half were singled out only after a close female relative or a wife had been accused—a sort of guilt by association. The reverse pattern holds true for only one, or possibly three, of the remaining male witches. Thus, the traditional notion of the witch as a specifically female type held true for most Essex County accusations—even during times of severe stress, when virtually anyone might suffice as a scapegoat. . . .

The Accusers

For many people who were already struggling against spiritual, political, and economic deprivation, and against the force of late seventeenth century changes, making a witchcraft accusation expressed their anxiety while it reasserted a sense of their own potency. Sociologist Dodd Bogart's conclusion that demon or witch charges are attempts to restore "self worth, social recognition, social acceptance, social status, and other related social rewards" is pertinent to the Salem Village situation. Accusations allowed the angry, the helpless, and sometimes the sensitive to fight the imagined malign powers that frustrated them by scapegoating suitable incarnations of evil. By testifying against a witch, they not only exposed but also conquered their own feelings of powerlessness in a changing world. By blaming witches, men and women attempted to reestablish some feeling of order, of control, when confronted by the discomforting effects of threats both external (e.g., Indians, political anarchy, urban materialism) and internal (e.g., the inability to achieve assurance of justification before God, or to understand, if assured, why God had chosen to "providentially" destroy a given animal or person).

The sixty-three men and twenty-one women who testified as corroborating witnesses against accused witches had much in common with the six males and thirty-seven females whose hysterical fits initiated proceedings. In specifically sex-role-defined ways, members of each sex responded to an apparent condition of helplessness. Men primarily appeared before the magistrates and, in typically straightforward fashion, gave accounts of the witches' *maleficium*; women usually made their accusations more circuitously, behind the cover of a fit. Men revealed their feelings of fear and impotence by describing how witches had pressed them into rigid immobility; bewitched women demonstrated dramatically, before the very eyes of the justices, how that—and far worse—could happen.

Women, particularly those adolescents who experienced fits, used the witchcraft accusation as a viable form of self-expression in 1692–93. Burdened by the restrictive contingencies of the ideal feminine role, with its dictum (reinforced in church and school) that good girls must control their longings for material joy and submit to stronger adult authority figures, many young females probably felt a great deal of frustration as they searched for gaiety, attention, accomplishment, and individual autonomy. This was especially true considering the recent fits of the Goodwin children in Boston (1688), the occupational assertiveness of female innkeepers and school dames, and the patent examples of so many women who violated Puritan laws—all of which had an impact upon the consciousnesses of developing adolescents.

After studying spirit possession and shamanism in primitive societies, I. M. Lewis concluded that accusatory fits are "thinly disguised protest movements directed against the dominant sex. They thus play a significant part in the sex-war in traditional societies and cultures where women lack more obvious and direct means of forwarding their aims. To a considerable extent, they protect women from the exactions of men and offer an effective vehicle for manipulating husbands and male relatives." Lewis's conclusion is equally applicable to Salem Village. There, in the paranoid atmosphere of 1692, girls used the fit—although not necessarily consciously—as a vehicle to invert the traditional social status hierarcy. Similarly, adult women, those perpetual children, expressed, through the fit, a need for excitement and dominion. For females, such assertion entailed, symbolically and on occasion literally, the elimination of the immediate oppressing force—the adult, the husband, or, in Mercy Short's case, the Indians. The bewitched parties, through their accusations, did help to eliminate authority figures—if not actual parents or husbands, whose destruction would be *too* discomforting or would deprive them of necessary support, then surely "representative" substitutions. A female figure suggestive of parental authority by her mature years, or one closely associated with a male of high position, was frequently chosen as a safer but still satisfactory surrogate. Later, as the afflicted girls achieved more self-confidence, they actually attacked men, including at least two ministers.

All of the afflicted women, most particularly the Salem Village girls, exercised fantastic power. The public watched spellbound while the girls contorted their bodies into unbelievable shapes. Magistrates hung on their every word, believing them even when the girls were caught in outright lies. At least one justice changed his opinion of a prominent friend after that man came under accusation. Accused witches hardly knew what to say, save to maintain their innocence, when confronted by the awesome spectacle of girls throwing themselves about the courtroom, pulling four-inch-long pins and broken knife blades out of their own flesh. Some accused witches even became confused as to their own complicity in such goings on. Anyone who criticized the court proceedings or the afflicted quickly fell under accusation as another witch, including even defecting members of the girls' own group.

As early as March 20 the afflicted proved they could also, on occasion, assume a more self-consciously assertive stance. When Deodat Lawson prepared to give a Sabbath lecture, eleven-yrar-old Abigail Williams shouted out, "Now stand up, and Name your Text." In the beginning of his sermon Goodwife Ann Pope told him, "Now there is enough of that," and after it was finished, Williams asserted, "It is a long Text." Twelve-year-old Anne Putnam shouted out that an invisible yellow bird, a witch's familiar, sat on Lawson's hat as it hung on a pin. In the afternoon sermon Williams again spoke up: "I know no Doctrine you had," she informed the minister, "If you did name one, I have forgot it." Such outspokenness dumbfounded the congregation. Here three females had violated the biblical injunction against women speaking in church; furthermore, a little girl had criticized the minister. Obviously witches were to blame!

Not only had such females assumed the power to speak in church, and to designate men and women as witches; they also claimed the ability to vanquish supernatural creatures. They asserted that they could see and talk to the Devil, yet emerge unscathed from those encounters. Tituba, powerless both as servant and as woman, told imaginative tales of her own fearless contact with frightening spectral creatures—hairy upright men and great black dogs. Another "very sober and pious woman," uncowed by a malign specter's appearance, disputed with it about a scriptural text. . . .

The choice of victims, many of them eccentrics, suggests that the bewitched females were most discomforted by those women who had acted upon their own inner needs to ignore or defy the ideal feminine sex role; i.e., those women who best illustrated the projected desires of the afflicted. Unable to be similarly assertive, the accusers turned instead to equally unfeminine, but disguised and purely destructive, aggression in punishing those nontraditional women. The psychoanalyst Merell Middlemore appears correct when he writes that the Salem Village girls could not "consolidate a female identification"—but only if his remark is qualified to read Puritan, or perhaps seventeenth-century, female identification.

Scapegoating witches did not always work for the individual accuser, as the shocking inhumanity of sending people to the gallows sometimes became too much for the afflicted girls to handle. Some initial accusers ceased to have fits or to denounce witches long before the frenzy abated. Mary Warren, after actively accusing a number of witches, suddenly began to charge that the "afflicted children did but dissemble." Immediately she was cried out upon as a witch, but in prison she continued to speak out against the proceedings, asserting several times that the magistrates "might as well examine Keysar's daughter that had been distracted many years." She explained, "when I was afflicted, I thought I saw the apparitions of a hundred persons," but then added that her head had been "distempered." In court, however, the other girls, Ann Pope, and John Indian attributed their violent fits to her, and under stringent cross-examination Mary Warren fell once again into fits. Imprisoned for a month, she finally retracted her criticism, admitted her own witchcraft, and once more began accusing others. Similarly, when Deliverance Hobbs wavered from her accusatory afflictions, the bewitched girls denounced her. She, like Mary Warren, denied signing the Devil's book, but then, under the magistrates' relentless questioning, also admitted her witchcraft. Another of the girls, Sarah Churchill, fell under suspicion of practicing witchcraft, probably for the same reason. After her examination she cried and appeared "much troubled in spirit." She explained to Sarah Ingersoll that she had confessed her *maleficium* only "because they threatened her, and told her they would put her into the dungeon."

The line between witch and bewitched was dangerously thin, both on the psychological level and in terms of the social distribution of power which an accuser manipulated. Once a woman began having fits in which she declared herself afflicted by agents of Satan, she could afford no second thoughts, however sane and humane. Once she had "sold her soul"—that is, disavowed responsibility for her own deepest impulses—she could not recover it without sharing the fate of her accused victims, without becoming as powerless as they in the grip of the larger Puritan community. . . .

The Accused: Nontraditional Women

While many witches served as scapegoat-victims of various men's land greed, others more clearly fitted the image of social deviants. Women who did not toe the ideal feminine line offered the afflicted females a superb opportunity to work out their own projected aggressions and needs for dominion—those unacceptable urges which the afflicted found desirable yet incompatible with their Puritan training. In what was probably an overstatement, Thomas Maule estimated that two-thirds of the accused were either guilty of rebellion against their parents (who included, in Puritan terms, husbands and magistrates) or of adultery. One, Sarah Osborne, had lived in a common law relationship with her "wild" Irish servant; another, Martha Corey, had given birth to a mulatto child. "Witch" Susannah Roots had earned a reputation as a "bad woman" who entertained company late at night.

Those women who had openly flouted the ideal role in the changing world of the late century received quick convictions. One of the first three persons accused, Sarah Good, was such a woman. Born into a wealthy family, she had been cheated out of her inheritance after her father's suicide in 1672. She married twice, both times to men who became debt ridden. By 1689 her second husband, William Good, had lost all of his land and seventeen head of cattle to his creditors. Too poor to own a house, he lived with Sarah and their infant daughter in neighbors' houses, barns, and sometimes open ditches. Turbulent and vitriolic, Sarah Good often scolded and "fell to muttering" when people extended charity to her. When one neighbor refused her lodging, she was not above setting his cattle loose. In court she answered the magistrates "in a very wicked spiteful manner, reflecting and retorting against the authorities with base and abusive words." After the minister Nicholas Noyes urged her to confess, since "she knew she was a witch," Sarah pulled no punches in lashing out, "you are a liar; I am no more a Witch than you are a Wizard; and if you take away my Life, God will give you Blood to drink." She died on July 19, protesting to the end.

Bridget Bishop, the first "witch" hanged, would not be dominated by her three husbands. She operated an unlicensed tavern where visitors congregated late at night to play the illegal game of shuffleboard, and she dressed provocatively—some of her contemporaries might say whorishly—in a red paragon bodice. Once she had driven an accusatory stranger off her porch with a spade. Like so many other alleged witches, she protested her innocence, asserting, "I know not what a witch is."

Martha Carrier, accused of no less than thirteen witchly murders at Andover, had actively disputed with neighbors over land, physically shaken up one twelve-year-old girl in church, and threatened a male opponent by saying that "She would hold his Nose close to the Grindstone as ever it was held since his Name was Abbot." Her interrogator asked at the witch trials, "What black man did you see?" She retorted, "I saw no black man but your own presence." She charged the magistrates with not listening to what she said, while they "shamefully" paid attention to every little utterance of the bewitched girls. Cotton Mather, detesting her outspokenness, termed her "this rampant hag."

Many other witches revealed their deviance both in and out of court. Abigail Hobbs expressed no fear of lying out in the woods at night, explaining that "she was not afraid of any thing." Disobedient to her parents, she had once sprinkled water in her mother's face, saying she "baptised hir in the name of the Father Son and Holy Ghost." Susannah Martin of Amesbury, long accounted a witch, spoke harshly to neighbors, accused the girls of "dealing in the Black Art," and pointed out (to the magistrates' chagrin) that the Old Testament described Satan's appearance in the shape of an innocent, one "glorified Saint." Mary Parker had once shocked her associates by coming to the tavern after her husband and there "railing" at him. Ann Pudeator possessed a long-standing reputation as "an ill-carriaged woman," while Mary Obinson several times abused Thomas Hill, calling him "cuckold & old foole." Mammy Read had the gall to tell Mistress Symmes, after an argument, that she wished her antagonist "might never piss, nor shit, if she did not goe [*i.e.,* leave]." Read, Pudeator, Martin, Carrier, and Bishop all swung from the gallows, but Hobbs received a reprieve after her conviction. No further record exists of Obinson's case. Whether any of. these woman actually practiced witchcraft cannot now be determmed, but it is unlikely. The fact that women in 1692 had more freedom than ever before—a reality produced in part by the lack of witchcraft prosecutions after 1665—would presumably have decreased the need for "rebels" against the feminine ideal to assume the totally malign inversion of the proper role. The clarity and force of the earlier typologies of Witch and Whore, as well as Virgin and Wife, had considerably weakened by the 1690s, only to dramatically resurface in 1692.

Despite their realizations that they faced a death sentence, most of the accused women refused to insure their own releases by concocting confessions. Instead, they "would neither in time of Examination, nor Trial, Confess any thing of what was laid to their Charge; some would not admit of any Minister to Pray with them, others refused to pray for themselves." Nineteen women died protesting their innocence, including five in prison. One of the hanged "witches," Mary Easty, knowing that she could not save her own life, wished to save those "that are going the same way with myself." She urged the Salem Court to examine carefully all confessing witches who accused others, for, she explained, they "have belyed themselves and others."

Those women who walked bravely to the gallows may have summoned strength from their religious faith, or from recognition of the integrity of their own personhood. Other women signed petitions supporting accused witches, even though such petitioners should have been aware that the afflicted girls quickly accused their critics. Two Putnam opponents, Israel and Elizabeth Porter, headed a petition signed by sixteen other women and twenty-one men on behalf of Rebecca Nurse. Another thirteen men and seven of their wives requested leniency for the Proctors. . . .

During the trials, from time to time an occasional unaccused woman went so far as to attack the character of one or more of the afflicted. For example, Lydia Porter charged Goody Bibber with mischief-making and lying. Mary Phips, the wife of the governor, expressed her own disagreement by pardoning one convicted witch in the governor's absence, although she had no legal power to do so. Lady Phips, Lydia Porter, and the almost one hundred female petitioners, as well as many of the "witches," were acting assertively in varying degrees, reflecting and contributing to the style of the nontraditional woman.

An End to Witchcraft

As witchcraft accusations increased in number, protests also mounted, from men as well as from women. Husbands spoke up in defense of their wives. Ex-deputy Robert Pike told Justice Corwin that "diabolical visions, apparitions or representations" were "more commonly false and delusive then real," also pointing out that the afflicted women raised the dead, like the Witch of Endor in biblical times. A Salem Quaker named Thomas Maule anonymously blasted the Puritans for murdering one another under the Devil's influence, and as early as June the Anabaptist William Milbourne protested to the General Court against the use of "bare specter testimonie" to convict "persons of good fame and of unspotted reputations." A Boston merchant by the name of Thomas Brattle, in an October letter, penned a scathing criticism of the Salem proceedings. At about the same time Samuel Willard published a disapproving analysis of the arguments used against witches, in *Some Miscellany Observations on our Present Debates Respecting Witchcraft, In a Dialogue between S[alem] and B[oston].* Cotton Mather had begun to doubt the reality of specter evidence, while other ministers, including Joshua Moody, John Hale, John Wise, Francis Dane, James Allen, and John Baily, raised objections to the proceedings. Willard and Moody took occasion to preach the text, "they that are persecuted in one city, let them flee to another," and then counselled four "witches" to escape from prison.

The afflicted girls ultimately insured that the witchcraft proceedings would halt—by accusing the most prestigious members of Puritan society. The girls had first charged contentious, penniless Sarah Good, disreputable Sarah Osborne, and the exotic Barbadian Indian slave Tituba. Sensing their own power in the court's response, they subsequently broadened their attack by clamoring not only against low-status eccentrics, but also against virtuous women like Rebecca Nurse, and even against men. On May 31 attorney Thomas Newton would assert that they "spare no person of what quality so ever." By November the bewitched had charged the wives of critics Moody, Hale, and Dane, as well as several members of Boston's ruling elite. However, the authorities were reluctant to prosecute. Margaret Thatcher, the widow of Boston's wealthiest merchant and mother-in-law of Judge Jonathan Corwin, who presided at witchcraft trials, escaped apprehension, even though she was much complained about by the afflicted. So did Mary Phips, Samuel Willard, and Mistress Moody. The magistrates did issue a warrant for the arrest of a prominent merchant named Hezekiah Usher, but he received lodging in a private house and then was permitted to leave the colony.

Bostonians had less respect for the orders of the Salem Court than did the citizenry of any other area; their constables ignored warrants. Accused witches broke out of prison altogether too easily, suggesting complicity on the part of the jailor. In fact, the keeper had no apparent hesitancy about releasing one "witch" upon receipt of Lady Phips's pardon. Other Bostonians hid "witches" who had escaped from prison or fled apprehension.

The Salem Village girls who accused proper Bostonians quite possibly exploited the resentment of many rural Salem Villagers for those alien yet very powerful urbanites who often valued capital over land, commerce over husbandry, ornamentation over simplicity, and new ideas over old. The Putnams, in particular, facing diminishing land resources and declining status, had a good deal to resent; they listened with open ears while the girls accused nine prominent Bostonians and denounced Nathaniel Saltonstall, the Haverhill Councillor who had resigned his seat on the witch court. Those with Boston connections also faced prosecution. In Andover, for example, three prominent Bradstreets—a family with close marital and political ties to Boston's ruling elite—fled prosecution. Before the witchcraft frenzy had abated, even the secretary of Connecticut had been denounced.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates many people's dislike for the merchant class than the destruction wrought against the property of the wealthy French Huguenot, Philip English. (There was undoubtedly some anti-French feeling involved in English's case as well.) After English and his "aristocratic" wife, Mary, escaped from Salem prison, an irate group of citizens sacked their "great house" at Salem, destroying or carrying away various old family portraits and furniture and robbing storehouses of goods valued at £2,683. When English later returned, he found a single servant's bed the only furniture remaining in the house.

The colony's economic and political leaders objected to the accusations levied against so many of their friends and wives. Quite probably their objections were crucial in bringing the frenzy to a halt. Robert Calef credited one prominent Bostonian with stopping proceedings at Andover by threatening to sue his accusers there in a £1,000 defamation action. Governor William Phips initially left all witchcraft affairs to the Court of Oyer and Terminer, but after returning to Boston from an expedition against the Maine Indians he found "many persons in a strange ferment of disatisfaction." Soon the royal governor forbade the issuance of any new literature on the subject, asked the Crown for counsel, and dissolved the Court of Oyer and Terminer. In the winter of 1692–93 Phips pardoned some convicted witches, caused some to be let out on bail, and "put the Judges upon considering a way to relieve others and prevent them from perishing in prison." The General Court on December 16, 1692, directed the newly created Superior Court to try the "witches" still in custody within Essex County. The Superior Court, meeting on January 3, 1692/3, acquitted forty-nine "witches" and convicted three. Deputy Governor Stoughton, the chief justice, ordered the execution of those three, as he had of other "witches," but Phips pardoned these and five other convicted persons. Stoughton, enraged, refused to sit on the bench of the next court at Charlestown. That body released all the accused persons tried before it.

Before the Superior Court met at Salem, the bewitched girls had ceased their afflictions. Perhaps by then they had realized that their reach exceeded their grasp. Perhaps they felt guilty over precipitating the deaths of twenty-five persons. Perhaps their power impulses had been satiated. (After all, for some time people as far away as Boston, Andover, and Gloucester had sought their advice in pointing out witches.) Perhaps they were drained by the physical and emotional strain which attended fits. Perhaps they felt purged, for a time, of their own unfeminine longings. For whatever reasons, they *had* had their day; now it seemed only appropriate that they return to their status as unobtrusive members of the Puritan community. . . .

Only in eastern Massachusetts, with its intense and numerous frustrations, could a sustained witch hunt be mounted. There the reality of the nontraditional woman loomed larger, helping to precipitate fits in powerless adolescents and religious Puritan wives, as well as aggravating the already established tendency to view unfeminine behavior as witchlike. Those independent-spirited women who faced prosecution as witches were the victims of other, more conservative women's unconscious search for power.

Laurie Winn Carlson **NO**

A Fever in Salem: A New Interpretation of the New England Witch Trials

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, residents of a northeastern Massachusetts colony experienced a succession of witchcraft accusations resulting in hearings, trials, imprisonments, and executions. Between 1689 and 1700 the citizens complained of symptoms that included fits (convulsions), spectral visions (hallucinations), mental “distraction” (psychosis), “pinching, pin pricking and bites” on their skin (clonus), lethargy, and even death. They “barked like dogs,” were unable to walk, and had their arms and legs “nearly twisted out of joint.”

In late winter and early spring of 1692, residents of Salem Village, Massachusetts, a thinly settled town of six hundred, began to suffer from a strange physical and mental malady. Fits, hallucinations, temporary paralysis, and “distracted” rampages were suddenly occurring sporadically in the community. The livestock, too, seemed to suffer from the unexplainable illness. The randomness of the victims and the unusual symptoms that were seldom exactly the same, led the residents to suspect an otherworldly menace. With the limited scientific and medical knowledge of the time, physicians who were consulted could only offer witchcraft as an explanation.

These New Englanders were Puritans, people who had come to North America to establish a utopian vision of community based upon religious ideals. But, as the historian Daniel Boorstin points out, their religious beliefs were countered by their reliance on English common law. The Puritans did not create a society out of their religious dogma, but maintained the rule of law brought from their homeland. They were pragmatic, attempting to adapt practices brought from England rather than reinventing their own as it suited them. When problems arose that were within the realm of the legal system, the community acted appropriately, seeking redress for wrongs within the courts.

Thus when purported witchcraft appeared, church leaders, physicians, and a panicked citizenry turned the problem over to the civil authorities. Witchcraft was a capital crime in all the colonies, and whoever was to blame for it had to be ferreted out and made to stop. Because no one could halt the

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outbreak of illness, for ten months the community wrestled with sickness, sin, and the criminal act of witchcraft. By September 1692, nineteen convicted witches had been hanged and more than a hundred people sat in prison awaiting sentencing when the trials at last faded. The next year all were released and the court closed. The craze ended as abruptly as it began.

Or did it? There had been similar sporadic physical complaints blamed on witchcraft going back several decades in New England, to the 1640s when the first executions for the crime of witchcraft were ordered in the colonies. Evidence indicates that people (and domestic animals) had suffered similar physical symptoms and ailments in Europe in still earlier years. After the witch trials ended in Salem, there continued to be complaints of the "Salem symptoms" in Connecticut and New Hampshire, as well as in Boston, into the early eighteenth century. But there were no more hangings. The epidemic and witchcraft had parted ways.

By examining the primary records left by those who suffered from the unexplainable and supposedly diabolical ailments in 1692, we get a clear picture of exactly what they were experiencing. *The Salem Witchcraft Papers,* a three-volume set compiled from the original documents and preserved as typescripts by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, has been edited for today's reader by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. It is invaluable for reading the complete and detailed problems people were dealing with. Like sitting in the physician's office with them, we read where the pain started, how it disappeared or progressed, how long they endured it.

A similar epidemic with nearly exact symptoms swept the world from 1916 to 1930. This world-wide pandemic, sleeping sickness, or encephalitis lethargica, eventually claimed more than five million victims. Its cause has never been fully identified. There is no cure. Victims of the twentieth-century epidemic continue under hospitalization to the present day. An excellent source for better understanding encephalitis lethargica is Oliver Sacks's book *Awakenings,* which is now in its sixth edition and has become a cult classic. A movie of the same title, based on the book, presents a very credible look at the physical behaviors patients exhibited during the epidemic. While encephalitis lethargica, in the epidemic form in which it appeared in the early twentieth century, is not active today, outbreaks of insect-borne encephalitis do appear infrequently throughout the country; recent outbreaks of mosquito-borne encephalitis have nearly brought Walt Disney World in Florida to a halt, have caused entire towns to abandon evening football games, and have made horse owners anxious throughout the San Joaquin Valley in California.

Using the legal documents from the Salem witch trials of 1692, as well as contemporary accounts of earlier incidents in the surrounding area, we can identify the "afflictions" that the colonists experienced and that led to the accusations of witchcraft. By comparing the symptoms reported by seventeenth-century colonists with those of patients affected by the encephalitis lethargica epidemic of the early twentieth century, a pattern of symptoms emerges. This pattern supports the hypothesis that the witch-hunts of New England were a response to unexplained physical and neurological behaviors resulting from an epidemic of encephalitis. This was some form of the same encephalitis epidemic that became pandemic in the 1920s. In fact, it is difficult to find anything in the record at Salem that *doesn't* support the idea that the symptoms were caused by that very disease. . . .

What Happened at Salem?

. . . Historical explanations of witchcraft dwell on what Thomas Szasz calls the "scapegoat theory of witchcraft," which explores who was accused and why in the context of larger societal issues. Inevitably they fail to examine the accusers or the "afflicted," who themselves were often tried for witchcraft.

Sociologists have pointed to community-based socioeconomic problems as the causative agent in the events at Salem. They propose that there were really two Salems: Salem Town (a prosperous sector on the well-developed east side of town) and Salem Village (a less-developed, very swampy and rocky area on the west side). Likening Salem Village to a troubled backwater, the accusations and afflictions emanated from the west side, where the residents directed their animosity toward their wealthier, more powerful eastern counterparts by accusing individuals on the east side of witchcraft. Examining the struggles, failures, broken dreams, and lost hopes of the Salem Village residents, sociologists began to view the village as "an inner city on a hill." Social conflict, in this case between prosperous merchants and struggling subsistence farmers, was examined. In the case of the Salem witch hunts, the theory may better explain who was accused and convicted of witchcraft than why individuals were afflicted. Division along class and religious lines has been well documented in determining criminal accusations.

Other investigators have blamed the situation on village factionalism, claiming that Salem Village was rife with suspicious, disgruntled, jealous settlers whose frustrations had festered for years before exploding in the court record with witchcraft accusations and trials. But that does not explain why twenty-two *other* towns in New England were eventually connected to the proceedings in some way; villagers throughout Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island were brought into the trial records. Victims, accused witches, and witnesses came from other locales as far away as the Maine frontier. Other locations, such as Connecticut, conducted witch trials that preceded or coincided with those at Salem. Choosing to view the problems as power struggles or personality differences within a small village strikes one as too parochial. Many of the possessed claimants barely knew the people they named as their tormenters, in fact several had never even met the persons they accused of fostering their problems—hardly enough tension to support the idea that the entire uproar was based on long-standing animosities. Socioeconomic divisions did engender problems in the region, and while they ultimately may be used to explain who was accused and why, they do not explain the many physical symptoms or who experienced them.

Carol Karlsen has viewed what happened at Salem in her book *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman,* which relates the events to women's oppressed status within Puritan society. She considers New Englanders' "possession" to have been a cultural performance—a ritual—performed by girls, interpreted by ministers, and observed by an audience as a dramatic event. Karlsen claims the possessed individuals exhibited learned behavior patterns and that words and actions varied only slightly among them. The affected women experienced an inner conflict which was explained by ministers as a struggle between good and evil: God versus Satan. The outcome revolved around whether or not the young women would later lead virtuous lives or fall into sin. Karlsen suggests that a woman's possession was the result of her indecision or ambivalence about choosing the sort of woman she wanted to be. She views the possession as a "collective phenomenon" among women in Connecticut between 1662 and 1663, and in Massachusetts from 1692 to 1693. It was a "ritual expression of Puritan belief and New England's gender arrangements," and a challenge to society. It was ultimately a simple power struggle between women and their oppressors.

As to the physical symptoms: the fits, trances, and paralyzed limbs, among others, Karlsen attributes them to the afflicted girls' actual fear of witches as well as the idea that once they fell into an afflicted state they were free to express unacceptable feelings without reprisal. The swollen throats, extended tongues, and eyes frozen in peripheral stares were manifestations of the inner rage they felt toward society; they were so upset they literally *couldn't* speak. Their paralysis was based on anger over having to work; their inability to walk meant they could not perform their expected labor—in other words, a passive-aggressive response to a situation that incensed them. Karlsen views witchcraft possession in New England as a rebellion against gender and class powers: a psychopathology rooted in female anger.

Misogyny may well explain who was accused of witchcraft, but it lacks an explanation for the wide-ranging symptoms, the ages of the afflicted, and the patterns of symptoms that occurred across time and distance in seventeenth-century New England. Scholars who take this route, however, conveniently ignore the fact that men too were accused, tried, and hanged for witchcraft, both in the colonies and in Europe. In fact, Robin Briggs states that though "every serious historical account recognizes that large numbers of men were accused and executed on similar charges, this fact has never really penetrated to become part of the general knowledge on the subject." His research shows that a misogynistic view of witch-hunts lacks complete credibility.

Many researchers have proposed that mass hysteria affected the young women of Salem. The term *hysteria,* essentially a female complaint, has recently been dropped from use by the psychiatric profession in favor of "conversion symptom," which describes the manner in which neurotic patients suffer emotional stress brought on by an unconscious source. This stress or tension can undergo "conversion" and reveal itself in a variety of physical ailments. Conversion, a very pliable disorder, can be explained by almost any societal pressure in any particular culture. It is a psychological catchall for unexplained neurological or emotional problems. But its victims are always the same, according to analysts: unstable females.

Jean-Martin Charcot, a French physician, worked extensively with epileptic and hysteric female patients at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris between 1862 and 1870. He laid the groundwork for hysteria theory, calling it hystero-epilepsy.

He accused his patients of being deceitful, clever actresses who delighted in fooling the male physician. Charcot's medical students claimed to be able to transfer diseases from hysterics with the use of magnets, something they called the "metal cure." Eventually his professional standing as a neurologist diminished and faded, and he turned to faith healing, Sigmund Freud, one of his students, began his work under Charcot's direction.

A more modern version of the hysteria complex is called Mass Psychogenic Illness, or MPI, which is defined as the contagious spread of behavior within a group of individuals where one person serves as the catalyst or "starter" and the others imitate the behavior. Used to describe situations where mass illness breaks out in the school or workplace, it is usually connected to a toxic agent—real or imagined—in a less than satisfactory institutional or factory setting. MPI is the sufferer's response to overwhelming life and work stress. It relies on the individual's identification with the index case (the first one to get sick, in effect the "leader") and willingness to succumb to the same illness. A classical outbreak of MPI involves a group of segregated young females in a noisy, crowded, high-intensity setting. It is most common in Southeast Asian factories crowded with young female workers; adults are not usually affected. Symptoms appear, spread, and subside rapidly (usually over one day). Physical manifestations usually include fainting, malaise, convulsions with hyperventilation, and excitement. Transmission is by sight or sound brought about by a triggering factor which affects members of the group, who share some degree of unconscious fantasies. A phenomenon more related to the industrial world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than to pastoral village life in colonial New England, MPI does not address the question of why men and young children, who would not have identified emotionally and psychologically with a group of young girls, suffered. The New England colonists scarcely fit the pattern for this illness theory that demands large groups of people of similar age, sex, and personality assembled in one confined location.

Salem's witches cannot, of course, escape Freudian critique. Beyond the hysteria hypothesis, John Demos, in *Entertaining Satan,* looked at the evidence from the perspective of modern psychoanalysis. He pointed out that witchcraft explained and excused people's mistakes or incompetence—a failure or mistake blamed on witches allowed a cathartic cleansing of personal responsibility. Witches served a purpose; deviant people served as models to the rest of society to exemplify socially unacceptable behavior. But Demos's explanation that witch-hunts were an integral part of social experience, something that bound the community together—sort of a public works project—does not address the physical symptoms of the sufferers.

For the most part, examinations of the afflicted individuals at Salem have focused on the young women, essentially placing the blame on them instead of exploring an organic cause for their behaviors. Freudian explanations for the goings-on have attributed the activities of the possessed girls to a quest for attention. Their physical manifestations of illness have been explained as being conversion symptoms due to intrapsychic conflict. Their physical expression of psychological conflict is a compromise between unacceptable impulses and the mind's attempt to ignore them. Demos uses the example of Elizabeth

Knapp, whose fits became increasingly severe while strangers gathered to view her behavior. Instead of considering that she was beset by an uncontrollable series of convulsions which were likely worsened by the excited witnesses who refused to leave her alone, he attributes her worsening condition to her exhibitionist tendencies, motivated by strong dependency needs. Elizabeth's writhing on the floor in a fetal position is seen as an oral dependency left over from childhood, causing her regression to infancy.

But "inner conflict" simply does not explain the events at Salem. Neither does the idea that the young afflicted girls were motivated by an erotic attraction to church ministers who were called in to determine whether Satan was involved. The girls' repressed adolescent sexual wishes (one girl was only eleven years old) and their seeking a replacement for absent father figures scarcely explains the toll the disease was taking on victims of both sexes and all ages. No Freudian stone has been left unturned by scholars; even the "genetic reconstruction" of Elizabeth Knapp's past points out that her childhood was filled with unmet needs, her mother's frustration because of an inability to bear additional children, and her father's reputation as a suspected adulterer. "Narcissistic depletion," "psychological transference," "a tendency to fragment which was temporarily neutralized"—the psycho-lingo just about stumbles over itself in attempts to explain the afflicted girls at Salem. But unanswered questions remain: Why the sharp pains in extremities? The hallucinations? The hyperactivity? The periods of calm between sessions of convulsions? Why did other residents swear in court that they had seen marks appear on the arms of the afflicted?

The opinion that the victims were creating their own fits as challenges to authority and quests for fame has shaped most interpretations of what happened in 1692. But would the colonists have strived for public notice and attention? If the afflicted individuals were behaving unusually to garner public notice, why? Did women and men of that era really crave public attention, or would it have put them in awkward, critical, and socially unacceptable situations? How socially redeeming would writhing on the ground "like a hog" and emitting strange noises, "barking like a dog," or "bleating like a calf" be for a destitute young servant girl who hoped to marry above her station? It is difficult to accept that these spectacles, which horrified viewers as well as the participants themselves, were actually a positive experience for the young women. That sort of suspicious activity usually met with social stigma, shunning, or, at the least, brutal whipping from father or master.

Puberty, a time of inner turmoil, is thought to have contributed to the victims acting out through fits, convulsions, and erratic behavior. The victims' inability to eat is explained away as a disorder related to the youthful struggle for individuality: anorexia nervosa. What about the young men who reported symptoms? Freudian interpretation attributes their behavior to rebellion against controlling fathers. How have psycho-social interpretations explained the reason witch trials ended after 1692 in Salem? As communities grew into larger urban units, people no longer knew their neighbors, grudges receded in importance as a factor in social control, and witches were no longer valuable to society. John Demos observes that witchcraft never appeared in cities, and that it lasted longest in villages far removed from urban influence. That linkage between witchcraft outbreaks and agricultural villages is important when establishing a connection with outbreaks of encephalitis lethargica, which appeared largely in small towns and rural areas in the early twentieth century. Rather than accepting the idea that witchcraft receded because it was no longer useful in a community context, one must examine why epidemics occurred in waves and how particular diseases affected isolated population groups.

The situation in seventeenth-century New England fails psycho-social explanation because too many questions remain unanswered. Not only can we not make a strong case that infantilism, sexual repression, and a struggle for individuality caused the turmoil in Salem, but a psycho-social explanation does not answer why the symptoms, which were so *obviously physical,* appeared with such force and then, in the autumn of 1692, largely disappeared from Salem.

Because the complexity of psychological and social factors connected with interpreting witchcraft is so absorbing, the existence of a physical pathology behind the events at Salem has long been overlooked. Linnda Caporeal, a graduate student in psychology, proposed that ergot, a fungus that appears on rye crops, caused the hallucinogenic poisoning in Salem. Her article appeared in 1976 in *Science* while Americans were trying to understand the LSD drug phenomenon. Hers is one of the few attempts made to link the puzzling occurrences at Salem with biological evidence.

Ergot was identified by a French scientist in 1676, in an explanation of the relation between ergotized rye and bread poisoning. It is a fungus that contains several potent pharmacologic agents, the ergot alkaloids. One of these alkaloids is lysergic acid amide, which has ten percent of the activity of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide). This sort of substance causes convulsions or gangrenous deterioration of the extremities. Caporeal proposed that an ergot infestation in the Salem area might explain the convulsions attributed to witchcraft. If grain crops had been infected with ergot fungus during the 1692 rainy season and later stored away, the fungus might have grown in the storage area and spread to the entire crop. When it was distributed randomly among friends and villagers, they would have become affected by the poisoned grain.

Caporeal's innovative thinking was challenged by psychologists Nicholas Spanos and Jack Gottlieb, who were quick to point out that her theory did not explain why, if food poisoning were to blame, families who ate from the same source of grain were not affected. And infants were afflicted who may not have been eating bread grains. Historically, epidemics of ergotism have appeared in areas where there was a severe vitamin A deficiency in the diet. Salem residents had plenty of milk and seafood available; they certainly did not suffer from vitamin A deficiency. Ergotism also involves extensive vomiting and diarrhea, symptoms not found in the Salem cases. A hearty appetite, almost ravenous, follows ergotism; in New England the afflicted wasted away from either an inability to eat or a lack of interest in it. The sudden onset of the Salem symptoms in late winter and early spring would be hard to trace to months of eating contaminated grain. Ergot was never seriously considered as the cause of problems at Salem, even by the colonists themselves who knew what ergotism was (it had been identified sixteen years earlier) and were trying desperately to discover the source of their problems.

An explanation that satisfies many of the unanswered questions about the events at Salem is that the symptoms reported by the afflicted New Englanders and their families in the seventeenth century were the result of an unrecognized epidemic of encephalitis. Comparisons may be made between the afflictions reported at Salem (as well as the rest of seventeenth-century New England) and the encephalitis lethargica pandemic of the early twentieth century. This partial list, created from the literature, reveals how similar the two epidemics were, in spite of the variation in medical terms of the day:

1692 SALEM	1916–1930s ENCEPHALITIS EPIDEMIC
fits	convulsions
spectral visions	hallucinations
mental “distraction”	psychoses
pinching, pricking	myoclonus of small muscle bundles on skin surface
“bites”	erythmata on skin surface, capillary hemorrhaging
eyes twisted	oculogyric crises: gaze fixed upward, downward, or to the side
inability to walk	paresis: partial paralysis
neck twisted	torticollis: spasm of neck muscles forces head to one side, spasms affect trunk and neck
repeating nonsense words	palilalia: repetition of one’s own words

In both times, most of the afflicted were young women or children; the children were hit hardest, several dying in their cradles from violent fits. The afflictions appeared in late winter and early spring and receded with the heat of summer. . . . Von Economo noted that most encephalitis lethargica epidemics had historically shown the greatest number of acute cases occurring in the first quarter of the year, from midwinter to the beginning of spring. The “pricking and pinching” repeated so often in the court records at Salem can be explained by the way patients’ skin surfaces exhibited twitches—quick, short, fluttering sequences of contractions of muscle bundles. Cold temperatures cause them to increase in number and spread over the body. Twitches were seldom absent in cases of hyperkinetic encephalitis lethargica during the 1920s epidemic. The skin surface also exhibited a peculiar disturbance in which red areas appeared due to dilation and congestion of the capillaries. Red marks that bleed through the skin’s surface would explain the many references in court documents to suspected bites made by witches.

Examining the colonists' complaints in the trial papers uncovers many other symptom similarities: inability to walk, terrifying hallucinations, sore throat, or choking—the list goes on and on. . . .

Ultimately the witch-hunts—or at least the complaints of afflictions—ended in Salem in the autumn of 1692, and there were no more complaints the following year. An arboviral encephalitis epidemic would have receded in the fall, when the air and water grew too cold for mosquitoes' survival. By the time spring arrived, the situation had altered, and the epidemic appeared to fade. Encephalitis epidemics, like many other contagious epidemics, often recede for years—sometimes decades—between recrudescence periods. Either the agents mutate and disappear to return years later, or they run out of susceptible hosts—the only ones left are those who have an immunity to the infection.

Ticks too might have been to blame. Just as in the spread of tick-borne encephalitis throughout the northern region of Russia, ticks played a part in spreading the disease across the virgin forests of temperate North America. Peasants who worked in the forest as woodcutters were affected in Russia during the epidemic of the 1950s; in Salem, in the seventeenth century, residents also worked as woodcutters and loggers. The Putnam family, in particular, were engaged in logging and woodcutting (and in fact were involved in arguments over whether they were taking logs from property they did not own). If the Putnams brought ticks bearing disease into their homes on their bodies or clothing, other members might have been affected. Reverend Parris's household could have been infected from the large amount of firewood he negotiated to supply his family, as part of his salary. Because they were his strongest supporters, the Putnams would likely have been the ones to cut and deliver the wood to his doorstep. Firewood, in the form of large logs used in colonial fireplaces, might have harbored wood ticks that had gone into winter hibernation but came out of the bark when logs were stored beside the hearth in a warm New England house. Infestations of ticks and body lice were common in colonial homes where laundry could not be done during the winter (nowhere to dry the wet clothing) and baths were rarely taken.

Another disease that results in encephalitis is endemic to the New England area even today. Lyme disease is a contemporary problem in New England, and there is little reason to think that it would have been absent from the area in colonial times. It is an infectious disease caused by bacteria spread by deer ticks. Both people and animals can be infected with Lyme disease. It is a serious but not fatal disease today. Found throughout the United States, it is most common along the East Coast, the Great Lakes, and the Pacific Northwest. In Massachusetts, deer ticks are most often found along the coast and are common in the Connecticut River Valley. The disease most likely spreads between late May and early autumn, when ticks are active. So tiny that the larvae are no bigger than a pencil point, the ticks live for two years, during which they can infect wild and domestic animals as well as people.

Symptoms of Lyme disease include a rash where the tick was attached—which may appear anywhere between three days and a month after the innocuous bite. Some times the rash looks like a small red doughnut. Other signs include itching, hives, swollen eyelids, and flulike symptoms such as fever, headache, stiff neck, sore muscles, fatigue, sore throat, and swollen glands. The symptoms go away after a few weeks, but without medical treatment nearly half the infected people will experience the rash again in other places on their bodies. In the later stages, three major areas—the joints, the nervous system, and the heart—may be affected even months after the tick bite. People with Lyme disease can develop late-stage symptoms even if they have never had the rash. About 10 to 20 percent of the people who do not get treatment develop nervous system problems: severe headache, stiff neck, facial paralysis, or cranial nerve palsies, and weakness and/or pain in their hands, arms, feet, or legs. Symptoms may last for weeks, often shifting from mild to severe and back again.

These symptoms are found in the present form of Lyme disease; the disease could likely have mutated over the centuries, because hallucinations and paranoia, along with lethargy, are not found in today's tick-borne version of Lyme disease. Questions and problems arise when connecting Lyme disease to the situations in 1692 or 1920, but it is another factor to consider. Could ticks have been common in Salem? The colonists did not bathe regularly, and they lived close by their domestic animals. Ticks could have wintered inside the home, carried in on firewood. They would have found ample hiding places in the seams of the heavy woolen clothing commonly worn by the colonists.

What about 1920? A common nuisance of that era was the "bedbug," chinch bug, or *Cimex lectularius*. Jar lids filled with arsenic were placed under bedsteads to keep the critters from climbing into bed and feeding on people's blood. Head lice have been common throughout the ages; today's rampant epidemics in schools are nothing to ignore, though scientists reassure us that neither bedbugs nor head lice carry any type of disease. Perhaps they did at one time. Many avenues must be explored, much research must be done. Perhaps we will never know what caused encephalitis lethargica. . . .

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria a Product of Women's Search for Power?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. Compare and contrast the characteristics of witchcraft accusers and accused in Salem.
2. Discuss and explain the differing attitudes toward the witchcraft hysteria exhibited in Salem and Boston.
3. What evidence does Lyle Koehler present to support his conclusion that the Salem witchcraft hysteria was grounded in women's search for power?
4. What does Koehler's essay suggest about the status of women in seventeenth-century New England?
5. What specific evidence does Laurie Winn Carlson give to support her interpretation of the events in Salem in 1692? How persuasive is her argument?

Is There Common Ground?

The Salem witch hysteria and subsequent trials and executions were an unfortunate, but not unique, event and must be understood within the larger context of attitudes toward the supernatural. While Salem seems always to attract the attention of the curious among students and the general public, scholars are well aware that similar episodes erupted in Western Europe and other parts of the American colonies. Because the vast majority of those accused of practicing witchcraft were women, it is no surprise that some historians would focus on the nature of gender relations in the colonies to gain a better understanding of why these accusations occurred and why they were believed by so many. At the same time, the accusations can be viewed from a much broader perspective of political, economic, and social transformations that were occurring in the late-seventeenth century and which generated enormous tensions and anxieties among the people experiencing that changing world. A comparative framework could be established that examines peoples' reactions to the profound changes produced by rapid industrialization and the shift from rural to urban values that took place in the late-nineteenth century or the fears demonstrated by many Americans in the post–World War II era as they attempted to come to grips with the atomic age and the rising power of the Soviet Union. Dramatic changes often spawn concerns about the impact of such changes on individuals within society. The Carlson essay, however, takes the discussion of Salem in an entirely different direction and reinforces the importance of our willingness to recognize the impact of biological forces in history. This recognition relates well to historical arguments made by William McNeill, Jared Sparks, and Alfred Crosby, among others, regarding the influence of germs in shaping human history.

Additional Resources

For an older and broader comparative study, see George L. Kittridge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Harvard University Press, 1929). Documentary evidence of seventeenth-century witchcraft can be examined in George L. Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648–1706* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Northeastern University Press, 1993), David D. Hall, ed., *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638–1693* (2nd ed.; Northeastern University Press, 1999), and Frances Hall, ed., *The Salem Witch Trials Reader* (Da Capo Press, 2000). More recent studies include Larry Gragg, *The Salem Witch Crisis* (Praeger, 1992), and Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). For additional discussion of the relationship between women and witchcraft, see Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Cornell University Press, 1997), and Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York University Press, 1995).

Carol Karlsen's work reflects a growing interest in the status of colonial American women. Students in American history classes have, for generations read of the founding of the colonies in British North America, their political and economic development, and the colonists' struggle for independence without ever being confronted by a female protagonist. Are there other equally valid explanations that place little or no weight on the gender of the accused? Only in the last three or four decades have discussions of the role of women in the development of American society made their appearance in standard textbooks. Consequently, it is useful to explore the status of women in colonial America. Surveys of American women's history that address the colonial period include June Sochen, *Herstory: A Woman's View of American History* (Alfred Publishing Company, 1974) and Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1984). The idea that colonial American women enjoyed a higher status than their European counterparts is supported in Richard B. Morris, *Studies in the History of American Law* (2nd ed.; Octagon books, 1964), Roger Thompson, *Women in Stuart England and America: A Comparative Study* (Routledge & Kegan, 1974), and Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land: Women in American History* (Little, Brown, 1977). Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1980) describes a variety of roles performed by married women.

Women in the age of the American Revolution are the focus of Linda Grant DePauw and Conover Hunt, *"Remember the Ladies": Women in America,* *1750–1815* (Viking Press, 1976), Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Little, Brown, 1980), Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1980), and Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel, Jr., *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (W. W. Norton, 1984).

ISSUE 5

Was There a Great Awakening in Mid-Eighteenth-Century America?

YES: Thomas S. Kidd, from *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (Yale University Press, 2007)

NO: Jon Butler, from "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *Journal of American History* (September 1982)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Discuss the role played by religion in the British North American colonies.
- Identify George Whitefield and explain his contributions to the Great Awakening.
- Understand the origins, goals, leaders, and consequences of the First Great Awakening.
- Evaluate the relationship between evangelical Protestantism and democracy in early America.
- Analyze these essays within the context of a discussion of historical truth.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Thomas Kidd insists that preachers such as George Whitefield engineered a powerful series of revivals in the mid-eighteenth century that influenced all of the British North American colonies and gave birth to a spirit of evangelicalism that initiated a major alteration of global Christian history.

NO: Jon Butler claims that to describe the religious revival activities of the eighteenth century as the "Great Awakening" is to seriously exaggerate their extent, nature, and impact on prerevolutionary American society and politics.

Although generations of American schoolchildren have been taught that the British colonies in North America were founded by persons fleeing religious persecution in England, the truth is that many of those early settlers were motivated by other factors, some of which had little to do with theological preferences. To be sure, the Pilgrims and Puritans of New England sought to escape the proscriptions established by the Church of England. Many New Englanders, however, did not adhere to the precepts of Calvinism and therefore were viewed as outsiders. The Quakers who populated Pennsylvania were mostly fugitives from New England, where they had been victims of religious persecution. But to apply religious motivations to the earliest settlers of Virginia, South Carolina, or Georgia is to engage in a serious misreading of the historical record. Even in New England, the religious mission of Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop's "city upon a hill" began to erode as the colonial settlements matured and stabilized.

Although religion was a central element in the lives of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europeans who migrated to the New World, proliferation of religious sects and denominations, emphasis upon material gain in all parts of the colonies, and the predominance of reason over emotion that is associated with the Deists of the Enlightenment period all contributed to a gradual but obvious movement of the colonists away from the church and clerical authority. William Bradford of Plymouth Colony, for example, expressed grave concern that many Plymouth residents were following a path of perfidy, and Pennsylvania founder William Penn was certain that the "holy experiment" of the Quakers had failed. Colonial clergy, fearful that a fall from grace was in progress, issued calls for a revival of religious fervor. The spirit of revivalism that spread through the colonies in the 1730s and 1740s, therefore, was an answer to these clerical prayers.

The episode known as the First Great Awakening coincided with the Pietistic movement in Europe and England and was carried forward by dynamic preachers such as Gilbert Tennant, Theodore Frelinghuysen, and George Whitefield. They promoted a religion of the heart, not of the head, in order to produce a spiritual rebirth. These revivals, most historians agree, reinvigorated American Protestantism. Many new congregations were organized as a result of irremediable schisms between "Old Lights" and "New Lights." Skepticism about the desirability of an educated clergy sparked a strong strain of anti-intellectualism. Also, the emphasis on conversion was a message to which virtually everyone could respond, regardless of age, sex, race, or social status.

For some historians, the implications of the Great Awakening extended beyond the religious sphere into the realm of politics and were incorporated into the American Revolution. William G. McLoughlin's essay "'Enthusiasm for Liberty': The Great Awakening as the Key to the Revolution," in Jack P. Greene and William G. McLoughlin, eds., *Preachers & Politicians: Two Essays on the Origins of the American Revolution* (American Antiquarian Society, 1977) claims that the Great Awakening paved the way for the American Revolution by promoting religious revitalization, intercolonial unity, and democracy. In his book *Religion in America: Past and Present* (Prentice-Hall, 1961), Clifton E.

Olmstead argues for a broader application of religious causes to the origins of the American Revolution. First, and consistent with McLoughlin and others, Olmstead contends that the Great Awakening did foster a sense of community among American colonists, thus providing the unity required for an organized assault on English control. Moreover, the Awakening further weakened existing ties between colonies and Mother Country by drawing adherents of the Church of England into the evangelical denominations that expanded as a result of revivalist Protestantism. Second, tensions were generated by the demand that an Anglican bishop be established in the colonies. Many evangelicals found in this plan evidence that the British government wanted further control over the colonies. Third, the Quebec Act, enacted by Parliament in 1774, not only angered American colonists by nullifying their claims to western lands, but also heightened religious prejudice in the colonies by granting tolerance to Roman Catholics. Fourth, ministers played a significant role in encouraging their parishioners to support the independence movement. Olmstead claims that Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Baptist ministers overwhelmingly defended this revolutionary movement in the colonies. Finally, many of the revolutionaries, imbued with the American sense of mission, believed that God was ordaining their revolutionary activities.

Further support for these views can be found in Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1966); Cedric B. Cowing, *The Great Awakening and the American Revolution: Colonial Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (University of Chicago, 1971); Richard Hofstadter, *America at 1750: A Social Portrait* (Knopf, 1973); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 1985); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (Oxford University Press, 1986); Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (Oxford University Press, 1986); and Mark A. Noll, *Christians in the American Revolution* (Regent College Publishing, 2006). Jon Butler has expanded his views on the colonial religious experience in *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Harvard University Press, 1990).

In the following selections, Thomas S. Kidd writes from the traditional assumption that a powerful revivalist force known as the "Great Awakening" occurred in the American colonies in the mid-eighteenth century. Recognizing that these revivals began before 1740 and continued well into the Revolutionary era, Kidd focuses on the activities of George Whitefield in the early 1740s. In his essay, Kidd challenges Jon Butler's contention that the influence of the Great Awakening was limited to New England and produced little change in colonial American religion. In contrast, Kidd argues that the Great Awakening produced a powerful impact in the colonies and sparked a rise in evangelical fervor that would have significant implications for global Christianity.

Jon Butler claims that historians, by accepting without much question the existence of the Great Awakening, have become accomplices in Napoleon's insistence that "history is fable agreed upon." Closer scrutiny of these revivals, says Butler, reveals that they were regional episodes that did not affect all of the colonies equally and, hence, had only a modest impact on American colonial religion. Because the mid-eighteenth-century revivals did not produce the kinds of dramatic changes—religious or political—frequently ascribed to them, Butler suggests that historians should abandon the concept of the "Great Awakening" altogether.

YES

Thomas S. Kidd

The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America

. . . Until 1982, historians took the Great Awakening as a given, but then historian Jon Butler argued that it was only an "interpretative fiction" invented by nineteenth-century Christian historians. Although Butler's argument was overextended, it helpfully provoked a revaluation of what we actually mean by "the Great Awakening." He contended that the event really amounted to just "a short-lived Calvinist revival in New England during the early 1740s." No doubt the eighteenth-century awakenings were centered in New England, but over time they came to influence parts of all the colonies, and more important, they helped birth an enormously important religious movement, evangelicalism, which shows no sign of disappearing today.

Butler also asserted that the "revivals had modest effects on colonial religion" and that they were "never radical." But if the revivals helped create evangelicalism, then not only did the awakenings make a profound change in colonial religion, but they began a major alteration of global Christian history. Moreover, . . . the revivals featured all manner of radical spiritual manifestations, unnerving antirevivalists and moderate evangelicals alike. Butler's critique does show, however, that it is not enough to evaluate evangelicalism as a homogenous whole. It had radical implications, but those implications were hotly contested by moderates, and its social potential often came to naught for women, African Americans, and Native Americans. Some evangelicals also began a great assault on the churchly establishments of colonial America, and the revolutionary move for disestablishment on the federal and state levels can largely be attributed to evangelical and deist cooperation in favor of the separation of church and state.

Butler finally claimed that, contrary to the suggestions of previous scholars, "the link between the revivals and the American Revolution is virtually nonexistent." . . . I am in substantial agreement with Butler on this point. Moreover, evangelicals' responses to the Revolution covered the whole range of opinions from enthusiastic Patriotism to staunch Loyalism. But we should also note that evangelical rhetoric and ideology helped to inspire and justify the Patriot cause for both evangelical and nonevangelical leaders. Evangelicalism

From *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* by Thomas S. Kidd (Yale University Press, 2007), pp. xviii–xix, 83–90, 91, 92–93 (excerpts). Copyright © 2007 by Yale University. Reprinted by permission of Yale University Press.

did not start the Revolution, but the Patriot side certainly benefited from the support of many evangelicals.

. . . I contend that there was, indeed, a powerful, unprecedented series of revivals from about 1740 to 1743 that touched many of the colonies and that contemporaries remembered for decades as a special visitation of the Holy Spirit. Calling this event "the" Great Awakening does present historical problems. Chief among them is that the standard framework of the "First" and "Second" Great Awakenings may obscure the fact that the evangelical movement continued to develop after 1743 and before 1800. There were important, widespread revivals that happened before the First, and between the First and Second, Great Awakenings. . . . I examine, instead, what we might call the *long* First Great Awakening and the contest to define its boundaries. Although many revivals, including the major season from 1740 to 1743, happened during this period, revivals alone did not delineate the early evangelical movement. Instead, persistent desires for revival, widespread individual conversions, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit distinguished the new evangelicals. The long First Great Awakening started before Jonathan Edwards's 1734–35 Northampton revival and lasted roughly through the end of the American Revolution, when disestablishment, theological change, and a new round of growth started the (even more imprecise) "Second" Great Awakening. The controversial emergence of the religion of the new birth demarcated the long First Great Awakening and the first generation of American evangelical Christianity.

. . . New Englanders began to hear about George Whitefield in 1739, and many hoped that he would soon visit them. Benjamin Colman of Boston's Brattle Street Church wrote to Whitefield in December 1739 after having received a letter from him. Whitefield estimated that he might come to New England by summer 1740. Colman was deeply impressed by what he had learned about Whitefield. He had read Whitefield's *Journals,* as well as some of his sermons. Colman wrote that he had never encountered anything comparable to Whitefield's ministry, although he had witnessed "uncommon Operations of the holy Spirit . . . ; as in our Country of Hampshire of late; the Narrative of which by Mr. Edwards, I suppose you may have seen." If Whitefield would come to New England, he would find the churches' Calvinist doctrine to his liking, "how short soever we may come of your Fervours." Colman told him that the churches had been praying for him publicly, and that when he arrived he could use the commodious Brattle Street Church for meetings. In a letter to Gilbert Tennent, Whitefield wrote that he found Colman's published sermons "acute and pointed, but I think not searching enough by many degrees." If anything, Colman was too polite for Whitefield. Nevertheless, Whitefield wrote back to Colman and promised that when he came to New England "I shall endeavour to recommend an universal charity amongst all the true members of CHRIST's mystical body." Because of this universal spirit, he suggested that he might stay in the fields to preach, and out of the meetinghouses. He appreciated Colman's latitudinarianism, and they both hoped that the old division of Anglican versus dissenter would become irrelevant in light of the ministry of the new birth.

Jonathan Edwards also received word of Whitefield's revivals, and in November 1739 Whitefield wrote to him, desiring to visit Northampton to see for himself the fruit of the 1734–35 awakening. Edwards wrote back in February 1740, encouraging Whitefield to travel to Northampton but warning him not to expect much. Edwards was heartened by God's raising up Whitefield in the Church of England "to revive the mysterious, spiritual, despised, and exploded doctrines of the gospel." This might be a sign of the coming Kingdom of God, Edwards thought.

The Boston and Philadelphia newspapers began picking up stories about Whitefield's prodigious meetings in England in spring 1739, and Whitefield's fame began to spread into the hinterlands by early 1740. For instance, pastor Nicholas Gilman of Exeter, New Hampshire, on a visit to Boston, began reading Whitefield's *Journals* in mid-January 1740 and commented with admiration on Whitefield's "most Indefatigable labours to Advance the Kingdom of Christ." He borrowed more of Whitefield's sermons from Colman. In June, Gilman noted that "Mr. Whitefield [was] Now much the Subject of Conversations."

In July, Whitefield wrote to Colman to announce that he was coming soon, perhaps within a month, and to ask Colman to spread the word in friendly churches. This advance publicity worked wonderfully, and when Whitefield arrived in Newport. Rhode Island, on September 14, 1740, New England was abuzz with talk of his coming. In Newport, Whitefield was welcomed by Nathaniel Clap, a venerable Congregational minister, and the wandering Jonathan Barber of Oysterponds, Long Island. Whitefield had earlier written the disconsolate Barber, telling him that he did not presume to judge whatever dealings God had with him. As for his visionary experiences, "I rather rejoice in them, having myself been blessed with many experiences of the like nature." He told Barber to expect persecution when God dealt with him in extraordinary ways. These encouraging words led Barber to come to Newport to receive Whitefield. Upon meeting, they agreed that Barber would become part of Whitefield's entourage.

After some successes in preaching, particularly at Clap's meetinghouse, Whitefield traveled north to Boston, where he arrived on September 18. Boston was the largest town in the colonies but still only a small provincial capital with about 17,000 people. In 1740, it was in decline, and it would slowly lose population up through the American Revolution. War with Spain, and later with France, left many widows in Boston, and the city faced high taxes and inflation. The poor in Boston were many, and they responded exuberantly to Whitefield, as they would to the radical piety of James Davenport and others.

As usual, Whitefield met with Anglican authorities in Boston, most notably the Commissary Timothy Cutler, the former Congregationalist rector of Yale turned Anglican "apostate." Cutler was the most formidable proponent of Anglicanism in the colonies, and he and Whitefield did not see eye to eye about Whitefield's relationship with non-Anglicans. Cutler argued that dissenters had no legitimate ordination because they did not follow in the line of apostolic succession. Whitefield thought their ordinations were legitimate, primarily because they preached the new birth: "I saw regenerate souls among the Baptists, among the Presbyterians, among the Independents, and among the Church folks—all children of God, and yet all born again in a different way of worship," he told Cutler. Whitefield was able to leave Cutler on friendly terms, but he would receive a much warmer welcome among the Congregationalists, especially from Benjamin Colman. After visiting Cutler he preached at the Brattle Street Church to about four thousand.

Whitefield spoke from supporters' Boston pulpits as well as on Boston Common. On September 20, he preached at Joseph Sewall's Old South Church to about six thousand, and in the afternoon he addressed a crowd at the common that he estimated at eight thousand, although the papers guessed five thousand. The next day he attended Sunday morning services at the Brattle Street Church and spoke at Thomas Foxcroft's Old Brick Church in the afternoon. The crowd pressing to see him was so large that he went out to the common again and preached to an enormous assembly he totaled at fifteen thousand, close to the whole population of Boston (the newspapers guessed eight thousand). On Monday morning he sermonized at John Webb's New North Church to about six thousand. Then, in the afternoon, tragedy struck the tour. At Samuel Checklcy's New South Church, the sound of a breaking board in the gallery triggered a stampede among the overflow crowd. A number of people were severely trampled, and some jumped from the balcony. Five people died. Whitefield decided to go on with the message he planned to deliver, only moving out to the common. No doubt this suggested insensitivity in Whitefield's character, but the crowd wanted him to go on, and one could hardly imagine a better moment for people to contemplate their mortality.

Whitefield visited Harvard and was not impressed with the size of the school or its spirit. He noted that "bad books," such as those by John Tillotson and Samuel Clarke, defenders of natural religion, were popular there, not the Puritan classics. Whitefield would later regret his harsh assessment of Harvard and Yale and would become a great supporter of the colleges. Whitefield also toured neighboring towns, including Roxbury and Charlestown, in his circuit. On September 27, Whitefield preached to one of his greatest crowds yet, fifteen thousand, on the common. Many were deeply affected, and Whitefield himself wrote that he felt like shouting, "This is no other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven." Boston Common had become a portal to divine glory.

Whitefield began taking collections for the Bethesda Orphanage, and the number of pounds given was truly remarkable: perhaps £3,000 in local currency. Boston outpaced collections even in London. On September 28 alone, he collected more than £1,000 in services at the Old South and Brattle Street churches. After speaking at Brattle Street in the afternoon, Whitefield held two private meetings that showed the breadth of his appeal. The first was with the governor, Jonathan Belcher, who was an evangelical supporter of Whitefield. The second was with "a great number of negroes," who requested a private session with him. He preached to them on the conversion of the Ethiopian in Acts 8.

Whitefield visited towns up the coast from Boston from September 29 to October 6, finding some successes but also a great deal of passivity. Maine and New Hampshire had a substantial revival tradition, having seen large numbers of conversions and admissions to full communion in the 1727–28 earthquake awakening, and to a lesser extent in 1735–36 as a devastating "throat distemper" (diphtheria) raged there. He preached as far north as York, Maine, at the church of the well-respected Samuel Moody. His northern tour gave Nicholas Gilman of Exeter, who had been reading Whitefield's *Journals* and sermons for almost a year, a chance to meet him. Gilman was perhaps not as adulatory in his initial response to Whitefield as one might expect, noting that "there are Various Conjectures about Mr. Whitefield," but expressing hope that he truly was "a Man of an Excellent Spirit." Whitefield's appearance precipitated a conversion crisis for Gilman, as well, and set him on the path to becoming one of the most radical of New England's evangelicals. Whitefield won some notable converts in Maine, especially John Rogers. The pastor at Kittery, Rogers had been in the ministry for thirty years when he heard Whitefield, but he had never experienced conversion. Whitefield's ministry convinced him of his need for the new birth, and afterwards he became one of Whitefield's foremost proponents in Maine. Rogers's son Daniel, a tutor at Harvard, would soon join Whitefield's entourage and seek his own assurance of salvation. The revivals in Maine and New Hampshire would not begin in force until late 1741, however.

Returning to Boston, Whitefield continued seeing large audiences, but he also gravitated toward Tennent's confrontational style as he spoke against unconverted ministers. "I am persuaded," he wrote in his journal, "[that] the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ." He felt energized by confronting the unsaved clergy: "Unspeakable freedom God gave me while treating on this head." Although some of the ministers may have grown uneasy at such talk, Whitefield drew ever-larger crowds, until he finally announced a farewell sermon on October 12, which drew a crowd estimated at twenty thousand. If reasonably accurate, this was the largest crowd ever assembled in America up to that time.

From Boston, Whitefield traveled west through New England. Delivering on his promise, Whitefield went slightly out of his way to visit Northampton. It was a poignant occasion for Edwards, who had waited five long years for revival fire to reignite in Northampton. Edwards shed tears during Whitefield's preaching. Whitefield, too, was deeply affected by his visit and impressed with Edwards's wife and children, who seemed to him models of piety and propriety. Whitefield's preaching in Northampton reached a crescendo on the Sabbath, as "Mr. Edwards wept during the whole time of exercise" in the morning. "Mr. Whitefield's sermons were suitable to the circumstances of the town," Edwards wrote later to Thomas Prince, "containing just reproofs of our back-slidings." He reported to Whitefield that the revival bore lasting fruit, including the conversion of some of the Edwardses' children. Immediately after Whitefield's departure, however, Edwards did begin a sermon series on the parable of the sower (Matthew 13), including warnings that short-lived episodes of heated preaching and crying did not make for saving religion. He subtly warned that Whitefield's brand of revivalism was ripe for religious hypocrisy. Edwards would continue to support Whitefield, but he insisted that Northampton would experience revival on his terms.

Accompanied by Edwards, Whitefield made his way south to East Windsor, the home of Edwards's parents. Along the way Whitefield kept preaching on unconverted ministers, and at one point Edwards cautioned Whitefield about not judging other ministers too harshly or trying to ascertain whether they were converted. Edwards supported Whitefield overall, but he certainly had doubts about the emotionalism and rash judgments that seemed to characterize the itinerant's ministry. In East Windsor, Whitefield preached to Timothy Edwards's congregation and then visited the elderly pastor and his wife Esther Stoddard Edwards, sharing supper and staying the night in their home.

Out of Whitefield's journey through Connecticut came two remarkable testimonies of conversion. The first was from the East Windsor saddler Samuel Belcher. Though Belcher grew up in the family of Joseph Belcher, pastor at Dedham, Massachusetts, he became "Cold and Dull" in matters of salvation, and though he experienced some concerns for his soul before 1740, they had not lasted. Whitefield's arrival signaled the beginning of a six-month-long conversion crisis. When "mr Whitefield p[re]ached here, . . . I was Greatly effected with his preaching both here and att Hartford," Belcher wrote. Belcher grew cold again, but then in April he met a man in Lebanon, Connecticut, who told of the revival there, which deeply impressed him. Then pastors Eleazar Wheelock of Lebanon and Benjamin Pomeroy of Hebron preached at East Windsor, and Belcher fell under deeper convictions than ever before. He felt the terrors of sin and the threat of damnation, "but God was pleased to enable me to Cry mightily unto him in the bitterness of my Soul for mercy in and through Jesus Christ." While he was praying, "I felt my Load Go of and my mouth was Stopt and I Could not utter one word for Some time and I felt as if my heart was Changed." When Belcher could speak again, he began praising God and he knew he had been saved. For Belcher, Whitefield's exhortations began the conversion process, but Wheelock's and Pomeroy's preaching, and his own prayers, finished the ordeal.

Whitefield's appearance also represented a beginning point for the conversion of Nathan Cole, a farmer and carpenter from Kensington, Connecticut. Cole grew up as what he called an "Arminian," likely meaning that he casually assumed that good works would save him. He began to hear reports about Whitefield's tour, and he "longed to see and hear him, and wished he would come this way." News arrived in October that Whitefield had left Boston for Northampton. Then on October 23, a messenger arrived and told him that Whitefield was coming to nearby Middletown later that morning. Cole ran in from the field to tell his wife that they were leaving immediately, fearing they would not have time to get there. As they neared the road to Middletown, he wrote that

> I saw before me a Cloud or fogg rising; I first thought it came from the great River, but as I came nearer the Road, I heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of Horses feet coming down the Road and this Cloud was a Cloud of dust. . . . I could see men and horses Sliping along in the Cloud like shadows . . . every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of Souls, it made me tremble to see the Sight, how the world was in a Struggle.

When they arrived at the Middletown meeting house, Cole guessed that perhaps three or four thousand had assembled there, the countryside having emptied of its residents. Then Whitefield came to the scaffold:

> He Looked almost angelical; a young, Slim, slender, youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted Countenance . . . he looked as if he was Cloathed with authority from the Great God. . . . And my hearing him preach, gave me a heart wound; By Gods blessing: my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me; then I was convinced of the doctrine of Election: and went right to quarrelling with God about it; because that all I could do would not save me; and he had decreed from Eternity who should be saved and who not.

Cole's "quarrelling" with God lasted almost two years. Like Jonathan Edwards, he wrestled with the doctrine of predestination, thinking it abhorrent, while at the same time wondering if he himself was damned. "Hell fire was most always in my mind; and I have hundreds of times put my fingers into my pipe when I have been smoaking to feel how fire felt." In the midst of his fears of hell's torments, however, God gave him a vision:

> God appeared unto me and made me Skringe: before whose face the heavens and the earth fled away; and I was Shrinked into nothing; I knew not whether I was in the body or out, I seemed to hang in open Air before God, and he seemed to Speak to me in an angry and Sovereign way what won't you trust your Soul with God; My heart answered O yes, yes, yes. . . . Now while my Soul was viewing God, my fleshly part was working imaginations and saw many things which I will omitt to tell at this time. . . . When God appeared to me every thing vanished and was gone in the twinkling of an Eye, as quick as A flash of lightning; But when God disappeared or in some measure withdrew, every thing was in its place again and I was on my Bed. My heart was broken; my burden was fallen of[f] my mind; I was set free, my distress was gone.

Cole's long conversion culminated, as it did for many early evangelicals, with a vision of God.

In New Haven, Whitefield visited with Rector Thomas Clap, who would later become one of his most bitter opponents. For now, Whitefield received a universally polite, if not entirely zealous, reception at Yale, despite his speaking to the students about "the dreadful ill consequences of an unconverted ministry." Whitefield then continued toward New York, and when he reached the border, he evaluated New England as impressive because of its godly heritage, but he feared that "Many, nay most that preach . . . do not experimentally know Christ." He loved the excitement his visit generated, though, and he thought New England was pliable enough for true revival. Pastor William Gaylord of Wilton, Connecticut, brother-in-law of James Davenport, wrote that many thought Whitefield "has a Touch of Enthusiasm" but that overheatedness could be forgiven more easily than lukewarmness. He believed

Whitefield's most profound effect might have been "stirring up" the ministers themselves, though he did have reservations about Whitefield's comments on unconverted ministers. Much of the power of Whitefield's tours lay in his ability to excite the local ministers to more fervent gospel preaching.

As Whitefield's band crossed into New York, the Harvard tutor Daniel Rogers came to the spiritual awakening he had sought during weeks of travel. After a meeting at King's Bridge (now a part of the Bronx), Rogers wrote, "It pleased God of his free Sovreign Grace to come into my poor Soul with Power and so to fill me with Peace: yea with Such Joy in the Holy Ghost as I never Experienced before—I cd not forbear Smiling nay Laughing for Joy and Gladness of Heart." Rogers shared the news with an elated Whitefield, but soon after Satan was tormenting Rogers with "Abominable Horrible Shocking Tho'ts." Assurance was not always easily gained by the new evangelicals. . . .

Whitefield continued to preach with considerable success in New York City, then moved on to Staten Island where he rendezvoused with Gilbert Tennent and John Cross. Tennent told him of his recent itineration through south Jersey, Delaware, and northern Maryland, while Cross reported that he had recently "seen great and wonderful things in his congregations." They arrived at Cross's Basking Ridge congregation on November 5, where James Davenport had been preaching in the morning. At an affecting afternoon service, Daniel Rogers recalled that a nine- or ten-year-old boy began speaking loudly, at which time Whitefield called on the crowd "to hear this Lad preaching to them." This led to a "General motion" during which many cried out, some fainted, and some fell into fits. A young man near Rogers was so moved that he had to lean on Rogers during much of the sermon until he finally fell to his knees.

The large crowd then retired to Cross's barn for the evening lecture. Tennent preached first, followed by Whitefield. Whitefield estimated that he had spoken for six minutes when one man began to shout, "He is come, He is come!" (Rogers recalled the man as crying "I have found him!") Many others began crying out "for the like favour," and Whitefield stopped to pray over them, which only heightened their fervent emotions. Rogers struggled to adequately describe the meeting, but noted that many were "weeping, Sighing, Groaning, Sobbing, screaching, crying out." The ministers finally retired, but Rogers and Davenport returned at one o'clock in the morning to resume preaching. Many in the congregation stayed up all night in the barn, praying and worshipping. "Tis a night to be remembered," Rogers wrote.

The next morning many penitents approached the departing Whitefield, including a "poor negro woman," a slave, who asked to join his entourage. Her master actually agreed to this idea (it is unlikely that he had permanent emancipation in mind), but Whitefield told her to go home and "serve her present master." Whitefield and most white evangelicals were unprepared to let the social implications of his gospel run a course to abolitionism. . . .

. . . Whitefield's tour moved on to New Brunswick, where Whitefield began telling Gilbert Tennent and Daniel Rogers to go to New England to follow up on the work there. Tennent initially refused, but after encouragement from Whitefield and an apparent vote by the entourage, Tennent agreed.

Whitefield headed south with Davenport while Rogers and Tennent began planning their new tours. In Philadelphia, Whitefield began preaching in the so-called New Building, a structure erected by supporters specifically for his visits. The one-hundred-by-seventy-foot building became Whitefield's usual pulpit in Philadelphia, and though the fervor of his earlier visit had abated, wondrous visitations continued. At one meeting, many reported experiencing the sensation of being pierced by "pointed arrows" as he preached, and a young woman fell down senseless during the meeting and had to be carried home. On another occasion Whitefield reported that he spontaneously spoke against "reasoning unbelievers," and he later found out that "a number of them were present" at his sermon. He attributed his well-timed admonition to the leading of the Holy Ghost.

Through November, Whitefield continued his tour of southern New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, making stops at friendly congregations in Whiteclay Creek, Fagg's Manor, Nottingham, and Bohemia Manor. Whitefield, as was often the case, fell terribly ill at Fagg's Manor, writing that "straining caused me to vomit much." But he continued preaching and praying, and "soon every person in the room seemed to be under great impressions, sighing and weeping." On December 1, Whitefield departed for South Carolina and Georgia, noting with satisfaction that he had preached perhaps one hundred seventy-five times since he arrived in Rhode Island two-and-a-half months earlier. The presence of God that attended his meetings convinced him that the British American provinces would remain his "chief scene for action." The fall 1740 tour had been a gigantic success for Whitefield. His method of theatrical field preaching rejuvenated New England's substantial revival tradition and captivated tens of thousands of listeners. His incautious remarks about unconverted ministers, however, and his friendship with such figures as Tennent, Davenport, and Cross laid the groundwork for great controversies concerning the awakenings in the years ahead.

Jon Butler **NO**

Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction

In the last half century, the Great Awakening has assumed a major role in explaining the political and social evolution of prerevolutionary American society. Historians have argued, variously, that the Awakening severed intellectual and philosophical connections between America and Europe (Perry Miller), that it was a major vehicle of early lower-class protest (John C. Miller, Rhys Isaac, and Gary B. Nash), that it was a means by which New England Puritans became Yankees (Richard L. Bushman), that it was the first "intercolonial movement" to stir "the people of several colonies on a matter of common emotional concern" (Richard Hofstadter following William Warren Sweet), or that it involved "a rebirth of the localistic impulse" (Kenneth Lockridge).

American historians also have increasingly linked the Awakening directly to the Revolution. Alan Heimert has tagged it as the source of a Calvinist political ideology that irretrievably shaped eighteenth-century American society and the Revolution it produced. Harry S. Stout has argued that the Awakening stimulated a new system of mass communications that increased the colonists' political awareness and reduced their deference to elite groups prior to the Revolution. Isaac and Nash have described the Awakening as the source of a simpler, non-Calvinist protest rhetoric that reinforced revolutionary ideology in disparate places, among them Virginia and the northern port cities. William G. McLoughlin has even claimed that the Great Awakening was nothing less than "the Key to the American Revolution."

These claims for the significance of the Great Awakening come from more than specialists in the colonial period. They are a ubiquitous feature of American history survey texts, where the increased emphasis on social history has made these claims especially useful in interpreting early American society to twentieth-century students. Virtually all texts treat the Great Awakening as a major watershed in the maturation of prerevolutionary American society. *The Great Republic* terms the Awakening "the greatest event in the history of religion in eighteenth-century America." *The National Experience* argues that the Awakening brought "religious experiences to thousands of people in every rank of society" and in every region. *The Essentials of American History* stresses how the Awakening "aroused a spirit of humanitarianism," "encouraged the notion of equal rights,"

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and "stimulated feelings of democracy" even if its gains in church membership proved episodic. These texts and others describe the weakened position of the clergy produced by the Awakening as symptomatic of growing disrespect for all forms of authority in the colonies and as an important catalyst, even cause, of the American Revolution. The effect of these claims is astonishing. Buttressed by the standard lecture on the Awakening tucked into most survey courses, American undergraduates have been well trained to remember the Great Awakening because their instructors and texts have invested it with such significance.

Does the Great Awakening warrant such enthusiasm? Its puzzling historiography suggests one caution. The Awakening has received surprisingly little systematic study and lacks even one comprehensive general history. The two studies, by Heimert and Cedric B. Cowing, that might qualify as general histories actually are deeply centered in New England. They venture into the middle and southern colonies only occasionally and concentrate on intellectual themes to the exclusion of social history. The remaining studies are thoroughly regional, as in the case of books by Bushman, Edwin Scott Gaustad, Charles Hartshorn Maxson, Dietmar Rothermund, and Wesley M. Gewehr, or are local, as with the spate of articles on New England towns and Jonathan Edwards's or Isaac's articles and book on Virginia. The result is that the general character of the Great Awakening lacks sustained, comprehensive study even while it benefits from thorough local examinations. The relationship between the Revolution and the Awakening is described in an equally peculiar manner. Heimert's seminal 1966 study, despite fair and unfair criticism, has become that kind of influential work whose awesome reputation apparently discourages further pursuit of its subject. Instead, historians frequently allude to the positive relationship between the Awakening and the Revolution without probing the matter in a fresh, systematic way.

The gap between the enthusiasm of historians for the social and political significance of the Great Awakening and its slim, peculiar historiography raises two important issues. First, contemporaries never homogenized the eighteenth-century colonial religious revivals by labeling them "the Great Awakening." Although such words appear in Edwards's *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God,* Edwards used them alternately with other phrases, such as "general awakening," "great alteration," and "flourishing of religion," only to describe the Northampton revivals of 1734–1735. He never capitalized them or gave them other special emphasis and never used the phrase "the Great Awakening" to evaluate all the prerevolutionary revivals. Rather, the first person to do so was the nineteenth-century historian and antiquarian Joseph Tracy, who used Edwards's otherwise unexceptional words as the title of his famous 1842 book, *The Great Awakening.* Tellingly, however, Tracy's creation did not find immediate favor among American historians. Charles Hodge discussed the Presbyterian revivals in his *Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church* without describing them as part of a "Great Awakening," while the influential Robert Baird refused even to treat the eighteenth-century revivals as discrete and important events, much less label them "the Great Awakening." Baird all but ignored these revivals in the chronological segments of his *Religion in America* and mentioned them elsewhere only by way of explaining the intellectual origins of the Unitarian movement, whose early leaders opposed revivals. Thus, not until the last half of the nineteenth century did "the Great Awakening" become a familiar feature of the American historical landscape.

Second, this particular label ought to be viewed with suspicion, not because a historian created it—historians legitimately make sense of the minutiae of the past by utilizing such devices—but because the label itself does serious injustice to the minutiae it orders. The label "the Great Awakening" distorts the extent, nature, and cohesion of the revivals that did exist in the eighteenth-century colonies, encourages unwarranted claims for their effects on colonial society, and exaggerates their influence on the coming and character of the American Revolution. If "the Great Awakening" is not quite an American Donation of Constantine, its appeal to historians seeking to explain the shaping and character of prerevolutionary American society gives it a political and intellectual power whose very subtlety requires a close inspection of its claims to truth.

How do historians describe "the Great Awakening"? Three points seem especially common. First, all but a few describe it as a Calvinist religious revival in which converts acknowledged their sinfulness without expecting salvation. These colonial converts thereby distinguished themselves from Englishmen caught up in contemporary Methodist revivals and from Americans involved in the so-called Second Great Awakening of the early national period, both of which imbibed Arminian principles that allowed humans to believe they might effect their own salvation in ways that John Calvin discounted. Second, historians emphasize the breadth and suddenness of the Awakening and frequently employ hurricane metaphors to reinforce the point. Thus, many of them describe how in the 1740s the Awakening "swept" across the mainland colonies, leaving only England's Caribbean colonies untouched. Third, most historians argue that this spiritual hurricane affected all facets of prerevolutionary society. Here they adopt Edwards's description of the 1736 Northampton revival as one that touched "all sorts, sober and vicious, high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise," but apply it to all the colonies. Indeed, some historians go farther and view the Great Awakening as a veritable social and political revolution itself. Writing in the late 1960s, Bushman could only wonder at its power: "We inevitably will underestimate the effect of the Awakening on eighteenth-century society if we compare it to revivals today. The Awakening was more like the civil rights demonstrations, the campus disturbances, and the urban riots of the 1960s combined. All together these may approach, though certainly not surpass, the Awakening in their impact on national life."

No one would seriously question the existence of "the Great Awakening" if historians only described it as a short-lived Calvinist revival in New England during the early 1740s. Whether stimulated by Edwards, James Davenport, or the British itinerant George Whitefield, the New England revivals between 1740 and 1745 obviously were Calvinist ones. Their sponsors vigorously criticized the soft-core Arminianism that had reputedly overtaken New England Congregationalism, and they stimulated the ritual renewal of a century-old society by reintroducing colonists to the theology of distinguished seventeenth-century Puritan clergymen, especially Thomas Shepard and Solomon Stoddard.

Yet, Calvinism never dominated the eighteenth-century religious revivals homogenized under the label "the Great Awakening." The revivals in the middle colonies flowed from especially disparate and international sources. John B. Frantz's recent traversal of the German revivals there demonstrates that they took root in Lutheranism, German Reformed Calvinism (different from the New England variety), and Pietism (however one wants to define it). Maxson stressed the mysticism, Pietism, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry rampant in these colonies among both German and English settlers. In an often overlooked observation, Maxson noted that the Tennents' backing for revivals was deeply linked to a mystical experience surrounding the near death of John Tennent and that both John Tennent and William Tennent, Jr., were mystics as well as Calvinists. The revivals among English colonists in Virginia also reveal eclectic roots. Presbyterians brought Calvinism into the colony for the first time since the 1650s, but Arminianism underwrote the powerful Methodist awakening in the colony and soon crept into the ranks of the colony's Baptists as well.

"The Great Awakening" also is difficult to date. Seldom has an "event" of such magnitude had such amorphous beginnings and endings. In New England, historians agree, the revivals flourished principally between 1740 and 1743 and had largely ended by 1745, although a few scattered outbreaks of revivalism occurred there in the next decades. Establishing the beginning of the revivals has proved more difficult, however. Most historians settle for the year 1740 because it marks Whitefield's first appearance in New England. But everyone acknowledges that earlier revivals underwrote Whitefield's enthusiastic reception there and involved remarkable numbers of colonists. Edwards counted thirty-two towns caught up in revivals in 1734–1735 and noted that his own grandfather, Stoddard, had conducted no less than five "harvests" in Northampton before that, the earliest in the 1690s. Yet revivals in Virginia, the site of the most sustained such events in the southern colonies, did not emerge in significant numbers until the 1750s and did not peak until the 1760s. At the same time, they also continued into the revolutionary and early national periods in ways that make them difficult to separate from their predecessors.

Yet even if one were to argue that "the Great Awakening" persisted through most of the eighteenth century, it is obvious that revivals "swept" only some of the mainland colonies. They occurred in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia with some frequency at least at some points between 1740 and 1770. But New Hampshire, Maryland, and Georgia witnessed few revivals in the same years, and revivals were only occasionally important in New York, Delaware, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The revivals also touched only certain segments of the population in the colonies where they occurred. The best example of the phenomenon is Pennsylvania. The revivals there had a sustained effect among English settlers only in Presbyterian churches where many of the laity and clergy also opposed them. The Baptists, who were so important to the New England revivals, paid little attention to them until the 1760s, and the colony's taciturn Quakers watched them in perplexed silence. Not even Germans imbibed them universally. At the same time that

Benjamin Franklin was emptying his pockets in response to the preaching of Whitefield in Philadelphia—or at least claiming to do so—the residents of Germantown were steadily leaving their churches, and Stephanie Grauman Wolf reports that they remained steadfast in their indifference to Christianity at least until the 1780s.

Whitefield's revivals also exchanged notoriety for substance. Colonists responded to him as a charismatic performer, and he actually fell victim to the Billy Graham syndrome of modern times: his visits, however exciting, produced few permanent changes in local religious patterns. For example, his appearances in Charleston led to his well-known confrontation with Anglican Commissary Alexander Garden and to the suicide two years later of a distraught follower named Anne LeBrasseur. Yet they produced no new congregations in Charleston and had no documented effect on the general patterns of religious adherence elsewhere in the colony. The same was true in Philadelphia and New York City despite the fact that Whitefield preached to enormous crowds in both places. Only Bostonians responded differently. Supporters organized in the late 1740s a new "awakened" congregation that reputedly met with considerable initial success, and opponents adopted a defensive posture exemplified in the writings of Charles Chauncy that profoundly affected New England intellectual life for two decades.

Historians also exaggerate the cohesion of leadership in the revivals. They have accomplished this, in part, by overstressing the importance of Whitefield and Edwards. Whitefield's early charismatic influence later faded so that his appearances in the 1750s and 1760s had less impact even among evangelicals than they had in the 1740s. In addition, Whitefield's "leadership" was ethereal, at best, even before 1750. His principal early importance was to serve as a personal model of evangelical enterprise for ministers wishing to promote their own revivals of religion. Because he did little to organize and coordinate integrated colonial revivals, he also failed to exercise significant authority over the ministers he inspired.

The case against Edwards's leadership of the revivals is even clearer. Edwards defended the New England revivals from attack. But, like Whitefield, he never organized and coordinated revivals throughout the colonies or even throughout New England. Since most of his major works were not printed in his lifetime, even his intellectual leadership in American theology occurred in the century after his death. Whitefield's lack of knowledge about Edwards on his first tour of America in 1739–1740 is especially telling on this point. Edwards's name does not appear in Whitefield's journal prior to the latter's visit to Northampton in 1740, and Whitefield did not make the visit until Edwards had invited him to do so. Whitefield certainly knew of Edwards and the 1734–1735 Northampton revival but associated the town mainly with the pastorate of Edwards's grandfather Stoddard. As Whitefield described the visit in his journal: "After a little refreshment, we crossed the ferry to Northampton, where no less than three hundred souls were saved about five years ago. Their pastor's name is Edwards, successor and grandson to the great Stoddard, whose memory will be always precious to my soul, and whose books entitled 'A Guide to Christ,' and 'Safety of Appearing in Christ's Righteousness,' I would recommend to all."

What were the effects of the prerevolutionary revivals of religion? The claims for their religious and secular impact need pruning too. One area of concern involves the relationship between the revivals and the rise of the Dissenting denominations in the colonies. Denomination building was intimately linked to the revivals in New England. There, as C. C. Goen has demonstrated, the revivals of the 1740s stimulated formation of over two hundred new congregations and several new denominations. This was accomplished mainly through a negative process called "Separatism," which split existing Congregationalist and Baptist churches along prorevival and antirevival lines. But Separatism was of no special consequence in increasing the number of Dissenters farther south. Presbyterians, Baptists, and, later, Methodists gained strength from former Anglicans who left their state-supported churches, but they won far more recruits among colonists who claimed no previous congregational membership.

Still, two points are important in assessing the importance of revivals to the expansion of the Dissenting denominations in the colonies. First, revivalism never was the key to the expansion of the colonial churches. Presbyterianism expanded as rapidly in the middle colonies between 1710 and 1740 as between 1740 and 1770. Revivalism scarcely produced the remarkable growth that the Church of England experienced in the eighteenth century unless, of course, it won the favor of colonists who opposed revivals as fiercely as did its leaders. Gaustad estimates that between 1700 and 1780 Anglican congregations expanded from about one hundred to four hundred, and Bruce E. Steiner has outlined extraordinary Anglican growth in the Dissenting colony of Connecticut although most historians describe the colony as being thoroughly absorbed by the revivals and "Separatism."

Second, the expansion of the leading evangelical denominations, Presbyterians and Baptists, can be traced to many causes, not just revivalism or "the Great Awakening." The growth of the colonial population from fewer than three hundred thousand in 1700 to over two million in 1770 made the expansion of even the most modestly active denominations highly likely. This was especially true because so many new colonists did not settle in established communities but in new communities that lacked religious institutions. As Timothy L. Smith has written of seventeenth-century settlements, the new eighteenth-century settlements welcomed congregations as much for the social functions they performed as for their religious functions. Some of the denominations reaped the legacy of Old World religious ties among new colonists, and others benefited from local anti-Anglican sentiment, especially in the Virginia and Carolina backcountry. As a result, evangelical organizers formed many congregations in the middle and southern colonies without resorting to revivals at all. The first Presbyterian congregation in Hanover County, Virginia, organized by Samuel Blair and William Tennent, Jr., in 1746, rested on an indigenous lay critique of Anglican theology that had turned residents to the works of Martin Luther, and after the campaign by Blair and Tennent, the congregation allied itself with the Presbyterian denomination rather than with simple revivalism.

The revivals democratized relations between ministers and the laity only in minimal ways. A significant number of New England ministers changed their preaching styles as a result of the 1740 revivals. Heimert quotes Isaac Backus on the willingness of evangelicals to use sermons to "'insinuate themselves into the affections' of the people" and notes how opponents of the revivals like Chauncy nonetheless struggled to incorporate emotion and "sentiment" into their sermons after 1740. Yet revivalists and evangelicals continued to draw sharp distinctions between the rights of ministers and the duties of the laity. Edwards did so in a careful, sophisticated way in *Some Thoughts concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England.* Although he noted that "disputing, jangling, and contention" surrounded "lay exhorting," he agreed that "some exhorting is a Christian duty." But he quickly moved to a strong defense of ministerial prerogatives, which he introduced with the proposition that "the Common people in exhorting one another ought not to clothe themselves with the like authority, with that which is proper for ministers." Gilbert Tennent was less cautious. In his 1740 sermon *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry,* he bitterly attacked "Pharisee-shepherds" and "Pharisee-teachers" whose preaching was frequently as "unedifying" as their personal lives. But Gilbert Tennent never attacked the ministry itself. Rather, he argued for the necessity of a *converted* ministry precisely because he believed that only preaching brought men and women to Christ and that only ordained ministers could preach. Thus, in both 1742 and 1757, he thundered against lay preachers. They were "of dreadful consequence to the Church's peace and soundness in principle. . . . [F]or Ignorant Young Converts to take upon them authoritatively to Instruct and Exhort publickly tends to introduce the greatest Errors and the greatest anarchy and confusion."

The 1740 revival among Presbyterians in New Londonderry, Pennsylvania, demonstrates well how ministers shepherded the laity into a revival and how the laity followed rather than led. It was Blair, the congregation's minister, who first criticized "dead Formality in Religion" and brought the congregation's members under "deep convictions" of their "natural unregenerate state." Blair stimulated "soul exercises" in the laity that included crying and shaking, but he also set limits for these exercises. He exhorted them to "moderate and bound their passions" so that the revival would not be destroyed by its own methods. Above this din, Blair remained a commanding, judgmental figure who stimulated the laity's hopes for salvation but remained "very cautious of expressing to People my Judgment of the Goodness of their States, excepting where I had pretty clear Evidences from them, of their being savingly changed." . . .

Nor did the revivals change the structure of authority within the denominations. New England Congregationalists retained the right of individual congregations to fire ministers, as when Northampton dismissed Edwards in 1750. But in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these congregations seldom acted alone. Instead, they nearly always consulted extensively with committees of ordained ministers when firing as well as when hiring ministers. In the middle colonies, however, neither the prorevival Synod of New York nor the antirevival Synod of Philadelphia tolerated such independence in congregations whether in theory or in practice. In both synods, unhappy congregations had to convince special committees appointed by the synods and composed exclusively of ministers that the performance of a fellow cleric was sufficiently dismal to warrant his dismissal. Congregations that acted independently in such matters quickly found themselves censured, and they usually lost the aid of both synods in finding and installing new ministers.

Did the revivals stir lower-class discontent, increase participation in politics, and promote democracy in society generally if not in the congregations? Even in New England the answer is, at best, equivocal. Historians have laid to rest John C. Miller's powerfully stated argument of the 1930s that the revivals were, in good part, lower-class protests against dominant town elites. The revivals indeed complicated local politics because they introduced new sources of potential and real conflict into the towns. New England towns accustomed to containing tensions inside a single congregation before 1730 sometimes had to deal with tensions within and between as many as three or four congregations after 1730. Of course, not all of these religious groups were produced by the revivals, and, as Michael Zuckerman has pointed out, some towns never tolerated the new dissidents and used the "warning out" system to eject them. Still, even where it existed, tumult should not be confused with democracy. Social class, education, and wealth remained as important after 1730 in choosing town and church officers as they had been before 1730, and Edward M. Cook, Jr., notes that after 1730 most new revival congregations blended into the old order: "dissenters [took] their place in town affairs once they stopped threatening the community and symbolically became loyal members of it." . . .

What, then, ought we to say about the revivals of religion in prerevolutionary America? The most important suggestion is the most drastic. Historians should abandon the term "the Great Awakening" because it distorts the character of eighteenth-century American religious life and misinterprets its relationship to prerevolutionary American society and politics. In religion it is a deus ex machina that falsely homogenizes the heterogeneous; in politics it falsely unites the colonies in slick preparation for the Revolution. Instead, a four-part model of the eighteenth-century colonial revivals will highlight their common features, underscore important differences, and help us assess their real significance.

First, with one exception, the prerevolutionary revivals should be understood primarily as regional events that occurred in only half the colonies. Revivals occurred intermittently in New England between 1690 and 1745 but became especially common between 1735 and 1745. They were uniformly Calvinist and produced more significant local political ramifications—even if they did not democratize New England—than other colonial revivals except those in Virginia. Revivals in the middle colonies occurred primarily between 1740 and 1760. They had remarkably eclectic theological origins, bypassed large numbers of settlers, were especially weak in New York, and produced few demonstrable political and social changes. Revivals in the southern colonies did not occur in significant numbers until the 1750s, when they were limited largely to Virginia, missed Maryland almost entirely, and did not occur with any regularity in the Carolinas until well after 1760. Virginia's Baptist revivalists stimulated major political and social changes in the colony, but the secular importance of the other revivals has been exaggerated. A fourth set of revivals, and the exception to the regional pattern outlined here, accompanied the preaching tours of the Anglican itinerant Whitefield. These tours frequently intersected with the regional revivals in progress at different times in New England, the middle colonies, and some parts of the southern colonies, but even then the fit was imperfect. Whitefield's tours produced some changes in ministerial speaking styles but few permanent alterations in institutional patterns of religion, although his personal charisma supported no less than seven tours of the colonies between 1740 and his death in Newburyport, Massachusetts, in 1770.

Second, the prerevolutionary revivals occurred in the colonial backwaters of Western society where they were part of a long-term pattern of erratic movements for spiritual renewal and revival that had long characterized Western Christianity and Protestantism since its birth two centuries earlier. Thus, their theological origins were international and diverse rather than narrowly Calvinist and uniquely American. Calvinism was important in some revivals, but Arminianism and Pietism supported others. This theological heterogeneity also makes it impossible to isolate a single overwhelmingly important cause of the revivals. Instead, they appear to have arisen when three circumstances were present—internal demands for renewal in different international Christian communities, charismatic preachers, and special, often unique, local circumstances that made communities receptive to elevated religious rhetoric.

Third, the revivals had modest effects on colonial religion. This is not to say that they were "conservative" because they did not always uphold the traditional religious order. But they were never radical, whatever their critics claimed. For example, the revivals reinforced ministerial rather than lay authority even as they altered some clergymen's perceptions of their tasks and methods. They also stimulated the demand for organization, order, and authority in the evangelical denominations. Presbyterian "New Lights" repudiated the conservative Synod of Philadelphia because its discipline was too weak, not too strong, and demanded tougher standards for ordination and subsequent service. After 1760, when Presbyterians and Baptists utilized revivalism as part of their campaigns for denominational expansion, they only increased their stress on central denominational organization and authority.

Indeed, the best test of the benign character of the revivals is to take up the challenge of contemporaries who linked them to outbreaks of "enthusiasm" in Europe. In making these charges, the two leading antirevivalists in the colonies, Garden of Charleston and Chauncy of Boston, specifically compared the colonial revivals with those of the infamous "French Prophets" of London, exiled Huguenots who were active in the city between 1706 and about 1730. The French Prophets predicted the downfall of English politicians, raised followers from the dead, and used women extensively as leaders to prophesy and preach. By comparison, the American revivalists were indeed "conservative." They prophesied only about the millennium, not about local politicans, and described only the necessity, not the certainty, of salvation. What is most important is that they eschewed radical change in the position of women in the churches. True, women experienced dramatic conversions, some of the earliest being described vividly by Edwards. But, they preached only irregularly, rarely prophesied, and certainly never led congregations, denominations, or sects in a way that could remotely approach their status among the French Prophets.

Fourth, the link between the revivals and the American Revolution is virtually nonexistent. The relationship between prerevolutionary political change and the revivals is weak everywhere except in Virginia, where the Baptist revivals indeed shattered the exclusive, century-old Anglican hold on organized religious activity and politics in the colony. But, their importance to the Revolution is weakened by the fact that so many members of Virginia's Anglican aristocracy also led the Revolution. In other colonies the revivals furnished little revolutionary rhetoric, including even millennialist thought, that was not available from other sources and provided no unique organizational mechanisms for anti-British protest activity. They may have been of some importance in helping colonists make moral judgments about eighteenth-century English politics, though colonists unconnected to the revivals made these judgments as well.

In the main, then, the revivals of religion in eighteenth-century America emerge as nearly perfect mirrors of a regionalized, provincial society. They arose erratically in different times and places across a century from the 1690s down to the time of the Revolution. Calvinism underlay some of them, Pietism and Arminianism others. Their leadership was local and, at best, regional, and they helped reinforce—but were not the key to—the proliferation and expansion of still-regional Protestant denominations in the colonies. As such, they created no intercolonial religious institutions and fostered no significant experiential unity in the colonies. Their social and political effects were minimal and usually local, although they could traumatize communities in which they upset, if only temporarily, familiar patterns of worship and social behavior. But the congregations they occasionally produced usually blended into the traditional social system, and the revivals abated without shattering its structure. Thus, the revivals of religion in prerevolutionary America seldom became proto-revolutionary, and they failed to change the timing, causes, or effects of the Revolution in any significant way.

Of course, it is awkward to write about the eighteenth-century revivals of religion in America as erratic, heterogeneous, and politically benign. All of us have walked too long in the company of Tracy's "Great Awakening" to make our journey into the colonial past without it anything but frightening. But as Chauncy wrote of the Whitefield revivals, perhaps now it is time for historians "to see that Things have been carried too far, and that the Hazard is great . . . lest we should be over-run with *Enthusiasm.*"

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was There a Great Awakening in Mid-Eighteenth-Century America?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What do historians mean by the term "Great Awakening"? Is there consensus among scholars regarding the significance of the Great Awakening in early America? Explain.
2. According to Thomas Kidd, what were the origins, goals, and consequences of the First Great Awakening?
3. Who was George Whitefield, and what role did he play in mid-eighteenth-century religious revivals?
4. What arguments does Jon Butler make in challenging the validity of an historical event known as the "Great Awakening"?
5. Compare and contrast the conclusions reached by Kidd and Butler concerning the Great Awakening.
6. Contrast the positions taken by Kidd and Butler concerning the influence of the Great Awakening on the American Revolution.

Is There Common Ground?

Few scholars are likely to be persuaded by Butler's insistence upon abandoning the label "Great Awakening" when referring to the colonial revivals of the mid-eighteenth century, but some do find merit in certain aspects of his interpretation. In particular, Butler's critique of efforts to link the Awakening with the American Revolution is part of a longstanding historical debate related to the intersection of religious and political liberty. Was there, in fact, a "Great Awakening"? If so, how extensive was its influence? Is it possible to argue that these religious revivals had little or no influence in some colonies or among some religious denominations, or was it truly the first shared national experience of the British North American colonies? What does the discussion of the Great Awakening suggest about the more general understanding of religious influences in the American colonies?

Additional Resources

Students interested in further analyses of the Great Awakening should consult Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England* (Harper & Brothers, 1957); David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm and the Great Awakening* (Prentice-Hall, 1969); and Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"*

(Princeton University Press, 1999). Richard Bushman, ed., *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740–1745* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989) and Thomas S. Kidd, ed., *The Great Awakening: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008) offer excellent introductions to this topic through collected sermons and first-person accounts. For biographies of two of the leading figures of eighteenth-century revivalism, see Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, 1991); and George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (Yale University Press, 2003). McLoughlin's earlier thoughts on the relationship between the Great Awakening and the American Revolution are summarized in *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607–1977* (University of Chicago Press, 1978). The most recent contribution to this topic is Thomas Kidd's, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (Basic Books, 2010).

In recent years, significant public (and political) discussion has focused on the question of whether or not the United States was established as "a Christian nation." Valuable assessments of this question are available in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1990); and James H. Hutson, ed., *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). Significant primary source documents can be found in Matthew Harris and Thomas Kidd, eds., *The Founding Fathers and the Debate over Religion in Revolutionary America: A History in Documents* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

Internet References . . .

The American Revolution: A Documentary History

This is an online collection of the most significant Revolutionary era documents overseen by The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/amerrev.asp

The Constitution of the United States

Sponsored by the national Archives and Records Administration, this site presents a wealth of information on the U.S. Constitution. From here you can link to the biographies of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention, take an in-depth look at the convention and the ratification process, and read a transcription of the complete text of the Constitution, including high-resolution images of each page of the document.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_of_freedom_6.html

Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America

Sponsored by the New York Historical Society, this site includes a virtual tour of the Hamilton traveling exhibition and links to documents and databases relating to Hamilton.

http://alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/

Indian Removal Act

This Library of Congress Web site includes links to government documents, maps, contemporary periodicals, as well as links to external Web sites concerning this event.

http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Indian.html

UNIT 2

Revolution and the New Nation

The American Revolution led to independence from England and to the establishment of a new nation. As the United States matured, its people and leaders struggled to implement fully the ideals that had sparked the Revolution. What had been abstractions before the formation of the new government had to be applied and refined in day-to-day practice. The nature of post-revolutionary America, government stability, the transition of power against the backdrop of political factionalism, the extension of democracy, and the international role of the new United States had to be worked out.

- Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces?
- Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes?
- Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period?
- Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?
- Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?

ISSUE 6

Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces?

YES: T. H. Breen, from *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

NO: Carl Degler, from *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*, 2nd ed. (Harper Collins Publishers, 1959, 1970)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue you should be able to:

- Critically analyze whether the American Revolution was a radical or conservative revolution or just a political rebellion.
- Critically evaluate whether the American Revolution was an economic revolution, largely a product of market-driven consumer boycotts that gave the colonists a sense of nationhood.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Professor T. H. Breen maintains that "the colonists' shared experiences as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest"—the non-importation agreements which provided "a necessary if not causal link" to the break with England.

NO: Professor Carl N. Degler argues that the American Revolution was a political rebellion led by a group of reluctant revolutionaries who opposed parliament's attempt to impose taxes without the consent of the colonists.

Was the American Revolution a true revolution? The answer may depend on how the term *revolution* is defined. *Strict constructionists*, for example, perceive revolution as producing significant and deep societal change, while *loose* *constructionists* define the term as "any resort to violence within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies." Historians agree that American revolutionaries fulfilled the second definition because they successfully fought a war that resulted in the overthrow of their British rulers and established a government run by themselves; however, historians disagree over the amount of social and economic changes that took place in British North America.

Early historians did not concern themselves with the social and economic aspects of the American Revolution. They instead argued over the causes of the Revolution and refought the political arguments advanced by the rebelling colonists and the British government. George Bancroft was the first historian to advance the *Whig*, or *Pro-American*, interpretation of the war. The colonists won, he said, because God was on their side.

Bancroft's view remained unchallenged until the beginning of the twentieth century, when a group of *imperialist* historians analyzed the Revolution from the perspective of the British Empire. These historians tended to be sympathetic to the economic and political difficulties that Great Britain faced in running an empire in the late eighteenth century.

Both the Whig and the imperialist historians assumed that the Revolution was an external event whose primary cause was the political differences between the colonists and their British rulers. In 1909, however, historian Carl Becker paved the way for a different interpretation of the Revolution when he concluded in his study of colonial New York that an *internal* revolution had taken place. The American Revolution, said Becker, created a struggle not only for home rule but also one for who should rule at home. This *progressive*, or *conflict*, interpretation dominated most of the writings on the American Revolution from 1910 through 1945. During this time progressive historians searched for the social and economic conflicts among groups struggling for political power.

Since 1945, most professional historians have rejected what they considered to be an oversimplified conflict interpretation of the Revolution by the previous generation of progressive historians. These post–World War II historians have been called neo-Whig, neo-conservative, and consensus historians because, like earlier nineteenth century historians, they consider the taxation issue between England and the colonists to be the major reason for the American Revolution. Robert E. Brown, in his studies on colonial Massachusetts and Virginia, argued that America had become a middle-class democracy before the American Revolution. Consequently, Brown maintained, there was no need for a social revolution. Most influential have been the works of Harvard University professor Bernard Bailyn, who used a neo-conservative approach in analyzing the Revolution. In his *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 1968), Bailyn took ideas seriously once again and saw the colonists implementing the views of radical British thinkers in their struggle for independence. The most recent statement on the American Revolution from the neo-conservative perspective is *Becoming America: The Revolution Before 1776* by Jon Butler (Harvard University Press, 2000). In it, Butler argues that American colonial society—politically, socially, and economically—was dramatically transformed between 1680 and 1770.

Since the late 1960s, historians have written a great deal about blacks, women, Native Americans, and "ordinary" people. This neo-progressive interpretation of America's past has also made views on the events surrounding the Revolution more complicated. See the collection of articles edited by Alfred Young in *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1993); Young's own collection of essays in *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution* (New York University Press, 2006) and Gary Nash's summative neo-progressive interpretation *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (Viking Press, 2005).

Carl Degler, writing about the Revolution from 1945 through the 1970s, summarizes the arguments of the neo-Whig or consensus school of historians. The colonists were rational loyal citizens of the British Empire who accepted the trade regulations of the mercantilist system because of the benefits provided, such as guaranteed markets and the protection of the British navy against pirates. Trouble began when the British acquired Canada from France after the Great War for Empire in 1763. No longer was France a threat to the colonists, but the British needed revenue because they were saddled with a debt of 130 million pounds sterling plus interest. It seemed only fair that the colonists should pay their fair share of taxes. When the British enacted the Sugar, Stamp, and Townshend Acts, the colonists responded with the consistent argument that they were taxed without being represented in parliament.

The disagreements over virtual and actual representation in parliament and who had the power to tax centered around two very different assumptions about the nature of the British Empire. "Whereas Englishmen saw America as a part of an empire in which all elements were subordinate to Britain," says Degler, "the Americans, drawing upon their actual history, saw only a loose confederation of peoples in which there were Britons and Americans, neither one of whom could presume to dictate to the other."

In spite of the emphasis given to the political and ideological causes of the American Revolution by contemporary historians Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood, the economic interpretation of the American Revolution never completely disappeared. Seventy-five years ago Louis Hacker gave the clearest statement of the economic causes of *The First American Revolution* [*Columbia University Quarterly* (1935), pp. 259–295] reprinted in Esmond Wright's edited anthology on the *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution* (Quadrangle Books, 1966). "If in the raising of a colonial revenue lay the heart of the difficulty," Hacker said, "how are we to account for the quick repeal of the Stamp Tax and the Townshend Acts and the lowering of the molasses duty? And, on the other hand, how are we to account for the tightening of enforcement of the Acts of Trade and Navigation at a dozen and one different points, the passage of the Currency Act, the placing of iron on the enumerated list, English seizure of control of the wine trade, and the attempt to give the East India Company a monopoly over the colonial tea business?" The struggle was not over high-sounding political and constitutional concepts: over the power of taxation and, in the final analysis, over natural rights, but over colonial manufacturing, wild lands and furs, sugar, wine, tea and currency, all of which meant, simply, the survival or collapse of English merchant capitalism within the imperial–colonial framework of the mercantilist system.

In the YES reading professor T. H. Breen returns to an economic interpretation of the American Revolution. He has, however, given it a new twist. The title of his book is appropriate. *The Marketplace of Revolution* demonstrates how consumer politics shaped American independence. Breen accepts the idea that the mercantilist system benefited the colonists. He extends the argument in his book by demonstrating how both the upper- and middle-class colonists had improved their living standard in the eighteenth century by the importation of what Connecticut governor Jonathan Law described in an inventory for the Board of Trade in the 1740s as "all sorts of woolen cloth, silks, scythes, nails, glass, pewter, firearms and all sorts of cutler, the quantity we cannot ascertain."

Breen's main thesis is that the consumer boycotts from the Stamp Act of 1765 through the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 provided the colonists with a shared experience that enabled them to develop a sense of nationhood that differentiated themselves from the British. Breen is too good a historian to accept the consumer revolt as a mono-causal explanation for the American Revolution, and he recognizes that there were other issues such as direct taxation, political representation, and pressure to support the Anglican Church, which angered the colonists. But through his use of primary sources—letters, diaries, political resolutions, pamphlets, and most important of all, newspapers—Breen is able to show that after the Boston Tea Party the colonists realized that a split from the British Empire was more than a distinct possibility. In his essay that follows, Breen maintains that "the colonists' shared experiences as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest"—the nonimportation agreements which provided links to the break with England.

In the NO reading, Professor Carl N. Degler argues that the American Revolution was a political rebellion led by a group of reluctant revolutionaries who opposed parliament's attempt to impose taxes without the consent of the colonists. Degler, like most consensus historians, was reacting to the earlier generation of progressives who emphasized social and economic conflicts over political motivations. He argues that the restrictions of British mercantilism upon American colonial manufactures were of minor importance.

YES

T. H. Breen

The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence

A reinterpretation of the coming of the American Revolution must deal with timing. Although it may seem obvious, we should remember that separation from Great Britain occurred at a precise historical moment. However plausible alternative dates may appear with hindsight, it did not happen during the Glorious Revolution of 1688, or at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War in 1763, which removed forever the threat of French encroachment, or, despite the spontaneous street violence associated with the Stamp Act crisis, in 1765. No one seriously advocated independence in 1768, even though Charles Townshend's Revenue Acts provoked hostility throughout the colonies. Nor, in fact, did the Tea Act of 1773 do the trick. What may seem today as irresistible momentum carrying a colonial society toward national independence could at any moment have been halted, diverted, or thwarted. British administrators need not have pursued a policy so doggedly confrontational. By the same token, Americans from different regions could have followed separate paths, concluding, for example, that those who spoke for Boston were troublesome radicals deserving whatever punishments Parliament cared to mete out. Reminding ourselves of the contingency of events is another way of drawing attention to the force of human agency—real people making choices about the politics of empire—in shaping the flow of activities that we lump together as the coming of the American Revolution.

What gave the American Revolution distinctive shape was an earlier transformation of the Anglo-American consumer marketplace. This event, which some historians have called a "consumer revolution," commenced sometime during the middle of the eighteenth century, and as modestly wealthy families acquired ever larger quantities of British manufactures—for the most part everyday goods that made life warmer, more comfortable, more sanitary, or perhaps simply more enjoyable—the face of material culture changed dramatically. Suddenly, buyers voiced concerns about color and texture, about fashion and etiquette, and about making the right choices from among an expanding number of possibilities.

From *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. xiv–xvii, 298–303, 316–317 (excerpts). Copyright © 2004 by T. H. Breen. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press.

This was surely not a society of self-sufficient yeomen farmers. People purchased the items they most desired at local stores; they often demanded and received liberal credit. Each year the volume of imports increased, creating by 1750 a virtual "empire of goods." England experienced the same consumer revolution as did the American colonists. But there was a major difference. In a colonial marketplace in which dependency was always an issue, imported goods had the potential to become politicized, turning familiar imported items such as cloth and tea into symbols of imperial oppression. And since Americans from Savannah to Portsmouth purchased the same general range of goods, they found that they were able to communicate with each other about a common experience. Whatever their differences, they were consumers in an empire that seemed determined to compromise their rights and liberties.

[This essay] argues, therefore, that the colonists' shared experience as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest. In this unprecedented context, private decisions were interpreted as political acts; consumer choices communicated personal loyalties. Goods became the foundation of trust, for one's willingness to sacrifice the pleasures of the market provided a remarkably visible and effective test of allegiance.

Before this moment, no massive political movement had organized itself around the denial of imported goods. In other words, although it does not receive the same acclaim from historians as does the system of checks and balances put forward in the Constitution, the consumer boycott was a brilliantly original American invention. As General Thomas Gage, a British military leader who wanted to nip rebellion in the bud, exclaimed, "I never heard of a people, who by general agreement, and without sumptuary laws to force them, that ever denied themselves what their circumstances would afford, and custom and habit prompted them to desire." But that is precisely what the colonists did. They made goods speak to power in ways that mid-century consumers and merchants had never anticipated.

The term boycott is, of course, an anachronism, since it first came into the language during the nineteenth century in recognition of the activities of an English land agent in Ireland, Charles C. Boycott. Such considerations need not deter us. We are dealing with popular political movements that were boycotts in all but name. Within the structures of voluntary associations formed to enforce non-importation of British manufactures, men and women found that they could judge for themselves whether or not other Americans were in fact fulfilling pledges of mutual support. Failure to comply exposed possible enemies who publicly demonstrated by their continued purchase of imported goods that they could not be counted on during a crisis. A strategy of political resistance centered on the marketplace quickly transformed myriad private acts of consumption into self-conscious public declarations of resistance. The non-importation agreements throughout colonial America provided an effective means for distinguishing supporters from those people who suffered humiliation as "the friends of government." In more positive terms, one's relation to everyday goods became a measure of patriotism. "What is true grandeur," asked a writer in the *New-London Gazette,* "but a noble patriotic resolution of sacrificing every other consideration to the Love of our Country. And can he be a true lover of his country . . . who would be seen strutting about the streets, clad in foreign [British] fripperies, than to be nobly independent in the russet grey?"

Commercial rituals of shared sacrifice provided a means to educate and energize a dispersed populace. These events helped participants discover the radical political implications of their own actions, even as those same rituals demonized people who inevitably held back, uncertain and afraid, victims of new solidarities they never quite understood. Indeed, the boycott movement invited colonists traditionally excluded from formal political processes—the election of representatives to colonial assemblies, for example—to voice their opinions in a raucous, open public forum, one that defined itself around subscription lists, voluntary associations, organized protests, destruction of goods, and incendiary newspaper exchanges. What we encounter in colony after colony is a radically new form of politics, a politics practiced out-of-doors, in which women and the poor experienced an exhilarating surge of empowerment. Although during the two decades following the winning of national independence—the so-called constitutional period—well-to-do leaders had second thoughts about encouraging such groups to speak out, we should appreciate the powerfully egalitarian potential of that earlier moment. The non-importers of the 1760s and 1770s were doing more than simply obstructing the flow of British-made goods. They were inviting the American people to reinvent an entire political culture. . . .

. . . How does one explain the timing of revolution? Why did the break with Great Britain not occur at an earlier moment when passions ran high and mobs roamed the streets of the major colonial ports? A glib answer would be that the colonists were not ready to mount such a united effort in 1765 or 1770. The translation of local grievance into organized rebellion required the development of ways for Americans to reach out effectively to other Americans. That process of discovery took time. The colonists drew upon their participation in a vast new consumer marketplace, an experience that persuaded them that their dependence upon British manufactures might be turned by a colonial people into a powerful political weapon. During the Stamp Act agitation they took tentative steps toward non-importation. At first, it seemed reasonable to place responsibility for the success of this strategy on the merchants. Only slowly did ordinary colonists begin to appreciate that such a plan had little chance of success. The merchants marched to different drummers. More radical Americans such as Samuel Adams concluded that the protest against the Townshend duties had been a failure; after 1770 colonial consumers raced once again to the shops, buying British imports at record levels. In their disappointment, Adams and others undervalued changes in the political culture that were of profound significance for the character of later events. Between 1767 and 1770 Americans invented a "public" which monitored behavior in a consumer public sphere, experimented with new forms of extra-legal political participation, constituted themselves as a group with interests separate from those of the British, and forged channels of communication that promoted a sense of trust among distant strangers.

When Parliament passed the Tea Act in May I773, the colonists were not the same people they had been in 1768. They drew upon a history of protest within the consumer marketplace, a history without precedent and entirely of their own making. Almost without fully comprehending the magnitude of their own achievement, Americans now almost instinctively moved from demands for *non-importation* to appeals for *non-consumption,* a shift of immense importance in the history of popular political protest. On this occasion they insisted that the people must take personal responsibility for their own political destiny. As one Connecticut writer observed in 1774, the former effort to make non-importation work had collapsed because "it stood on a rotten and unsolid basis. It was erected wholly on the virtue of the merchants, and rested its whole weight solely on this prop." Just as the authors of the formal political pamphlets—documents that so often structure modern accounts of the American Revolution—were struggling to comprehend a republican polity founded on the will of the people, ordinary men and women were being asked in a parallel discourse to sacrifice personal comforts lor the common good. Samuel Adams understood the challenge. In a letter written in June 1774 to Richard Henry Lee about the prospects for a total American boycott, Adams observed, "It is the virtue of the yeomanry we are chiefly to depend on." In this atmosphere, the people no longer defined British imports such as tea as luxuries or as sources of debt but as poisons they had to purge in the name of liberty.

The argument is not that consumer goods caused the American Revolution. In Aristotelian terms, the claim is rather that British imports provided a necessary but not sufficient cause for the final break with Parliament. Other developments within late colonial society—the spread of evangelical Christianity, for example—helped ordinary men and women make sense of political events. And without an inspiring language of universal rights, non-importation would have been little more than a strategy in search of a proper goal. Still, imported goods invited colonists to think radical new thoughts about empire. British manufactures came to symbolize dependence and oppression. The mental link was so strong that when a small, very poor community in Massachusetts addressed the problem of the tea, it also raised questions about its place within a larger world. In response to news of the arrival of the tea ships in Boston Harbor, the inhabitants of the town of Harvard discussed the situation and found "it to be a matter of as interesting and important a nature when viewed in all its Consequences not only to this Town and Province, but to America in general, and that for ages and generations to come, as ever came under the deliberation of this Town." The intensity of the reaction of these obscure farmers helps explain why colonists from South Carolina to New Hampshire stood with Boston during the terrible days following the destruction of the tea.

During 1773 the pace of events accelerated. Following the collapse of organized resistance three years earlier, many people on both sides of the Atlantic persuaded themselves that the time of troubles had ended and Humpty Dumpty had not in fact taken a great fall. But the House of Commons, now led by Frederick Lord North, second earl of Guilford, managed once again to roil imperial waters. The new crisis resulted not from tougher

American policy but rather from a much overdue attempt to bring order to the chaotic affairs of the East India Company. This grossly mismanaged enterprise possessed a monopoly to import tea from South Asia into Great Britain, but for many reasons—internal corruption being a prime candidate—the directors had run up huge operating debts, and to avoid bankruptcy they turned to the government for an emergency loan. Lord North offered to support such an arrangement, but only on condition that the Company reform its business practices. The directors argued that if they could sell their tea directly to the Americans without paying normal duties or going through wholesalers who ran up the price, they might be able to turn a profit. A concession from the government on duties would enable the Company to undersell the smugglers, who obtained their tea from the Dutch. Anxious that he not signal a retreat on the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, North refused to drop the last remaining Townshend Duty, a decision that still allowed the Company to cut prices substantially but also compelled the Americans to pay a tax which they labeled unconstitutional. When asked why he did not show greater flexibility on this point, North growled that "the temper of the people there is little deserving favour from hence." If the minister really thought the colonists would accept the Tea Act, he was in for a shock. Although some modern Americans seem to accept the notion that the federal government should bail out failing corporations, the colonists branded the legislation venal, and they vowed to teach North that their love of liberty exceeded their love of tea.

During the fall of 1773 Americans scrambled to nullify the Tea Act. Learning that Company ships would arrive in the major colonial ports sometime in November, local protest groups pressured civil authorities to prohibit the unloading of the vessels. The Sons of Liberty did their best to intimidate newly appointed tea agents, many of them prominent merchants whose personal loyalties lay with the crown. In the newspapers and in cheap broadsides, patriotic voices sounded the alarm once again, urging the colonists to resist political oppression by refusing to buy imported goods. By now the mental link between consumer sacrifice and political ideology was well established. Still, at that moment, no one could confidently predict the popular response to the Tea Act. After all, between 1770 and 1773, in addition to the smuggled Dutch tea, Americans bought some 300,000 pounds of tea annually from British merchants, knowing full well that the purchase price included the Townshend duty. Of the many entreaties broadcast during this period, few were as strongly worded as a letter in the *Pennsylvania Packet* addressed to "the Freeholders and Freemen" of Pennsylvania. "Taking for granted . . .," the writer reasoned, "that the revenue acts are opposite to the very idea and spirit of liberty, it will naturally follow, that a ship, loaded with goods which come under one of those acts is the true and literal Pandora's box, filled with poverty, oppression, slavery, and every other hated disease." Colonial consumers should be forewarned that this legislation was only the start. "Whenever the Tea is swallowed, and pretty well digested, we shall have new duties imposed on other articles of commerce." The Association of the Sons of Liberty in New York City prepared a stirring history of American non-importation from the "detestable Stamp Act" to the current campaign against tea.

What had been an imaginative although tentative strategy of consumer protest in 1765 had now evolved into the accepted mode of American resistance. If people embraced the tea, declared the Sons of Liberty, they would acquire a heavy burden of guilt. They would forever have to justify why they had failed "to defeat the pernicious Project" and thereby denied "to our Posterity, those Blessings of Freedom, which our Ancestors have handed down to us." A New York newspaper wailed that "A SHIP loaded with TEA is now on her Way to this Port, being sent out by the Ministry for the Purpose of *enslaving* and *poisoning* ALL the AMERICANS." A later issue of the same journal provided readers with a secular catechism so that they might better understand the gravity of the crisis. Compared to the formal legal and constitutional pamphlets of the day, these productions may seem simple, even childish, but they expose a level of popular mobilization that intellectual histories generally ignore. The litany not only outlined the challenge but also advised ordinary men and women what they could do to demonstrate their commitment to the common good.

> QUERIES—Respecting the TEA ACT submitted to the most serious Consideration of every person in AMERICA.
>
> Query. As there is an Act of the British Parliament in Being, that would subjugate America to *Three Pence Sterling Duty* upon every Pound Weight of Tea imported from *Britain;* and as this Duty is *voted* independent of, and without the Sanction of any of *our American* Parliaments, what ought to be done unto every one of those *traitorous Persons,* who shall aid or abet the Importation of, *or landing,* the said Tea in any part of *America,* till the Act is totally repealed, *jointly, by King, Lords, and Commons?*
>
> Answer. Such base *Traitors* to this Country, without Exception, should immediately and *resolutely* be dragged from Concealment; they should be transported, or forced from every Place in *America,* loaded with the most striking Badges of Disgrace . . .
>
> Query. What will be the most effectual Methods of Proceeding, to obtain a Repeal of the said oppressive, unconstitutional Act?
>
> Ans. TO USE NO TEA, *at least for the present,* for if any Persons should give the Sellers more than the usual Price for Tea, he ought to be held up as a mortal Enemy to *American Freedom.* And,—*brave Americans.*

In New York City, Charleston, and Philadelphia last-minute negotiations helped prevent serious violence. Either the tea ships returned to London or crown officials prudently stored the tea in safe places where it could not be sold.

In Boston events took a different turn. A crowd of five thousand men and women witnessed the arrival of the Company ships, carrying 342 chests of East India tea. Popular leaders begged the captains of these vessels to return to London, but perhaps to no one's surprise, local tea agents refused to compromise. The Hutchinson brothers, Thomas and Elisha, who represented the Company in Boston, insisted on landing the entire cargo. Samuel Adams and his friends pledged never to let that happen. The standoff pushed those who opposed the Tea Act to stake out ever more radical ground. One announcement signed by "The People" reminded "The Public, That it was solemnly voted by the Body of the People of this and the neighboring Towns . . . that the said Tea never should be landed in this Province, or pay one Farthing of Duty." Anyone who dared to assist such an attempt, declared "The People," "must betray an inhuman Thirst for Blood, and will also in great Measure accelerate Confusion and Civil War. This is to assure such public Enemies of this Country, they will be considered and treated as Wretches unworthy to live, and be made the first Victims of our just Resentment."

If crown officials and their supporters thought that such inflated rhetoric amounted to no more than bluster, they were mistaken. On December 16 Boston "Mohawks" spent much of the day throwing tea chests into the harbor, one of which, of course, found its way to Ebenezer Withington. Accounts of the Indian disguise have given this famous incident a slightly ludicrous character in American history, transforming the Tea Party into a kind of carnival event in which feathered citizens lightheartedly sparked the final confrontation with Parliament. It was nothing of the sort. As every participant understood, the destruction of the tea invited immediate and severe retaliation. They had violated private property, a provocation no British ruler could ignore. More to the point, the Tea Party represented not a break with the previous history of colonial resistance but rather an escalation of a tradition of consumer protest that had begun a decade earlier.

Boston's punishment staggered even those who expected the worst. Lord North could endure no more insolence from what seemed to him America's hotbed of radicalism. A well-placed London diarist, Matthew Brickdale, recorded the ministry's case against the community that had drowned the tea. Boston, scribbled Brickdale, "has been the ringleader of all violence and opposition to the execution of the laws of this country. New York and Philadelphia grew unruly on receiving the news of the triumph of the people of Boston. Boston had not only therefore to answer for its own violence but for having incited other places to tumults." Thinking of this sort led in the spring of 1774 to a series of statutes known collectively in the colonies as the Intolerable Acts. These bills closed Boston Harbor to all commerce until the city reimbursed the East India Company for its loss. Other acts fundamentally altered the constitution of Massachusetts Bay. Perhaps the most intrusive measure was legislation limiting town meetings throughout the colony to a single session each year, a serious blow to a people who prized the rough-and-tumble debate of local government.

One Connecticut writer who styled himself the "Conciliator" explained the larger meaning of North's punitive policy. "At length," he declared, "the Harbor of Boston is blocked up, and the Business of Importation in that Town at an End. . . . Foreign Manufactures, it seems, are considered as pernicious to the Constitution of America, and we must either disuse them, or encounter the Horrors of Slavery." The Conciliator insisted that no colonist should be surprised to discover that common consumer goods now defined the battle lines of empire. "The Language of Great-Britain in Years past, in Accents loud as Thunder, has rung this solemn Peal in our Ears—Americans! Stop your Trade."

But even in these dark hours, hope beckoned. The British "know that Economy, Frugality and Virtue will raise us above the Reach of the envenomed Arrows of Oppression. . . . Our foolish Fondness for the Toys of that Country, provokes her Resentment." The message was clear. Americans might assist Boston with food and money. If they meant to be free, however, they had to rededicate themselves to consumer sacrifice. Sounding like an Old Testament prophet who believed that virtuous consumers must atone for past market sin, the Conciliator exclaimed, "It is our Treachery to ourselves, my Countrymen, that has brought these Burdens upon us."

It did not require a miracle to persuade other Americans to pledge their support to Boston. They might, of course, have taken an easier path. After all, they might have reasoned, the Intolerable Acts did not directly affect them. Why not wait? Since Parliament had not closed their ports, they might continue to do business as usual. And yet, by and large, they stood firm when it counted most. The explanation for solidarity—a challenge informing this study from the start—was that by the summer of 1774 Americans had learned how to reach out to each other. They had begun to think continentally. The experience of mounting ever more effective consumer protests against a commercial empire had encouraged them to imagine a new, geographically inclusive identity. A decade of protest in the marketplace had forced them to define themselves as not fully British. Indeed, in defiance of parliamentary taxation they increasingly saw themselves as Americans. The North government failed to appreciate that it was no longer dealing with a loose collection of colonies which might turn on each other to gain some transient advantage.

Parliament tried to make an example of Boston and, by so doing, aroused a nation. The reaction of the planters of Queen Anne's County, Maryland, to the Boston crisis was unusual only in its eloquence. In June 1774, they declared, "Duly considering, and deeply affected with the prospect of the unhappy situation of Great Britain and British America, under any kind of disunion, this Meeting think themselves obliged, by all the ties which ever ought to preserve a firm union amongst Americans, as speedily as possible, to make known their sentiments to their distressed brethren of Boston, and therefore publish [them] to the world." The planters' first decision reflected long years of experimentation with non-importation: "[T]hey look upon the cause of Boston, in its consequences, to be the common cause of America." Resolutions of this sort poured forth from small, scattered communities. Their residents wanted to register a public commitment to a larger responsibility. . . .

In each community tea sparked a slightly different political conversation. A meeting of the inhabitants of Brookline, Massachusetts, for example, agreed with other towns that anyone who imported tea while it was still subject to a parliamentary tax should be "considered and treated by this Town as an Enemy to this Country." What struck these people as most offensive was the blatant inequity of the legislation. They were tired of being treated like second-class subjects of the crown. They had no doubt that a few well-placed individuals in England were getting richer at the expense of American rights, a kind of corporate profiteering that once had the capacity to inspire indignation. "Thus," the Brookline meeting observed, "have the Parliament discovered the most glaring Partiality in making one and the same Act to operate for the Ease and Convenience of a few of the most opulent Subjects in Britain on the one Hand, and for the Oppression of MILLIONS of Freeborn and most loyal Inhabitants of America on the other." Only a few months later, the "votable inhabitants" of Bolton staged a seminar on tea and taxation, and after considering the issue of parliamentary sovereignty from various perspectives—they termed it a "free debate"—the assembly passed without a single negative voice a number of strongly worded resolutions, the most demagogic of which declared that "in order to counteract and render abortive (according to the utmost of our power) the British act, respecting the duty on Tea to be paid *here,* we will not take of this politically forbidden fruit, if even solicited thereto by the Eves of our own bosoms, nor any other consideration whatever, whilst it remains under the circumstance of taxation." . . .

At the distance of over two centuries, public opinion can be measured only crudely through anecdotes. As colonial leaders were busy attempting to make sense of an official British policy of punishment, ordinary Americans sought as best they could to provide proof of consumer virtue. In a letter sent to Abigail during the summer of 1774, John Adams recounted a scene that warmed the heart of a weary patriotic traveler. After a hard ride of over thirty-five miles through the interior of Massachusetts, Adams finally arrived at the house where he intended to take a rest. "'Madam' said I to Mrs. Huston, 'is it lawful for a weary Traveller to refresh himself with a Dish of Tea provided it has been honestly smuggled, or paid no Duties?'" Mrs. Huston was shocked by the request. "'No sir,' said she, 'we have renounced all Tea in this Place. I cant make Tea, but I'le make you Coffee.' Accordingly I have drank Coffee every Afternoon since, and have borne it very well. Tea must be universally renounced. I must be weaned, and the sooner, the better." About Adams's contribution to the revolutionary cause, there is not the slightest doubt. It is people such as Mrs. Huston who have been undervalued. . . .

Carl Degler

NO

Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America

A New Kind of Revolution

On at least two scores, the American Revolution was something new under the sun. Although most of the major powers of Europe boasted overseas colonial empires, never before had a colonial people successfully rebelled against the mother country. But once it was done by the United States, the example was not ignored. Within a century after the Revolution, France, Spain, and Portugal lost portions or all of their New World empires through colonial rebellion. Nor have the echoes yet ceased. In 1945, one sour Englishman in Batavia during the rebellion of the Indonesians against the Dutch remarked, "That damned American Revolution . . . is still giving us trouble."

Despite its precedent-setting character, however, the American revolt is noteworthy because it made no serious interruption in the smooth flow of American development. Both in intention and in fact the American Revolution conserved the past rather than repudiated it. And in preserving the colonial experience, the men of the first quarter century of the Republic's history set the scenery and wrote the script for the drama of American politics for years to come.

1. Causes Were Consequences

Though the colonists had long been drifting away from their allegiance to the mother country, the chain of events which led to the Revolutionary crisis was set in motion by external factors. The shattering victory of the Anglo-American forces over the French in the Great War for the Empire (1754–63), as Lawrence Gipson has rechristened the French and Indian War, suddenly revealed how wide the gulf between colonists and mother country had become. The very fact that the feared French were once and for all expelled from the colonial backdoor meant that another cohesive, if negative, force was gone. At least one friend of Britain, looking back from the fateful days of 1776, thought that "had Canada remained in the hands of the French, the colonies would have remained dutiful subjects. Their fears for themselves in that case," he reasoned, "would have supplied the place of the pretended affection for this

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nation. . . ." What actual effect the removal of the French produced upon the thinking of the colonists is hard to weigh, but there can be little doubt that the Great War for the Empire opened a new era in the relations between the colonies and the mother country.

Great Britain emerged from the war as the supreme power in European affairs: her armies had swept the once-vaunted French authority from two continents; her navy now indisputably commanded the seven seas. A symbol of this new power was that Britain's ambassadors now outranked those of France and Spain in the protocol of Europe's courts. But the cost and continuing responsibilities of that victory were staggering for the little island kingdom. Before the war the annual expenditures for troops in America and the British West Indies amounted to £110,000; now three times that sum was needed to protect the western frontier, suppress Indian revolts and maintain order. Furthermore, the signing of the peace found Britain saddled with a debt of £130 million, the annual charges of which ran to another £4 million. Faced with such obligations, the British government was compelled to reassess its old ways of running an empire, particularly in regard to the raising of new revenues.

Before the war, the administration and cost of the Empire were primarily, if not completely, a British affair. Imperial defense on the high seas was in the hands of the Royal Navy, and though the colonies were called upon from time to time to assist in the war with France, the bulk of the fighting was sustained by British troops. In return, the colonies had acquiesced in the regulation of their trade through a series of so-called Navigation Acts, which were enacted and enforced by the British authority; no revenues, however, except those collected as import or export duties, were taken from the colonies by Britain.

Under the pressure of the new responsibilities, the British authorities began to cast about for a new theory and practice of imperial administration into which the colonies might be fitted as actively contributing members. Prior to the war the government had been willing to protect the West Indian sugar interests at the expense of the rest of the Empire. But now, in the interest of increased revenue, the old protective duty, which was much too high to bring any return, was cut in half, thus permitting French molasses to compete with British West Indian in the English and colonial markets. In 1766, this molasses duty, in a further effort to increase revenue, was cut to two thirds of what it had been before the war. In short, the need for imperial revenues, not private interests, was now dictating legislation. The Stamp Act of 1765 and the Townshend duties of two years later were similar efforts to spread the financial burdens of the Empire among the beneficiaries of the British triumph over the French.

It seemed only simple justice to London officialdom that the colonies should share in the costs as well as the benefits to be derived from the defeat of the ancient enemy. At no time, it should be noticed, were the colonies asked to contribute more than a portion of the price of their own frontier defense. The stamp duty, for instance, was envisioned as returning no more than a third of the total military expenditures in America; the remainder would be borne by the home government. And because the colonists had difficulty scraping together the specie with which to pay such duties, the British government agreed to spend all the revenue obtained from the stamp tax in the colonies in order to avoid depleting the scanty colonial money supply. Nor were Americans heavily taxed; it was well known that their fiscal burden was unique in its lightness. In 1775 Lord North told the House of Commons that the per capita tax payments of Britons were fifty times those of the Americans. It was not injustice or the economic incidence of the taxes which prompted the colonial protests; it was rather the novelty of the British demands.

The new imperial policies of the British government caught the Americans off guard. Reveling in the victory over the French, the colonists confidently expected a return to the lax, uninterested administration of the prewar years and especially to their old freedom from any obligation to support the imperial defenses. Therefore, when the first of the new measures, the Sugar Act of 1764, became law, the Americans protested, but on a variety of grounds and without sufficient unity to command respect. By the time of the Stamp Act in the following year, however, the colonists were ready.

The essential colonial defense, from which the colonies never deviated, was a denial that the British Parliament had any right in law or custom to lay taxes upon the colonies for revenue purposes. Such taxes, the colonials insisted, could only be levied by the colonial legislatures. Actually, this expression of the colonial constitutional position was as novel as the imperial policy. Never before had there been an occasion for such an assertion simply because England had heretofore confined her colonial legislation to the regulation of trade. It is true that the Pennsylvania Charter of 1681 specifically reserved to the British Parliament the right to tax the colony; but since Parliament had never used this power, the colonists had a case when they said the new British taxes were historically unknown and therefore unconstitutional. The details of this controversy, in which merit is by no means the exclusive possession of either side, do not concern us here. The important fact is not whether the Americans or the British were right in their respective readings of imperial constitutional history, but that the colonials believed they were right and acted accordingly. Regardless of the constitutional niceties involved, it is patent that the English had waited too long to assert their authority. Too many Americans had grown accustomed to their untrammeled political life to submit now to new English controls. In brief, the colonists suddenly realized that they were no longer wards of Britain, but a separate people, capable of forging their own destiny.

This conviction runs all through the polemics of the Revolutionary crisis. For underlying the constitutional verbiage which Englishmen and Americans exchanged were two quite different assumptions about the nature of the British Empire and the character of the American people. Whereas Englishmen saw America as a part of an Empire in which all elements were subordinate to Britain, the Americans, drawing upon their actual history, saw only a loose confederation of peoples in which there were Britons and Americans, neither one of whom could presume to dictate to the other. The colonials, in effect, now felt themselves Americans, not displaced, subordinate Englishmen. Jefferson suggested this to the King himself when he wrote in his *Summary*

View of the Rights of British America: "You are surrounded by British counsellors. . . . You have no minister for American affairs, because you have none taken from us." Furthermore, even after 1776 many a Loyalist exiled in Britain found the English annoying and strange—evidence of the fact that residence in America had worked its influence even upon those loyal to the Crown. "It piques my pride, I must confess," wrote one expatriated Loyalist, "to hear us called 'our colonies, our plantations,' in such terms and with such airs as if our property and persons were absolutely theirs, like the 'villains' in their cottages in the old feudal system."

The imperial view so confidently advanced by Grenville and others of the British administration came too late; the Americans were not interested in making a more efficient Empire to be manipulated from Whitehall. Because of this basic conflict in assumptions, American demands continued to leapfrog ahead of British concessions right up to the Carlisle Peace Mission in the midst of the Revolutionary War. Even ministerial assurances in 1769 that there would be no further imperially imposed taxes failed to divert the colonial drive toward equality with Britain. The child was truly asserting himself, and, as so often happens, the parent was reluctant to strike him down.

Measured against the age of Hitler and Stalin, the British overlords of the eighteenth century appear remarkably benign in their dealings with the colonies in the years after 1763. For it is a fact that the colonies were in revolt against a potential tyrant, not an actual one. Much more fearsome in the eyes of the politically sensitive colonials was the direction in which the British measures tended rather than the explicit content of the acts. As Bernard Bailyn has pointed out after a survey of some 400 tracts of the Revolutionary era, Americans were convinced that a conspiracy was afoot in Britain to deprive them of their liberties, though historians can find little basis for such political paranoia. But that such fear was a source of revolutionary fervor, Bailyn has no doubt. Furthermore, Englishmen could never bring themselves to enforce, with all the power at their command, what they believed was the true nature of the Empire, that is, the subordinate position of the colonies. More than once General Thomas Gage, commanding the British troops in America, reported that his forces were too scattered to preserve proper order and government in the colonies. "I am concerned to find in your Lordship's letters," he wrote from New York in 1768, "that irresolution still prevails in our Councils; it is time to come to some determination about the disposition of the troops in this Country."

Part of this irresolution was born of British confusion as to what should be the government's purpose, as the hasty repeals of the stamp and Townshend duties testify on the one hand, and the remarkably inept Tea Act reveals on the other. Part of it stemmed from the fact that within their own house, so to speak, were Americans: at times Lord Chatham himself, at all times Edmund Burke, Colonel Isaac Barré, John Wilkes, and Dr. Price, who insisted that Americans possessed the rights of Englishmen. "The seditious spirit of the colonies," George Grenville wryly complained on the floor of Commons in 1776, "owes its birth to the factions in this House."

Divided as to aims and devoid of strong leadership, the British permitted the much more united colonists, who were blessed with superb and daring leadership, to seize and hold the initiative. Not until the very end—after the destruction of the tea at Boston Harbor in 1773—did the patience of the British ministry run dry. By then, however, the years of acrimony, suspicion, and growing awareness of the differences between the two peoples had done their work, and the harsh coercive measures taken against Massachusetts only provoked counterviolence from all the colonies. Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill and Independence Hall, were then not far behind.

By implication, the interpretation of the coming of the Revolution given here greatly subordinates the role of economic factors. Since the economic restrictions imposed upon the colonies have traditionally played a large role in most discussions of the causes of the Revolution, they deserve some comment here. Those who advance an economic explanation for the Revolution argue that the series of economic measures enacted by Britain in the century before 1750 actually operated to confine, if not stifle, the colonial economy. Therefore, it is said, the colonies revolted against Britain in an effort to break through these artificial and externally imposed limits. On the surface and from the assumptions of twentieth-century economic life, the mercantilistic system appears severe and crippling and worthy of strong colonial opposition. But before such speculative conclusions can be accepted, they deserve to be checked against the facts.

Several historians have sought to measure quantitatively the restrictive effects of English mercantilism upon the colonial economy. Their conclusions, it can be said at the outset, are generally in the negative. For example, take the three major British limitations on colonial manufactures. On the statute books the Iron Act of 1750 appears to halt the erection of additional slitting mills in the colonies, but the fact is that many were set up after that date, regardless of the act's prohibitions, and to such an extent that by 1776 there were probably more such mills in America than in England. Nor, Lawrence Harper tells us, did the Woolens Act of 1699, designed to prevent colonial competition with a major English industry, actually inhibit American endeavors in the field, since few Americans cared to engage in the industry. True, Harper concluded that the colonial beaver-hat industry suffered from the restrictions of the Hat Act of 1732, but, as he adds, that branch of economic activity could hardly be considered an important segment of the economy. And those are the three major British efforts to "stifle" American manufacturing.

Nor can the restrictions on the settlement of the West be viewed, as some historians have asserted, as a significant motive for the Revolution. For one thing, movement into the West was never absolutely halted, and as early as 1764 the Proclamation Line of the previous year was being moved westward to permit settlement beyond the mountains. Furthermore, as Thomas Abernathy has shown, the Virginia gentry—often cited as heavily involved in western land speculation and therefore concerned with restrictions on the West—were not vitally interested in the matter economically, though the religious and political implications of the later Quebec Act, for example, did arouse them. All in all, it would appear that the western land question may have been an irritating factor, but, in view of the changing and indecisive English policy, hardly a revolution-making force.

Perhaps the most that can be said quantitatively about the burden of the whole navigation or mercantilist system in which England encased the colonies is that the regulations concerning the routing of trade added between $2.6 million and $7 million to the cost of doing business in the colonies. Over against this, however, must be placed the fact that the system did not seem a burden to the colonies. Very few objections to the navigation system appear in the voluminous literature of the crisis. In fact, so acceptable did it appear to that jealous American, Benjamin Franklin, that in 1774 he suggested to Lord Chatham that all the basic Navigation Laws be re-enacted by the colonial legislatures as an earnest of colonial loyalty. Furthermore, in October of that year, the first Continental Congress publicly declared the colonies willing to "cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British Parliament, as are bona fide, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce, for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country, and the commercial benefits of its respective members. . . ." In short, the navigation system was acceptable. Certainly laws the repressive nature of which no one was disturbed about can hardly be accepted as the grounds for a revolution.

No better economic argument can be made for taxation as a cause for the Revolution. Despite the tradition of oppressive taxation which the myth of the Revolution has spawned, the actual tax burden of the colonies was much heavier in the seventeenth century than in the years immediately before the conflict. On a per capita basis, taxes were five times greater in 1698 than they were in 1773. The lightness of the British taxes in the pre-Revolutionary period is also shown by the fact that the duty on molasses in 1766 was only a penny a gallon, or less than the duty the federal government imposed in 1791. As Lord North pointed out in 1775, taxation of the Americans was neither excessive nor oppressive.

From the unconvincing character of the economic explanations for the coming of the Revolution, it would appear, therefore, that the underlying force impelling the break was the growing national self-consciousness of the Americans. "The Revolution was effected before the war commenced," John Adams remarked years afterward. "The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people. . . ." The origins of the "principles and feelings" which made the Revolution, Adams thought, "ought to be traced back . . . and sought in the history of the country from the first plantations in America." For a century and a half the Americans had been growing up and now they had finally come of age. Precisely because the Revolution was the breaking away of a young people from a parent, the substance of the Revolution was political. The argument concerned the question of parental authority, because that is the precise point at which tension appears as the child approaches maturity and seeks to assert his independence. Unfortunately for Britain, but like so many modern parents, the mother country had long before conveniently provided the best arguments in favor of freedom. And the colonists had learned the arguments well. For this reason, the rhetoric of the Revolutionary argument was in the language of the British political and constitutional tradition.

As children enjoying a long history of freedom from interference from their parent, the Americans might well have continued in their loose relationship, even in maturity, for they were conservative as well as precocious. History, however, decreed otherwise. Britain's triumph in the Great War for the Empire put a new strain on the family relationship, and so intense was the pressure that Americans could not fail to see, as the argument increased in acrimony, that they were no longer members of the English family, but rather a new people, with their own separate destiny. Some Americans saw it earlier than others; a good many saw it by 1776. John Penn, while in England in 1773, was struck by the English ignorance "with respect to *our* part of the world (for I consider myself more American than English). . . ." To South Carolinian Henry Laurens, the Boston Port Act hit at "the liberty of all Americans," not just at that of the people of Massachusetts. Once they were convinced of their essential difference as a people and that British obduracy would not melt, Americans could not accept the old familiar arrangements. Anything less than their independence as a people was unacceptable; it would take Englishmen another generation to realize that the disagreement was as deep as that.

At no time during the ten-year crisis, however, were most Americans spoiling for a rupture with England merely for the sake of a break. Indeed, no one can run through the constitutional arguments of that day without being struck with the reluctance—almost misgivings—with which Americans reached the conclusion of independence. After attending the Continental Congress in 1774, Washington, for example, was "well satisfied that" independence was not "desired by any thinking man in all North America." And, as late as July 6, 1775—over two months after the embattled farmers made their stand at the "rude bridge"—Congress denied any "designs of separation from Great Britain and establishing independent states."

This was no heedless, impetuous overthrow of an oppressor; rather it was a slowly germinating determination on the part of Americans to counter and thwart a change in their hitherto established and accepted ways of governing. Except for the long-deferred assertion of independence, the whole corpus of Revolutionary rhetoric—and nothing lends itself more to radicalism than words—was conservative, expressive of the wish to retain the old ways. The demands made upon Britain were actually pleas for a return to the old relationship: repeal the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts, the Mutiny Acts; restore trial by jury as abrogated by the expanded admiralty courts; remove the restrictions recently placed upon western migration. One needs only to run through that famous list of grievances in the Declaration of Independence to be forcefully reminded that what these revolutionaries wanted was nothing but the *status quo ante bellum.*

"We have taken up arms," the Continental Congress carefully explained in July, 1775, two months after Lexington, "in defense of the freedom that is our birth-right, and which we ever enjoyed til the late violation of it. . . ." These men had been satisfied with their existence, they were not disgruntled agitators or frustrated politicians; they were a strange new breed—contented revolutionaries. . . .

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was the American Revolution Largely a Product of Market-Driven Consumer Forces?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What does Degler mean when he argues that the colonists were reluctant revolutionaries?
2. Was the American Revolution a conservative or a radical revolution? Discuss what constitutes both and try to argue whether the American Revolution can fit into one, none, or both categories.
3. a. If Great Britain had taken Guadalupe instead of Canada from France in the Treaty of Paris of 1763, would there have been a Revolutionary War?
   b. If Great Britain had repealed all taxes after 1763 including the tea tax, would there have been an American Revolution?
   c. Is it possible in the year 2012 that the United States would still be a part of the British Empire with dominion status similar to Canada?
4. Degler believes the political humiliation of being taxed without being represented in Parliament was a more important reason for the revolution than the economic policies regulating trade, restricting certain areas of manufacturing, and levying direct taxes. Discuss.
5. According to Professor T. H. Breen, consumer politics shaped American independence. Discuss.
6. Professor Degler believes that American Revolution was primarily a political revolt against taxes. Professor T. H. Breen believes the American Revolution was shaped by an economic consumer revolt. Compare and contrast the arguments of both historians. Where do their arguments converge and where do they diverge?
7. Is it possible to have a single cause for the American Revolution? Or do we have multiple causes? Discuss.
8. Critics of Breen's thesis of a consumer revolution argue that it is difficult to fashion collective boycotts of British goods from consumers who made individual choices of purchases. Is this a valid criticism? How does Breen respond? Discuss.
9. How is modern consumer culture similar to and different from the consumer culture of the eighteenth century? How are the tea parties of the summer of 2010 similar to and different from the Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773? Discuss.

Is There Common Ground?

A good starting point on this issue is to discuss the definition of *revolution.* Do you prefer the strict constructionist or loose constructionist definition? Can a conflict in which only a political change of leadership takes place be called a revolution? Or must each change be accompanied by a radical transformation of a society's social and economic institutions? Was the American Revolution radical, conservative, or not a revolution at all? How do students define such terms as radical and conservative? How do historians define these same terms?

Evaluate T. H. Breen's view of the eighteenth-century colonial consumers consciously using their collective political actions of non-importation agreements to challenge British taxation policies with the modern view of consumption "as a process of manipulation buried within the larger system of social relations." Is consumption a positive or a negative force in the American economic system? For a historical comparison, compare your reading from Breen's *The Marketplace of Revolution* with Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: the Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America* (New York, 2003) who distinguishes the *citizen consumer* who acknowledged the economic importance of consumption with the *purchaser consumer* who defends his individual purchases with the nation's total economic well-being. Discuss whether Breen's colonial consumers were citizen or purchaser consumers. Can you make a case for both types existing simultaneously? For background, see the exchange between David Steigerwald, T. H. Breen, and Lizabeth Cohen in "Exchange: American Consumerism," in *The Journal of American History* 93/2 (September, 2006), pp. 385–413.

Additional Resources

There are numerous anthologies that offer a diverse range of interpretations about the American Revolution. Two of the best-edited collections are George Athan Billias, *The American Revolution: How Revolutionary Was It?* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1980) and Richard M. Fulton, *The Revolution That Wasn't: A Contemporary Assessment of 1776* (Kennikat Press, 1981), which discusses numerous theories of revolution. Among the most recent edited collections is Kirk D. Werner, ed., *The American Revolution* (Greenhaven Press, 2000). William Dudley has edited some of the most useful primary sources to a reasonable length in *The American Revolution: Opposing Viewpoints* (Greenhaven Pres, 1992).

The two major interpretative articles on the subject are Jack P. Greene, "The Reappraisal of the American Revolution in Recent Historical Literature," in Greene, ed., *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution* (Harper & Row, 1968), an anthology of essays that highlights Greene's historiographical appraisal from Bancroft to Bailyn. A second immensely detailed appraisal sympathetic to a radial interpretation of the Revolution is Alfred E. Young, "American Historians Confront the Transforming Hand of Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert, eds., *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement* (University of Virginia Press, 1996).

ISSUE 7

Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes?

YES: Howard Zinn, from *A People's History of the United States* (Harper Collins, 1999)

NO: Gordon S. Wood, from "Democracy and the Constitution," in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, eds., *How Democratic is the Constitution?* (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue you should be able to:

- Gain an understanding of the political, philosophical, and social differences between the Federalists (Cosmopolitans) and the Anti-Federalists (Localists).
- Gain an understanding of economics as a force in history and whether or not economics was the primary motivating force in writing the Constitution.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: According to radical historian Howard Zinn, the Founding Fathers were an elite group of northern money interests and southern slaveholders who used Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts as a pretext to create a strong central government, which protected the property rights of the rich to the exclusion of slaves, Indians, and non-property-holding whites.

NO: Professor of history Gordon S. Wood views the struggle for a new constitution in 1787–1788 as a social conflict between upper-class Federalists who desired a stronger central government and the "humbler" Anti-Federalists who controlled the state assemblies.

The United States possesses the oldest written constitution of any major power. The 55 men who attended the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 could scarcely have dreamed that 225 years later the nation would venerate them as the most "enlightened statesmen" of their time. James Madison, the principal architect of the document, may have argued that the Founding Fathers had created a system that might "decide forever the fate of Republican Government which we wish to last for ages," but Madison also told Thomas Jefferson in October 1787 that he did not think the document would be adopted, and if it was, it would not work.

The enlightened statesmen view of the Founding Fathers, presented by nineteenth-century historians like John Fiske, became the accepted interpretation among the general public until the Progressive Era. In 1913, Columbia University professor Charles A. Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (Free Press, 1913, 1986) caused a storm of controversy because it questioned the motivations of the Founding Fathers. The architects of the Constitution supported the creation of a stronger central government, argued Beard, not for patriotic reasons but because they wanted to protect their own economic interests.

Beard's research method was fairly simple. Drawing upon a collection of old, previously unexamined treasury records in the National Archives, he discovered that a number of delegates to the Philadelphia Convention and, later, to the state ratifying conventions held substantial amounts of continental securities that would sharply increase in value if a strong national government were established. In addition to attributing economic motives to the Founding Fathers, Beard included a Marxist class conflict interpretation in his book. Those who supported the Constitution, he said, represented "personalty interests which had been adversely affected under the Articles of Confederation: money, public securities, manufactures, and trade and shipping." Those who opposed ratification of the Constitution were the small farmers and debtors.

Beard's socioeconomic conflict interpretation of the supporters and opponents of the Constitution raised another issue: How was the Constitution ratified if the majority of Americans opposed it? Beard's answer was that most Americans could not vote because they did not own property. Therefore, the entire process, from the calling of the Philadelphia Convention to the state ratifying conventions, was nonrepresentative and nondemocratic.

An Economic Interpretation was a product of its times. Economists, sociologists, and political scientists had been analyzing the conflicts that resulted from the Industrial Revolution, which the United States had been experiencing at the turn of the twentieth century. Beard joined a group of progressive historians who were interested in reforming the society in which they lived and who also shared his discontent with the old-fashioned institutional approach. The role of the new historians was to rewrite history and discover the real reason why things happened. For the progressive historians, reality consisted of uncovering the hidden social and economic conflicts within society. In the years between the world wars, the general public held steadfastly to the "enlightened statesmen" view of the Founding Fathers, but Beard's thesis became the new orthodoxy in most college texts on American history and government.

The "enlightened statesmen" interpretation reasserted itself during the cold war in the 1950s and 1960s with the methodological critiques of Beard's work by Robert E. Brown in *Charles Beard and the Constitution* (Princeton University Press, 1956) and Forrest McDonald's many works, the earliest of which *We the People* (University of Chicago Press, 1958) argued that numerous interest groups in the states ratified the Constitution for a variety of political and economic reasons. The best summary of this scholarship is the widely reprinted article by Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, "The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution," in Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution 1763–1789* (Harper & Row, 1968), 378–395, which argues that the Federalists were broad-minded nationalists, and the less well-organized Anti-Federalists were small-minded localists, an interpretation influenced by Cecilia Kenyon in "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," *William and Mary Quarterly* 12 (1955), 3–43.

In the "Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," *American Political Science Review* (December 1961) John P. Roche also stresses the political reasons for writing a new Constitution. In a widely reprinted, spirited essay that reflects great admiration for the Founding Fathers as enlightened politicians, Roche describes the Constitution as a "triumph of architectonic genius; it was a patch-work sewn together under the pressure of both time and events by a group of extremely talented democratic politicians."

Roche narrates the events of the convention of 1787 with a clarity rarely seen in the writings on this period. He makes the telling point that, once the dissenters left Philadelphia, the delegates were able to hammer out a new Constitution. All the Founding Fathers agreed to create a stronger national government, but differences centered around the shape the new government would take. The delegates' major concern was to create as strong a national government as possible that would be acceptable to all states. Had the ratifying conventions rejected the new Constitution, the United States might have disintegrated into 13 separate countries.

In recent years the Anti-Federalists have received positive evaluations from both conservatives and leftists who reject the excessive accumulation of power by the national government. See conservative Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), an influential effort to analyze Anti-Federalist ideas, and Alfred F. Young, "The Framers of the Constitution and the 'Genius' of the People," *Radical History Review*, 42 (1988). Earlier, Jackson Turner Main revived the Beardian conflict interpretations between agrarian localists and cosmopolitan elitists in *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781–1788* (University of North Carolina Press, 1961), which has been superseded by Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788–1828* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), a sympathetic and comprehensive analysis buttressed by research into the primary writings and secondary accounts of the Anti-Federalists. The most recent sympathetic account of the Anti-Federalists is Woody Holton's *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (Hill and Wang, 2007).

Readers can gain a sense of the debates over ratification of the Constitution by reading some of the original texts. Two of the most convenient anthologies are Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History* (New York, 1986) and Bernard Bailyn, ed., *The Debate on the Constitution*, 2 Vols. (New York, 1993).

In the first essay that follows, the late Howard Zinn offers a neo-Beardian interpretation of the Constitution of the United States from his best-selling text *A People's History of the United States* (Harper Collins, 1999). An avowed Marxist and radical leftist, Zinn was a political activist who served in a bombing squadron in the Army Air Corps in World War II, was an early member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and a staunch peace activist opposing the U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia, Central America, and the Middle East. He believed that history should be studied and written primarily for the purpose of eliminating America's violent past and moving it in a more peaceful, equitable direction. In this context, Zinn argued that Shays' Rebellion, an uprising of western Massachusetts farmers who were unable to pay their taxes to the Massachusetts' government, was the catalyst that inspired the men at Philadelphia in 1787 to draft a new constitution.

How does Zinn explain the support for the new government if it favored the well-to-do? "The Constitution," he says, "illustrates the complexity of the American system; that it serves the interests of a wealthy elite, but also does enough for small property owners, for middle-income mechanics and farmers, to build a broad base of support. The slightly prosperous people who make up this base of support are buffers against the blacks, the Indians, the very poor whites. They enable the elite to keep control with a minimum of coercion, a maximum of law—all made palatable by the fanfare of patriotism and unity."

In the second essay, Professor Gordon S. Wood agrees with the class conflict theories of Beard and Zinn regarding the supporters and opponents of the Constitution, but he stresses social and ideological, not economic, motivations. Wood argues that the Federalists were upper-class aristocrats who believed that the national government, which they controlled, provided a more cosmopolitan and enlightened outlook than the local and provincial interests of the "humbler sort" who ran the state assemblies. According to Wood, the Federalists at both the Philadelphia and the state ratifying conventions employed "democratic" language to argue cleverly and falsely that the new national government was as democratic as the Confederation government it would replace.

In some ways, Wood's scholarship helped to change the focus of the debate over the purposes of the Constitution. His *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (University of North Carolina Press, 1969), which sought to recapture the conflicting views of politics in the eighteenth century, became a new starting point for scholarship on this topic. The bicentennial celebration of the Constitution and its ratification spawned several works considering the literature of this document, the most important of which are Richard Beeman et al., eds., *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Peter S. Onuf, "Reflections on the Founding: Constitutional Historiography in Bicentennial Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 30 Ser., 46 (1989), 341–375; and Richard D. Bernstein, "Charting the Bicentennial," *Columbia Law Review*, 87 (1987), 1565–1624.

YES ↩ **Howard Zinn**

A People's History of the United States

To many Americans over the years, the Constitution drawn up in 1787 has seemed a work of genius put together by wise, humane men who created a legal framework for democracy and equality. This view is stated, a bit extravagantly, by the historian George Bancroft, writing in the early nineteenth century:

> The Constitution establishes nothing that interferes with equality and individuality. It knows nothing of differences by descent, or opinions, of favored classes, or legalized religion, or the political power of property. It leaves the individual alongside of the individual. . . . As the sea is made up of drops, American society is composed of separate, free, and constantly moving atoms, ever in reciprocal action . . . so that the institutions and laws of the country rise out of the masses of individual thought which, like the waters of the ocean, are rolling evermore.

Another view of the Constitution was put forward early in the twentieth century by the historian Charles Beard (arousing anger and indignation, including a denunciatory editorial in the *New York Times*). He wrote in his book *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution:*

> Inasmuch as the primary object of a government, beyond the mere repression of physical violence, is the making of the rules which determine the property relations of members of society, the dominant classes whose rights are thus to be determined must perforce obtain from the government such rules as are consonant with the larger interests necessary to the continuance of their economic processes, or they must themselves control the organs of government.

In short, Beard said, the rich must, in their own interest, either control the government directly or control the laws by which government operates.

Beard applied this general idea to the Constitution, by studying the economic backgrounds and political ideas of the fifty-five men who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 to draw up the Constitution. He found that a majority of them were lawyers by profession, that most of them were men of wealth, in land, slaves, manufacturing, or shipping, that half of them had money loaned

From *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn (HarperCollins, 1999). Copyright © 1980 by Howard Zinn. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

out at interest, and that forty of the fifty-five held government bonds, according to the records of the Treasury Department.

Thus, Beard found that most of the makers of the Constitution had some direct economic interest in establishing a strong federal government: the manufacturers needed protective tariffs; the moneylenders wanted to stop the use of paper money to pay off debts; the land speculators wanted protection as they invaded Indian lands; slaveowners needed federal security against slave revolts and runaways; bondholders wanted a government able to raise money by nationwide taxation, to pay off those bonds.

Four groups, Beard noted, were not represented in the Constitutional Convention: slaves, indentured servants, women, men without property. And so the Constitution did not reflect the interests of those groups.

He wanted to make it clear that he did not think the Constitution was written merely to benefit the Founding Fathers personally, although one could not ignore the $150,000 fortune of Benjamin Franklin, the connections of Alexander Hamilton to wealthy interests through his father-in-law and brother-in-law, the great slave plantations of James Madison, the enormous landholdings of George Washington. Rather, it was to benefit the groups the Founders represented, the "economic interests they understood and felt in concrete, definite form through their own personal experience."

Not everyone at the Philadelphia Convention fitted Beard's scheme. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts was a holder of landed property, and yet he opposed the ratification of the Constitution. Similarly, Luther Martin of Maryland, whose ancestors had obtained large tracts of land in New Jersey, opposed ratification. But, with a few exceptions, Beard found a strong connection between wealth and support of the Constitution.

By 1787 there was not only a positive need for strong central government to protect the large economic interests, but also immediate fear of rebellion by discontented farmers. The chief event causing this fear was an uprising in the summer of 1786 in western Massachusetts, known as Shays' Rebellion.

In the western towns of Massachusetts there was resentment against the legislature in Boston. The new Constitution of 1780 had raised the property qualifications for voting. No one could hold state office without being quite wealthy. Furthermore, the legislature was refusing to issue paper money, as had been done in some other states, like Rhode Island, to make it easier for debt-ridden farmers to pay off their creditors.

Illegal conventions began to assemble in some of the western counties to organize opposition to the legislature. At one of these, a man named Plough Jogger spoke his mind:

> I have been greatly abused, have been obliged to do more than my part in the war; been loaded with class rates, town rates, province rates, Continental rates and all rates . . . been pulled and hauled by sheriffs, constables and collectors, and had my cattle sold for less than they were worth. . . .
>
> . . . The great men are going to get all we have and I think it is time for us to rise and put a stop to it, and have no more courts, nor sheriffs, nor collectors nor lawyers. . . .

The chairman of that meeting used his gavel to cut short the applause. He and others wanted to redress their grievances, but peacefully, by petition to the General Court (the legislature) in Boston.

However, before the scheduled meeting of the General Court, there were going to be court proceedings in Hampshire County, in the towns of Northampton and Springfield, to seize the cattle of farmers who hadn't paid their debts, to take away their land, now full of grain and ready for harvest. And so, veterans of the Continental army, also aggrieved because they had been treated poorly on discharge—given certificates for future redemption instead of immediate cash—began to organize the farmers into squads and companies. One of these veterans was Luke Day, who arrived the morning of court with a fife-and-drum corps, still angry with the memory of being locked up in debtors' prison in the heat of the previous summer.

The sheriff looked to the local militia to defend the court against these armed farmers. But most of the militia was with Luke Day. The sheriff did manage to gather five hundred men, and the judges put on their black silk robes, waiting for the sheriff to protect their trip to the courthouse. But there at the courthouse steps, Luke Day stood with a petition, asserting the people's constitutional right to protest the unconstitutional acts of the General Court, asking the judges to adjourn until the General Court could act on behalf of the farmers. Standing with Luke Day were fifteen hundred armed farmers. The judges adjourned.

Shortly after, at courthouses in Worcester and Athol, farmers with guns prevented the courts from meeting to take away their property, and the militia were too sympathetic to the farmers, or too outnumbered, to act. In Concord, a fifty-year-old veteran of two wars, Job Shattuck, led a caravan of carts, wagons, horses, and oxen onto the town green, while a message was sent to the judges:

> The voice of the People of this county is such that the court shall not enter this courthouse until such time as the People shall have redress of the grievances they labor under at the present.

A county convention then suggested the judges adjourn, which they did.

At Great Barrington, a militia of a thousand faced a square crowded with armed men and boys. But the militia was split in its opinion. When the chief justice suggested the militia divide, those in favor of the court's sitting to go on the right side of the road, and those against on the left, two hundred of the militia went to the right, eight hundred to the left, and the judges adjourned. Then the crowd went to the home of the chief justice, who agreed to sign a pledge that the court would not sit until the Massachusetts General Court met. The crowd went back to the square, broke open the county jail, and set free the debtors. The chief justice, a country doctor, said: "I have never heard anybody point out a better way to have their grievances redressed than the people have taken."

The governor and the political leaders of Massachusetts became alarmed. Samuel Adams, once looked on as a radical leader in Boston, now insisted people act within the law. He said "British emissaries" were stirring up the farmers. People in the town of Greenwich responded: You in Boston have the money, and we don't. And didn't you act illegally yourselves in the Revolution? The insurgents were now being called Regulators. Their emblem was a sprig of hemlock.

The problem went beyond Massachusetts. In Rhode Island, the debtors had taken over the legislature and were issuing paper money. In New Hampshire, several hundred men, in September of 1786, surrounded the legislature in Exeter, asking that taxes be returned and paper money issued; they dispersed only when military action was threatened.

Daniel Shays entered the scene in western Massachusetts. A poor farm hand when the revolution broke out, he joined the Continental army, fought at Lexington, Bunker Hill, and Saratoga, and was wounded in action. In 1780, not being paid, he resigned from the army, went home, and soon found himself in court for nonpayment of debts. He also saw what was happening to others: a sick woman, unable to pay, had her bed taken from under her.

What brought Shays fully into the situation was that on September 19, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts met in Worcester and indicted eleven leaders of the rebellion, including three of his friends, as "disorderly, riotous and seditious persons" who "unlawfully and by force of arms" prevented "the execution of justice and the laws of the commonwealth." The Supreme Judicial Court planned to meet again in Springfield a week later, and there was talk of Luke Day's being indicted.

Shays organized seven hundred armed farmers, most of them veterans of the war, and led them to Springfield. There they found a general with nine hundred soldiers and a cannon. Shays asked the general for permission to parade, which the general granted, so Shays and his men moved through the square, drums banging and fifes blowing. As they marched, their ranks grew. Some of the militia joined, and reinforcements began coming in from the countryside. The judges postponed hearings for a day, then adjourned the court.

Now the General Court, meeting in Boston, was told by Governor James Bowdoin to "vindicate the insulted dignity of government." The recent rebels against England, secure in office, were calling for law and order. Sam Adams helped draw up a Riot Act, and a resolution suspending habeas corpus, to allow the authorities to keep people in jail without trial. At the same time, the legislature moved to make some concessions to the angry farmers, saying certain old taxes could now be paid in goods instead of money.

This didn't help. In Worcester, 160 insurgents appeared at the courthouse. The sheriff read the Riot Act. The insurgents said they would disperse only if the judges did. The sheriff shouted something about hanging. Someone came up behind him and put a sprig of hemlock in his hat. The judges left.

Confrontations between farmers and militia now multiplied. The winter snows began to interfere with the trips of farmers to the courthouses. When Shays began marching a thousand men into Boston, a blizzard forced them back, and one of his men froze to death.

An army came into the field, led by General Benjamin Lincoln, on money raised by Boston merchants. In an artillery duel, three rebels were killed. One soldier stepped in front of his own artillery piece and lost both arms. The winter grew worse. The rebels were outnumbered and on the run. Shays took refuge in Vermont, and his followers began to surrender. There were a few more deaths in battle, and then sporadic, disorganized, desperate acts of violence against authority: the burning of barns, the slaughter of a general's horses. One government soldier was killed in an eerie night-time collision of two sleighs.

Captured rebels were put on trial in Northampton and six were sentenced to death. A note was left at the door of the high sheriff of Pittsfidd:

> I understand that there is a number of my countrymen condemned to die because they fought for justice. I pray have a care that you assist not in the execution of so horrid a crime, for by all that is above, he that condemns and he that executes shall share alike. . . . Prepare for death with speed, for your life or mine is short. When the woods are covered with leaves, I shall return and pay you a short visit.

Thirty-three more rebels were put on trial and six more condemned to death. Arguments took place over whether the hangings should go forward. General Lincoln urged mercy and a Commission of Clemency, but Samuel Adams said: "In monarchy the crime of treason may admit of being pardoned or lightly punished, but the man who dares rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death." Several hangings followed; some of the condemned were pardoned. Shays, in Vermont, was pardoned in 1788 and returned to Massachusetts, where he died, poor and obscure, in 1825.

It was Thomas Jefferson, in France as ambassador at the time of Shays' Rebellion, who spoke of such uprisings as healthy for society. In a letter to a friend he wrote: "I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing. . . . It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government. . . . God forbid that we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. . . . The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure."

But Jefferson was far from the scene. The political and economic elite of the country were not so tolerant. They worried that the example might spread. A veteran of Washington's army, General Henry Knox, founded an organization of army veterans, "The Order of the Cincinnati," presumably (as one historian put it) "for the purpose of cherishing the heroic memories of the struggle in which they had taken part," but also, it seemed, to watch out for radicalism in the new country. Knox wrote to Washington in late 1786 about Shays' Rebellion, and in doing so expressed the thoughts of many of the wealthy and powerful leaders of the country:

> The people who are the insurgents have never paid any, or but very little taxes. But they see the weakness of government; they feel at once their own poverty, compared with the opulent, and their own force, and they are determined to make use of the latter, in order to remedy the former. Their creed is "That the property of the United States has been protected from the confiscations of Britain by the joint exertions of all, and therefore ought to he the common property of all. And he

> that attempts opposition to this creed is an enemy to equity and justice and ought to be swept from off the face of the earth."

Alexander Hamilton, aide to Washington during the war, was one of the most forceful and astute leaders of the new aristocracy. He voiced his political philosophy:

> All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the government. . . . Can a democratic assembly who annually revolve in the mass of the people be supposed steadily to pursue the public good? Nothing but a permanent body can check the imprudence of democracy. . . .

At the Constitutional Convention, Hamilton suggested a President and Senate chosen for life.

The Convention did not take his suggestion. But neither did it provide for popular elections, except in the case of the House of Representatives, where the qualifications were set by the state legislatures (which required property-holding for voting in almost all the states), and excluded women, Indians, slaves. The Constitution provided for Senators to be elected by the state legislators, for the President to be elected by electors chosen by the state legislators, and for the Supreme Court to be appointed by the President.

The problem of democracy in the post-Revolutionary society was not, however, the Constitutional limitations on voting. It lay deeper, beyond the Constitution, in the division of society into rich and poor. For if some people had great wealth and great influence; if they had the land, the money, the newspapers, the church, the educational system—how could voting, however broad, cut into such power? There was still another problem: wasn't it the nature of representative government, even when most broadly based, to be conservative, to prevent tumultuous change?

It came time to ratify the Constitution, to submit to a vote in state conventions, with approval of nine of the thirteen required to ratify it. In New York, where debate over ratification was intense, a series of newspaper articles appeared, anonymously, and they tell us much about the nature of the Constitution. These articles, favoring adoption of the Constitution, were written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, and came to be known as the *Federalist Papers* (opponents of the Constitution became known as anti-Federalists).

In *Federalist Paper #10,* James Madison argued that representative government was needed to maintain peace in a society ridden by factional disputes. These disputes came from "the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society." The problem, he said, was how to control the factional struggles that came from inequalities in wealth. Minority factions could be controlled, he said, by the principle that decisions would be by vote of the majority.

So the real problem, according to Madison, was a majority faction, and here the solution was offered by the Constitution, to have "an extensive republic," that is, a large nation ranging over thirteen states, for then "it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other. . . . The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States."

Madison's argument can be seen as a sensible argument for having a government which can maintain peace and avoid continuous disorder. But is it the aim of government simply to maintain order, as a referee, between two equally matched fighters? Or is it that government has some special interest in maintaining a certain kind of order, a certain distribution of power and wealth, a distribution in which government officials are not neutral referees but participants? In that case, the disorder they might worry about is the disorder of popular rebellion against those monopolizing the society's wealth. This interpretation makes sense when one looks at the economic interests, the social backgrounds, of the makers of the Constitution.

As part of his argument for a large republic to keep the peace, James Madison tells quite clearly, in *Federalist #10,* whose peace he wants to keep: "A rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project, will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the Union than a particular member of it."

When economic interest is seen behind the political clauses of the Constitution, then the document becomes not simply the work of wise men trying to establish a decent and orderly society, but the work of certain groups trying to maintain their privileges, while giving just enough rights and liberties to enough of the people to ensure popular support.

In the new government, Madison would belong to one party (the Democrat-Republicans) along with Jefferson and Monroe. Hamilton would belong to the rival party (the Federalists) along with Washington and Adams. But both agreed—one a slaveholder from Virginia, the other a merchant from New York—on the aims of this new government they were establishing. They were anticipating the long-fundamental agreement of the two political parties in the American system. Hamilton wrote elsewhere in the *Federalist Papers* that the new Union would be able "to repress domestic faction and insurrection." He referred directly to Shays' Rebellion: "The tempestuous situation from which Massachusetts has scarcely emerged evinces that dangers of this kind are not merely speculative."

It was either Madison or Hamilton (the authorship of the individual papers is not always known) who in *Federalist Paper #63* argued the necessity of a "well-constructed Senate" as "sometimes necessary as a defense to the people against their own temporary errors and delusions" because "there are particular moments in public affairs when the people, stimulated by some irregular passion, or some illicit advantage, or misted by the artful misrepresentations of interested men, may call for measures which they themselves will afterwards be the most ready to lament and condemn." And: "In these critical moments, how salutary will be the interference of some temperate and respectable body of citizens in order to check the misguided career, and to suspend the blow meditated by the people against themselves, until reason, justice, and truth can regain their authority over the public mind?"

The Constitution was a compromise between slaveholding interests of the South and moneyed interests of the North. For the purpose of uniting the thirteen states into one great market for commerce, the northern delegates wanted laws regulating interstate commerce, and urged that such laws require only a majority of Congress to pass. The South agreed to this, in return for allowing the trade in slaves to continue for twenty years before being outlawed.

Charles Beard warned us that governments—including the government of the United States—are not neutral, that they represent the dominant economic interests, and that their constitutions are intended to serve these interests. One of his critics (Robert E. Brown, *Charles Beard and the Constitution*) raises an interesting point. Granted that the Constitution omitted the phrase "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," which appeared in the Declaration of Independence, and substituted "life, liberty, or property"—well, why shouldn't the Constitution protect property? As Brown says about Revolutionary America, "practically everybody was interested in the protection of property" because so many Americans owned property.

However, this is misleading. True, there were many property owners. But some people had much more than others. A few people had great amounts of property; many people had small amounts; others had none. Jackson Main found that one-third of the population in the Revolutionary period were small farmers, while only 3 percent of the population had truly large holdings and could be considered wealthy.

Still, one-third was a considerable number of people who felt they had something at stake in the stability of a new government. This was a larger base of support for government than anywhere in the world at the end of the eighteenth century. In addition, the city mechanics had an important interest in a government which would protect their work from foreign competition. As Staughton Lynd puts it: "How is it that the city workingmen all over America overwhelmingly and enthusiastically supported the United States Constitution?"

This was especially true in New York. When the ninth and tenth states had ratified the Constitution, four thousand New York City mechanics marched with floats and banners to celebrate. Bakers, blacksmiths, brewers, ship joiners and shipwrights, coopers, cartmen and tailors, all marched. What Lynd found was that these mechanics, while opposing elite rule in the colonies, were nationalist. Mechanics comprised perhaps half the New York population. Some were wealthy, some were poor, but all were better off than the ordinary laborer, the apprentice, the journeyman, and their prosperity required a government that would protect them against the British hats and shoes and other goods that were pouring into the colonies after the Revolution. As a result, the mechanics often supported wealthy conservatives at the ballot box.

The Constitution, then, illustrates the complexity of the American system: that it serves the interests of a wealthy elite, but also does enough for small property owners, for middle-income mechanics and farmers, to build a broad base of support. The slightly prosperous people who make up this base of support are buffers against the blacks, the Indians, the very poor whites. They enable the elite to keep control with a minimum of coercion, a maximum of law—all made palatable by the fanfare of patriotism and unity.

The Constitution became even more acceptable to the public at large after the first Congress, responding to criticism, passed a series of amendments known as the Bill of Rights. These amendments seemed to make the new government a guardian of people's liberties: to speak, to publish, to worship, to petition, to assemble, to be tried fairly, to be secure at home against official intrusion. It was, therefore, perfectly designed to build popular backing for the new government. What was not made clear—it was a time when the language of freedom was new and its reality untested—was the shakiness of anyone's liberty when entrusted to a government of the rich and powerful.

Indeed, the same problem existed for the other provisions of the Constitution, like the clause forbidding states to "impair the obligation of contract," or that giving Congress the power to tax the people and to appropriate money. They all sound benign and neutral until one asks: Tax who, for what? Appropriate what, for whom? To protect everyone's contracts seems like an act of fairness, of equal treatment, until one considers that contracts made between rich and poor, between employer and employee, landlord and tenant, creditor and debtor, generally favor the more powerful of the two parties. Thus, to protect these contracts is to put the great power of the government, its laws, courts, sheriffs, police, on the side of the privileged—and to do it not, as in premodern times, as an exercise of brute force against the weak but as a matter of law.

The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights shows that quality of interest hiding behind innocence. Passed in 1791 by Congress, it provided that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press. . . ." Yet, seven years after the First Amendment became part of the Constitution, Congress passed a law very clearly abridging the freedom of speech.

This was the Sedition Act of 1798, passed under John Adams's administration, at a time when Irishmen and Frenchmen in the United States were looked on as dangerous revolutionaries because of the recent French Revolution and the Irish rebellions. The Sedition Act made it a crime to say or write anything "false, scandalous and malicious" against the government, Congress, or the President, with intent to defame them, bring them into disrepute, or excite popular hatreds against them.

This act seemed to directly violate the First Amendment. Yet, it was enforced. Ten Americans were put in prison for utterances against the government, and every member of the Supreme Court in 1798–1800, sitting as an appellate judge, held it constitutional.

There was a legal basis for this, one known to legal experts, but not to the ordinary American, who would read the First Amendment and feel confident that he or she was protected in the exercise of free speech. That basis has been explained by historian Leonard Levy. Levy points out that it was generally understood (not in the population, but in higher circles) that, despite the First Amendment, the British common law of "seditious libel" still ruled in America. This meant that while the government could not exercise "prior restraint"—that is, prevent an utterance or publication in advance—it could legally punish the speaker or writer afterward. Thus, Congress has a convenient legal basis for the laws it has enacted since that time, making certain kinds of speech a crime. And, since punishment after the fact is an excellent deterrent to the exercise of free expression, the claim of "no prior restraint" itself is destroyed. This leaves the First Amendment much less than the stone wall of protection it seems at first glance.

Are the economic provisions in the Constitution enforced just as weakly? We have an instructive example almost immediately in Washington's first administration, when Congress's power to tax and appropriate money was immediately put to use by the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton.

Hamilton, believing that government must ally itself with the richest elements of society to make itself strong, proposed to Congress a series of laws, which it enacted, expressing this philosophy. A Bank of the United States was set up as a partnership between the government and certain banking interests. A tariff was passed to help the manufacturers. It was agreed to pay bondholders—most of the war bonds were now concentrated in a small group of wealthy people—the full value of their bonds. Tax laws were passed to raise money for this bond redemption.

One of these tax laws was the Whiskey Tax, which especially hurt small farmers who raised grain that they converted into whiskey and then sold. In 1794 the farmers of western Pennsylvania took up arms and rebelled against the collection of this tax. Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton led the troops to put them down. We see then, in the first years of the Constitution, that some of its provisions—even those paraded most flamboyantly (like the First Amendment)—might be treated lightly. Others (like the power to tax) would be powerfully enforced.

Still, the mythology around the Founding Fathers persists. To say, as one historian (Bernard Bailyn) has done recently, that "the destruction of privilege and the creation of a political system that demanded of its leaders the responsible and humane use of power were their highest aspirations" is to ignore what really happened in the America of these Founding Fathers.

Bailyn says:

> Everyone knew the basic prescription for a wise and just government. It was so to balance the contending powers in society that no one power could overwhelm the others and, unchecked, destroy the liberties that belonged to all. The problem was how to arrange the institutions of government so that this balance could be achieved.

Were the Founding Fathers wise and just men trying to achieve a good balance? In fact, they did not want a balance, except one which kept things as they were, a balance among the dominant forces at that time. They certainly did not want an equal balance between slaves and masters, propertyless and property holders, Indians and white.

As many as half the people were not even considered by the Founding Fathers as among Bailyn's "contending powers" in society. They were not mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, they were absent in the Constitution, they were invisible in the new political democracy. They were the women of early America.

Gordon S. Wood **NO**

Democracy and the Constitution

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The Debate over the Constitution

The historical debate over the Constitution and democracy continues, for the debate is rooted in the original controversy that surrounded the creation of the Constitution in 1787–1788. In fact, all the historical debates over the democratic nature of the Constitution are essentially reverberations of this original dispute at the time of the framing. The creators and supporters of the Constitution, the Federalists as they called themselves, argued strenuously that the Constitution was a fulfillment, not a repudiation, of the Revolution and that it provided for a thoroughly republican and popular government. The opponents of the Constitution, the Antifederalists, charged that the Constitution was a denial of the principles of 1776 and that it was an aristocratic document calculated to create an undemocratic government benefiting the few at the expense of the many. It is essentially these two contrasting viewpoints of 1787–1788 that have been echoing through our historical writing on the origins of the Constitution ever since. We are forever trying to decide in these debates who was more right in their interpretation of the Constitution, the Federalists or the Antifederalists.

Cast in this way, the question will inevitably force us to take sides and argue that either the Federalists or the Antifederalists had a more "correct" view of the "real" Constitution. But there was and is no "real" Constitution against which we can measure the conflicting statements of the Federalists and Antifederalists. The only Constitution that existed in 1787–1788 was the one men at the time believed in and described; and these beliefs and descriptions were very different. Instead of asking whether the Constitution was democratic, we should be asking what the historical participants were up to and why they described the Constitution in such different ways. When the questions are posed in this way, the answers will show that neither the Federalists nor the Antifederalists were more right in their interpretation of the Constitution; both had good reason to think as they did about the Constitution.

From the vantage point of 1776, which was generally the perspective of the Antifederalists, the Constitution of 1787 looms as an extraordinary, even unbelievable, creation. None of the revolutionary leaders at the time of independence even contemplated, let alone suggested, the possibility of erecting

From *How Democratic is the Constitution* by Gordon S. Wood (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980). Copyright © 1980 by American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Reprinted by permission.

over all America such a strong, overarching national government as the Constitution provided. Such a powerful central government operating directly on individuals was diametrically opposed to all the principles of the Revolution. More than anything else, the Revolution intended to reduce the overweening power of the government, particularly far-removed central government associated with the British imperial system. Any revolutionary in 1776 suggesting a national government resembling the one eventually created by the Constitution of 1787 would have been branded a lunatic or, worse, a British monarchist.

The Articles of Confederation

Of course, some Americans in 1776 wanted a stronger central government than that provided by the Articles of Confederation. But even the most fervent advocates in 1776–1777 of a stronger confederation, like John Dickinson, never envisioned a national government like that of 1787. For most revolutionaries, the confederation was a simple political response to the need for union against Britain. They were interested less in creating an enduring nation-state than in legitimizing the resistance movement and the activity of the Continental Congress. At most, they wanted a strong union of the separate states that would have substantial authority over matters of general concern such as war, trade, interstate disputes, and western lands. However substantial such a confederation might be, it was still to be a confederation—a union of separate and remarkably independent states. The actual Articles of Confederation that emerged from the congressional discussions of 1776–1777 were weaker than some had wanted, but this limited union represented the views of most Americans at the time.

Given these American fears of far-removed central power, explaining the adoption of the Constitution in 1787–1788 becomes quite a problem. Indeed, the formation of the Constitution seems to be such an unexpected and unprecedented event that historians of all persuasions have felt compelled to rely on some version of a "great men" explanation to account for it. Some have followed Beard and stressed the conspiratorial character of the movement for the Constitution by a dynamic minority of nationalists who "conjured up" a crisis. Others writing against a Beardian view have also emphasized the youthful energy and political effectiveness of a small group of farsighted Federalist leaders. In fact, the adulation of recent historians for the Federalists' élan and dash has become so great—one called them "giants in the earth"—that we may be returning to the nineteenth-century image of the Founding Fathers as demigods. Apparently the formation of the Constitution is so inexplicable that it cannot be accounted for except in terms of the heroic actions of a few great men.

Of course, many historians have described the accumulating problems of the confederation in order to explain the writing of the Constitution. Although no one today endorses John Fiske's view that the decade of the 1780s was "the most critical moment in all the history of the American people"—a time of near chaos and anarchy—historians have pointed out that the confederation was suffering from a number of visible weaknesses. In international affairs, the confedration was hard–pressed to maintain its territorial integrity. Great Britain refused to vacate the Northwest posts; Spain claimed a huge chunk of the Southwest and closed the Mississippi to traffic. The Barbary pirates were seizing American ships and crews because Congress had no money to pay the necessary tributes. Lacking any taxing power, the United States government could not even pay the interest on its debt to its creditors at home or abroad. Congress had no authority to regulate commerce and thus had no way of forcing any openings in the European mercantile empires for American traders. Efforts to get even limited taxing and commercial regularity powers foundered on the requirements for the unanimous consent of all the states for amendment of the Articles of Confederation.

Pressing and serious as these problems of the confederation were, they cannot by themselves exaplain the formation of the Constitution. The Constitution created a national government whose strength and character were out of proportion to the obvious and acknowledged weaknesses of the confederation. Indeed, by 1787 almost everyone recognized the debility of the Articles and was prepared to grant additional powers to Congress. They were not prepared for what came out of the Philadelphia Convention of 1787—a revolutionary transformation of the entire American political system including a radical diminishing of the independence and power of the states. This was no invigorated league of states that the Constitution created. This totally new and extraordinarily powerful national government operating directly on individuals went well beyond what the difficulties of credit and commerce and the humiliations in foreign affairs demanded in additional central powers.

The Problem of Democracy in the States

Something besides the obvious debility of the confederation lay behind such a radical political transformation. Only political conditions in the states—political conditions of the most threatening kind—can ultimately explain the creation of the Constitution. There in the states, the political entities the revolutionaries cared about most, the problem of democracy was revealed; and it is that problem the Constitution sought to solve.

The state republics created in 1776 were at the heart of the Revolution. Winning the war and forming the Articles of Confederation were crucial, no doubt, but creating new state constitutions, as Thomas Jefferson said in 1776, was "the whole object of the present controversy." In their new commonwealths, Americans aimed to test all that they had learned about tyranny and liberty from their colonial experience and their debate with Britain in the 1760s and 1770s. Republicanism and popular government in America, and indeed in the world, would live or die by what happened in these individual states.

In 1776 Americans as yet did not call their new governments democracies; it is important for our understanding of the Constitution's relationship to democracy to know why they did not. It is true that the new state governments were very popular, more popular surely than any other government in the eighteenth-century world. In the American states, a greater proportion of people could vote and a greater proportion of government officials were elected than in any other country. The most popular part of the state governments, the lower houses of the legislatures, were given an extraordinary amount of power, including many prerogatives, like the granting of pardons and the appointment of judges, that were traditionally exercised only by magisterial authority in other countries. Still, these new governments were not called democracies because, as the eighteenth century commonly understood the term, they were not democracies.

Americans in 1776 thought of democracy in a traditionally classical manner. Democracy was not what it has become for us—a general set of values embracing popular government, equality, and liberty. It was still a rather technical term of political science used much as Aristotle had used it. It meant literally government by the people, referring in the strictest sense to political gatherings of the people in person in town meetings and the like. Since such pure democracy was impractical for most governmental affairs, Americans recognized as democratic the modern refinement of representation, which allowed elected agents to participate in government in place of the people. Representation was not yet equated, as it is now, with mere popular election. The representatives of the people were exclusively those elected members of the lower houses of the legislatures—the houses of representatives. The officials of the other branches of the government—whether governors or senators—even though elected by the people, were not yet considered to be in any way "representatives" of the people. They stood "for" the people but were not "of" them. Thus, any state that possessed a governor and a senate, although popularly elected could not be a democracy. Americans in 1776 therefore saw themselves creating mixed republics, with the democratic element, the lower assemblies, playing a very dominant role.

By the 1780s, many American leaders realized that these state assemblies were abusing their extraordinary powers. The annually elected legislatures, beset by hosts of various interests, were constantly changing their membership and were making legislation chaotic. As James Madison pointed out, more laws were enacted by the states in the decade following independence than in the entire colonial period. Many of these laws were unjust: paper money acts, stay laws, and other forms of debtor relief legislation hurt various creditor groups in the society and violated individual property rights. To some, the legislatures seemed more frightening than the former royal governors. It did not matter that the legislators were supposedly the representatives of the people and annually elected by them. "173 despots would surely be as oppressive as one," wrote Jefferson. "An *elective despotism* was not the government we fought for."

These legislative abuses, many American leaders believed, flowed from too much democracy. The legislators were too susceptible to various narrow and parochial interests and had become merely spokesmen for their local constituents. "A spirit of locality" in the state legislatures, said Madison, was destroying "the aggregate interests of the Community," and this localist spirit was "inseparable" from elections by small districts or towns. Each representative, said Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, was concerned only with the special interests of his electors. At the reading of a bill in the legislature, "every one instantly thinks how it will affect his constituents." In short, the representatives of the people—the democratic parts of the mixed constitutions—were responding too readily to the wishes of the people they represented. When the Federalists in 1787 came to complain of "the turbulence and follies of democracy," this is what they meant.

American leaders tried several approaches to these democratic abuses in the states. Some attempted to reform the revolutionary state constitutions by reducing the power of the popular assemblies and enhancing that of the governors and senates. The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 embodied many of these second thoughts, and during the 1780s other states sought to remake their constitutions in Massachusetts' image. Others tried to use the judiciary against what were thought to be unconstitutional acts of the legislatures; there were scattered and rudimentary expressions of what would become judicial review. Many leaders, however, thought such judicial overturnings of law enacted by popularly elected legislatures smacked of despotism and were contrary to republican government.

By the mid-1780s, men were increasingly disillusioned with these reforms and devices at the state level. Finally, when even Massachusetts with its supposedly model constitution experienced popular excesses, including Shays' Rebellion and the subsequent legislative "tyranny" of Shaysite sympathizers, many leaders were ready to shift the arena of constitutional change from the states to the nation. It seemed to many that only by modifying the structure of the central government could America find an answer to its democratically caused problems within the states.

What happened in 1786–1787, in brief, was the coalescing of two different and hitherto separate reform movements. The previously frustrated attempts of various groups—public creditors, merchants, and others—to amend the Articles of Confederation were reinforced by the efforts of those alarmed by majoritarian tyranny within the states. Heightened concern with the implications of state politics overwhelmed the state particularism and the fear of far-removed central power that had prevented earlier reform of the Articles of Confederation and forced a recasting of the terms of the problem facing Americans. Since the legislative abuses of the states flowed from the revolutionary aim of increasing the participation of the people in government, the very success of the revolutionary experiment in popular government was at stake. Thus, changing the central government was no longer a matter of standing firm in foreign affairs or of satisfying particular creditor or mercantile interests. It was now a matter, as Madison said, that would "decide forever the fate of republican government."

An Enlarged and Elevated Republic

No one saw this linkage between reform of the central government and reform of the states more clearly and used it more effectively than Madison. Nearly everyone is familiar with Madison's central role in planning for the Philadelphia Convention and in drafting the Virginia plan, which was the convention's working proposal. But not everyone is equally familiar with what

Madison wanted from the new central government and how disappointed he was with the final Constitution. Madison's proposals were truly radical; they were designed not to solve particular problems of the confederation but to remedy the deficiencies of republicanism itself. The evidence is strong that Madison and other nationalists who thought like him wanted greater consolidation and a correspondingly greater weakening of the states than they got. Madison wanted a national government that not only would have "a positive and compleat authority in all cases where uniform measures are necessary," as in commerce and foreign policy, but would have "a negative in all cases whatsoever on the Legislative Acts of the States as the King of Great Britain heretofore had." This veto power over all state legislation seemed to Madison "to be absolutely necessary, and to be the least possible encroachment on the State jurisdictions." Without it, he believed, none of the great objects which led to the convention—neither the need for more central authority nor the desire to prevent instability and injustice in state legislation—would be met. When the convention eventually set aside this national veto power, Madison initially thought that the Constitution was doomed to failure.

Although deeply disappointed with the Constitution Madison and other nationalists aimed to make the best of what they had, a greatly enlarged and elevated republic. All scholars now know how ingeniously Madison made theoretical sense of the new national system. Seizing on David Hume's radical suggestion that a republican government might operate better in a large territory than in a small one, Madison reversed the traditional assumptions about the appropriate size of a republic. Since experience in America from 1776 had demonstrated that no republic could be made small enough to avoid the clashing of rival parties and interests (tiny Rhode Island was the most faction-ridden of all), the republican state, said Madison in a series of notable letters, essays, and speeches climaxing with his *Federalist* No. 10, must be enlarged "without a departure from the elective basis of it." In this way "the propensity in small republics to rash measures and the facility of forming and executing them" by overbearing factional majorities would be stifled. "In a large Society," said Madison, "the people are broken into so many interests and parties, that a common sentiment is less likely to be felt, and the requisite concert less likely to be formed, by a majority of the whole."

All this may be common knowledge to scholars, but it has led to great misunderstanding of Madison's meaning. Some have pictured Madison "as the originator of what has come to be called an "interest-group" theory of politics. But Madison was not a forerunner of Arther Bentley, David Truman, or Robert Dahl. Despite his keen appreciation of the multiplicity of interests in a commercial society, Madison was not presenting a pluralist conception of politics. He did not envision public policy or the common good emerging naturally from the give-and-take of hosts of competing interests. Instead he hoped that these competing parties and interests in an enlarged republic would neutralize themselves, which in turn would allow rational men to promote the public good. It had worked that way in America's religious situation, which was a common analogy for Madison. The multiplicity of religious sects in America prevented any from dominating the state and permitted the enlightened reason of *philosophes* like Jefferson and himself to shape public policy and church-state relations. Madison did not want the new national government to be an integrator and harmonizer of different interests in the society; instead he wanted it to be a "disinterested and dispassionate umpire in disputes" between these different interests. In other words, Madison was not as modern as we often make him out to be. He hoped the national government might play the same role the British king had been supposed to play in the empire.

Cosmopolitanism vs. Localism

If the new government were to be monarchlike with its own "dispassionate and disinterested" authority, how was it to work in republican America? "It may be asked," Madison said, "how private rights will be more secure under the Guardianship of the General Government than under the State Governments, since they are both founded on the republican principle which refers the ultimate decision to the will of the majority." What, in other words, was really different about the new federal Constitution from the state constitutions that would enable it to lessen the effects of tyrannical majorities and keep it from succumbing to the same popular pressures besetting the state governments in the 1780s?

The answer the Federalists gave to these questions cut to the heart of the new system and reveals clearly the problem of the Constitution's relation to democracy. The Federalists, Madison included, were not as much opposed to governmental power per se as to the character and outlook of the people wielding it. They thought that the vices of the state assemblies in the 1780s flowed essentially from the kinds of people being elected to these assemblies. Such legislators were too often too much like the people they represented.

The Revolution had democratized the state assemblies by increasing the number of representatives and by altering their social character. Men of more humble, more rural origins, less educated, and with more parochial interests than those in the colonial legislatures became state representatives after 1776. These nongentry elements formed what Jackson Turner Main has called "localist parties" in all the state legislatures. Although the turnover of membership among these groups was perhaps too great to permit such a rigid classification as "party," these legislative blocs took consistently localist positions or many issues that their cosmopolitan elite opponents criticized as "illiberal," "interested," and "unprincipled." Madison and other gentlemen believed that these ordinary men lacked the "enlarged" and "liberal" outlooks of the more cosmopolitan "natural aristocracy" that Jefferson, for one, had expected to dominate government. These ordinary men were the ones winning elections to the state legislatures and enacting most of what the Federalists described as the confused, unjust, and narrowly based legislation of the 1780s. What the Federalists wanted from the Constitution was a structure of government that would inhibit such localist kinds of men from gaining power.

They proposed to do this by enlarging the arena of politics. Raising important governmental decision making to the national level would expand the electorate and at the same time would reduce the number of those elected.

This expanded electorate and elevated government would then act as a kind of filter, refining the kind of men who would become national leaders. In a larger arena with a smaller number of representatives, only the most notable and most socially established were likely to gain political office. If the people of a state, New York, for example, had to select only ten men to the federal Congress in contrast to the sixty-six they elected to their state assembly, they were more apt in the case of the few representatives in the national government to ignore obscure ordinary men with local reputations and elect those who were well bred, well educated, and well known. Election by the people in large districts would inhibit demagoguery and crass electioneering and would therefore, as Madison's closest ally in the convention, James Wilson, said, "be most likely to obtain men of intelligence and uprightness."

What was the meaning of all this Federalist talk of keeping out of government "men of factious tempers, of localist prejudices, or of sinister designs"? Who were the men possessing "the most attractive merit and most diffusive and established characters"? If anyone today used those terms to describe political leaders, we would be understandably suspicious. We might even say that these are "code words" for distinct social types. The Federalist diagnosis of the problems of state politics in the 1780s was at bottom social. Prior to the Revolution, the colonists, like all eighteenth-century Englishmen, had less need for such circumlocutions; they then talked more candidly about the distinction between gentlemen and ordinary people and were much more blunt in designating some as aristocrats and most as not. Since the Revolution, however, the distinction between gentlemen and common people was becoming blurred; aristocracy, even a republican "natural aristocracy," had become a pejorative term in many parts of the country. It is perhaps anachronistic and crude to refer to this gentry sense of difference from obscure ordinary people as a "class" distinction, for it was a distinction that belonged to the older hierarchically and vertically organized society of ranks and degrees and not to the economically based class and horizontally organized society of the future. Yet, it is surely more accurate to describe the controversy over the Constitution in these anachronistic and crude "class" terms than to suggest that it had no social implications whatsoever. The Federalists knew well the social significance of their enlarged republic. They had a shrewd sociological insight into American politics, and they aimed to use it in transforming the social character of American government.

It is a sociological insight that was exploited time and again in later American history. The Progressive period, for example, was marked by the reforming efforts of cosmopolitan types, often liberal, upper-income professionals and businessmen, to wrest the reins of government out of the hands of "corrupt" and "undesirable" localist elements. The Progressive reformers often did this by shifting the level of governmental decision making from wards, towns, and counties to the states and the nation. Commissions of "experts" at the state and federal level supplanted parochial politicians who could not see beyond their own neighborhoods. Changing the level of decision making continues to have social implications; much of our national politics still swirls around this cosmopolitan-localist dichotomy. What do we mean socially when we refer to "establishment types," "limousine liberals," "Middle America," or "Archie Bunkers"?

A Republican Remedy for Republican Diseases

Whether such cosmopolitan efforts to create political structures that deliberately excluded the ordinariness of ordinary people are undemocratic was precisely the issue raised at the framing of the Constitution. The Antifederalists, speaking for a populist localist tradition, certainly thought the Constitution was undemocratic. They immediately saw the social implications of the elevated federal government, where only certain "high-toned" and "great men" would hold office and consequently attacked it as "aristocratic" and contrary to the aim of the Revolution.

Yet, the issue has always been complicated by the fact that the Federalists did not allow themselves to be pictured as opposed to the people or republicanism. They had good reason to know that the Constitution would be seen as undemocratic. "When this plan goes forth," John Dickinson warned the Philadelphia Convention, "it will be attacked by the popular leaders. Aristocracy wil be the watch-word; the Shibboleth among its adversaries." Precisely because the Antifederalists, as Alexander Hamilton observed in the New York ratifying convention did talk "so often of an aristocracy," the Fedralists were compelled in the ratifying debates and in their publications to minimize, even to disguise, the elitist elements of the Constitution. Much of *The Federalist*, for example, was devoted to demonstrating just how "strictly republican" the new system was. The Federalists emerged from the debates, if we take their public statements at face value, as the great defenders of the supremacy of the people in politics. They said over and over again that the new national government, unlike the old confederation, was fully derived from the people. The states could not stand in the way of what the people wanted, and the Constitution was only fulfilling at the national level what the Revolution in 1776 had begun. In effect, the Federalists usurped the popular revolutionary language that rightfully belonged to their opponents and, in the process, helped to further the extraordinary changes taking place in the American conception of politics and democracy.

By the end of the debate over the Constitution, it was possible for the Federalists to describe the new national government, even with its indirectly elected president and Senate, as "a perfectly democratical form of government." Already by 1787–1788 democracy had come to be identified by some Americans simply as a representative government derived from the people. In other words, republicanism and democracy were becoming equated. The houses of representatives lost their exclusive connection with the people. Representation was now identified simply with election; thus, all elected officials, and, for some, even those not elected, such as judges, were considered somehow "representative" of the people. Consequently, the older classical ideas of democracy and mixed government that went back to Aristotle became irrelevant in describing the new American political system. Democracy rapidly became a generic label for all American government.

The changes in language and thought that made this new, more modern definition of democracy possible were not as easily reached as suggested here. Nor was the Federalist use of populism to defend the Constitution as self-conscious or calculating as here implied. Ideas and words are not manipulated or transformed quite that crudely. But, in sum, the Federalists did seek to cover their aristocratic document with a democratic mantle. The state problems of the 1780s they hoped to solve were those of excessive democracy; yet, the solution, they said, or felt compelled to say, was likewise democratic. As Madison, who was somewhat less willing than other Federalists to distort language and indulge the people, put it, the Constitution was "a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government." Whatever the terms used, the Federalists in their public statements were not able to say candidly what at least some had said within the secrecy of the Philadelphia Convention: that the source of their difficulties came from too much local democracy, and that the solution was to limit this local democracy by erecting a more aristocratic structure over it.

In the end, the Federalists had little choice in their rhetoric. If they were to get the Constitution ratified, they had to work within the egalitarian and populist currents flowing from the Revolution. Despite the suggestion of disingenuousness, there is no denying their achievement. They thought and acted more creatively than any other generation in American history. They not only convinced the country to accept a national government inconceivable a decade earlier but they did so without repudiating the republicanism and the popular basis of government that nearly all devoutly believed in. The Federalists of 1787–1788 were not the Federalists of the 1790s; they were alarmed by the abuses of popular power, but they were not, like the later Federalist party, actually fearful of the people. They remained confident that, if only the people's choice could be undisturbed by ambitious local demagogues and crass electioneering, the people would "choose men of the first character for wisdom and integrity," men very much like themselves. It was an achievement that transcended their intentions and one that has rightly earned them the admiration of subsequent generations. Somehow for a moment they reconciled aristocracy with democracy and gave us, as John P. Roche has said "a classic example of the potentialities of a democratic elite."

Nevertheless, great as the Federalists' achievement was, the cost to the future of American politics was high. By using the most popular and democratic rhetoric available to explain and justify their aristocratic system, the Federalists helped to foreclose the development of an American intellectual tradition in which differing ideas of politics would be intimately and genuinely related to differing social interests. In other words, the Federalists of 1787 furthered the American disavowal of any sort of aristocratic conception of politics and encouraged the American belief that the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy. From the creation of the Constitution, as the Federalist party of the 1790s eventually discovered to its dismay, democracy in America was no longer something to be discussed skeptically and challenged but a faith to which all Americans and all American institutions must unquestioningly adhere.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was the Constitution of the United States Written to Protect the Economic Interests of the Upper Classes?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. Briefly state the theory of Charles A. Beard regarding the motivations of the Founding Fathers.
    a. Why was Beard's theory so controversial at the time it was written?
    b. What evidence did Beard use to substantiate his theory?
2. Critically analyze James Madison's argument in *Federalist Paper #10* that a Republican form of government functions better in a large territory rather than a small one.
3. a. Distinguish between a republican and a democratic form of government.
    b. Distinguish between what Professor Wood calls the modern form of democracy and the ancient Greek definition.
    c. Is there a difference between a republic and a democracy in America today? Are the terms used interchangeably, or is there a real difference?
4. a. Critically analyze Wood's argument that the new Constitution was written because of an excess of democracy in the state legislatures and the lack of taxing and commerce powers in the Confederation government.
    b. Is Wood correct in arguing that the struggle for the new Constitution was between "localists" and "cosmopolites?"
    c. Did the Federalists lie when they argued that the Constitution with its stronger central government was a fulfillment of the American Revolution?
5. Professor Zinn argues that there were and are structural difficulties with the Constitution that make it difficult to bring about changes. Critically discuss some of these difficulties.
6. Do you agree with Professor Zinn that the Constitution is inherently conservative? Discuss.
7. According to Zinn, the majority of the population were poor when the Constitution was written. If this was true and the Constitution allows the elite to control the masses, how did the states ratify it in the first place? Critically discuss.
8. Compare and contrast the differing interpretations of Wood and Zinn regarding the events that took place at the Philadelphia Convention in 1787. Is there any way in which the two interpretations can be blended together?

9. According to Professor Wood: “We are forever trying to decide in the debates who was more right in their interpretation of the Constitution, the Federalists or the Antifederalists.” Critically discuss.

Is There Common Ground?

The interpretations of Professors Zinn and Wood may not be as far apart as they first appear. Zinn stresses the economic differences between the classes while Wood focuses upon the political, social, and sectional differences. In his seminal work on *The Creation of the American Republic* (1961), Wood solemnly declared that Beard’s thesis was dead, and economic forces and classes were meaningless. Yet Professor Forest McDonald has argued that “what Wood emerged with was Beard’s interpretation with the dollar signs removed: the Constitution was intrinsically an aristocratic document designed to check the democratic tendencies of the period.” Is it possible to argue that Zinn and Wood’s interpretations can be reconciled? Can economic and political motivations coexist?

The most recent work by Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution 1787–1788* (Simon & Schuster, 2010) is a comprehensive state by state analysis that gives equal billing to the Anti-Federalist arguments against the Constitution and demonstrates the pressure tactics used by the Federalists to ram the Constitution through the state ratifying conventions. See Gordon Wood’s, “The Great American Argument,” *The New Republic* (December 30, 2010) for his analysis of Maier’s book.

Question: Could the United States have survived today under a revised Articles of Confederation? Are both Tea Party conservatives and leftist radicals correct in arguing against the pernicious influence of big government (though for different reasons)?

Additional Resources

Many books and articles proliferated in the 1980s celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of the Constitution. See the following review essays of the literature: Edmund Morgan’s review essay of 19 books on the Constitution in *The New Republic* (June 29, 1987); and Forrest McDonald, “A New Introduction” to Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (Free Press, 1986), a brilliant and critical analysis of the literature critiquing Beard. Additional bibliography includes discussions of the “originalist” interpretations of the Constitution and its effects on the modern-day Tea Party movement. Garret Epps, “Stealing the Constitution: Inside the Right’s Campaign to Hijack Our Country’s Founding Text—and How to Fight Back,” *The Nation* (February 7, 2011); Jill Lepore, “The Commandment: The Constitution and its Worshippers,” *The New Yorker*_(January 17, 2011); and Gordon S. Wood, “No Thanks for the Memories: A Review of Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle Over American History*,” *The New York Review of Books* (January 13, 2011), which is more critical of Lepore than expected and views the Tea Party movement as a legitimate grassroots protest movement.

ISSUE 8

Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period?

YES: John Steele Gordon, from *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Powers* (Harper Collins, 2004)

NO: Joyce Appleby, from *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (The Belknap Press, 2000)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Critically analyze the arguments supporting and opposing Hamilton's economic policies.
- Critically analyze the long-range effects of Hamilton's economic program on United States economic development in the nineteenth century.
- Critically analyze Joyce Appleby's argument that it was Jefferson's economic policies that liberated the American economy in the years from the 1790s through the 1840s.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Historian John Steele Gordon claims that Hamilton's policies for funding and assuming the debts of the confederation and state governments and for establishing a privately controlled Bank of the United States laid the foundation for the rich and powerful national economy Americans enjoy today.

NO: Joyce Appleby argues that Jefferson democratized Hamilton's accomplishments, dismantled the Federalist fiscal program, reduced taxes, and freed money and credit from national control.

Alexander Hamilton remains the most enigmatic, elusive, and highly criticized of the group we call "the founding fathers." When contrasted with

Jefferson, Hamilton comes off second best as arrogant, crude, and manipulative, an embezzler who was worst of all a "crypto-monarchist." Yet nationally syndicated conservative columnist George Will astutely observes: "There is an elegant memorial in Washington to Jefferson, but none to Hamilton. However, if you seek Hamilton's monument, look around. You are living in it. We honor Jefferson but live in Hamilton's country."

Hamilton grew up in very humble circumstances. Born out of wedlock in the West Indies in 1755, Hamilton was abandoned by his father at age 9, orphaned by the death of his mother at age 13, and left penniless. He and his older brother were assigned by the courts to live with a cousin who committed suicide less than a year after he had taken in the boys. In spite of such a volatile childhood that limited his formal schooling, Hamilton was a voracious reader who taught himself French and became skilled in mathematics and economics. As a 16-year-old, he was employed as a clerk in the firm of Beckman and Cruger where he performed important accounting and administrative duties. Hugh Knox, a Presbyterian minister, recognized Hamilton's talents and changed the young man's life forever when he collected funds to send him to the mainland for an education.

Hamilton was not only talented but also very ambitious. He arrived in the British North American colonies in 1773 as revolutionary fervor was boiling and worked his way up in the Continental Army. General Washington appointed Hamilton his chief aide-de-camp and promoted him to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He served with the general at key battles including the near disaster at Valley Forge.

Hamilton's military experiences with the financially starved Continental Army, along with his service as a delegate from New York in the Confederation Congress, turned him into a staunch nationalist. He attended the Annapolis convention in 1786 to discuss the problems of interstate commerce under the Articles of Confederation, but when so few delegates showed up, Hamilton introduced a resolution for a meeting at Philadelphia the following year.

At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Hamilton's proposal to model the new government after the British system, with lifetime appointments for the president, Supreme Court, and Senate met with strong hostility. His two fellow New York delegates were even opposed to the government supported by the majority of the delegates. "But Hamilton was instrumental in convincing a hostile New York Convention to support the Constitution." *The Federalist Papers* were published in book form and became the bible of interpreting the Constitution.

The highpoint of Hamilton's career was his appointment as President George Washington's secretary of the treasury, where his proposals for funding the new government, assuming the debts of the states, and establishing a Bank of the United States created a political furor that is still being debated by historians today.

After his resignation from Washington's cabinet in 1795, Hamilton's advice was sought by Washington, and he penned the president's famous farewell address. Though out of office, he dominated the cabinet of his opponent, President John Adams, but lost influence after his Federalist Party was thrown out of office. In the election of 1800, he supported Jefferson over Burr when a tie resulted in the electoral-college vote. Later, when Hamilton labeled Burr "a dangerous man who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government" and cost his adversary the gubernatorial election in New York in 1804, Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. Hamilton accepted and was mortally wounded on July 11, 1804. He died a day later, bidding farewell to his wife and children.

Was Hamilton an economic genius or was he overrated in terms of his influence of the future American economy? In the first essay, historian John Steele Gordon states that Hamilton's policies for funding and assuming the debts of the confederation and state governments, and for establishing a privately controlled Bank of the United States, laid the foundation for the rich and powerful national economy the nation enjoys today.

Not all of Hamilton's contemporaries agreed with his vision of America. His biggest challenge came in the 1790s from Thomas Jefferson, Washington's Secretary of State whose political values and economic views were diametrically opposed to the Secretary of the Treasury. Jefferson was a true Renaissance man who knew a little about everything. "Not a sprig of grass shoots uninteresting to me," he once wrote to his daughter. As a philosopher who spoke to posterity, he waxed eloquent in his letters about civil liberties, the rights of man, states' rights, strict construction of the Constitution, and the virtues of the agrarian way of life. A practical man, he was an architect of the nation's capital, the University of Virginia, and his own home. Visitors to his Monticello plantation are amazed by the elaborate pulley and drainage systems that he devised. A respected member of the Virginia aristocracy who owned about 10,000 acres and from 100 to 200 slaves, Jefferson ran his farm in a self-sufficient manner and carefully studied the efficiency of employing slave labor. When he traveled, he recorded everything he observed in detailed journals. The newest inventions—steam engines, thermometers, elevators—fascinated him.

Jefferson was also a keen political animal—author of the Declaration of Independence, Governor of Virginia during the Revolutionary War, and Ambassador to France during the Confederation government. Unlike Hamilton, Jefferson did not attend the Constitutional Convention of 1787 though he supported the new Constitution provided a bill of rights was added.

As Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson and his Virginia colleague James Madison opposed Hamilton's economic program. The Funding Act of 1790 allowed present holders of national securities to convert them into federal bonds at face value. The measure passed, but Jefferson was upset that the original holders were revolutionary war soldiers who sold them off at a fraction of their value and received no compensation. Jefferson agreed to allow the national government to assume the debts of the states when a deal was struck to locate the permanent capital of the United States at its present site along the Potomac River adjacent to his home state of Virginia. Jefferson and Madison also opposed funding a debt to back an issue of "bank notes" which could be lent to manufacturers and merchants in lieu of cash. The debt would be funded by imports and excise taxes. These notes were to be issued by a privately chartered Bank of the United States, an institution opposed by Jefferson because it favored the northern states over the southern ones and the merchant and manufacturing classes over the farmers, and because he found no authority for the Bank's creation within the constitution of the United States.

Considering the vitriolic fights over Hamilton's economic policies, Washington's foreign policy of neutrality, as well as the fiasco in the 1800 election that resulted in an electoral college tie, Jefferson's presidency was remarkable for the smooth transition in which the opposition party took power. As Professor Richard Hofstadter points out in *The Idea of Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (University of California Press, 1969), Jefferson's pragmatic "disposition dictated an initial strategy of conciliation toward the Federalists which led to a basic acceptance of the Hamiltonian fiscal system, including even the bank, to a patronage policy which Jefferson considered to be fair and compromising and hoped would appease moderate Federalists, and to an early attempt to pursue neutrality and to eschew aggravating signs of that Francophilia and Anglophobia with which the Federalists so obsessively and hyperbolically charged him." His first term was more successful than his second. He waged a winning war against the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean and took advantage of Napoleon's offer to purchase the Louisiana territory, thereby nearly doubling the size of the United States. His second term, however, was consumed with a failed embargo against Great Britain and France who were at war with one another.

In the NO selection, Joyce Appleby disagrees with Professors Richard Hofstadter, John Steele Gordon, and others who argue that Jefferson and other presidents (until Jackson) continued most of the policies laid out by Hamilton in the 1790s. She argues that Jefferson democratized Hamilton's accomplishments, dismantled the Federalist fiscal program, reduced taxes, and freed money and credit from national control. When the Bank of the United States' charter lapsed, individual state banks and private corporations lent money in promoting new industries and the building of the nation's infrastructure of roads, canals, and railroads.

YES

John Steele Gordon

The Hamiltonian Creation

The importance that the Washington administration, which took office on April 30, 1789, placed on dealing with the financial situation confronting the government under the new Constitution can be judged by the numbers. While the newly created State Department had five employees, the Treasury had forty.

The tasks before the Treasury were monumental. A tax system had to be created out of whole cloth and put in place. The debt left over from the Revolution had to be rationalized and funded. The customs had to be organized to collect the duties that would be the government's main source of revenue for more than a century. The public credit had to be established so that the federal government could borrow when necessary. A monetary system had to be implemented.

The last already existed, at least in theory, established by Congress under the Articles of Confederation. In what was to be his only positive contribution to the financial system of the United States, it had been devised by Thomas Jefferson.

[B]efore the Revolution, the merchants of the various colonies had kept their books in pounds, shillings, and pence, but the money in actual circulation was almost everything *but* pounds, shillings, and pence. The question of what new unit of account to adopt was nearly as complex, because the inhabitants of the various colonies "thought" in terms of so many different, often incommensurate units.

Robert Morris, who had done so much to keep the Revolution financially afloat, tried to bridge the differences by finding the lowest common divisor of the most often encountered monetary unit of each state. He calculated this to be 1,440th of a Spanish dollar. Jefferson thought this far too infinitesimal to be practical, and Morris agreed. He proposed that his unit be multiplied by one thousand and made equal to 25/36ths of a dollar. Jefferson argued instead for just using the dollar, already familiar throughout the United States, as the new monetary unit.

The origin of the word *dollar* lies in the German word for valley, *Thal*. In the fifteenth century major silver deposits had been discovered in Bohemia, in what is now the Czech Republic. In 1519 the owner of mines near the town of Joachimsthal, the Graf zu Passaun und Weisskirchen, began minting silver coins that weighed a Saxon ounce and were called thalers, literally "from the valley." These coins, new and pure, met with great acceptance from merchants, and other rulers in the Holy Roman Empire began to imitate them with their own coinage.

From *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power* by John Steele Gordon (HarperCollins, 2004). Copyright © 2004 by John Steele Gordon. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

The Holy Roman Emperor, the Hapsburg Charles V, also adopted the thaler as the standard for his own coinage in both his Austrian and Spanish lands and his new-won, silver-rich empire in the New World. The staggering amounts of gold and silver mined in Spanish America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (just between 1580 and 1626, more than eleven thousand tons of gold and silver were exported to Spain from the New World) made the thaler the standard unit of international trade for centuries. *Thaler* became *dollar* in the English language, much as *Thal*, centuries earlier, had become *dale* and *dell*. It also became the most common major coin in the British North American colonies.

Jefferson, in his "Notes on the Establishment of a Money Unit, and of a Coinage for the United States," advocated not only using the dollar but making smaller units decimal fractions of the dollar. Today this seems obvious. After all, every country in the world now has a decimal monetary system, and as Jefferson himself explained, "in all cases where we are free to choose between easy and difficult modes of operation, it is most rational to choose the easy." But Thomas Jefferson was the first to advocate such a system, and the United States, in 1786, was the first country in the world to adopt one.

Spanish dollars had often been clipped into halves, quarters, and eighths, called bits, to make small change (which is why they were often called "pieces of eight"). But Jefferson advocated coinage of a half dollar, a fifth, a tenth (for which he coined the word *dime*), a twentieth, and a hundredth of a dollar (for which he borrowed the word *cent* from Robert Morris's scheme). In 1785 Congress declared that the "monetary unit of the United States of America be one dollar." But the next year Congress, while adopting the cent, five-cent, dime, and fifty-cent coins advocated by Jefferson, decided to authorize a quarter-dollar coin rather than a twenty-cent piece.

The quarter is with us yet, now the last, distant echo of the old octal monetary system of colonial days. But other echoes held on for decades. The New York Stock Exchange still gave prices in eighths of a dollar as late as 1999. And the term *shilling* long remained in common use to mean twelve and a half cents, an eighth of a dollar, although there has never been a United States coin in that denomination. The east side of Broadway, in New York, where the less fashionable stores were located, was still called the "shilling side" as late as the 1850s, while the west side of the street was called the "dollar side."

One reason the term *shilling* held on so long, of course, was that American coinage was not adequate to the ever-growing demand for it and the old hodgepodge of foreign coins thus held on as well. The first United States coin, a copper cent bearing the brisk motto "Mind Your Business," was privately minted. The Philadelphia mint was established in 1792 but minted few coins in the early years for lack of metal with which to do so.

◆

Robert Morris, bent on making money, turned down Washington's offer to name him as secretary of the treasury in the new government (it was a bad decision—he ended up in debtors' prison). The president then turned to one of his aides-de-camp during the Revolution, Alexander Hamilton, only in his early thirties.

Hamilton was the only one of the Founding Fathers not to be born in what is now the United States. He was born in Nevis, one of Britain's less important Leeward Island possessions. He was also the only one—besides Benjamin Franklin, who had made a large fortune on his own and an even larger reputation—not to be born to affluence. Indeed, he grew up in poverty after his feckless father—who had never married his mother—deserted the family when Hamilton was only a boy.

Living in St. Croix, now part of the U.S. Virgin Islands but then a possession of Denmark, Hamilton went to work at a trading house owned by the New York merchants Nicholas Cruger and David Beekman, when he was eleven years old. Extraordinarily competent and ferociously ambitious, Hamilton was managing the place by the time he was in his mid-teens, quite literally growing up in a counting house. Thus, of all the Founding Fathers, only Franklin had so urban and commercial a background. Even John Adams, a lawyer by profession, considered his family farm in Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts, to be home, not Boston.

Cruger, recognizing Hamilton's talents, helped him come to New York in 1772 and to attend King's College, now Columbia University. After the Revolution he studied law and began practicing in New York City, where he married Elizabeth Schuyler, from one of New York's most prominent families. After the Revolution he wrote a series of newspaper articles and pamphlets outlining his ideas of what was needed to create an effective federal government. In 1784 he founded the Bank of New York, the first bank in that city and the second in the country.

He attended the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and worked tirelessly to get the document ratified, writing two-thirds of *The Federalist Papers*. When Robert Morris took himself out of consideration, Hamilton, whom Morris called "damned sharp," was more than happy to take the job of secretary of the treasury.

He was also one of the very few competent to do so. While Americans had already distinguished themselves in many fields of endeavor, they "were not well acquainted with the most abstruse science in the world [public finance], which they never had any necessity to study."

Hamilton, a deep student of economics, understood public finance thoroughly, a fact that he would make dazzlingly clear in the next few years. But like so many of the Founding Fathers, he was also a deep student of human nature and knew that there was no more powerful motivator in the human universe than self-interest. He sought to establish a system that would both channel the individual pursuit of self-interest into developing the American economy and protect that economy from the follies that untrammeled self-interest always leads to.

Even before the Treasury Department was created on September 2, 1789, and Hamilton was confirmed by the Senate as its first secretary on September 11, Congress had passed a tax bill to give the new government the funds it needed to pay its bills. There was no argument that the main source of income was to be the tariff, but there was lengthy debate over what imports should be taxed and at what rate. Pennsylvania had had a high tariff under the old Articles to protect its nascent iron industry and wanted it maintained. The southern states, importers of iron products such as nails and hinges, wanted a low tariff on iron goods or none at all. New England rum distillers wanted a low tariff on its imports of molasses. Whiskey manufacturers in Pennsylvania and elsewhere wanted a high tariff on molasses, to stifle their main competition.

Congress finally passed the Tariff and Tonnage Acts (the latter imposed a duty of 6 cents a ton on American ships entering U.S. ports and 50 cents a ton on foreign vessels) in the summer of 1789. But, second only to slavery, the tariff would be the most contentious issue in Congress for the next hundred years. Pierce Butler of South Carolina even issued the first secession threat before the Tariff Act of 1789 made it through Congress.

With funding in place, Hamilton's most pressing problem was to deal with the federal debt. The Constitution commanded that the new federal government should assume the debts of the old one, but how that should be done was a fiercely debated question. Much of the debt had fallen into the hands of speculators who had bought it for as little as 10 percent of its face value.

On January 14, 1790, Hamilton submitted to Congress his first "Report on the Public Credit." It called for redeeming the old debt on generous terms and issuing new bonds to pay for it, backed by the revenue from the tariff. The report became public knowledge in New York City, the temporary capital, immediately, but news of it spread only slowly to other parts of the country, and New York speculators were able to snap up large quantities of the old debt at prices far below what Hamilton proposed redeeming it for.

Many were outraged that speculators should profit while those who had taken the debt at far higher prices during the Revolution should not see their money again. James Madison argued that only the original holders should have their paper redeemed at the full price and the speculators get only what they had paid for it. But this was hopelessly impractical. For one thing, determining who was the original holder would have often been impossible.

Even more important, such a move would have greatly impaired the credit of the government in the future. If the government could decide to whom along the chain of holders it owed past debts, people would be more reluctant to take future debt, and the price in terms of the interest rate demanded, therefore, would be higher. And Hamilton was anxious to establish a secure and well-funded national debt, modeled on that of Great Britain and for precisely the purposes that Great Britain had used its debt.

Many of those in the new government, unversed in public finance, did not grasp the power of a national debt, properly funded and serviced, to add to a nation's prosperity. But Hamilton grasped it fully. One of the greatest problems facing the American economy at the start of the 1790s was the lack of liquid capital, capital available for investment. Hamilton wanted to use the national debt to create a larger and more flexible money supply. Banks holding government bonds could issue banknotes backed by them. And government bonds could serve as collateral for bank loans, multiplying the available capital. He also knew they would attract still more capital from Europe.

Hamilton's program eventually passed Congress, although not without a great deal of rhetoric. Hamilton's father-in-law, a senator from New York in the new Congress, was a holder of $60,000 worth of government securities he hoped would be redeemed by Hamilton's program. It was said the opposition to the program made his hair stand "on end as if the Indians had fired at him."

Hamilton also wanted the federal government to assume the debts that had been incurred by the various states in fighting the Revolution. His main reason for doing so was to help cement the Union. Most of the state debt was held by wealthy citizens of those states. If they had a large part of their assets in federal bonds, instead of state bonds, they would be that much more interested in seeing that the Union as a whole prospered.

Those states, mostly northern, that still had substantial debt were, of course, all for Hamilton's proposal. Those that had paid off their debts were just as naturally against it. Jefferson and Madison—Virginia had paid off its debts—were adamantly opposed and had enough votes to defeat the measure. Hamilton offered a deal.

If enough votes were switched to pass his assumption bill, he would see that the new capital was located in the South. To assure Pennsylvania's cooperation, the capital would be moved from New York to Philadelphia for ten years while the new one was built. Jefferson and Madison agreed. Hamilton's program passed and was signed into law by President Washington, who was delighted at the prospect of the new capital being located on his beloved Potomac River.

The program was an immediate success, and the new bonds sold out within a few weeks. When it was clear that the revenue stream from the tariff was more than adequate to service the new debt, the bonds became sought after in Europe. In 1789 the United States had been a financial basket case, its obligations unsalable, its ability to borrow nil. By 1794 it had the highest credit rating in Europe, and some of its bonds were selling at 10 percent over par.

Talleyrand, the future French foreign minister, then in the United States to escape the Terror, explained why. The bonds, he said, were "safe and free from reverses. They have been funded in such a sound manner and the prosperity of this country is growing so rapidly that there can be no doubt of their solvency."

Talleyrand might have added that the willingness of the new federal government to take on the debt of the old, rather than repudiate it for short-term fiscal reasons or political advantage, also helped powerfully to gain the trust of investors. The ability of the federal government to borrow huge sums at affordable rates in times of emergency—such as during the Civil War and the Great Depression—has been an immense national asset. In large measure, we owe that ability to Alexander Hamilton's policies that were put in place at the dawn of the Republic. It is no small legacy.

To be sure, Hamilton, and the United States, had the good fortune to have a major European war break out in 1793, after Louis XVI was guillotined. This proved a bonanza for American foreign trade and for American shipping, which was protected from privateers by the country's neutrality. European demand for American foodstuffs and raw materials greatly increased, and the federal government's tariff revenues increased proportionately. In 1790 the United States exported $19,666,000 worth of goods, while imports not reexported amounted to $22,461,000. By 1807 exports were $48,700,000 and imports $78,856,000. Government revenues that year were well over five times what they had been seventeen years earlier.

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The other major part of Hamilton's fiscal policy was the establishment of a central bank, to be called the Bank of the United States and modeled on the Bank of England.

Hamilton expected a central bank to carry out three functions. First, it would act as a depository for government funds and facilitate the transfer of them from one part of the country to another. This was a major consideration in the primitive conditions of the young United States. Second, it would be a source of loans to the federal government and to other banks. And third, it would regulate the money supply by disciplining state-chartered banks.

The money supply was a critical problem at the time. Specie—gold and silver coins—was in very short supply. In 1790 there were only three state-chartered banks empowered to issue paper money, including Hamilton's Bank of New York, but these notes had only local circulation. Hamilton reasoned that if the Bank of the United States accepted these local notes at par, other banks would too, greatly increasing the area in which they would circulate. And if the BUS refused the notes of a particular bank, because of irregularities or excess money creation, other banks would refuse them as well, helping to keep the state banks on the straight and narrow.

Hamilton had learned not to like the idea of the government itself issuing paper money, knowing that in times of need the government would be unable to resist the temptation to solve its money problems by simply printing it. Certainly the Continental Congress had shown no restraint during the Revolution, but at least it had had the excuse of no alternative. And the history of paper money since Hamilton's day has shown him to be correct. Without exception, wherever politicians have possessed the power to print money, they have abused it, at great cost to the economic health of the country in question.

Hamilton proposed a bank with a capitalization of $10 million. That was a very large sum when one considers that the three state banks in existence had a combined capitalization of only $2 million. The government would hold 20 percent of the stock of the bank and have 20 percent of the seats on the board. The secretary of the treasury would have the right to inspect its books at any time. But the rest of the bank's stock would be privately held.

"To attach full confidence to an institution of this nature," Hamilton wrote in his "Report on a National Bank," delivered to Congress on December 14, 1790, "it appears to be an essential ingredient in its structure, that it shall be under a *private* not a *public* direction—under the guidance of *individual interest,* not of *public policy;* which would be supposed to be, and, in certain emergencies, under a feeble or too sanguine administration, would really be, liable to being too much influenced by *public necessity*."

The bill passed Congress with little trouble, both houses splitting along sectional lines. Only one congressman from states north of Maryland voted against it and only three congressmen from states south of Maryland voted for it. Hamilton thought the deal was done.

But he had not counted on Thomas Jefferson, by now secretary of state, and James Madison, who then sat in the House of Representatives. Although Jefferson had personally enjoyed to the hilt the manifold pleasures of Paris while he had served as minister to Louis XVI under the old Articles of Confederation, nonetheless he had a deep political aversion to cities and to the commerce that thrives in them.

Nothing symbolized the vulgar, urban moneygrubbing he so despised as banks. "I have ever been the enemy of banks . . ." he wrote to John Adams in old age. "My zeal against those institutions was so warm and open at the establishment of the Bank of the U.S. that I was derided as a Maniac by the tribe of bank-mongers, who were seeking to filch from the public their swindling, and barren gains."

Jefferson, born one of the richest men in the American colonies—on his father's death he inherited more than five thousand acres of land and three hundred slaves—spent money all his life with a lordly disdain for whether he actually had any to spend. He died, as a result, deeply in debt, bankrupt in all but name. And regardless of his own aristocratic lifestyle, his vision of the future of America was a land of self-sufficient yeoman farmers, a rural utopia that had never really existed and would be utterly at odds with the American economy as it actually developed in the industrial age then just coming into being.

Jefferson and his allies Madison and Edmund Randolph, the attorney general, fought Hamilton's bank tooth and nail. They wrote opinions for President Washington saying that the bank was unconstitutional. Their arguments revolved around the so-called necessary and proper clause of the Constitution, giving Congress the power to pass laws "necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers."

As the Constitution nowhere explicitly grants Congress the power to establish a bank, they argued, only if one were absolutely necessary could Congress do so. This "strict construction" of the Constitution has been part of the warp and woof of American politics ever since, although even Jefferson admitted that it appealed mostly to those out of power. The fact that the Constitution nowhere mentions the acquisition of land from a foreign state did not stop Jefferson, as president, from snatching the Louisiana Purchase when the opportunity presented itself.

Hamilton countered with a doctrine of "implied powers." He argued that if the federal government were to deal successfully with its enumerated duties, it must be supreme in deciding how to do so. "Little less than a prohibitory clause," he wrote to Washington, "can destroy the strong presumptions which result from the general aspect of the government. Nothing but demonstration should exclude the idea that the power exists." Further, he asserted that Congress had the right to decide what means were necessary and proper. "The national government like every other," he wrote, "must judge in the first instance of the proper exercise of its powers." Washington, his doubts quieted, signed the bill.

The sale of stock was a resounding success, as investors expected that the bank would prove very profitable, which it was. It also functioned exactly as Hamilton thought it would. The three state banks in existence in 1790 became twenty-nine by the turn of the century, and the United States enjoyed a more reliable money supply than most nations in Europe.

With the success of the Bank of the United States stock offering, the nascent securities markets in New York and Philadelphia had their first bull markets, in bank stocks. Philadelphia, the leading financial market in the country at that time, thanks to the location there of the headquarters of the Bank of the United States, established a real stock exchange in 1792. In New York a group of twenty-one individual brokers and three firms signed an agreement—called the Buttonwood Agreement because it was, at least according to tradition, signed beneath a buttonwood tree (today more commonly called a sycamore) outside 68 Wall Street. In it they pledged "ourselves to each other, that we will not buy or sell from this day for any person whatsoever any kind of Public Stock, at a less rate than one quarter per cent Commission on the specie value, and that we will give preference to each other in our negotiations."

The new group formed by the brokers was far more a combination in restraint of trade and price-fixing scheme than a formal organization, but it proved to be a precursor of what today is called the New York Stock Exchange.

A speculative bubble arose in New York, centered on the stock of the Bank of New York. Rumors abounded that it would be bought by the new Bank of the United States and converted to its New York branch. Numerous other banks were announced and their stock, or, often, rights to buy the stock when offered, was snapped up. The Tammany Bank announced a stock offering of 4,000 shares and received subscriptions for no fewer than 21,740 shares.

An unscrupulous speculator named William Duer was at the center of this frenzy in bank stocks. He had worked, briefly, for the Treasury, but had resigned rather than obey the rule Hamilton had put in place forbidding Treasury officials from speculating in Treasury securities. Hamilton was appalled by what was happening on Wall street. "'Tis time," he wrote on March 2, 1792, "there should be a line of separation between honest Men & knaves, between respectable Stockholders and dealers in the funds, and mere unprincipled Gamblers."

It didn't take long for Duer's complex schemes to fall apart, and he was clapped into debtors prison, from which he would not emerge alive. Panic swept Wall street for the first time, and the next day twenty-five failures were reported in New York's still tiny financial community, including one of the mighty Livingston clan.

Jefferson was delighted with this turn of events. "At length," he wrote a friend, "our paper bubble is burst. The failure of Duer in New York soon brought on others, and these still more, like nine pins knocking down one another." Jefferson, who loved to calculate things, estimated the total losses at $5 million, which he thought was about the total value of all New York real estate at the time. Thus, Jefferson gleefully wrote, the panic was the same as though some natural calamity had destroyed the city.

In fact, the situation was not nearly that dire, especially as Hamilton moved swiftly to stabilize the market and ensure that the panic did not bring down basically sound institutions. He ordered the Treasury to buy its own securities to support the market, and he added further liquidity by allowing customs duties—ordinarily payable only in specie or Bank of the United States banknotes—to be paid with notes maturing in forty-five days.

The system Hamilton had envisioned and put in place over increasing opposition from Thomas Jefferson and his political allies worked exactly as Hamilton had intended. Several speculators were wiped out, but they had been playing the game with their eyes open and had no one to blame but themselves. The nascent financial institutions, however, survived. "No calamity truly *public* can happen," Hamilton wrote, "while these institutions remain sound." The panic soon passed and most brokers were able to get back on their feet quickly, thanks to Hamilton's swift action.

Unfortunately, Thomas Jefferson was a better politician than Hamilton, and a far better hater. The success of the Bank of the United States and its obvious institutional utility for both the economy and the smooth running of the government did not cause him to change his mind at all about banks. He loathed them all. The party forming around Thomas Jefferson would seize the reins of power in the election of 1800 and would not lose them for more than a generation. In that time, they would destroy Hamilton's financial regulatory system and would replace it with nothing.

As a result, the American economy, while it would grow at an astonishing rate, would be the most volatile in the Western world, subject to an unending cycle of boom and bust whose amplitude far exceeded the normal ups and downs of the business cycle. American monetary authorities would not—indeed could not—intervene decisively to abort a market panic before it spiraled out of control for another 195 years.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the most brilliant men who has ever lived, was psychologically unable to incorporate the need for a mechanism to regulate the emerging banking system or, indeed, banks at all, into his political philosophy. His legion of admirers, most of them far less intelligent than he, followed his philosophy for generations as the country and the world changed beyond recognition. As a direct result, economic disaster would be visited on the United States roughly every twenty years for more than a century.

Joyce Appleby **NO**

Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans

Enterprise

The elaboration of a commercial society took place in the United States under circumstances that forged a powerful link between political and economic freedom. Nations have been described as "imagined communities," but the United States became more of an imagined enterprise. In 1789, a long period of warfare, uncertainty, and depression came to an end. Americans had paid dearly for their Revolution, but at last the crushing burden of debt had been lifted and prosperity returned. In the ruminations of those born after Independence we get glimpses of the bedrock under America's culture of capitalism: national goals cemented for personal ambitions to an imagined national enterprise that vindicated democracy in a world of monarchies.

The establishment of the new government under the Constitution coincided with an economic pick-up: the funding of the Revolutionary debt executed by Alexander Hamilton created a new pool of capital. Once elected president, Jefferson worked swiftly to democratize Hamilton's accomplishment, dismantling the Federalist fiscal program, reducing taxes, and cutting the size of the civil service. Letting the charter of Hamilton's Bank of the United States lapse freed money and credit from national control, leaving individual states and private corporations to supply the country with competing banks. For the next half-century the states took the lead in promoting economic developments; building an infrastructure of banks, roads, and canals; and offering bounties, licenses, and charters for promising and unpromising economic ventures alike. Unlike the Federalists, who still fondly hoped for the supervision of the wise at the center, the state's economic initiatives formed a vortex for popular politics.

Had the Federalists passed on their power to like-minded men in 1800, the course of economic development in the United States would have been guided by government officials attentive to the nation's major investors. The intertwined social and economic prescriptions of a national elite would have informed policies for the country as a whole. Bankers and lenders would have controlled the flow of credit. The pace of settlement would have been slower as land passed first to large speculators, as it did in the Federalist era, and then to the farming family. Instead, a new political

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movement explicitly hostile to the exercise of government authority triumphed, and the fiscal stability achieved in Washington's administration redounded to the benefit of the very people intent upon liberating themselves from the restraint of their social superiors. Women, blacks, servants, and the indigent continued to be constrained by law, but no elite group in America would emerge with the power to close off the access of ordinary white men to economic resources.

If the Constitution provided the foundation of America's liberal society, the free enterprise economy raised its scaffolding. After Independence a new economic order took shape, the old one all but disappearing after the break with Great Britain. Without imperial control over land and credit, thousands of bootstrap operators could act on their plans with little but high hopes for their financing. Jefferson's commitment to decentralizing governmental power dispersed opportunity to rural areas—areas where the water power of brooks and streams was cheap and plentiful. The gradual emancipation of slaves in the Northern states redirected capital from long-term investments in labor. International trade throve because of the favored role of the United States as a neutral carrier for France and England, again at war.

The national domain, acquired at the end of the Revolutionary War, acted as a constant stimulus to economic development: prodding states to improve access, luring skilled farmers onto fertile land, and adding thousands of professional opportunities in the western communities that sprouted across the frontier. The Constitution added governmental muscle to the thrust of American families against the indigenous populations in the trans-Appalachian West. Native American tribes fought fiercely to preserve their ancestral lands, but they now faced a united government with a peacetime army to put in the field against them. It would not be amiss to conclude that the yearning for economic independence among ordinary white Americans sealed the fate of dependency for Native Americans.

The commercialization and democratization of the United States worked interactively to spread revolutionary changes, bolstered by a prosperity that promoted the construction of roads, the extension of postal services, and the founding of newspapers in country towns. The United States became a safe place for European investors just when the wars of the French Revolution put a premium on American foodstuffs and neutral shippers. British demand for cotton for its textile mills coincided with the invention of the cotton gin, revitalizing Southern agriculture, which had been particularly hard hit by the Revolutionary War. Within a decade, merchants, freed from British restrictions, sent ships up the California coast, across the Pacific, and into the Indian Ocean. The lifting of colonial restrictions on manufacturing unloosed Yankee ingenuity. Workers sought out the hundreds of little factories that sprang up along the waterways being tapped for power in the East. Steam engines and water power topped up this heady mixture of novel enterprises, accelerating the pace of economic development and adding manufacturing to the nation's expanding agricultural base.

Hundreds of people-many of them ingenious youths-responded to the incentives to produce something for the market. Farmers were as eager for innovations as city dwellers, a taste that astounded Europeans, accustomed to the backward ways of rural folk. While lots of aspiring entrepreneurs failed to rise above the poverty of their farming families, enough succeeded to attract the startled attention of those expecting resistance to change from country men and women. With few exceptions, entrepreneurs came from those outside the circle of old wealth. This meant that manufacturing profits accrued to a new middle class distinguished by its ingenuity and work ethic. When these unknown innovators succeeded, their success lent credibility to claims that political freedom would inspire economic progress. So strong was the imaginative linking of political and economic liberty into a single cause of prosperity that every economic downturn jeopardized the reputation of democratic governance. "Panics" and "busts," when they came, turned quickly into political crises because of the association of the two freedoms, raising in new guises old questions about distributive justice.

With the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, the short-staple cotton grown all over the South became commercially profitable, triggering a Southern expansion that more than matched the grain frontier of the North. Simple to imitate—to Eli Whitney's great chagrin—cotton gins popped up all over the South; land that had been marginal assumed new value as soil for producing the fiber that was transforming textile-making. More profitable than any other undertaking in the United States, slave-worked cotton plantations reaped the benefits of an industrial revolution in Great Britain. The ease of marketing this valuable crop in turn promoted diverging concepts of work and wealth-getting between Northern and Southern states.

The planters who benefited from their advantageous situation in a world market created a way of life strikingly different from that of their slaves and the slaveless white majority in their midst. They became the great consumers of the American economy, using spare slave labor to build handsome plantation houses, where a gracious style of hospitality set the South's elite off from the penurious Southern whites and blacks as well as the vast majority of Northerners. Their economic success promoted specialization as Southern demand for foodstuffs, lumber products, and manufactured goods stimulated economic development elsewhere in the United States. . . .

In spite of all this activity, the country was economically primitive by any present-day standard. Until the end of the 1820s, only those living on the nation's rivers could be sure of long-distance transportation, and then only in one direction. Roads did not go very far inland and were impassable in rainy months. In 1790, close to 90 percent of the population was engaged in farming, much of it of the most basic kind. Most people lived in very simple houses, often of their own making. Enslaved families were crowded into barracks-like cabins. Olive Cleaveland Clarke, who grew up in western Massachusetts, remembered seeing her first carpets when she was seventeen, and she had to visit Northampton to make her acquaintance with a piano.

Life expectancy was not high: age forty-five for both white women and men who lived to be twenty. For African Americans the picture was much bleaker. Life expectancy dropped as low as thirty-five, with black infant mortality twice that of white babies. The remarkably low mortality rates of the eighteenth century had taken a turn for the worse in the 1790s, and continued high for the next hundred years as the new killers—tuberculosis, yellow fever, and cholera—took their terrible toll. White women in 1800 bore an average of seven children; enslaved black women nine, with each delivery a threat to their health. Such high fertility made for a youthful nation; 58 percent of America's population was under twenty in 1820 as compared to 44 percent in 1899 and 18 percent in 1940!

How long people worked also made life hard by today's standards. Ten hours a day, six days a week was the norm. Wages, good by European standards, were far from generous when the cost of living was factored in—food, clothing and shelter took 80 percent or more of a worker's wages. Average unskilled laborers got seventy-five cents a day in the early part of the century, and frontier farmers paid workers even less for the back-breaking work of clearing the land. Slaves hired out got comparable wages. Laborers in Pittsburgh could earn two dollars a day, although in New York City not even 1 percent of the population earned the equivalent of $7,000 in 1980 dollars.

But people take their bearings from what has gone before them, not future, unimaginable attainments. And what Americans in the early republic experienced was the steady reworking of the material environment—acres brought under the plow, steam engines applied in unfamiliar ways, rivers and streams dammed and sluiced to power mills, canals, and roads cut through the wilderness. The market's opportunities came in new guises to new participants. The digest of patents that the first commissioner put together reveals the full sweep of commercial imagination. Scores of inventors patented devices in metallurgy, chemical processes, hydraulic implements, machine tools, and household conveniences. And every idea that found material expression in novel artifacts proved just how wrong were the old-timers who invoked the past to predict the future. Reflecting on this, Chauncey Jerome said he could not "now believe that there will ever be in the same space of future time so many improvements and inventions as those of the past half century—one of the most important in the history of the world." Novelty, always experienced as a break with the expectation of how things were going to be, became the most constant feature in the lives of Jerome's generation.

Not everyone favored these changes. The manufacturers' use of water power in rural areas provoked contention over fishing rights along the rivers. Manufacturing and farming families disputed the justice of paying taxes for schools. Religious groups like the Hicksite Quakers viewed banks, agricultural societies, missions, chemistry, and the Erie Canal as signs of an unwholesome desertion of true piety. Pockets of opposition to commercial intrusion into traditional ways of work and life like these remained throughout the country, but most conflicts broke out among economic competitors when new development made salient how diverse interests would be affected by specific changes.

After Jefferson's election, the westward movement of families away from eastern centers of authority and refinement, a development that Federalists had dreaded, accelerated. When land offices opened on the frontier, land sales soared. In 1800 some 67,000 acres passed into private hands; 497,939 acres did so in 1801. By 1815 annual sales hit one and half million dollars, more than doubling four years later. American geographic mobility astounded foreign visitors, who wrote home about the forests of masts in American harbors and the undulating train of wagons snaking their way to Pittsburgh, from whence they could raft down the Ohio. To these visitors, American society offered an ever-changing visual landscape as people moved, roads were graded, land was cleared, and buildings were raised in a reconfiguration of the material environment that went on without rest.

Eager for farms of their own, poor white Americans pushed west in a never-ending stream, with confidence in their right to the land. Skirmishes and set battles continued throughout the settlement of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, for land acquisitions on the other side of the mountains had to be bought, negotiated for, or wrested from the Indian tribes. The adjective "hostile" became permanently linked to the word "Indians," as newspapers reported their tenacious fight to save their ancestral hunting grounds. John Jay Smith reported that migrants from Pennsylvania pushed west to Ohio even though there were vast tracts of land remaining in the center of their state, still dotted with Indian occupants. Two-thirds of the landless white men of Virginia moved West in the 1790s. Americans learned early to move towards opportunity, laying the basis for an enduring national trait. Between 1800 and 1820, the trans-Appalachian population grew from a third of a million to more than two million. Never again would so large a portion of the nation live in new settlements. . . .

As long as western farmers were dependent upon rivers and wagons for transportation, there wasn't a single crop that could pay for its freight back east and very few that could make returns on the river trip south to New Orleans. This left the frontier with persistent gluts. When farmers had too much corn, they fed it to their hogs and produced a hog glut. Distilling their grain into whisky became so attractive that soon they had a whiskey glut. But the steamboat came to their rescue. Robert Fulton's *Clermont* crossed the Hudson in 1807, the same year John Stevens took his steamboat on a successful sea voyage, but it was Nicholas Roosevelt who caused a sensation with the first steamboat on the Mississippi in 1812, in part because Mrs. Roosevelt gave birth before they reached New Orleans. After the steamboats demonstrated that they could stem the rough currents of the western rivers, they found their natural medium. By 1818 there were twenty of them plying the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi, and by 1829, two hundred. With adequate transport, whiskey, rum, and other distilled spirits became the third most important domestic product, representing 10 percent of the nation's entire industrial output.

After the War of 1812, Congress gave its veterans 16o-acre bounties in land lying between the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Most veterans sold their patents to land speculators in eastern cities, but the traffic created new opportunities because the land title had to be recorded in Illinois. . . .

The remarkable crop-yield differentials between the Ohio country and new England caused problems at both ends. The ease of growing crops on western lands undercut the marketing prospects for farmers in the East, which had begun to brighten. The turnpike mania of the 1790s had integrated the villages of New England into the commerce of the sea coast towns, and farmers began to sell their livestock and dairy products to the cities, which were doubling in size with every passing decade. Those established on the best lands or those near cities could get by, but others who had pushed onto marginal lands in the preceding generation were hard-pressed to compete. Raising merino sheep and Morgan horses gave northern New Englanders a brief respite, but soon Ohio graziers were wintering over sheep for a dollar when it cost two in Vermont. In the end New England's best export was its farming families, the intrepid Yankees who pushed into the West on sleighs, on foot, and in wagons, carrying with them their farming lore, their work habits, and their religious preferences. . . .

Southern Planters would have grown wealthy in the early national period whether the North had expanded or contracted, remained rural or become urban, developed a worldwide commerce or continued to ply the waters of the Atlantic. Events elsewhere shaped their economic destiny. Great Britain's revolutionary technology for manufacturing fabric triggered an unprecedented demand for raw cotton. Rarely in history has one spot on the globe become favored above all others, but such was the case of the American South in the first half of the nineteenth century, as it had been earlier for the sugar cane-growing islands of the Caribbean and would become later for countries rich in oil deposits. Subject to booms and bust, particularly during the rapacious scramble for land when each territory opened up, the cotton economy brought great wealth to the nation as a whole, its marketing and shipping adding measurably to the prosperity of the North Atlantic states. Against the measurable wealth that slave labor created must be placed the immeasurable loss to the South of cultural capital in skills not learned and lessons in adaptability postponed. Even less tangible was the enormous drain of the region's moral resources spent defending a social system that others found increasingly indefensible.

William Grayson painted a graphic picture of the impact of the cotton boom in his hometown of Beaufort, South Carolina. Recalling the beautiful orchards of a neighbor, he detailed their bounty "in all good things." "Oranges were plentiful, figs without number, peaches and pomegranates in profusion," he chronicled with evident nostalgia, warming to the climax of his story:

> The cultivation of a great staple like cotton or tobacco starves everything else. The farmer curtails and neglects all crops. He buys from distant places not only the simplest manufactured article like his brooms and buckets, but farm productions, grain, meat, hay, butter, all of which he could make at home . . . Under this system the country that might be the most abundant in the world is the least plentiful. The beef is lean, the poultry poor, the hogs a peculiar breed with long snouts and gaunt bodies . . .

Speculation in cotton futures became almost as popular as gambling. Money chased after the acres and field hands that would bring high returns. E. S. Thomas, the nephew of the famous printer and bibliophile Isaiah Thomas, like many another Yankee, went South to find his fortune. Opening a book store in Charleston, Thomas made several trips to England, returning from his fourth voyage in 1803 with a printed catalogue of 50,000 volumes in every branch of literature, arts, and sciences. His venture coincided with South Carolina's provocative resumption of the foreign slave trade, which had lapsed during the Revolution. "The news had not been five hours in the city," Thomas recalled, "before two large *British Guineamen* that had been laying off . . . port for several days, expecting it, came up to town; and from that day my business began to decline."

Cotton expansion absorbed almost all the investment capital and entrepreneurial initiative of Southerners who, like their Northern counterparts, built canals and turnpikes and speculated in bank stock. Yet the nexus of issues clustering around the use of slave labor blunted the stimulus of high profits, for slaves produced more than labor; they also stored and reproduced wealth. In New England, when teenage children started to strike out on their own, parents began to save for their old age. While Northern savings went up, aging Southerners looked to the seemingly inexorable rise in the value of their slaves to provide for their old age. Small farmers throughout the South welcomed internal improvements and celebrated progress, but the rigidities in the slave economy repeatedly frustrated their efforts while its benefits forestalled the day when Southerners would have to respond to changing markets and new technologies.

The biggest losers in this new era of Southern expansion were African Americans, whose opportunities for manumission practically disappeared once the profits from cotton raised the value of their labor. The price of slaves more than doubled within a decade, tempting the planters of Virginia and Maryland, where agriculture was declining, to sell their stock in human beings. Having preened themselves on the price of their slaves, plantation masters had to take but a small step psychologically to realize that sum in a sale. The domestic slave trade represented the one entrepreneurial activity in the South. Enslaved families lived with the constant threat of being sold down the river, often separately. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans were wrenched from kith and kin and force-marched to Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama, carrying the institution of slavery deeper into the continent. By 1820 over a million African Americans had moved beyond the boundaries of the original slave states to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. . . .

The principal citizens of American cities were merchants or lawyers—the former to make the money, the latter to adjudicate the suits that money provoked. Unlike colonial seaports, which had depended upon the Atlantic either as a source of fish or as an avenue to the Caribbean and Europe, cities of the new United States would grow wealthy in the nineteenth century by capturing the trade of an expanding hinterland. Philadelphia, New York, and the upstart city of Baltimore all drew on the ever-expanding production of their own catch basin of farmlands to sustain their growth. In 1790 only 202,000 people out of a population close to 4 million lived in towns of more than 2,500; by 1825 that number had risen to 1 million in a population of 11,252,000. With growth rates of over 50 percent per decade, America's cities sparkled with new building, making investments in real estate extremely appealing. New York's population soon outstripped all other cities, with Philadelphia, Boston, Charleston, Baltimore, and New Orleans among the top six. The parallel growth of America's rural areas meant that not until 1840 did the proportion of those living in towns over 2,500 exceed the level in 1690!

While much of the wealth of the seaport merchants went into urban real estate, by the 1820s even America's most conservative investors recognized the attractiveness of western lands and internal improvements. Many other holders of urban wealth needed the help of an expert to make their choices. The time was ripe for the development of investment trusts to sweep up the savings of the wealthy, not to mention the urban middle class of clerks and professional men. Nathaniel Bowditch, Boston's polymath scientist, merchant, and mathematician, initiated the first extensive trust business at the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Co. By 1830 there were a variety of companies dealing in fire insurance and annuities as well as simple savings in Philadelphia and New York as well as Boston. In this, as in so much else, a new age was dawning, for earlier neither the statistical nor the moral underpinnings for such enterprises existed. Where calculating the likelihood of accidents once abraded the sensibilities of those who stoically accepted the hand of God in human affairs, insuring against possible loss increasingly appeared to make good common business sense, insinuating market rationality into popular thinking.

The wealthy of the old colonial seaports tended to be unimaginative investors, but Moses Brown of Providence and the Lowells and Lawrences of Boston proved to be stellar exceptions. One of four brothers of a prominent colonial merchant family, Brown brought the secrets of the famous English cotton manufacturing system to America in the person of Samuel Slater who reproduced Arkwright's cotton-spinning machinery for him. After visiting an English factory, enthusiasm for textiles also spurred on Francis Cabot Lowell, a member of the new generation. Returning to Boston he got some fifty families to join him in forming the Boston Manufacturing Company. Capitalized at $400,000, Lowell's group built the world's first integrated textile factory at Waltham, Massachusetts in 1814.

The Boston Associates went on to establish entirely new towns at Lawrence and Lowell and another factory at Manchester, New Hampshire. While most American textile mills as late as the 1830s hired fewer than twenty hands, the Associates' employee rolls ballooned to four hundred, six hundred, and eight hundred, the lion's share of jobs going to women and children. Advertising throughout the agricultural communities of Northern New England, Boston's pioneering industrialists drew young, unmarried women from their family farms in Vermont and New Hampshire to planned communities of dormitory living, strict discipline, and female conviviality. Their employment policies form a major chapter in the history of women in the United States, for they were the first manufacturers to turn to female labor in the early years of industrialization, taking advantage of women's dexterity in operating the new machinery and the cheapness of their labor. In the traditional rural economy of this region, the wages of children and women had been low—about a quarter of what men were paid, rising to half for factory jobs. Along with textiles, Northerners began manufacturing boots, shoes, hats, paper, and woolens, all industries using female labor. Like cheap water power, low wages underwrote hundreds of new ventures, many of them failures.

The success of the Lowell Associates helped turn Massachusetts into the most thoroughly industrialized section of the United States, second only to Great Britain in the world. Manufacturers in Springfield, Philadelphia, and Providence proved to be equally assiduous in exploiting the domestic market for textiles. Within the first twelve years, the Bostonians' dividends began to exceed the amount of their original pooled investment. Flush with profits, the partners put money into mining, canal companies, and railroads. The first railroad in Massachusetts, built in 1825, ran between Lowell and Boston. Despite the boldness of their production system and their social engineering, these Boston entrepreneurs followed the conservative financial strategies of an elite. They did not maximize profits so much as they secured the growth of their wealth. Achieving their goal of establishing fortunes, individual family members were free to pursue careers in philanthropy, education, and reform.

The truly unexpected development of the early nineteenth century came from the boot-strap manufacturing ventures that proliferated in the rural North, independent of the investment plans of the nation's wealthy. Textile factories and railroads—even cargoes for Atlantic voyages—took a considerable amount of capital to finance, but artisans-turned-manufacturers scraped by with very little start-up capital. Merchants of the seaport cities, many of them members of prominent colonial families, sought safe investments in real estate, but mechanics, tradesmen, and farmers with little or no capital turned their brains and hands to making something new.

In Newark, Moses Combs, a master shoemaker and tanner, got local farmers to make shoes during their winter fallow seasons. A natural merchandiser, Combs introduced Newark shoes to both the New York City and Southern markets in the 1790s. Thirty years later, one-seventh of the Newark labor force devoted itself to shoemaking at a time when applications of stream-driven machinery were still two decades away. The substantial productivity growth of the early nineteenth century came largely, experts say, from changes "in organizations, methods, and designs which did not require much in the way of capital deepening or dramatically new capital equipment."

Shoemaking was an interesting example of an ancient craft transformed under the expansion of national marketing. . . .

Two factors democratized opportunity in manufacturing in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The men with the most money in America—those who might have been able to monopolize winning projects—moved slowly into industrial ventures. Second, the energy for much manufacturing came from creeks and streams, tying production to rural millsites that were readily accessible to farmers and their sons. Zachariah Allen, a well-connected Providence inventor, fashioned a little homily from the location of American mills: steam aggregates workers and promotes vice while water power disperses them with benefit to their morals. The sudden appearance of factories even found expression in jest. Olive Cleaveland Clarke remembered that a tour of a new theological seminary prompted her brother to remark that here they "would manufacture ministers."

Independence brought the industrial competition that the British had long feared. Scottish merchant John Melish concluded after several tours of the country that Britain would no longer be the manufacturer for America, because "the seeds of manufacture, are sown throughout the country, never to be rooted out, and, so far from the *interior* being dependent upon the *cities* as heretofor, the cities will, in all probability, become dependent on it." American inventiveness ran through a gamut of goods. William Austin Burt, a Massachusetts farm boy and self-taught mathematician, invented the typewriter and a solar compass. Benjamin Thompson published plans for a drip coffeemaker. Abel Porter brought prosperity to his hometown of Waterbury, Connecticut when he set up a rolling mill to produce millions of buttons from gilt and brass to bone, ivory, and prunella buttons for women's clothes and lawyers' gowns. The kaleidoscope, invented by an Englishman, was fabricated in such rude style and great quantities in the United States that it became a plaything for children.

Peter Cooper was a veritable invention machine. Apprenticed to a coachmaker in Manhattan in 1807, his grandmother gave him the use of an outbuilding for his tinkering so he'd stay at home at night. There in her garage he invented a machine for mortising the hubs of carriages. After going to work for a shearer, he redesigned the shears, selling them as fast as he could produce them. He went on to manufacture glue, glass, and chalk and design locomotives. In his autobiography, Cooper described how his stint as a young father, taking care of their baby while his wife fixed dinner, led to his inventing a mechanism to rock the cradle, keep off the flies, and make music. As his editor astutely commented, "Mr. Cooper's mind is not one of great invention, but a mind of great contrivance." Americans liked contrivances, as the brisk sale of Cooper's patents and licenses confirmed. . . .

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century the country was awash with individual ventures like Deborah Power Ball's linoleum factory and Arial Bragg's shoemaking shop. Indeed, the United States had far more plans for personal enterprise than savings to finance them. Families eager for a farm on the frontier lacked the down payment; artisans with the know-how to go out on their own needed start-up funds. Communities had blueprints for draining swamps, improving roads, and cutting canals, but no capital to put their plans into operation. America's wealthy tended to sink their money into overseas trade and real estate; foreign investors preferred government bonds; modest savers most likely lent to relatives. Almost everyone wanted credit, from the humblest householder trenching on the grocer's faith to the many associations of land speculators staking out future metropolises.

State legislators, open to voter pressure and eager to give their constituents competitive advantages, fell in line with the demands for more credit and approved new bank charters with amazing swiftness. There were three banks in the United States in 1790, twenty-eight in 1800, 102 in 1810, and 327 in 1820. In Rhode Island the number of banks increased from one for every 3,357 People in 1810 to one for every 1,681 a decade later. Each city's second group of bank organizers represented younger lawyers, aspiring clerks, small manufacturers, and lesser merchants who formed banks to create capital rather than conserve it. Control of banks enabled them to tap into the savings of the community. When Thomas, the New England bookseller in Charleston, was denied full credit from a local bank, he succeeded in getting a charter for the Planters and Mechanics Bank, gloating many years later about his capacity to get even. A group of Philadelphia merchants who felt that they had been treated unfairly by existing banks started a new institution specifically directed to men of smaller means, pricing their shares at one hundred dollars, considerably below the norm of four hundred dollars. Sometimes only half of the cost of shares was demanded. In New Hampshire, opening up the Federalists' banking preserve became the Jeffersonians' principal campaign issue. With the uniting of small pools of capital in new banks, the Jeffersonians argued, "the industrious citizens might share with the more wealthy in the benefits" of banking.

Far from being the rich man's preserve, banking offered hundreds of local savers an investment possibility. Stalwarts of the old order like Boston's Nathan Appleton and New York's Isaac Bronson decried the leveling tendency in easy money policies, but ordinary people resoundingly approved. Soon legislators were yielding to popular pressure for corporations for surfacing roads, building canals, and starting insurance companies. Some states passed general incorporation acts. Even in those states that did not, entry into the banking business got easier and easier in the years before 1819. Bitterly opposed initially, the already-established discovered, to their chagrin, that no amount of banking wisdom could stay the hand of the legislators, who had the power to grant new charters. New Hampshire, a small state undistinguished for wealth in any category, had ten banks in six different towns by 1813, four of them in Portsmouth, a town or less than six thousand. Competition, although only grudgingly accepted by bankers themselves, greatly facilitated the expansion of business in the first decades of the nineteenth century. New banks also had the means of compelling cooperation. If a bank refused to receive their notes, they could call for specie payment for the other bank's notes that passed through normal business transactions into their possession.

During buoyant periods when bank notes gave market participants the wherewithal to put in effect their plans, the extra notes were a kind of borrowing against the future, the deployment of faith in lieu of savings. As long as people had high hopes, they accepted bank notes gladly, but any contraction of credit exposed the fragility of the system. Cautious creditors could call in their debts or demand specie payment for the notes they held. American banking practices encouraged inflation, and inflation primed the pump of economic activity, arousing conservatives' fears on both counts. In personal reminiscences banks figure as the principal source for currency—welcome, unregulated, and amazingly good at flooding the nation with notes.

Since bank notes were often presented for payment far from the point of issuance, shopkeepers had no way to determine their value. Eager to make a sale, they usually erred on the side of liberality. The slightest hint of value sufficed for circulation. Ichabod Washburn described the trepidation he felt passing his master's "uncurrent five dollar Ohio Bank Bill" during a trip home through central Massachusetts. Washburn was astonished when a tavern keeper accepted the bill and gave him $4.50 change. He carefully avoided the man on the return trip. John Neal, reminiscing from the safe shores of old age about his work in a haberdashery shop, described learning how to "lie-cheat-swear-and pass counterfeit money-if occasionally required." Indeed, he recalled that he and his fellow merchants would never turn down a sale because payment was offered in counterfeit bills. Estimating that 10 percent of the bills circulating during his business career in the first decade of the nineteenth century were worthless, Neal conveyed to a more law-abiding age the merchant's settled maxim: "if you buy the devil, the sooner you sell him, the better." . . .

Most businessmen operated with small savings sweated from their own labor and larger borrowings, usually from friends or relatives. A punishing process of adaptation lay behind the dynamic economic development of this period. Commercial growth was rapid, unregulated, and marked by sudden reversals of good times and bad. Neither farmers, clerks, professional men, nor manufacturers escaped these unexpected downturns. Debt acted as a mighty leveler in this ebullient society, and it figured in almost every autobiography. Anson Jones had to declare bankruptcy when he was sued for his board as a medical student. Samuel Foot went to prison for his brother's gambling debts. Workers lost back wages when their employers went broke. James Finley lost his frontier farm "by going security, or appearance-bail" for one of his neighbors. Because the court was forty miles away in Chillicothe, he did not go to lift his bonds, so when his neighbor decamped after a judgment went against him, Finley had to pay the debt. . . .

The capacity of industrial capitalism to concentrate economic power and forge a new elite could not be foreseen. Americans, especially in the North, viewed commercial expansion as the moral and material handmaiden to their liberal society. For many years after the Revolution, whatever class antagonisms existed pointed back to the residual traces of conflicts about privilege. Conservatives then were not proto-industrialists, but defenders of obsolete cultural traditions. Competition, far from being associated with grinding the face of the poor, stirred up hopes of advancement in ordinary men and women, who vigorously rejected the aristocratic notion of natural inequality. Such a conviction was reinforced by men like John Jacob Astor, who introduced profit-sharing to his men, relying in his struggle with the French for control of Hudson's Bay trade upon the entrepreneurial initiatives of his employees.

With economic pursuits that had previously been regulated now open to all comers, the economy could be construed as voluntary, free, even natural. The facts seemed to confirm the most potent ideological legacy of this era: the idea of a natural harmony of interests mediated by natural economic laws. Of course the national market required a legal framework, but memories of the contribution of the Constitution and John Marshall's decisions receded quickly from public consciousness in ensuing decades, making it easy to think of economic activities as operating without government help. The less heard from conservatives about public order and preserving continuity, the less conspicuous became society's role in facilitating economic development, even though the federal government continued to sell land at administered prices and to protect interstate commerce while states conferred licenses, franchises, and bounties on speculative development, sometimes with democratic abandon. In both cases, public authority appeared merely the handmaiden of private enterprise, helping along a natural process.

Retrospectively we can see that capitalist growth led to the creative destruction, to use Joseph Schumpeter's term, of stable ways of life. The elaboration of a national market depended upon many, many young men leaving the place of their birth and trying their hands at new careers. The range and sweep of their entrepreneurial talents, defined best as the ability to take on novel economic undertakings as personal ventures, suggests the widespread willingness to be uprooted, to embark on an uncharted course of action, to take risks with one's resources—above all the resource of one's youth. Those who did so turned themselves into agents of change. Both in personal terms for the young men seeking early adult independence and in the political terms of the Jeffersonian-Federalist debate, the freedom to innovate, to aspire, to seek a range of individual satisfactions in the market acquired a good reputation. To fail to mark this feature of the early republic is to obscure a very important element in American history: the creation of a popular, entrepreneurial culture that permeated all aspects of American society. Commerce appeared not as a divisive force to ordinary Americans in the early decades of the nineteenth century, but rather as the carrier of progress for an energetic, disciplined, self-reliant people.

As John Adams observed to Josiah Quincy, "there is no people on earth so ambitious as the people of America. The reason is," he went on to explain, "because the lowest can aspire as freely as the highest." No quality has so marked the character of American social life as individual aspiration, turning the United States into a magnet for immigrants and a wellspring of hope for the adventurous. If working for others alienates men and women from their handicraft and talents, imagining one's own future path—what came to be called careers in the early nineteenth century—grounded men and women in their own fantasies. Personal planning weakened the ties to community, but opened up the possibility of affinities based on moral and intellectual commitments. An ideology that linked economic and political freedom also fused the goals of the nation and its citizens. The less Southerners could identify with these convictions the less they shared in the emerging national spirit, which interpreted prosperity as a vindication of American independence.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Did Alexander Hamilton's Policies Lay the Foundation for America's Economic Growth in the Early National Period?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. Discuss and critically analyze the major components of Hamilton's economic program as Secretary of the Treasury. These include:
   a. Tariff and tonnage acts;
   b. The assumption and funding program of old debts;
   c. Assumption of state debts;
   d. The establishment and role of the Bank of the United States.
2. Critically analyze those economic programs that both Federalist and Republican–Democrats agreed upon. Where did they disagree? What arguments did both sides employ? Explain the differences between strict and loose construction of the Constitution. Use the constitutional arguments employed by Hamilton and Jefferson to support or oppose the creation of the Bank of the United States.
3. Historian John Steele Gordon favors Hamilton's views on the economy of 1790s. Joyce Appleby is much more sympathetic to the arguments of Hamilton's critics—Jefferson and Madison. Compare and contrast their opposing interpretations and give your own opinion on which side you support.
4. Critically analyze Professor Joyce Appleby's argument that it was Jefferson's economic policies which liberated the capital to create the new industries and infrastructure of America's roads, canals, and railroads that opened up the American economy in the years from the 1790s through the 1840s.
5. Critically analyze the following statement by historian E. James Ferguson: "Since interest on investing capital in the United States was higher than the interest payments required to support the debt, the new capital created by funding, if properly invested, would bring a net increase in national income. Moreover, since the securities were held by propertied men, the gains from an increase in security values would go to persons in a position to use them not for consumption but for investment." (For bibliography on the debt question see Ferguson, "The Nationalists of 1781–1783 and the Economic Interpretation of the Constitution," *Journal of American History*, 56 (September, 1969); John Steele Gordon, *Hamilton's Blessing: the Extraordinary Life and Times of Our National Debt* (Walker, 1997), and the critical essay by Carey Roberts, "Alexander Hamilton and the 1790s Economy: A Reappraisal," in Douglas Ambrose et al., *The*

Many Faces of Alexander Hamilton: The Life and Legacy of America's Most Elusive Founding Father (New York University Press, 2006).

Is There Common Ground?

Most historians view the election of 1800 as a critical election because it allowed the peaceful transition of power from the Federalists to the Jeffersonian Republicans without the intervention of the military or the courts to change the results. This is not to say there was no passion or vitriolic rhetoric or a real fear on the part of some Federalists that the country was going to hell. But the fundamental belief in representative government, elections and the willingness to accept losing and give up power supported all the emotions surrounding the election of 1800.

How responsible was the economic system that Hamilton put in place for the successful development of the American economy in the nineteenth century. Gordon and most others argue that Hamilton's policy set the tone for America's economic development through the Civil War. Do you think this development would have been different, as Appleby argues, if the Federalists instead of the Jeffersonian Republicans maintained power to 1824? In other words, what impact does politics have over economics?

Additional Resources

The most up-to-date summaries and bibliographies on this issue can be found in Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford, 1993) which is pro-Hamilton; Gordon Wood, *Empire and Liberty* (Oxford, 2009) which is pro-Jefferson; and Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (Norton, 2005) which is massive in its coverage of political parties.

There are numerous biographies of Hamilton. The most comprehensive is Ron Chernow's prize winning *Alexander Hamilton* (Penguin Press, 2004). But see also Forrest McDonald's *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography* (Norton, 1979), a concise discussion in support of Hamilton's economic policies; Clinton Rossiter's older but neglected *Alexander Hamilton and the Constitution* (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964) which discusses the many Hamiltons; and, finally, 30 pages from Thomas K. McGraw, "The Strategic Vision of Alexander Hamilton," *The American Scholar* 63/1 (Winter, 1994), 31–57 which says more than most biographies of the man.

There are numerous biographies of Jefferson. The two best scholarly and readable are Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (Oxford, 1970) and Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx* (Random House, Vintage, 1996, 1998).

Joyce Appleby has written a short biography of Thomas Jefferson for the American Presidents series (Times Books, 2003). Besides *Inheriting the Revolution* (Belknap, 2000) see *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York University, 1984); her important collection of articles in *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Belknap, 1992), and her comprehensive and comparative study of *The*

Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism (Norton, 2010) which should be compared with Gordon's, *An Empire of Wealth* (Harper Collins, 2004). Another work, Drew R. McCoy's *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1981), sees Jefferson looking backward to 1776 and views the Louisiana Purchase as an attempt to restore an agrarian America.

ISSUE 9

Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?

YES: Robert V. Remini, from *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (Viking Penguin, 2001)

NO: Alfred A. Cave, from "Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830," *The Historian* (Winter 2003)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the status of Native Americans in Jacksonian America.
- Discuss the concept of citizenship rights as applied to Native Americans in the 1820s and 1830s.
- Identify and explain the significance of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.
- Analyze the concept of nationhood as applied to both Anglo-Americans and Native Americans.
- Understand the nature and limitations of humanitarian reform when confronted with minority rights.
- Offer an appraisal of the consequences of land ownership in the age of Jackson.
- Determine whether President Jackson's actions amount to an abuse of his presidential powers.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Robert V. Remini insists that President Andrew Jackson demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of Native Americans by proposing a voluntary program that would remove the Five Civilized Tribes west of the Mississippi River where they could avoid dangerous conflict with white settlers and preserve their heritage and culture.

NO: Alfred A. Cave accuses Andrew Jackson of abusing his power as president by failing to adhere to the letter of the Indian Removal Act by transforming a voluntary program into a coercive one and by ignoring the provisions in his own removal treaties that promised protection to the various southern tribes.

Andrew Jackson's election to the presidency in 1828 ushered in an era marked by a growing demand for political and economic opportunities for the "common man." As the "people's president," Jackson embodied the democratic ideal in the United States, thereby inheriting the mantle of leadership for the Jeffersonian tradition. In his role as chief executive, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans symbolized a strong philosophical attachment to the elimination of impediments to voting (at least for adult white males), the creation of opportunities for the common man to participate directly in government through office holding, and the destruction of vestiges of economic elitism that served only the rich, well-born, and able. In addition, Jackson was a nationalist who defended states' rights as long as those rights did not threaten the sanctity of the Union.

At the heart of Jackson's philosophy was a commitment to "the people"; however, his definition of "the people" was not particularly inclusive. For example, as a Tennessee slave owner, Jackson clearly did not believe that African American slaves deserved to participate fully in his democratic world. Similarly, as a renowned veteran of the United States government's campaign to remove Native Americans from the path of white settlement, Jackson's attitudes toward the Indians were ambiguous, at best. Like most Democrats of his time, Andrew Jackson was no social reformer, and his brand of democracy was for whites only.

The rise of Jacksonian democracy occurred during a period of dramatic territorial growth in the years immediately following the War of 1812. A new state joined the Union each year between 1816 and 1821. As the populations of these states increased, white citizens demanded that their governments, at both the state and national levels, do something about the Native American tribes in their midst who held claims to land in these regions by virtue of previous treaties. (In fact, Andrew Jackson had negotiated several of these treaties. Some included provisions for the members of the southern tribes to remain on their lands in preparation for obtaining U.S. citizenship.) Most white settlers preferred the removal of Native Americans to western territories where, presumably, they could live unencumbered forever. The result was the "Trail of Tears," the brutal forced migration of Native Americans in the 1830s that resulted in the loss of thousands of lives.

One of the interesting sidelights of the federal government's efforts to develop a policy with regard to Native American tribes residing in individual states revolved around the questions of tribal sovereignty versus states' rights. The Cherokee, in particular, proved troublesome in this regard. Since 1791, the United States had recognized the Cherokee as a nation in a number of treaties, and in 1827 delegates of this tribe initiated action to draft a constitution that would more formally recognize this status. In doing so, Native Americans confronted a barrier in the United States Constitution that prohibited the establishment of a new state in a pre-existing state without the latter's approval. Georgia, where most of the Cherokee lived, opposed the plan and called for the removal of all Native Americans. At this point, Cherokee leaders sought an injunction to prevent the state of Georgia from enforcing its laws within Native American territory. The case reached the United States Supreme Court, which, in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), expressed sympathy for the Native Americans' position but denied that the Cherokee held the status of a foreign nation. The following year, in the midst of efforts to remove all Native Americans from the southeastern United States, Chief Justice John Marshall, in *Worcester v. Georgia,* ruled that the state had no right to extend sovereignty over the Cherokee within its borders. Andrew Jackson, unimpressed by Marshall's opinion, is alleged to have expressed his contempt with the retort: "Justice Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it."

Major studies of the Indian removal policy in Jacksonian America include Angie Debo's classic *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1940); Allen Guttman, *States Rights and Indian Removal: The Cherokee Nation vs. the State of Georgia* (D. C. Heath, 1965); Mary E. Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830–1860* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (University of Tennessee Press, 1970); Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (University of Nebraska Press, 1975); and John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (Doubleday, 1988). Perhaps the best analysis of Jackson's sometimes ambiguous attitude toward Native Americans is Michael Paul Rogin's *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1975). The most favorable treatment of Jackson's Indian policy can be found in three works by Francis Paul Prucha: *Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1780–1834* (Harvard University Press, 1962); "Andrew Jackson's Indian Policy: A Reassessment," *Journal of American History* 56 (December 1969): 527–539; and *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984). A brief analysis that corresponds to Cave's conclusions is available in Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (Hill & Wang, 1993).

According to historian Wilcomb Washburn, "No individual is more closely identified with . . . the policy of removal of the Indians east of the Mississippi to lands west of the river—than President Andrew Jackson." Although most historians are in agreement with the details of Jackson's Indian removal policy, there is significant debate with respect to his motivation. Did Jackson's racist antipathy to the Indians pave the way for the "Trail of Tears"? Or did he support this policy out of a humanitarian desire to protect Native Americans from the impending wrath of white settlers and their state governments who refused to negotiate with the southern tribes as sovereign nations?

In the YES selection, Robert Remini, Jackson's foremost biographer, claims that the criticism of Old Hickory's Indian policy is unfair. He argues that Jackson firmly believed that removal was the only policy that would prevent the decimation of these Native Americans. Remini concludes that Jackson attempted to deal as fairly as possible with the representatives of the Choctaws, Cherokees, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles, known then as the "Five Civilized Tribes."

In the NO selection, Albert A. Cave condemns President Jackson for abusing his presidential powers by breaking the commitments made to Native Americans under the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Privately, says Cave, Jackson favored a program of coerced removal of the Indians to lands west of the Mississippi River even while publicly announcing his support for voluntary removal. Behind the scenes, Jackson supported his representatives who bribed corrupt tribal officials to support migration, removed Indian agents from office who opposed removal, and ignored acts of harassment carried out against Native Americans who sought to remain on their traditional tribal lands.

YES **Robert V. Remini**

Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars

The Indian Removal Act

From the very start of his administration, President Andrew Jackson knew exactly what he wanted to do. He said he would institute a policy of "reform retrenchment and economy." Convinced the government had become corrupt over the past decade, he promised to cleanse the "Aegean stables," inaugurate a system of rotation in distributing the patronage (his enemies called it a "spoils system"), and practice fiscal conservatism to pay off the national debt. A democrat to the core, he believed his program would "protect liberty," "restore virtue in government," and ensure "obedience to the popular will." The people are sovereign, he declared. Their will must be obeyed. "The majority is to govern."

In his inaugural address, given on a bright and sunny March 4,1829, President Jackson stood before a cheering crowd estimated at twenty thousand and addressed these goals. He also raised the issue of the Indian. But his remarks masked his true intent. "It will be my sincere and constant desire," he declared, "to observe toward the Indian tribes within our limits a just and liberal policy, and to give that humane and considerate attention to their rights and their wants which is consistent with the habits of our Government and the feelings of our people." Anyone who knew him knew what that meant: removal of the remaining southern tribes beyond the Mississippi River.

Indeed he planned to undertake at long last the task he felt should have been completed years before, namely to involve Congress in what had been the sole action of the President to relocate the Indians in the west, where, he said, "they will always be free from the mercenary influence of White men, and undisturbed by the local authority of the states." Once the relocation was completed, the federal government could then "exercise a parental control over their interests and possibly perpetuate their race."

To ensure proper assistance in his efforts at removal, Jackson appointed his longtime friend and biographer John H. Eaton to serve as secretary of war, knowing that Eaton would execute his directions with all the loyalty and dedication with which he had performed so many other tasks for him in the

From *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (Viking Penguin, 2001), pp. 226–232, 237–238, 279–281. Copyright © 2001 by Robert V. Remini. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

past. In addition he appointed John M. Branch, a Georgian totally committed to removal, as attorney general. Such a combination of Jackson, Eaton, and Branch virtually guaranteed the speedy relocation of the southern tribes. But the President's main task involved persuading Congress to join his efforts and thereby provide additional legal and moral authority to his plan.

Jackson was anxious to start the process as soon as possible, because events were already developing that could escalate into a dangerous confrontation between the government and the state of Georgia. On December 20, 1828, approximately a month after Jackson's overwhelming election as President (and perhaps because of it), the Georgia legislature, infuriated over the Cherokee presumption in declaring its complete sovereignty after adopting a constitution modeled on the U.S. Constitution, decreed that all Indian residents within the state's boundary lines would fall under its jurisdiction after six months. Once this happened, serious trouble would surely follow. The legislature also acted because it had lost patience with the federal government for its failure to keep the promise it made in 1802 to extinguish Indian land titles within Georgia.

In view of this action and the likelihood that Alabama and Mississippi would follow suit, Jackson dispatched two Tennessee generals, John Coffee and William Carroll, to visit the Creeks and Cherokees and try to persuade them to remove voluntarily. They were instructed to inform the tribes that the President agreed with Georgia's action. Tell them, Jackson directed, that "the President is of opinion that the only mode left for the Indians to escape the effects of such enactments, and consequences more destructive . . . is, *for them to emigrate*. . . . He is sincerely anxious . . . to save these people, and relieve the States." Describe to them "the fine and fertile and abundant country" in the west where the federal government "could and *would* protect them fully in the possession of the soil, and their right of self government." There they will grow "to be our equals in privileges, civil and religious." But if they refuse to remove "they must necessarily entail destruction upon their race."

Obviously Jackson's concern over the likely extinction of Native Americans had grown stronger during the past few years. It behooved him therefore to convince the tribes to remove if they wished to "perpetuate their race." But their possible extinction never dominated his thinking. National security remained his prime concern.

It is also true that in all his dealings with Native Americans he showed genuine feelings of concern for their welfare, particularly the poor among them, and their rights as members of their particular tribes—provided their welfare and rights did not collide with those of the United States. His paternalism was appreciated by many chiefs who regarded him as their friend. They knew he had taken an Indian orphan into his home and had raised him as his son. They also knew that he anticipated Indians' becoming full-fledged citizens of the United States once they adopted the habits of white men. Given the greed of whites for Indian territory and their insatiable demands that would only accelerate in the coming years, and given the fact that the two races could not and would not "intermingle" or live side by side, Jackson felt he had no choice but to insist on removal as the only means of preventing conflict and

Indian annihilation. As "hard and cruel," as the policy was, wrote one contemporary a short while later, it "is now universally felt to have been as kind as it was necessary." Indeed many historians today agree with that conclusion.

Which is not to exonerate Sharp Knife of the horrors that followed. Still, to properly understand him and why he behaved as he did, it is necessary to reemphasize that he never intended or imagined the horror that accompanied removal and that he acted out of a fierce nationalism and an overwhelming concern for the nation's security and unity. Quite frankly, Jackson was obsessed over national security, which is quite understandable considering his experiences over the years with the British and Spanish and their involvement with hostile southern tribes.

It is true that he could be a fire-breathing and ruthless opponent if crossed or contradicted. Like most Americans at the time, he was a racist (not that he had the faintest idea what that meant), and he held an assortment of wrongheaded prejudices about Native Americans. But he was not a madman intent on genocide. Nor was he intent on the wholesale punishment of Indian tribes for their alleged past "misconduct." Removal was meant to prevent annihilation, not cause it.

Carroll and Coffee followed Jackson's instructions to the letter. But they did not have his skill in a face-to-face encounter and the chiefs of both tribes absolutely refused to grant the President's request. This was their land; their fathers were buried in it; it was their home. They had no connection with the Arkansas Territory and had no desire to visit it. Not only would they refuse to emigrate, they told the commissioners, but they would counsel other tribes against emigration.

The resistance of the Indians and what had become mounting opposition by many church groups to any attempt by the government to relocate the southern tribes convinced Jackson that a major political problem was developing that could easily spin out of control. He had to take immediate executive action. So, as a first step, he ordered the army to run off all white intruders in Indian lands and if necessary destroy their cabins and fields. Next he assigned Thomas L. McKenney to undertake the task of molding public opinion in favor of removal. McKenney had served as superintendent of Indian trade and had become the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, beginning in 1824. He was hailed as a humanitarian who cared personally and deeply about Native Americans. And although he had supported Adams's reelection, more important, he favored removal. He also recognized that whites, from the beginning of their arrival in North America, had pushed the Indians westward and degraded their cultures until many eastern tribes had vanished. Furthermore, he appreciated the fact that Indians readily acquired the worst vices of the white race. If they were ever to make real progress toward civilization and legal equality with other Americans, they must be removed. Such was his thinking. He therefore proved to be a most effective advocate among church groups in getting them to understand that removal was best for the red people.

Jackson also cautioned key southern leaders against any action that might jeopardize the administration's new policy and generate northern opposition. Then he replaced a number of Indian agents with reliable loyalists whose commitment to removal was above question. When he took office there were twenty such agents and thirty-six subagents. Over the next two years he removed ten agents and nineteen subagents.

The urgency to bring about removal as quickly as possible increased with the discovery of gold in northeastern Georgia in the summer of 1829, bringing with it an avalanche of white squatters into Cherokee territory. And although the invasion brought boisterous demands from church groups to expel the intruders, led by Jeremiah Evarts, the administration saw it as additional proof that the whites were about to overwhelm the Indians in their eastern territory.

"Overwhelm" is hardly the word. The Cherokees were being inundated. And they cried out to their Great Father to protect them. "There are hundreds of whitemen searching and digging for gold within the limits of the nation," they wrote. ". . . The number of these intruders has been variously stated from one to two thousand . . . which we cannot but consider as depriving us of property for which the faith of the Gov't is pledged for our protection. . . . We humbly request that you will consider the subject, as soon as the pressure of business will admit, and if possible grant the wishes of our people."

Not only were Americans invading Indian territory, but the annuities owed to the tribes were frequently handed over by agents to white creditors to pay for outstanding debts. When Jackson heard that the agent for the Creeks had "paid out large sums in discharge of judgements recovered by the white citizens of Alabama," he immediately instructed the secretary of war to investigate the "impropriety" of this action and submit a report. Control of money owed the tribes, he protested, was being taken away from them without their knowledge or consent.

All of the more cordial—that is, nonviolent—relations between the two races that had been developing since the end of the Indian wars over ten years earlier now seemed close to collapsing. "Our white brothers on each side of us appear to have lost all the good feelings which formerly existed," complained several Creek chiefs. "All appear to have turned their hands to crush us." They have no regard for us or our rights as guaranteed by your treaties.

By this time, whites were more brazen and determined to take whatever Indian land was still available within settled states, and they became extremely adept at justifying their actions. A short time later, several white settlers insisted that they had moved into tribal lands with the consent of the agent and the permission of the Indians themselves. They said they had settled in the Cherokee Nation "and pitched their crops for the year." They further declared that they "will not now permit, at this season of the year, their families to be turned out of doors, and their wives and children deprived of the means of subsistence." Not "without making the manly resistance of husbands and fathers in defence of every thing sacred and dear." They had a right to settle in the Nation, they protested, and they expected the state to enforce their right.

One "old and feeble" chief wrote to his Great Father and advised him of the "dreadful consequences" if these conditions persisted. "Your white sons and daughters are moving into my country in abundance and they are spoiling my lands and taking possession of the Red peoples improvements. . . . And your soldiers have refused to prevent it." Your white children "are bringing whiskey and opening drinking houses . . . they steal our property and make false accounts against us [and then] they sue us in your state courts for what we know nothing of." And what has been the result? "My Red children . . . have been compelled to resort to there guns." When that happens "the whites have collected themselves in bodies and hunted up . . . and shot them as if . . . they had been so many wild dogs." "All I want is peace," the old chief begged. Only you my Great Father can help. "With every Respect I have the honor to be your unfortunate old brother."

This was the situation Jackson faced when he became President, and it kept getting worse over the next several years. The collision of the two peoples in the southeast had become increasingly dangerous. The worst in white culture seemed to be destroying what was left of Indian life and civilization. He had to do something. So, as his final action in inaugurating the new Indian policy, he prepared to go to Congress and request appropriate legislation to end the collision, the intrusion, the killing, and the debasement of Indian culture and "save the remaining tribes from extinction." In December 1829, when the two houses reconvened, he formally presented his proposal and provided specific details. Without doubt he fully intended to make Indian removal his administration's first piece of major legislation.

Among the Jackson papers there is a draft of his first annual message in the President's hand. In it he set down his thinking about foreign affairs, rotation, the tariff, internal improvements, the public debt, the national bank, and the Indians. The Native Americans constituted the final topic he dealt with, but the document breaks off just before he reached a conclusion. What he wrote out was a recapitulation of present conditions, particularly how the government had tried to civilize the tribes and encourage them to abandon "their wandering ways." All to no avail, he said. "It will not answer to encourage them to the idea of exclusive self government. It is impracticable." No people can form a government or social compact "until education and intelligence was first introduced." True, each tribe has a few educated and well-informed men, but the great body of southern Indians "are erratic in their habits, and wanting in those endowments, which are suited to a people who would direct themselves and under it be happy and prosperous." And while we have tried to be solicitous and caring in our treatment of them, we have told them that "it cannot be conceded to them to continue their efforts at independence within the limits of any of the states."

With these harsh words the document ends. But the draft message was subsequently turned over to advisers, including Martin Van Buren, Andrew Jackson Donelson, William B. Lewis, Amos Kendall, and James A. Hamilton, the son of Alexander Hamilton. Together they produced a final version that was delivered to Congress after it reconvened on December 7,1829, and read aloud by a clerk. It was written in a flat, somber and prosaic style, quite unlike Jackson's unique and forceful form of utterance.

It starts off by describing the current situation and what the President had recently done to correct it. These southern tribes, he said, are surrounded by whites who are destroying the resources the Indians depend on for livelihood and which will therefore doom them to "weakness and decay." Look at what happened to the Mohegans, the Narragansetts, and the Delawares, he continued. They are gone, extinct. And the same fate "is fast overtaking the Choctaw, the Cherokee, and the Creek. . . . Humanity and national honor demand that every effort should be made to avert so great a calamity." It is too late to wonder whether it was just to have included them within the territorial bounds of the United States. That step cannot be retraced. A state cannot be dismembered by Congress without its consent nor restricted in the exercise of its constitutional powers. You are now asked whether it is indeed possible to do something for the Indians that is consistent with the rights of the states and "actuated by feelings of justice and a regard for our national honor . . . to preserve their much-injured race."

As a matter of fact, something can be done. "I suggest for your consideration" the propriety of setting apart an ample area west of the Mississippi, outside the limits of any state or territory now formed, to be guaranteed to the Indian tribes, each tribe having distinct control over the portion of land assigned to it. There they can be Indians, not cultural white men; there they can enjoy their own governments subject to no interference from the United States except when necessary to preserve peace on the frontier and between the several tribes; there they can learn the "arts of civilization" so that the race will be perpetuated and serve as a reminder of the "humanity and justice of this Government."

The emigration should be voluntary, the President declared, for it would be "as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers and seek a home in a distant land." They should be "distinctly informed" that if they choose to remain where they are within the limits of the states, then "they must be subject to their laws." But if they stay it is surely visionary to expect protection of their claims to land on which they have never dwelt nor made improvements "merely because they have seen them from the mountains or passed them in the chase." By submitting to state law if they stay and receiving protection in their persons and property like other citizens, "they will ere long become merged in the mass of our population." . . .

Actually the Indian Removal Act did not remove the Indians at all. What it did was empower the President to exchange unorganized public land in the trans-Mississippi west for land held by the Indians in the east. In addition it gave to the Indians who moved perpetual title to the new land and compensation for improvements they had made on the old. The federal government would assume all the costs involved in the removal and provide Indians with "such aid and assistance as may be necessary for their support and subsistence for the first year after their removal." Finally the act authorized an appropriation of $500,000 to carry out these provisions.

This monumental event in American history brought the entire government into the process of expelling the southern Indians from their homeland. Heretofore the early Presidents—many of whom were founding fathers of the Republic—removed Indians by executive initiative. What Jackson did was force the Congress to face up to the Indian issue and address it in the only way possible. And what it did at his direction was harsh, arrogant, racist—and inevitable. There was no way the American people would continue to allow the presence of the tribes in the fertile hills and valleys that they coveted. Sooner or later, white culture and life would engulf them.

The Indian Removal Act did not order the removal of the Indians, even though that was a foregone conclusion once the talks actually began about exchanging land. And, as far as Jackson was concerned, the Indians could refuse to remove and stay where they were; but if they stayed, they had to recognize that they were subject to state law and jurisdiction. No longer could they live under their own laws and practices. Henceforth the laws and practices would be white laws and white practices. But knowing Indians as he did, he understood that few could live under state jurisdiction. It was a hateful alternative. It therefore made sense for them to resettle in the west. That way they could preserve their Indian heritage and way of life.

Unfortunately the President's noble desire to give the Indians a free choice between staying and removing, one devoid of coercion, was disregarded by land-greedy state and federal officials, who practiced fraud and deception to enrich themselves and their friends at the expense of the native tribes. The removal process sullied virtually everyone involved in it.

Where Jackson is particularly culpable is in his insistence on speed and economy in reaching a decision with the several tribes. He wanted action immediately. He lacked patience, and by his pressure to move things along quickly he caused unspeakable cruelties to innocent people who deserved better from a nation that prided itself on its commitment to justice and equality. Removal could not be speeded up; it could not happen overnight. It would take months and years to properly transport and settle people from the country of their birth to a place they knew nothing about.

And $500,000 would not begin to cover the cost of removal. It actually took tens of millions of dollars to complete the process. Jackson wanted a quick ending to the Indian problem, and he achieved it. In his eight years in office some seventy-odd treaties were signed and ratified, adding to the public domain approximately 100 million acres of Indian land in the east at a cost of $68 million and 32 million acres of land west of the Mississippi River. But the cost in human lives and suffering was incalculable.

Eventually most Americans accepted what had happened. And even when the opposition party came to power it pursued the same savage practices against Native Americans as had the Democrats. Within a few years many thought the policy humane and enlightened. They understood the rationale behind removal and approved it. What they and Andrew Jackson failed to realize was that they had betrayed some of their most cherished ideas about American justice and decency. . . .

What Jackson did to the Indians as President was . . . end the drift and indecision of previous administrations by instituting a policy of removal that included an exchange of land. With the lessening of hostilities the tribes begged to be left alone, pleaded for protection and to be spared the necessity of contending with the power of the surrounding states whose citizens continually crowded in on them. But what they asked was impossible to provide in 1830. Perhaps it was never possible. As it turned out, the American people as a whole sided with the government and approved Jackson's policy. They did so because of their racism, their decades-old fear and mistrust of Native Americans, and their insatiable desire for the land they occupied. What resulted constitutes one of the great tragedies in the history of the United States, a tragedy for which the American people and their President must be held accountable. Like Jackson, they agreed that removal (which would make Indian land theirs) was also the only way to preserve Indian life and culture. Thus by shunting them off to the wilderness where they would no longer threaten the safety of the United States or hinder its westward and southern expansion, Americans felt they could resolve the problem of the Indian presence in a humanitarian manner that would not conflict with their Christian conscience or moral sensibility.

The distinguished scholar of Native American history Francis Paul Prucha has argued that four courses of action were available to the government in ending the everlasting white/red crisis. And four courses only. First, genocide. Exterminate the race. But no one in his right mind seriously proposed such a solution, certainly not Jackson or any other responsible official in government. Second, integrate the two societies. But Native Americans had no desire to become cultural white men. They had their own customs, laws, language, religion, government, and leaders and wanted to keep them. White man's culture was an abomination, except for those skills that could improve their standard of living. Nor did whites favor integration. As racists they feared that integration with red people would ultimately lead to integration with blacks. And that possibility horrified them. Third, protect the natives where they lived by enforcing existing treaties. Jackson knew such a policy was doomed from the start and had fifteen years of personal experience to attest to its impossibility. There was not army enough to keep squatters from invading Indian country. And future confrontations with southern states, similar to the one with Georgia, would undoubtedly follow, particularly in Alabama and Mississippi. Fourth, removal. That was the course Jackson knew would work and therefore adopted. No other alternative existed if Indians were to survive.

It needs to be remembered that removal was never just a land grab. That is too simplistic an explanation. Jackson fully expected the Indians to thrive in their new surroundings, educate their children, acquire the skills of white civilization so as to improve their living conditions, and become citizens of the United States. Removal, in his mind, would provide all these blessings.

At one point in this sad story a delegation of Chippewa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa chiefs came to Jackson in the White House and movingly described to him their suffering. "Your agent," they said, "told us at the Treaty made at Chicago in 1833 that the country assigned to us west of the Mississippi was equally good as the lands in Illinois. . . . Father—we have been deceived and we feel disappointed & dissatisfied. . . . There is scarce timber enough to build our Wigwams, and that some of our land is too poor for snakes to live upon. Our men are not accustomed to the Prairie. They have always lived in the woods."

Jackson listened to this recitation but did not hear. A long time before, he had made up his mind about what should be done with Native Americans, and nothing would change his mind, even though the eastern tribes no longer posed a danger to the country, nor was national security the issue. He believed the good of the nation and the tribes required their removal, and so thousands of men, women, and children suffered not only the loss of their property, but physical agony and even death.

To his dying day on June 8, 1845, Andrew Jackson genuinely believed that what he had accomplished rescued these people from inevitable annihilation. And although that statement sounds monstrous, and although no one in the modern world wishes to accept or believe it, that is exactly what he did. He saved the Five Civilized Nations from probable extinction.

Alfred A. Cave

NO

Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830

. . . The Indian Removal Act passed by Congress in 1830 neither authorized the unilateral abrogation of treaties guaranteeing Native American land rights within the states, nor the forced relocation of the eastern Indians. Yet both occurred, on a massive scale, during Andrew Jackson's administration and were the result, not of an explicit congressional mandate, but of an abuse of presidential power. In engineering removal, Jackson not only disregarded a key section of the Indian Removal Act, but also misused the powers granted to him under the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802. Furthermore, he failed to honor promises made in his name in order to win congressional support of the removal, and he broke a number of federal treaty commitments to Indians, including some that he had personally negotiated. While Jackson was not the only president who abused powers granted to him by the legislative branch, disregard of the extralegal character of much of his Indian policy has contributed to the over-simplistic view of Indian removal found in much of the historical literature.

In a message to the Congress of the United States dated 8 December 1829 Jackson declared of removal: "This emigration should be voluntary, for it would be as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers, and seek a home in a distant land." The president added that "our conduct toward these people" would reflect on "our national character." This perspective on Indian affairs is particularly interesting in light of Jackson's treatment of Indians during his first year of office, which reflected his long-standing belief that Indian treaties were not really binding on the nation. The Jackson administration had refused to intervene to protect the Cherokee from the state of Georgia, which by legislative act had denied the Cherokees' right to tribal self-government and challenged their ultimate ownership of their land. Repudiating all past constitutional precedents, Andrew Jackson had declared that the federal government could not interfere with the states' management of Indian affairs within their own borders. In his 1829 message to Congress, Jackson noted that "years ago I stated to them my belief that if the states chose to extend their laws over them it would not be in the power of the federal government to prevent it." Secretary of War Eaton, speaking for the President, several months earlier had informed Cherokee leaders that the guarantees in

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treaties with the United States that they claimed protected their rights against encroachment by Georgia in fact were nothing more than temporary grants of privilege awarded by a conquering power—the United States—to a vanquished people, the Cherokee. There were, Eaton declared, no guarantees in any treaty that could be considered permanent, nor could any clause be construed as "adverse to the sovereignty of Georgia." Indeed, in the early stages of Congress's deliberations on Indian removal, the report of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, written by close associates of the president, dismissed Indian treaty-making as nothing more than an "empty gesture" to placate Indian "vanity." Such treaties were not really treaties, the committee declared, but were only a "stately form of intercourse" useful in gaining Indian acquiescence in peacemaking and land cession. Although that view was rejected in the bill finally presented to Congress, it was reflected still in the words of some pro-removal congressmen and thereby served to arouse suspicion of the administration's real intent with regard to Indian removal.

Although privately in favor of coerced removal (and as a former treaty commissioner, skilled and experienced in the coercing of Indians), President Jackson recognized that he could not obtain from Congress the aggressive removal law that many writers imagine was actually passed. Hence, Jackson did not ask that Congress authorize forced deportation, but instead sought authorization and funding to continue his predecessors' policy of granting land west of the Mississippi to tribes willing to relinquish their eastern holdings. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 made provision for the president to negotiate for land exchanges and make payments for "improvements" (i.e., houses, barns, orchards, etc.) that Indians had made on their lands. The president was also authorized to pay transportation costs to the West. An appropriation of $500,000 was provided for those purposes. Significantly, there was no provision in the bill authorizing the seizure of land that Indians declined to cede by treaty.

Members of Jackson's administration underscored the presumed voluntary nature of the president's removal program. Secretary of War John Henry Eaton assured skeptical congressmen that "nothing of a compulsory nature to effect the removal of this unfortunate race of people has ever been thought of by the President, despite assertions to the contrary." Worried by the extensive anti-removal campaign recently mounted by the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions and by some of Jackson's political opponents, Eaton in confidential correspondence twice warned the Governor of Georgia that the state must be careful to avoid "the appearance of harshness towards the Indians." Should Georgia be suspected of "injustice," it might well prove impossible to secure broad based support for Jackson's removal program. To reassure the general public, Michigan Governor and Jackson loyalist Lewis Cass, in an unsigned article in the influential *North American Review* in January 1830, declared that the administration not only understood that "no force should be used," but was determined that Indians "shall be liberally remunerated for all they may cede."

Jackson's supporters in Congress also assured doubters that the administration did not intend to force a single Indian to move against his or her will.

To cite three typical examples, Senator Robert Adams of Mississippi denied that the legislation Jackson requested would give the president any power "to drive those unfortunate people from their present abode." Indian relocation, the senator insisted, would remain "free and voluntary." Congressman James Buchanan of Pennsylvania assured the House that there was no cause for concern, as Jackson had never considered "using the power of the government to drive that unfortunate race of men across the Mississippi." Congressman Wilson Lumpkin of Georgia assured his colleagues that "no man entertains kinder feelings towards Indians than Andrew Jackson." Jackson's supporters in Congress reminded skeptics of the president's assurances that Indians belonging to tribes that had signed removal treaties, but who did not themselves wish to accompany their kinsmen on the trek westward, would receive individual land grants after tribal claims had been extinguished and would then be welcome to remain behind as citizens of the states, where they would, in Jackson's words, be "protected in their persons and property."

The Indian Removal Act passed by Congress included a clause guaranteeing that "nothing in this act contained shall be construed as authorizing or directing the violation of any existing treaty between the United States and any of the Indian tribes." Without that guarantee, and without Jackson's promise of legal protection for Indians who chose not to relocate, it is unlikely that the removal act would have passed the House of Representatives.

The Jacksonians' insistence on the voluntary nature of their removal program was a political ploy aimed at winning badly needed votes in the House of Representatives. In both houses of Congress, a substantial block of legislators stated bluntly that they did not believe that Andrew Jackson could be trusted to deal fairly with Indians, a suspicion confirmed when War Department correspondence discussing possible means of bribing and intimidating Indians reluctant to sign removal treaties fell into the hands of the opposition. As a result, Jackson's congressional critics demanded yet more explicit procedural protection of existing Indian treaty rights. In the Senate, Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey offered two amendments that, by affirming explicitly that treaty rights transcended state authority, would have guaranteed continuing federal protection of "tribes and nations" that rejected removal. One amendment stipulated that in the absence of a removal treaty, the "tribes or nations . . . shall be protected in their present possessions, and in the enjoyment of all their rights of territory and government, as heretofore exercised and enjoyed, from all interruptions and encroachments." The second declared that changes in Indian status could be made only through the traditional treaty-making process, thus denying that Indian nations were subordinate to the states. In spite of significant support, however, determined opposition from southern senators meant that both amendments failed. A similar fate befell a variety of other proposed amendments, both in the Senate and the House, that would have provided more explicit federal protection of the property both of Indians who remained behind, and of those who relocated, and that would have mandated congressional inspection of the proposed Indian Territory. . . .

Indian removal as carried out by Jackson and his successor Martin Van Buren was anything but a voluntary relocation program. Numerous contemporary witnesses provide damning testimony regarding fraud, coercion, corruption, and malfeasance both in the negotiation of removal treaties and in their execution. In their zeal to secure removal treaties, agents of the Jackson administration resorted to extensive bribery of compliant and corrupt tribal officials and frequently threatened independent Indian leaders opposed to relocation. In a series of blatant violations of the specific guarantees that Andrew Jackson and his supporters had offered to Congress in 1830, federal officials, by a variety of ruses, in effect denied antiremoval majorities within Indian tribes the right to vote on the ratification of removal treaties. Furthermore, the administration systematically removed Indian agents who either opposed the removal policy or were less than zealous in coercing compliance. Moreover, Indians endeavoring to make good on Jackson's promise that they could remain within the states as individuals were subjected to all manner of harassment from state officials, speculators, and Indian-hating mobs as the federal government looked the other way.

Andrew Jackson's defenders over the years have suggested that Old Hickory ought not to be held responsible for the abuses associated with removal. Those abuses, in their view, were the work of lesser officials over whom he had little control. Jackson biographer Robert Remini, for example, has written that Old Hickory "struggled to prevent fraud and corruption" in the removal process, and sought through their relocation to protect "Indian life and culture." Furthermore, according to Remini, "as far as Jackson was concerned, the Indians could refuse to remove and stay where they were." He only asked that they acknowledge the authority of the state in which they resided. Remini recognizes that few of those who wished to remain were actually able to do so, but assures us that Andrew Jackson was not personally to blame. "Unfortunately the President's noble desire to give the Indians a free choice between staying and recovery, one devoid of coercion, was disregarded by land greedy state and federal officials, who practiced fraud and deception to enrich themselves and their friends at the expense of the native tribes."

In these assertions, Remini and other Jackson apologists are mistaken. Close examination of administrative correspondence and personal memoranda suggests that Jackson's guarantees in 1829 and early 1830 that removal would be voluntary and that those Indians who did not wish to relocate would be protected in their personal and property rights were politically expedient but fundamentally dishonest. Some rough notes in his personal papers offer some insights into the president's private thoughts about Indians as citizens of the states. In a set of points he intended to raise with his envoy to Mexico, scribbled in the summer of 1829, Jackson lists among the advantages of the possible acquisition of Texas the prospect that the "additional territory" could be used for "concentrating the Indians," thereby "relieving the states of the inconveniences which the residue within their limits at present afford." Jackson's own draft of his 1829 message to Congress contains no reference to voluntary removal. The eloquent acknowledgement that forced removal would be an act of cruelty that would reflect adversely on our national honor was added later, perhaps at the insistence of advisers hoping to reassure some northern congressmen. Jackson himself was more concerned about other political considerations. In a draft of a position paper probably written in 1831, he argued that if the states indeed had no jurisdiction over Indian lands within their boundaries and thus lacked the right to take that land when needed by white settlers, then numerous land grants, and with them countless white land titles, in the frontier states of the upper South were "void." "Such a doctrine," he wrote, "would not be well received in the west."

Jackson understood from the outset that the states would not in fact extend the full protection of the law to those Indians who remained behind. When the governor of Georgia informed Jackson that no Indian would be given a land allotment in his state, Jackson offered no objection. Instead, he warned Indians that the federal government could not protect them if they chose not to emigrate. When the Cherokee leadership indicated that they would accept a removal treaty that included the sort of allotment option earlier made available to the Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw, Jackson told them that they could have no land in Georgia. It is telling that in his 1830 annual message to Congress, Jackson in effect repudiated his 1829 observations about the cruelty of compelling "aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers and seek a home in a distant land." "Doubtless," the president now declared, "it will be painful for them to leave the graves of their forefathers, but what do they do more than our ancestors did or our children are now doing?"

Jackson regarded state harassment of Indians as a useful means of encouraging removal. Georgia officials claimed that Jackson himself in 1829 told a congressman disturbed by the delays in the Cherokee removal, "Build a fire under them. When it gets hot enough, they'll move." While Jackson himself made no record of that conversation, Georgia's governor later sent a confidential letter to Jackson expressing satisfaction with "your general plans and policy in relieving the states from their remnant Indian population." The Governor was gratified that Jackson understood that "Indians cannot live in the midst of a White Population and be governed by the same laws." As for the Cherokee, who still refused to sign a removal treaty, "starvation and destruction await them if they remain much longer in their present abodes." There is no doubt that Jackson shared those sentiments. Several months after the passage of the Removal Act, he assured a correspondent concerned about delays in the forthcoming Choctaw negotiations: "Indians could not possibly live under the laws of the states." He added: "If now they refuse to accept the liberal terms offered, they only must be responsible for whatever evils and difficulties may arise." Shortly thereafter, Jackson, frustrated by the refusal of several southeastern Indian nations to heed his summons to meet with him at Franklin, Tennessee, to discuss removal, wrote his close associate William B. Lewis to predict that the activities of former Attorney General William Wirt and other antiremoval activists "will lead to the destruction of the poor ignorant Indians." "I have used all the persuasive means in my power," the president declared, "I have exonerated the national character from all imputations, and now leave the poor deluded Creeks and Cherokees to their fate, and their annihilation, which their wicked advisers has [sic] induced."

Jackson repeatedly warned that those Indians who did not agree to removal would lose their right of self-government and be subject to the laws of the states in which they resided. In so doing, he far exceeded his legal mandate under the Indian Removal Act of 1830. That law, as we have seen, explicitly upheld existing treaty rights and obligations. Rather than enforcing the laws that forbade white settlement on treaty lands, Jackson informed Indian leaders that he lacked the power to protect them from even the most extreme and oppressive actions of the state governments and of lawless whites. One chief, self-described as "old and feeble," wrote to his "Great Father" Andrew Jackson to complain that treaty provisions were no longer honored and that whites invaded Indian country to "steal our property." Making matters worse, the federal soldiers in the area refused to help the Indians, but when Indians tried to resist the squatters, they were hunted down and shot "as if . . . they had been so many wild dogs." Only the Great Father, the chief pleaded, could protect his Indian children and restore peace. We have no record of Jackson's reply. But a typical example of Jackson's response to Indian petitioners is found in his message to the Cherokee, dated 16 March 1835, wherein he declared, "you cannot remain where you now are. Circumstances that cannot be controlled, and which are beyond the reach of human laws, render it impossible that you can flourish in the midst of a civilized community. . . . Deceive yourselves no longer. . . . Shut your ears to bad counsels." While it is true that Jackson on occasion sought to curb the excesses of some of the more corrupt Indian removal contractors, and ordered some reforms in the process, a close examination of the record suggests that he was primarily concerned with dealing with those who defrauded the government or who cheated other whites, and was relatively indulgent with those who defrauded Indians.

While some writers have explained Jackson's refusal to protect the sovereignty of Indian nations against the claims of the states as an act consistent with his deep respect for states' rights, one must remember that Andrew Jackson not only refused to honor the obligations contained in treaties negotiated by his predecessors, but also ignored treaty promises made by his own administration. His newly negotiated removal treaties generally guaranteed Indians federal protection from the depredations of white squatters prior to the completion of land surveys. While the federal government clearly possessed both the right and the obligation to enforce those guarantees, Secretary of War Cass, although required by the removal treaties to direct his agents to eject intruders on Indian land, made it clear that Andrew Jackson did not want federal officers to be particularly diligent in doing so. In a letter to United States Marshal Robert L. Crawford, he wrote: "it is the President's desire" that the order "be executed with as much regard for the feelings and situations of the persons (white squatter), whose cases are embraced by it, as possible." Force, the marshal was told, should be used "only when absolutely necessary," and then only after explaining the situation at length to those who were asked to move. Soon thereafter, Jackson's administration abandoned even the pretext of removing illegal occupants of Indian land. Southern politicians had made it clear that their constituents would not tolerate any real enforcement of the protective clauses in the removal treaties. In Mississippi, Congressman Franklin Plummer declared that the settlers who had occupied Choctaw lands came from "numerous families of the first respectability" and had been encouraged by the federal agent to plant their crops on Indian land. He further warned that Mississippi would resent their eviction. Similarly, in Alabama, federal efforts to deal with an unusually violent group of squatters provoked an armed confrontation, and a period of tension between the state and the administration that ended with an agreement that the treaty provision calling for the removal of all intruders on Creek land would not be enforced.

Plummer's claim of federal collusion was well founded. Jackson's agents from the outset understood that the president expected them to be considerate of white squatters, not of the Indians the squatters had so often dispossessed. Thus they not only did not challenge state officials who encouraged whites to occupy Indian lands prior to removal, but also on occasion actively encouraged the violation of removal treaty guarantees. The removal treaties envisioned an orderly process whereby whites purchasing Indian land would take possession only after the original owners had departed. But when Congressman Plummer in the spring of 1832 expressed concern that a provision in the recent Choctaw treaty which forbade white occupation of land in Choctaw territory occupied before September 1833 might be used to disallow the rights of some Mississippians who had already bought Indian titles, Secretary of War Cass replied: "The President is happy . . . that he is not called upon to execute [those] . . . provisions of the treaty." As to the political reasons for Jackson's happiness, General Winfield Scott, in correspondence with Secretary of War Cass, noted that use of federal troops to eject white occupants of Indian land "would inflame the passions of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi, and thus give wider spread to the heresies of nullification and secession."

Jackson was well aware of the misdeeds of his Indian agents. After leaving office, he told Francis P. Blair that dealing with the Indian office was "the most arduous part of my duty, and I watched over it with great vigilance, and could hardly keep it under proper restraint, and free from abuse and injury to the administration." His claim that he had displayed "great vigilance" must be placed in proper context. Jackson was speaking of those who cheated the government or other whites, not those who abused Indians. One combs the record in vain for evidence that Jackson took any particular pains to protect Indians from speculators and swindlers. . . .

Antiremoval protestors frequently charged that Andrew Jackson's refusal to execute the Indian treaties and laws of the United States "constituted a gross abuse of presidential power." The charge was well-founded. Nothing in the Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized his denial of Indian treaty rights in the removal process. While the law's affirmation that prior treaties remained in force was not as strong as Jackson's critics wished, it was nonetheless part of the law. By disregarding the obligations placed upon him by legislation providing for protection of Indian property, by denying the legitimacy of prior federal treaty commitments to Indian nations, by ignoring the promises written into his own removal treaties, and by tacitly encouraging the intimidation and dispossession of Indians, Jackson transformed the voluntary removal program authorized by Congress into a coerced removal sanctioned by the White House. The failure of subsequent Congresses dominated by Jacksonian loyalists to deal with those abuses does not alter the fact that the president was operating outside the law. It is doubtful that Jackson could have achieved his objectives in Indian removal had he either accepted the constraints contained in the enabling legislation, or honored the promises made to Congress to secure passage of that law. It is a mark of Jackson's political success that so many historians over the years have conveyed to their readers the impression that neither the constraints nor the promises existed.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Did Andrew Jackson's Removal Policy Benefit Native Americans?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What evidence does Robert Remini present that then-president Andrew Jackson was genuinely concerned about the well-being of Native Americans when he approved their resettlement west of the Mississippi River.
2. What factors does Alfred Cave cite to support his contention that Andrew Jackson was no friend to Native Americans?
3. Do you think that Alfred Cave makes a valid case that Andrew Jackson's handling of the Indian removal program amounted to an abuse of his presidential powers? Explain your conclusions.
4. Compare and contrast the arguments made by Robert Remini and Alfred Cave concerning President Jackson's enforcement of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.
5. If Andrew Jackson is the symbol of democratic America in the 1820s and 1830s, how would you assess his definition of democracy?

Is There Common Ground?

Looking at the Indian Removal Act of 1830 from the perspective of the early twenty-first century, it is difficult not to conclude that this policy, culminating in the "Trail of Tears," was an unmitigated disaster—at least for the Native American tribes involved. In the "age of Jackson," however, most Americans held the rights of Indians in low regard and of little consequence. Native Americans, as far as most whites were concerned, were, at best, "Noble Savages," but savages nonetheless. This included the members of the southeastern Indians who were collectively designated the "Five Civilized Tribes." Robert Remini is one of the few remaining scholarly apologists for Jackson, but he does try to understand Old Hickory's motivations within the context of the times in which Jackson lived. It is essential, therefore, to understand that Jackson was the shining symbol of the sharply limited definition of "democracy" that had emerged by the late 1820s. To put it bluntly, this was an American democracy for white adult males, and it represented a marked improvement over what had passed for democracy a generation earlier. Who, then, was included in Jackson's version of democracy? Who really constituted the "common man" for whom Jackson was the spokesman? Who benefitted from the opportunities that the Jacksonian Democrats claimed to have made available to the American people?

Additional Resources

For general studies of Native American history that include discussions of Jackson's attitudes and policies with regard to Indians, see Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Indian in America* (Harper & Row, 1975); Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); and Francis Paul Prucha's edited collection of readings, *The Indian in American History* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). For a collection of primary source materials, see David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, eds., *Indian Removal: A Norton Casebook* (W. W. Norton, 2007).

The historical literature on Jacksonian philosophy and policies is extensive. Remini is Jackson's definitive, generally sympathetic biographer. His three-volume study, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767–1821* (Harper and Row, 1977); *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822–1832* (Harper and Row, 1981); and *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Democracy, 1833–1845* (Harper and Row, 1984) is the culmination of a long career of study and writing. Older though equally excellent studies include Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Little, Brown, 1946); John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (Oxford University Press, 1955); and Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford University Press, 1957). Useful primary sources on the "age of Jackson" are collected in Edward Pessen, ed., *Jacksonian Panorama* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1976). The period is also explored in Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era, 1828–1848* (Harper and Row, 1959); Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Dorsey Press, 1969); and Henry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (Hill and Wang, 1990). Finally, Alexander de Tocqueville's classic *Democracy in America* (HarperCollins, 1988) sheds a great deal of light on the still-young nation of Jackson's time from the perspective of a foreign observer.

ISSUE 10

Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?

YES: Nancy F. Cott, from *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (Yale University Press, 1977, 1997)

NO: Gerda Lerner, from "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *The Majority Finds It's Past: Placing Women in History* (Oxford University Press, 1979)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue you should be able to:

- Critically analyze whether merchant capitalism opened new economic opportunities for women.
- Critically analyze whether "the cult of motherhood" restricted or opened up more opportunities for women inside the home.
- Critically analyze whether Jacksonian democracy disenfranchised and limited economic opportunities for the "lady" and the "mill girl."

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: According to Professor Nancy F. Cott, when merchant capitalism reached its mature phase in the 1830s, the roles of the middle-class family became more clearly defined, and new economic opportunities opened within a limited sphere outside the home.

NO: According to Professor Gerda Lerner, while Jacksonian democracy provided political and economic opportunities for men, both the "lady" and the "mill girl" were equally disenfranchised and isolated from vital centers of economic opportunity.

Until the 1960s, the serious student of American women could store all the important historical studies of women on one shelf of a bookcase. They fell into two categories: Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* (Harvard University Press, 1959) and Andrew Sinclair's_*The Better Half* (Harper and Row, 1965) were broad surveys based upon the limited sources available. This second category, for lack of a better label, was the "we did it too" category. This area is full of biographies of pioneering women in education, health care, and the suffragists' movement. These biographies of the "female leaders" fit nicely into mainstream political history. Instead of the "presidential synthesis," we now have the "great American women's synthesis." As important as these works were, historians of American women were being forced to write within a framework of political history where women were basically excluded until the Nineteenth Amendment went into effect in 1920.

In order to write a real history of women, new sources and approaches would have to be found. The traditional political-military-diplomatic framework would be abandoned. A new generation of historians, sons and daughters of immigrants, African Americans, and women, influenced by the fourth wave of immigration and the civil rights' and women's liberation movements, would write about the lives of ordinary people. History would be written from the bottom up instead of the top down. The new social history was born.

One area that distinguishes the old and new history is the study of families. Though family and women's history are considered separate areas of study, the two fields often intermingle. Historians generally agree that sometime between the end of the American Revolution and the 1830s the nuclear family emerged among the middle class. Sociologists believe that family members in the traditional household have clearly defined roles. Fathers go to work in an office or a factory; children attend school; and mothers stay in the house, nurture the children, keep order, and establish a proper moral atmosphere. In her study of religious literature and gift books, such as Sarah Josepha Hale's *Godey's Lady's Book*, historian Barbara Welter defined the role in "The Cult of true Womanhood 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* (Summer, 1966). According to Welter, "the attributes of True Womanhood," by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues—"piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife-woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them, she was promised happiness and power."

By the 1830s, merchant capitalism was flourishing and had created a number of factories along the various rivers in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Many single women left home temporarily and worked in these factories that were originally intended to provide clean and safe working conditions as compared to the English mills portrayed in the novels of Charles Dickens. Historians have used the diaries of some of these workers to describe their lifestyle; the fullest account is found in Thomas Dublin's *Women at Work: the Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell Massachusetts, 1826–1860* (Columbia University Press, 1979). Dublin also published a primary source collection *From Farm to Factory: Women's Letters 1830–1860* (Columbia University Press, 1981, 1993). Dublin's Lowell factory workers developed a collective consciousness because they spent all their leisure hours in boarding houses and their 72-hour workweek tending the looms. Their contact with the male owners was nonexistent. The modern corporation that separated owners and management was true at Lowell where the Boston capitalists who started the company rarely appeared. Usually the women tending the mills would have their only contact with their immediate male supervisors. Consequently, the women could enforce their moral standards in the boarding house and get rid of women whom they deemed promiscuous. Their collective consciousness also made it easier for the women to organize strikes when their owners cut the wages as they did in 1834 and 1836.

Dublin points out that the strikes did not succeed, but he is unclear about the reasons for their failures. One possibility could be that women viewed the work at Lowell as temporary, a chance to build up a dowry that they could use to get married. The cult of motherhood was strong even for female factory workers. Marriage was still their primary goal.

The Lowell experiment was short-lived. Though the female workers joined with men working in separate organizations to support the Ten Hour Movement, the early labor movement failed to achieve its objectives. By the 1850s, the "Daughters of Free Men" were replaced by Irish immigrants.

Did the Industrial Revolution provide more economic opportunities for women in the 1830s? Professor Nancy F. Cott believes that when the modern factory system developed in the 1830s, economic opportunities opened up outside the home in industry, journalism, and within a limited sphere in business, law, and medicine. Her essay draws upon the letters and diaries of literate New England women to trace their changing roles and attitudes. These are nontraditional sources but are essential to writing the social history of any particular group. Through these writings, Cott documents the shifting role of women inside and outside the family. In the late eighteenth century, these women performed household chores as well as worked at home in the "putting out" system used to make textiles and shoes. (This is similar to work performed in the house today by both sexes through use of the computer.)

Cott believes that a social transformation took place in the United States from 1780 to 1835. She accepts Professor E. P. Thompson's distinction between "task orientation of traditional artisan work patterns" in pre-industrial society and the "time, work-discipline, industrial capitalism" of the factory system. [See Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present*, 38 (1967) 56–79.] While she recognizes the constraints of the women's sphere in limiting women's economic opportunities outside the home, Cott nevertheless is more optimistic than Gerda Lerner, the author of the second essay in this section.

Professor Gerda Lerner is a pioneer in women's history. A European refugee and playwright, she convinced her mentors at Columbia University that a study of the Grimke sisters, two white southern abolitionists, would make a viable dissertation topic. She published *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels Against Slavery* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967), though a number of major publishers rejected the manuscript because it lacked information about the psychological failings of the sisters.

In 1962, Lerner taught the first course in women's history at the New School for Social Research. Recognizing that women "are and always have been at least half of humankind and most of the time have been a majority," Lerner argued that women have their own history, which should not be marginalized by men nor forced to be subject to the traditional male framework of political/military/diplomatic/economic history. Along with other pioneers, she led the search for nontraditional sources that provided information about women: demographic records; census figures; parish and birth records; property taxes; organizational files of churches, schools, police, and hospital records; finally, diaries, family letters, and autobiographies that are more attuned to a women's point of view.

Lerner suggested that scholars of women's history should: (1) search for women whose experiences deserve to be well known; (2) identify women worthy to topics and issues deemed important to the American mainstream; (3) test familiar narratives and rewrite generalizations when they appear to be wrong; and (4) understand gender as a social construct, and rewrite and develop new frameworks and concepts to understand women's history.

"The Lady and the Mill Girl" is a classic article that uses the conceptual framework of the "cult of motherhood" to demonstrate how the experiences of middle-class and working-class women in the Jacksonian period were different from men since women were unable to vote and were driven out of the medical, legal, and business professions, which provided occupations of upward mobility for men. Written a decade before historians began to use the term "market revolution," Lerner's article argues that industrialization retarded women's attempts at economic advancements outside the home. While Jacksonian democracy provided political and economic opportunities for men, she points out, the "lady" and the "mill girl" were equally disenfranchised and isolated from vital centers of economic opportunity.

YES

Nancy F. Cott

The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835

“Thine in the bonds of womanhood” Sarah M. Grimké signed the letters to Mary Parker which she published in Boston in 1838 as *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women.* Grimké had left behind the South Carolina plantation of her birth and become one of the first women to speak publicly against slavery. “Bonds” symbolized chattel slavery to her. She must have composed her phrase with care, endowing it intentionally with the double meaning that womanhood bound women together even as it bound them down.

It is a central purpose of mine to explain why an American feminist of the 1830s would have seen womanhood in that dual aspect. . . .

Recent historical research which has discovered shifts in family and sexual patterns in the late eighteenth century encouraged me to begin in that period. For the case of the United States—the period between 1780 and 1830 was a time of wide- and deep-ranging transformation, including the beginning of rapid intensive economic growth, especially in foreign commerce, agricultural productivity, and the fiscal and banking system; the start of sustained urbanization; demographic transition toward modern fertility patterns; marked change toward social stratification by wealth and growing inequality in the distribution of wealth; rapid pragmatic adaptation in the law; shifts from unitary to pluralistic networks in personal association; unprecedented expansion in primary education; democratization in the political process; invention of a new language of political and social thought; and—not least—with respect to family life, the appearance of “domesticity.” . . .

It is fitting to begin with the decade of the 1830s in view although it is the end point of this study, for it presents a paradox in the “progress” of women’s history in the United States. There surfaced publicly then an argument between two seemingly contradictory visions of women’s relation to society: the ideology of domesticity, which gave women a limited and sex-specific role to play, primarily in the home; and feminism, which attempted to remove sex-specific limits on women’s opportunities and capacities. Why that coincidence? Objectively, New England women in 1835 endured subordination to men in marriage and society,

From *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Women’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* by Nancy F. Cott (Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 1, 3, 5–9, 19, 23–27, 36–42, 43–44, 45–46, 57–59, 61–62 (excerpts, notes omitted). Copyright © 1997 by Yale University. Reprinted by permission of Yale University Press.

profound disadvantage in education and in the economy, denial of access to official power in the churches that they populated, and virtual impotence in politics. A married woman had no legal existence apart from her husband's: she could not sue, contract, or even execute a will on her own; her person, estate, and wages became her husband's when she took his name. Divorce was possible—and, in the New England states, available to wives on the same terms as husbands—but rare. Women's public life generally was so minimal that if one addressed a mixed audience she was greeted with shock and hostility. No women voted, although all were subject to the laws. Those (unmarried or widowed) who held property had to submit to taxation without representation.

This was no harsher subordination than women knew in 1770, but by 1835 it had other grievous aspects. When white manhood suffrage, stripped of property qualifications, became the rule, women's political incapacity appeared more conspicuous than it had in the colonial period. As occupations in trade, crafts, and services diversified the agricultural base of New England's economy, and wage earning encroached on family farm production, women's second-class position in the economy was thrown into relief. There was only a limited number of paid occupations generally open to women, in housework, handicrafts and industry, and schoolteaching. Their wages were one-fourth to one-half what men earned in comparable work.The legal handicaps imposed by the marriage contract prevented wives from engaging in business ventures on their own, and the professionalization of law and medicine by means of educational requirements, licensing, and professional societies severely excluded women from those avenues of distinction and earning power. Because colleges did not admit women, they could not enter any of the learned professions. For them, the Jacksonian rhetoric of opportunity had scant meaning.

The 1830s nonetheless became a turning point in women's economic participation, public activities, and social visibility. New textile factories recruited a primarily female labor force, and substantial numbers of young women left home to live and work with peers. In the mid-1830s occurred the first industrial strikes in the United States led and peopled by women. "One of the leaders mounted a pump," the Boston *Evening Transcript* reported during the first "turn-out" in Lowell, Massachusetts, to protest wage reductions, "and made a flaming Mary Woolstonecraft [*sic*] speech on the rights of women." Middle-class women took up their one political tool, the petition, to demand legislation enabling wives to retain rights to their property and earnings. So many women pursued the one profession open to them, primary-school teaching, that their entry began to look like a takeover, although (or, to be accurate, because) they consistently commanded much lower salaries than men. Secondary schools and academies which could prepare young women to teach multiplied. Women's growing literacy, owed in part to the employment of some as teachers of girls, swelled the audience for female journalists and fiction writers. While it had been unprecedented for Hannah Adams to support herself by her writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, that possibility came within more women's reach. Several ladies' magazines began publication during the decade, thereby increasing the editorial and publication possibilities for women authors and causing a female audience to coalesce.

Women also entered a variety of reform movements, to pursue objects in their own self-interest as well as to improve their society. Health reformers spotlighted women's physical condition. "Moral reformers" attacked the double standard of sexual morality and the victimization of prostitutes. Mothers formed societies to consult together on the rearing of children. Even larger numbers of women joined Christian benevolent associations, to reform the world by the propagation of the faith. An insistent minority of women became active in the antislavery movement where they practiced tactics of recruitment, organization, fund raising, propagandizing, and petitioning—and initiated the women's rights movement in the United States, when some of them took to heart the principles of freedom and human rights. Although the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 usually marks the beginning of organized feminism in this country, there were clearly feminist voices in the antislavery movement by the late 1830s.

At the same time, an emphatic sentence of domesticity was pronounced for women. Both male and female authors (the former mostly ministers) created a new popular literature, consisting of advice books, sermons, novels, essays, stories, and poems, advocating and reiterating women's certain, limited role. That was to be wives and mothers, to nurture and maintain their families, to provide religious example and inspiration, and to affect the world around by exercising private moral influence. The literature of domesticity promulgated a Janus-faced conception of women's roles: it looked back, explicitly conservative in its attachment to a traditional understanding of woman's place; while it proposed transforming, even millennial results. One might assume that this pervasive formulation was simply a reaction to—a conservative defense against—expansion of women's nondomestic pursuits. But women's educational, reform, labor force, and political activities were just beginning to enlarge in the 1830s when the concept of domesticity crystallized. Several decades' shift in the allotment of powers and functions inside and outside the household had created the constellation of ideas regarding women's roles that we call domesticity. It was hardly a *deus ex machina*. The particularization and professionalization taking place in the occupational structure between 1780 and 1835 affected women's domestic occupation as well as any other; and concomitant subtle changes in women's view of their domestic role established a substructure for their nondomestic pursuits and self-assertion. The ideology of domesticity may seem to be contradicted functionally and abstractly by feminism, but historically—as they emerged in the United States—the latter depended on the former. . . .

"A woman's work is never done," Martha Moore Ballard wrote in her journal one November midnight in 1795, having been busy preparing wool for spinning until that time, "and happy she whos[e] strength holds out to the end of the [sun's] rays." Ballard was sixty years old that year—a grandmother several times over—though she still had at home her youngest child of sixteen. Housekeeper and domestic manufacturer for a working farm where she baked and brewed, pickled and preserved, spun and sewed, made soap and dipped candles, she also was a trusted healer and midwife for the pioneer community of Augusta, Maine. During a quarter-century of practice continuing past her seventieth year, she delivered more than a thousand babies. The very processes of her work engaged her in community social life. In her medical work she became acquainted with her neighbors as she provided services for them, and domestic crafts, such as quilting and spinning, also involved her in both cooperative and remunerative social relationships. The pattern of her life was not atypical for the matron of a farm household, particularly in a frontier community, in the late eighteenth century. . . .

The basic developments hastening economic productivity and rationalizing economic organization in New England between 1780 and 1835 were extension of the size of the market, increases in agricultural efficiency, reduction in transportation costs, and consequent specialization of economic function, division of labor, and concentration of industry. In late eighteenth-century towns, subsistence farming and household production for family use prevailed, supplemented by individual craftsmen (cobblers, coopers, blacksmiths, tailors, weavers, etc.) who were established or itinerant depending on density of population in their locale, and by small industrial establishments such as sawmills, gristmills, fulling mills, ironworks, and brickyards. The Revolutionary war stimulated some forms of household production (such as "homespun"), and so did the disruption of the international market during the Napoleonic wars, but more continuous lines of change moved the New England economy from its agricultural and household-production base and gave it a commercial and then industrial emphasis by 1835.

Merchant capitalism was a primary force in this transformation. Merchant capitalists took risks, supplied capital, searched out markets, and attempted to maximize profits by producing standardized goods at the least cost, thus organizing production on a larger scale than had previously been typical. Their actions commanded a shift away from home production for family use, and from local craftsmen's production of custom or "bespoke" work for known individuals, toward more standardized production for a wider market. Mercantile capitalism flourished during the enormous expansion of New England's carrying trade and re-export business that occurred from 1793 to 1807 because of the confusion of European shipping during the Napoleonic wars. This burst of shipping energy also caused subsidiary economic activities, such as shipbuilding, and complementary businesses, such as brokerage, marine insurance, warehousing, and banking, to grow. Under the brunt of the national embargo in 1807 and the subsequent war with England this blooming of the American carrying and re-export trade faded, but since much of the capital involved was transferred to manufacturing activity overall economic productivity did not diminish greatly.

The shift to market-oriented production under merchant capitalists prepared the way for the development of manufacturing and the factory system. Under the demand of the merchant capitalist for widely distributable goods, the craftsman's shop became a larger and more specialized unit, for production only rather than (as formerly) for production and retail sale. The master craftsman became the "boss" of a larger number of journeymen and apprentices. In New England another production system, limited mainly to shoes and textiles, also preceded and overlapped with industrial manufacture. This was the "putting-out" or "given-out" system, in which a merchant or master craftsman distributed materials to individuals to work on in their homes at piece-work rates, and collected and sold the finished goods. As the given-out system developed, the individuals (often women) it employed at home performed more and more specialized and fragmentary handicrafts. Indeed, the hallmarks of economic development in this period were functional specialization and division of labor. Where there had been "jacks-of-all-trades" there came specialized laborers; where there had been eclectic merchants there came importers and exporters, wholesalers and jobbers and retailers. Farmers who had produced only for subsistence trained their eyes on, and diverted some of their energies to, the market for commercial produce. New specialists appeared in fields from insurance to banking to transportation, as incorporations of businesses multiplied and turnpikes and bridges replaced wooded paths. In order to understand shifts in women's work during these years, rapid changes of this type must be kept in mind. Whether a woman lived toward the beginning or toward the end of this half-century may have informed the character of her work as much as, or more than, her geographical location, wealth, or marital status, which were other significant factors. Comparison of the kinds of work recorded in women's diaries in the earlier and later years makes that clear.

During the late eighteenth century both unmarried and married women did their primary work in households, in families. Unmarried daughters might be called upon to help their fathers in a store or shop connected to the house: Sally Ripley, a tradesman's daughter in Greenfield, Massachusetts, more than once recorded in her diary, "This morning my Father departed for Boston, & I am again entrusted with the charge of the Store." But daughters' assistance in the housewife's realm of food preparation and preservation, dairying, gardening, cleaning, laundering, soap making, candle making, knitting, and textile and clothing manufacture was the more usual case. Mothers and daughters shared these labors. The continual and time-consuming work of spinning was the most readily delegated to the younger generation, it seems. Hannah Hickok Smith of Glastonbury, Connecticut, managed to avoid spinning, because she had five daughters at home. "The girls . . . have been very busy spinning this spring," she reported to their grandmother in 1800, "and have spun enough for about seventy yards besides almost enough for another carpet." Spinning must have taken precedence in the daughters' work, for when they had "no spinning to do of any consequence" then Mrs. Smith admitted that she "lived very easy, as the girls have done every thing." . . .

The first "manufactories" in the United States were places of business established in major cities in the 1760s to collect yarn spun and cloth woven by women in their homes by traditional hand methods. Some merchants soon put spinning wheels and looms on the premises of their manufactories, and hired women and children to work them there; but in general they employed a much larger proportion of women working in their own homes than on the manufactory premises. After Samuel Slater introduced industrial spinning machinery to New England in 1789, and other entrepreneurs established spinning mills, employing women to work the machinery, the proportions working at home and on the premises were reversed. The early mills (between 1790 and 1815) produced only yarn, which was distributed to domestic weavers like Samantha

Barrett to be made into cloth. The power loom did not appear in New England until 1814. That year the Boston Manufacturing Company introduced it at Waltham, Massachusetts, uniting under one factory roof all the operations necessary to turn raw fiber into finished cloth. Factories mass-producing cotton cloth multiplied during the 1820s.

By 1830, industrial manufacture had largely superseded home spinning and weaving in New England by producing cloth more cheaply. This changed women's work more than any other single factor, and likely had more emphatic impact on unmarried women than on mothers of families. Industrialization of textiles disrupted daughters' predictable role in the household first. Mothers' lives continued to be defined by household management and child rearing. Daughters, however, often had to earn wages to replace their contribution to family sustenance. Textile mill operatives, who were almost all between the ages of fifteen and thirty, were young women who followed their traditional occupation to a new location, the factory. New England textile factories from the start employed a vastly greater proportion of women than men.

The economic and social change of the period injected uncertainty, variety, and mobility into young women's lives—into none more dramatically than the early mill operatives'. Mary Hall began industrial employment after her academy schooling and experience in schoolteaching. In November 1830 she started folding books at a shop in Exeter, New Hampshire, not happy to be removed from her family. "Yes, I shall probably be obliged to call this, to me a land of strangers, home for the present," she wrote in her diary. "But home sweet home can never be transfer'd in the affections of Me. . . . How often this day amidst its cares and business have I been in imagination under the paternal roof seeing, hearing and conversing with its lov'd inhabitants." She was twenty-four years old. After seven months she returned home, because several family members were ill. In September 1831, she went to Lowell, Massachusetts, for employment as a cotton-mill operative. She worked in Lowell for the next five years, except for returns home to Concord for more than a year between 1832 and 1833, for the summer in 1834, for weeks in November and December 1834 (because of deaths in her family), and in November 1835 and June 1836. During her years in Lowell she worked for at least three different corporations.

Emily Chubbuck, whose family was probably poorer than Mary Hall's, had a more disjointed employment history. The fifth child in a New Hampshire family transplanted to upstate New York, she went to work in 1828, at the age of eleven, splicing rolls in a woolen factory. Her parents allowed her to keep her weekly wage of $1.25. When the factory closed in January 1829 she began attending a district school, to supplement the education she had received from an older sister. Two months later the factory reopened and she resumed work there. During the next three years, as her family moved several times in attempts to make a living, she intermittently worked for a Scottish weaver twisting thread, attended an academy, washed and ironed for her family's boarders, sewed for a mantua-maker, and attended a district school. At fourteen, despite her mother's advice to apprentice herself to a milliner, she lied about her age to obtain a schoolteaching job. Her wages were only 75 cents a week plus board. She knew that she "could earn as much with the milliner, and far more at twisting thread," but she hoped for a future in literary pursuits rather than manual employment.

There was a large class of young women who would have spun at home in early decades but whose families' incomes or priorities made factory work unlikely for them. Their work too became variable and sporadic, shifting among the options of schoolteaching, needlework, domestic work, and given-out industry. None of these was really a full-time, year-round occupation. Women tended to combine them. Rachel Stearns, under pressure of necessity, became willing to intersperse sewing in another household with her schoolteaching, although earlier she had "thought it quite too degrading to go to Uncle F's and sew." Nancy Flynt, a single woman of Connecticut, wrote to her married sister around 1810, "[I am] a tugging and a toiling day and night to get a maintenance, denying myself the pleasure of calling on my nearest neighbors. . . . I would tell you how much work I have dispatched since I saw you, I have a great deal of sewing on hand now." The twenty-five-year-old daughter of the minister in Hawley, Massachusetts, decided she should learn to support herself "by the needle" and therefore began to learn the milliner's trade, but her health failed, preventing her from continuing. "Perhaps [I] flattered myself too much with the idea of being able to bear my own expenses," she reflected somewhat bitterly.

Given-out industry, which constituted a significant stage in the industrial development of New England, enabled women to earn money while staying at home. Two kinds of production organized this way drew heavily on women's labor: the stitching and binding of boots and shoes (concentrated in eastern Massachusetts) and the braiding, or plaiting, of straw bonnets. The latter was a handicraft designed before 1800 by New England women who used native rye straw for the material. By 1830 thousands carried it on in the employ of entrepreneurs who imported palm leaves from Cuba and distributed them to farmhouses to be made up into hats. Eliza Chaplin and her sister Caroline of Salem, Massachusetts, made and sold bonnets during the 1820s, the same years that they taught school. Julia Pierce taught school in the summer and had "plenty of work" to do in the winter, she said: "I have braided more than 100 hats and the other girls as many more." The working life of Amanda Elliott of Guilford, Connecticut, exemplifies the variety of this transitional period. Within six months in 1816–17 she devoted considerable time to splitting straw and braiding hats; noted five new boarders; taught school; and mentioned binding shoes, in addition to usual domestic needlework, knitting, washing, and ironing. For some fortunate young women, of course, the diminution of household manufacture for the family meant greater leisure and opportunity for education. Hannah Hickok Smith's letters after 1800 revealed that spinning gradually dwindled in importance in her daughters' occupations. "As we have had much leisure time this winter," she wrote in 1816, "the girls have employed themselves chiefly in reading writing and studying French Latin and Greek."

While economic modernization changed young unmarried women's work more conspicuously than their mothers' at first, the disruption of the integral relation between the household and the business of society was bound to redefine matrons' occupations too. Wife-and-motherhood in a rural household of the eighteenth century implied responsibility for the well-being of all the family. Upon marriage a woman took on "the Cares of the world," Elizabeth Bowen admitted as she recounted her past life, at mid-century. Fond as Esther Edwards Burr was of improving her mind, she declined an opportunity to take French lessons in the 1750s with the forceful comment, "The married woman has something else to care about besides lerning [*sic*] French!" Sarah Snell Bryant's daily diary reported in straightforward fashion her matronly duties in an educated, respectable, but impecunious farm family in western Massachusetts. During the 1790s and early 1800s she bore and nursed six children (usually returning to household cares within a few days after childbirth), and taught them all to read the Bible before sending them to school. Generally she occupied every day in making cloth and clothing—from the "hatcheling" of flax and "breaking" of wool to the sewing of shirts, gowns, and coats—knitting gloves and stockings, baking, brewing, preserving food, churning butter, gardening, nursing the sick, making candles or soap, washing, ironing, scouring, quilting with neighbors, and even entertaining visitors. During a summer when her husband was traveling, she also taught school. Contemporaries of Sarah Snell Bryant who lived in more densely populated and commercial locations might have less labor to perform, especially if their husbands' wealth allowed their families to purchase goods and services. Martha Church Challoner, who lived in Newport, a lively Rhode Island port, in the 1760s, was able to buy various fabrics, shoes, and some basic foods. She had two black women in her house as servants (or slaves, possibly), and hired others to do washing, mending, spinning, carding, sewing, and nursing. Still, she herself made candles, knit stockings, sold butter and eggs, and sewed household linens, while supervising the household. . . .

Well into the middle decades of the nineteenth century married women's work remained centered on household management and family care, although the growing ramifications of the market economy diminished the importance of household manufacture and enlarged families' reliance on money to purchase basic commodities. Greater population density, commercial expansion, technological advances in transportation and communication, specialization in agriculture, and involvement of rural residents in given-out industry all contributed to the demise of the self-contained household economy. "There is no way of living in this town without cash," Abigail Lyman reported from Boston in 1797, and smaller towns rapidly manifested the same commercial spirit and need. Hannah Hickok Smith's account book for the years 1821–24 points out the extent to which a prosperous farm matron in an "urban"-sized commercial town—Glastonbury, Connecticut—was involved in commercial transaction. She recorded the purchase of edibles and baking supplies (spices, plums, currants, raisins, sugar, molasses, salt, wine, coffee, tea); of household items (teacups, platters, chest, jug, box, coffeepot, tinware, pins) and construction materials (pine boards, nails, steel); of writing accoutrements (paper, penknife, spelling book), nursing supplies (camphor, plaister) and soap, and some luxuries (snuff, tobacco, shell combs, parasol). Furthermore, she purchased at least eleven different kinds of fabric (such as dimity, brown holland, "factory cloth"), four kinds of yarn and thread, leather, and buttons; bought silk shawls, bonnets, dresses, stockings, and kid gloves, and also paid for people's services in making clothing. The farm produced the marketable commodities of grain (oats, rye, corn) and timber, animals (calves, turkeys, fowl) and animal products (eggs, hens' feathers, quills, wool, pork), and other farm produce which required more human labor, such as butter, cider, lard, and tallow. . . .

The growing availability of goods and services for purchase might spare a married woman from considerable drudgery, if her husband's income sufficed for a comfortable living. It also heightened her role in "shoping," as Abigail Brackett Lyman spelled it (her consumer role), although that was subject to her husband's authority over financial resources. In colonial America husbands, as "providers," typically were responsible for purchasing goods—including household goods, furniture, and food staples, if they were to be bought—but in commercial towns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century wives more frequently became shoppers, especially for articles of dress and food. The increasing importance of monetary exchange bore hard on those who needed to replace their former economic contribution of household manufacture with income-producing employment, while meeting their domestic obligations. Taking in boarders was one alternative. Betsey Graves Johnson did that while she brought up the five children born to her between 1819 and 1830. Otherwise, married women had the same options for wage earning as single women who wished to stay at home: to take in sewing, or work in given-out industry. Schoolteaching, a slight possibility for wives, was a likelier one for widows whose children had reached school age. One widow's "cares," as described by her sister in 1841, were "enough to occupy all her time and thoughts almost. . . . [She] is teaching from 16 to 20 sholars [*sic*] boarding a young lady, and doing the housework, taking care of her children, &c."

These constants—"doing the housework, taking care of her children"—persisted in married women's lives. Child care required their presence at home. This responsibility revealed itself as the heart of women's domestic duties when household production declined. After four years of marriage Sarah Ripley Stearns regretfully attributed her neglect of church attendance and devotional reading not to household duties but to "the Care of my Babes, which takes up so large a portion of my time of my time [*sic*] attention." More than ever before in New England history, the care of children appeared to be mothers' sole work and the work of mothers alone. The expansion of nonagricultural occupations drew men and grown children away from the household, abbreviating their presence in the family and their roles in child rearing. Mothers and young children were left in the household together just when educational and religious dicta both newly emphasized the malleability of young minds. Enlightenment psychology drew tighter the connection between early influence on the child, and his or her eventual character, just as mothers' influence on young children appeared more salient. . . .

While changes in economy and society made young women's work more social, more various and mobile, the same developments reduced the social engagement, variety, and mobility in the work of wives and mothers. Housekeeping and child care continued to require married women's presence at home, while the household diminished in population, kinds of business, and range of contacts. In an intriguing development in language usage in the early nineteenth century, "home" became synonymous with "retirement" or "retreat" from the world at large. Mary Tucker quoted approvingly in 1802 an author's assertion that "a woman's noblest station is retreat." On a cousin's approaching marriage she remarked, "Sally has passed her days in the shade of *retirement* but even there many virtues and graces have ripened to perfection, she has every quality necessary for a *good wife*." Salome Lincoln's marriage to a fellow preacher in 1835 virtually ended her extradomestic pursuits; she subsequently used her preaching talents only on occasional travels with her husband. The shifting emphasis among married women's occupations emerges clearly in the comparison of Lydia Hill Almy's occupations in 1797–99 with Mary Hurlbut's in the 1830s. The former not only kept house but let rooms, collected firewood, attended to livestock, and arranged to sell tanned skins; she considered her two children "grown out of the way" and "very little troble [*sic*]" when the younger was not yet weaned. Mary Hurlbut, in contrast, appeared solely concerned with her children's lives and prospects.

Married women's work at home distinguished itself most visibly from men's work, especially as the latter began to depart from the household/farm/craftshop to separate shops, offices, and factories. The rhythms of adult men's and women's work diverged even as did their places of work. During the eighteenth century, in agricultural towns, men and women had largely shared similar work patterns; their work, tied to the land, was seasonal and discontinuous. It was conditioned by tradition, family position, and legal obligation as well as by economic incentive. E.P. Thompson has called the dominant characteristic of work in such an agricultural/artisanal economy its "task-orientation," in contrast to the "time-discipline" required under industrial capitalism. Task-orientation implies that the worker's own sense of customary need and order dictates the performance of work. Intensification or delay occurs as a response to perceived necessity: in farming, for instance, the former occurs in harvest time, or the latter during stormy weather. Irregular work patterns typically result. "Social intercourse and labour are intermingled," Thompson also has pointed out, "the working-day lengthens or contracts according to the task—and there is no great sense of conflict between labour and 'passing the time of day.'" Persons accustomed to time-discipline, however, may consider task-oriented work patterns "wasteful and lacking in urgency." Thompson's analysis derived from his study of eighteenth-century English farmers, artisans, and laborers but can be applied to their contemporaries in New England. Even eighteenth-century colonial merchants, who, as risk-taking capitalists, might be expected to initiate disciplined work habits, structured their work lives in what Thompson would denote "preindustrial" ways, intermingling their work with recreation and with the conduct of their households. "The Founding Fathers, after all, lived in a preindustrial, not simply an 'agrarian' society," as Herbert Gutman has remarked, "and the prevalence of premodern work habits among their contemporaries was natural."

The social transformation from 1780 to 1835 signalled a transition from preindustrial to modern industrial work patterns. The replacement of family production for direct use with wage earning, the institution of time-discipline and machine regularity in place of natural rhythms, the separation of workplaces from the home, and the division of "work" from "life" were overlapping layers of the same phenomenon. . . .

Despite the changes in its social context adult women's work, for the most part, kept the traditional mode and location which both sexes had earlier shared. Men who had to accept time-discipline and specialized occupations may have begun to observe differences between their own work and that of their wives. Perhaps they focused on the remaining "premodern" aspects of women's household work: it was reassuringly comprehensible, because it responded to immediate needs; it represented not strictly "work" but "life," a way of being; and it also looked unsystematized, inefficient, nonurgent. Increasingly men did distinguish women's work from their own, in the early nineteenth century, by calling it women's "sphere," a "separate" sphere.

Women's sphere was "separate" not only because it was at home but also because it seemed to elude rationalization and the cash nexus, and to integrate labor with life. The home and occupations in it represented an alternative to the emerging pace and division of labor. Symbol and remnant of preindustrial work, perhaps the home commanded men's deepest loyalties, but these were loyalties that conflicted with "modern" forms of employment. To be idealized, yet rejected by men—the object of yearning, and yet of scorn—was the fate of the home-as-workplace. Women's work (indeed women's very character, viewed as essentially conditioned by the home) shared in that simultaneous glorification and devaluation.

Gerda Lerner **NO**

The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson

The period 1800–1840 is one in which decisive changes occurred in the status of American women. It has remained surprisingly unexplored. With the exception of a recent, unpublished dissertation by Keith Melder and the distinctive work of Elisabeth Dexter, there is a dearth of descriptive material and an almost total absence of interpretation. Yet the period offers essential clues to an understanding of later institutional developments, particularly the shape and nature of the woman's rights movement. This analysis will consider the economic, political, and social status of women and examine the changes in each area. It will also attempt an interpretation of the ideological shifts which occurred in American society concerning the "proper" role for women.

Periodization always offers difficulties. It seemed useful here, for purposes of comparison, to group women's status before 1800 roughly under the "colonial" heading and ignore the transitional and possibly atypical shifts which occurred during the American Revolution and the early period of nationhood. Also, regional differences were largely ignored. The South was left out of consideration entirely because its industrial development occurred later.

The status of colonial women has been well studied and described and can briefly be summarized for comparison with the later period. Throughout the colonial period there was a marked shortage of women, which varied with the regions and always was greatest in the frontier areas. This (from the point of view of women) favorable sex ratio enhanced their status and position. The Puritan world view regarded idleness as sin; life in an underdeveloped country made it absolutely necessary that each member of the community perform an economic function. Thus work for women, married or single, was not only approved, it was regarded as a civic duty. Puritan town councils expected single girls, widows, and unattached women to be self-supporting and for a long time provided needy spinsters with parcels of land. There was no social sanction against married women working; on the contrary, wives were expected to help their husbands in their trade and won social approval for doing extra work in or out of the home. Needy children, girls as well as boys, were indentured or apprenticed and were expected to work for their keep.

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The vast majority of women worked within their homes, where their labor produced most articles needed for the family. The entire colonial production of cloth and clothing and in part that of shoes was in the hands of women. In addition to these occupations, women were found in many different kinds of employment. They were butchers, silversmiths, gunsmiths, upholsterers. They ran mills, plantations, tan yards, shipyards, and every kind of shop, tavern and boarding house. They were gate keepers, jail keepers, sextons, journalists, printers, "doctoresses," apothecaries, midwives, nurses, and teachers. Women acquired their skills the same way as did the men, through apprenticeship training, frequently within their own families.

Absence of a dowry, ease of marriage and remarriage, and a more lenient attitude of the law with regard to women's property rights were manifestations of the improved position of wives in the colonies. Under British common law, marriage destroyed a woman's contractual capacity; she could not sign a contract even with the consent of her husband. But colonial authorities were more lenient toward the wife's property rights by protecting her dower rights in her husband's property, granting her personal clothing, and upholding prenuptial contracts between husband and wife. In the absence of the husband, colonial courts granted women "femme sole" rights, which enabled them to conduct their husband's business, sign contracts, and sue. The relative social freedom of women and the esteem in which they were held was commented upon by most early foreign travelers in America.

But economic, legal, and social status tells only part of the story. Colonial society as a whole was hierarchical, and rank and standing in society depended on the position of the men. Women did not play a determining role in the ranking pattern; they took their position in society through the men of their own family or the men they married. In other words, they participated in the hierarchy only as daughters and wives, not as individuals. Similarly, their occupations were, by and large, merely auxiliary, designed to contribute to family income, enhance their husbands' business or continue it in case of widowhood. The self-supporting spinsters were certainly the exception. The underlying assumption of colonial society was that women ought to occupy an inferior and subordinate position. The settlers had brought this assumption with them from Europe; it was reflected in their legal concepts, their willingness to exclude women from political life, their discriminatory educational practices. What is remarkable is the extent to which this felt inferiority of women was constantly challenged and modified under the impact of environment, frontier conditions, and a favorable sex ratio.

By 1840 all of American society had changed. The Revolution had substituted an egalitarian ideology for the hierarchical concepts of colonial life. Privilege based on ability rather than inherited status, upward mobility for all groups of society, and unlimited opportunities for individual self-fulfillment had become ideological goals, if not always realities. For men, that is; women were, by tacit concensus, excluded from the new democracy. Indeed their actual situation had in many respects deteriorated. While, as wives, they had benefitted from increasing wealth, urbanization, and industrialization, their role as economic producers and as political members of society differed sharply from that of men. Women's work outside of the home no longer met with social approval; on the contrary, with two notable exceptions, it was condemned. Many business and professional occupations formerly open to women were now closed, many others restricted as to training and advancement. The entry of large numbers of women into low status, low pay, and low skill industrial work had fixed such work by definition as "woman's work." Women's political status, while legally unchanged, had deteriorated relative to the advances made by men. At the same time the genteel lady of fashion had become a model of American femininity, and the definition of "woman's proper sphere" seemed narrower and more confined than ever.

Within the scope of this essay only a few of these changes can be more fully explained. The professionalization of medicine and its impact on women may serve as a typical example of what occurred in all the professions.

In colonial America there were no medical schools, no medical journals, few hospitals, and few laws pertaining to the practice of the healing arts. Clergymen and governors, barbers, quacks, apprentices, and women practiced medicine. Most practitioners acquired their credentials by reading Paracelsus and Galen and serving an apprenticeship with an established practitioner. Among the semi-trained "physics," surgeons, and healers the occasional "doctoress" was fully accepted and frequently well rewarded. County records of all the colonies contain references to the work of the female physicians. There was even a female Army surgeon, a Mrs Allyn, who served during King Philip's war. Plantation records mention by name several slave women who were granted special privileges because of their useful service as midwives and "doctoresses."

The period of the professionalization of American medicine dates from 1765, when Dr. William Shippen began his lectures on midwifery in Philadelphia. The founding of medical faculties in several colleges, the standardization of training requirements, and the proliferation of medical societies intensified during the last quarter of the 18th century. The American Revolution dramatized the need for trained medical personnel, afforded first-hand battlefield experience to a number of surgeons and brought increasing numbers of semi-trained practitioners in contact with the handful of European-trained surgeons working in the military hospitals. This was an experience from which women were excluded. The resulting interest in improved medical training, the gradual appearance of graduates of medical colleges, and the efforts of medical societies led to licensing legislation. In 1801 Maryland required all medical practitioners to be licensed; in 1806 New York enacted a similar law, followed by all but three states. This trend was reversed in the 1830s and 40s when most states repealed their licensure requirements. This was due to pressure from eclectic, homeopathic practitioners, the public's dissatisfaction with the "heroic medicine" then practiced by licensed physicians, and to the distrust of state regulation, which was widespread during the Age of Jackson. Licensure as prime proof of qualification for the practice of medicine was reinstituted in the 1870s.

In the middle of the 19th century it was not so much a license or an M.D. which marked the professional physician as it was graduation from an approved medical college, admission to hospital practice and to a network of referrals through other physicians. In 1800 there were four medical schools, in 1850, forty-two. Almost all of them excluded women from admission. Not surprisingly, women turned to eclectic schools for training. Harriot Hunt, a Boston physician, was trained by apprenticeship with a husband and wife team of homeopathic physicians. After more than twenty years of practice she attempted to enter Harvard Medical School and was repeatedly rebuffed. Elizabeth Blackwell received her M.D. from Geneva (New York) Medical College, an eclectic school. Sarah Adamson found all regular medical schools closed against her and earned an M.D. in 1851 from Central College at Syracuse, an eclectic institution. Clemence Lozier graduated from the same school two years later and went on to found the New York Medical College and Hospital for women in 1863, a homeopathic institution which was later absorbed into the Flower-Fifth Avenue Hospital.

Another way in which professionalization worked to the detriment of women can be seen in the cases of Drs. Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell, Marie Zakrzewska, and Ann Preston, who despite their M.D.s and excellent training were denied access to hospitals, were refused recognition by county medical societies, and were denied customary referrals by male colleagues. Their experiences were similar to those of most of the pioneer women physicians. Such discrimination caused the formation of alternate institutions for the training of women physicians and for hospitals in which they might treat their patients. The point here is not so much that any one aspect of the process of professionalization excluded women but that the process, which took place over the span of almost a century, proceeded in such a way as to institutionalize an exclusion of women, which had earlier been accomplished irregularly, inconsistently, and mostly by means of social pressure. The end result was an *absolute* lowering of status for all women in the medical profession and a *relative* loss. As the professional status of all physicians advanced, the status differential between male and female practitioners was more obviously disadvantageous and underscored women's marginality. Their virtual exclusion from the most prestigious and lucrative branches of the profession and their concentration in specializations relating to women and children made such disadvantaging more obvious by the end of the 19th century.

This process of pre-emption of knowledge, of institutionalization of the profession, and of legitimation of its claims by law and public acceptance is standard for the professionalization of the sciences, as George Daniels has pointed out. It inevitably results in the elimination of fringe elements from the profession. It is interesting to note that women had been pushed out of the medical profession in 16th-century Europe by a similar process. Once the public had come to accept licensing and college training as guarantees of up-to-date practice, the outsider, no matter how well qualified by years of experience, stood no chance in the competition. Women were the casualties of medical professionalization.

In the field of midwifery the results were similar, but the process was more complicated. Women had held a virtual monopoly in the profession in colonial America. In 1646 a man was prosecuted in Maine for practicing as a midwife. There are many records of well-trained midwives with diplomas from European institutions working in the colonies. In most of the colonies midwives were licensed, registered, and required to pass an examination before a board. When Dr. Shippen announced his pioneering lectures on midwifery, he did it to "combat the widespread popular prejudice against the man-midwife" and because he considered most midwives ignorant and improperly trained.

Yet he invited "those women who love virtue enough, to own their Ignorance, and apply for instruction" to attend his lectures, offering as an inducement the assurance that female pupils would be taught privately. It is not known if any midwives availed themselves of the opportunity.

Technological advances, as well as scientific, worked against the interests of female midwives. In 16th-century Europe the invention and use of obstetrical forceps had for three generations been the well-kept secret of the Chamberlen family and had greatly enhanced their medical practice. Hugh Chamberlen was forced by circumstances to sell the secret to the Medical College in Amsterdam, which in turn transmitted the precious knowledge to licensed physicians only. By the time the use of the instrument became widespread it had become associated with male physicians and male midwives. Similarly in America, introduction of the obstetrical forceps was associated with the practice of male midwives and served to their advantage. By the end of the 18th century a number of male physicians advertised their practice of midwifery. Shortly thereafter female midwives also resorted to advertising, probably in an effort to meet the competition. By the early 19th century male physicians had virtually monopolized the practice of midwifery on the Eastern seaboard. True to the generally delayed economic development in the Western frontier regions, female midwives continued to work on the frontier until a much later period. It is interesting to note that the concepts of "propriety" shifted with the prevalent practice. In 17th-century Maine the attempt of a man to act as a midwife was considered outrageous and illegal; in mid-19th-century America the suggestion that women should train as midwives and physicians was considered equally outrageous and improper.

Professionalization, similar to that in medicine with the elimination of women from the upgraded profession, occurred in the field of law. Before 1750, when law suits were commonly brought to the courts by the plaintiffs themselves or by deputies without specialized legal training, women as well as men could and did act as "attorneys-in-fact." When the law became a paid profession and trained lawyers took over litigation, women disappeared from the court scene for over a century.

A similar process of shrinking opportunities for women developed in business and in the retail trades. There were fewer female storekeepers and business women in the 1830s than there had been in colonial days. There was also a noticeable shift in the kind of merchandise handled by them. Where previously women could be found running almost every kind of retail shop, after 1830 they were mostly found in businesses which served women only.

The only fields in which professionalization did not result in the elimination of women from the upgraded profession were nursing and teaching. Both were characterized by a severe shortage of labor. Nursing lies outside the field of this inquiry since it did not become an organized profession until after the Civil War. Before then it was regarded peculiarly as a woman's occupation, although some of the hospitals and the Army during wars employed male nurses. These bore the stigma of low skill, low status, and low pay. Generally, nursing was regarded as simply an extension of the unpaid services performed by the housewife—a characteristic attitude that haunts the profession to this day.

Education seems, at first glance, to offer an entirely opposite pattern from that of the other professions. In colonial days women had taught "Dame schools" and grade schools during summer sessions. Gradually, as educational opportunities for girls expanded, they advanced just a step ahead of their students. Professionalization of teaching occurred between 1820 and 1860, a period marked by a sharp increase in the number of women teachers. The spread of female seminaries, academies, and normal schools provided new opportunities for the training and employment of female teachers.

This trend, which runs counter to that found in the other professions, can be accounted for by the fact that women filled a desperate need created by the challenge of the common schools, the ever-increasing size of the student body, and the westward growth of the nation. America was committed to educating its children in public schools, but it was insistent on doing so as cheaply as possible. Women were available in great numbers, and they were willing to work cheaply. The result was another ideological adaptation: in the very period when the gospel of the home as woman's only proper sphere was preached most loudly, it was discovered that women were the natural teachers of youth, could do the job better than men, and were to be preferred for such employment. This was always provided, of course, that they would work at the proper wage differential—30 to 50 per cent of the wages paid male teachers was considered appropriate. The result was that in 1888 in the country as a whole 63 per cent of all teachers were women, while the figure for the cities only was 90.04 per cent.

It appeared in the teaching field, as it would in industry, that role expectations were adaptable provided the inferior status group filled a social need. The inconsistent and peculiar patterns of employment of black labor in the present-day market bear out the validity of this generalization.

There was another field in which the labor of women was appreciated and which they were urged to enter—industry. From Alexander Hamilton to Matthew Carey and Tench Coxe, advocates of industrialization sang the praises of the working girl and advanced arguments in favor of her employment. The social benefits of female labor particularly stressed were those bestowed upon her family, who now no longer had to support her. Working girls were "thus happily preserved from idleness and its attendant vices and crimes," and the whole community benefitted from their increased purchasing power.

American industrialization, which occurred in an underdeveloped economy with a shortage of labor, depended on the labor of women and children. Men were occupied with agricultural work and were not available or were unwilling to enter the factories. This accounts for the special features of the early development of the New England textile industry: the relatively high wages, the respectability of the job and relatively high status of the mill girls, the patriarchal character of the model factory towns, and the temporary mobility of women workers from farm to factory and back again to farm. All this was characteristic only of a limited area and of a period of about two decades. By the late 1830s the romance had worn off: immigration had supplied a strongly competitive, permanent work force willing to work for subsistence wages; early efforts at trade union organization had been shattered, and mechanization had turned semi-skilled factory labor into unskilled labor. The process led to the replacement of the New England-born farm girls by immigrants in the mills and was accompanied by a loss of status and respectability for female workers.

The lack of organized social services during periods of depression drove ever greater numbers of women into the labor market. At first, inside the factories distinctions between men's and women's jobs were blurred. Men and women were assigned to machinery on the basis of local need. But as more women entered industry the limited number of occupations open to them tended to increase competition among them, thus lowering pay standards. Generally, women regarded their work as temporary and hesitated to invest in apprenticeship training, because they expected to marry and raise families. Thus they remained untrained, casual labor and were soon, by custom, relegated to the lowest paid, least skilled jobs. Long hours, overwork, and poor working conditions would characterize women's work in industry for almost a century.

Another result of industrialization was in increasing differences in life styles between women of different classes. When female occupations, such as carding, spinning, and weaving, were transferred from home to factory, the poorer women followed their traditional work and became industrial workers. The women of the middle and upper classes could use their newly gained time for leisure pursuits: they became ladies. And a small but significant group among them chose to prepare themselves for professional careers by advanced education. This group would prove to be the most vocal and troublesome in the near future.

As class distinctions sharpened, social attitudes toward women became polarized. The image of "the lady" was elevated to the accepted ideal of femininity toward which all women would strive. In this formulation of values lower-class women were simply ignored. The actual lady was, of course, nothing new on the American scene; she had been present ever since colonial days. What was new in the 1830s was the cult of the lady, her elevation to a status symbol. The advancing prosperity of the early 19th century made it possible for middle-class women to aspire to the status formerly reserved for upper-class women. The "cult of true womanhood" of the 1830s became a vehicle for such aspirations. Mass circulation newspapers and magazines made it possible to teach every woman how to elevate the status of her family by setting "proper" standards of behavior, dress, and literary tastes. *Godey's Lady's Book* and innumerable gift books and tracts of the period all preach the same gospel of "true womanhood"—piety, purity, domesticity. Those unable to reach the goal of becoming ladies were to be satisfied with the lesser goal—acceptance of their "proper place" in the home.

It is no accident that the slogan “woman’s place is in the home” took on a certain aggressiveness and shrillness precisely at the time when increasing numbers of poorer women *left* their homes to become factory workers. Working women were not a fit subject for the concern of publishers and mass media writers. Idleness, once a disgrace in the eyes of society, had become a status symbol. Thorstein Veblen, one of the earliest and sharpest commentators on the subject, observed that it had become almost the sole social function of the lady “to put in evidence her economic unit’s ability to pay.” She was “a means of conspicuously unproductive expenditure,” devoted to displaying her husband’s wealth. Just as the cult of white womanhood in the South served to preserve a labor and social system based on race distinctions, so did the cult of the lady in an egalitarian society serve as a means of preserving class distinctions. Where class distinctions were not so great, as on the frontier, the position of women was closer to what it had been in colonial days; their economic contribution was more highly valued, their opportunities were less restricted, and their positive participation in community life was taken for granted.

In the urbanized and industrialized Northeast the life experience of middle-class women was different in almost every respect from that of the lower-class women. But there was one thing the society lady and the mill girl had in common—they were equally disfranchised and isolated from the vital centers of power. Yet the political status of women had not actually deterioriated. With very few exceptions women had neither voted nor stood for office during the colonial period. Yet the spread of the franchise to ever wider groups of white males during the Jacksonian age, the removal of property restrictions, the increasing numbers of immigrants who acquired access to the franchise, made the gap between these new enfranchised voters and the disfranchised women more obvious. Quite naturally, educated and propertied women felt this deprivation more keenly. Their own career expectations had been encouraged by widening educational opportunities; their consciousness of their own abilities and of their potential for power had been enhanced by their activities in the reform movements of the 1830s; the general spirit of upward mobility and venturesome entrepreneurship that pervaded the Jacksonian era was infectious. But in the late 1840s a sense of acute frustration enveloped these educated and highly spirited women. Their rising expectations had met with frustration, their hopes had been shattered; they were bitterly conscious of a relative lowering of status and a loss of position. This sense of frustration led them to action; it was one of the main factors in the rise of the woman’s rights movement.

The women, who at the first woman’s rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 declared boldly and with considerable exaggeration that “the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her,” did not speak for the truly exploited and abused working woman. As a matter of fact, they were largely ignorant of her condition and, with the notable exception of Susan B. Anthony, indifferent to her fate. But they judged from the realities of their own life experience. Like most revolutionaries, they were not the most downtrodden but rather the most status-deprived group. Their frustrations and traditional isolation from political power funneled their discontent into fairly utopian declarations and immature organizational means. They would learn better in the long, hard decades of practical struggle. Yet it is their initial emphasis on the legal and political "disabilities" of women which has provided the framework for most of the historical work on women.[1] For almost a hundred years sympathetic historians have told the story of women in America by deriving from the position of middle-class women a generalization concerning all American women. To avoid distortion, any valid generalization concerning American women after the 1830s should reflect a recognition of class stratification.

For lower-class women the changes brought by industrialization were actually advantageous, offering income and advancement opportunities, however limited, and a chance for participation in the ranks of organized labor.[2] They, by and large, tended to join men in their struggle for economic advancement and became increasingly concerned with economic gains and protective labor legislation. Middle- and upper-class women, on the other hand, reacted to actual and fancied status deprivation by increasing militancy and the formation of organizations for woman's rights, by which they meant especially legal and property rights.

The four decades preceding the Seneca Falls Convention were decisive in the history of American women. They brought an actual deterioration in the economic opportunities open to women, a relative deterioration in their political status, and a rising level of expectation and subsequent frustration in a privileged elite group of educated women. It was in these decades that the values and beliefs that clustered around the assertion "Woman's place is in the home" changed from being descriptive of an existing reality to becoming an ideology. "The cult of true womanhood" extolled woman's predominance in the domestic sphere, while it tried to justify women's exclusion from the public domain, from equal education and from participation in the political process by claims to tradition, universality, and a history dating back to antiquity, or at least to the *Mayflower.* In a century of modernization and industrialization women alone were to remain unchanging, embodying in their behavior and attitudes the longing of men and women caught in rapid social change for a mythical archaic past of agrarian family self-sufficiency. In pre-industrial America the home was indeed the workplace for both men and women, although the self-sufficiency of the American yeoman, whose economic well-being depended on a network of international trade and mercantilism, was even then more apparent than real. In the 19th and 20th centuries the home was turned into the realm of woman, while the workplace became the public domain of men. The ideology of "woman's sphere" sought to upgrade women's domestic function by elaborating the role of mother, turning the domestic drudge into a "homemaker" and charging her with elevating her family's status by her exercise of consumer functions and by her display of her own and her family's social graces. These prescribed roles never *were* a reality. In the 1950s Betty Friedan would describe this ideology and rename it "the feminine mystique," but it was no other than the myth of "woman's proper sphere" created in the 1840s and updated by consumerism and the misunderstood dicta of Freudian psychology.

The decades 1800–1840 also provide the clues to an understanding of the institutional shape of the later women's organizations. These would be led by middle-class women whose self-image, life experience, and ideology had largely been fashioned and influenced by these early, transitional years. The concerns of middle-class women—property rights, the franchise, and moral uplift—would dominate the woman's rights movement. But side by side with it, and at times cooperating with it, would grow a number of organizations serving the needs of working women.

American women were the largest disfranchised group in the nation's history, and they retained this position longer than any other group. Although they found ways of making their influence felt continuously, not only as individuals but as organized groups, power eluded them. The mill girl and the lady, both born in the age of Jackson, would not gain access to power until they learned to cooperate, each for her own separate interests. It would take almost six decades before they would find common ground. The issue around which they finally would unite and push their movement to victory was the "impractical and utopian" demand raised at Seneca Falls—the means to power in American society—female suffrage.

Notes

1. To the date of the first printing of this article (1969).
2. In 1979, I would not agree with this optimistic generalization.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Did the Industrial Revolution Provide More Economic Opportunities for Women in the 1830s?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. List the changes that took place in politics, religion, agriculture, city living, and work in the United States from 1790 to 1840. With such rapid changes taking place, how was it possible for the roles of middle-class women and children to withdraw into an autonomous family life in the 1830s?
2. Describe the component parts of "the cult of domesticity" or "the cult of motherhood." In your answer, consider the roles of mother, father, and children within the ideal middle-class family of the 1830s.
3. Explain how this idealization of womanhood widened the gap between professional and working class women.
4. Explain how the professionalization of medicine, law, and business hurt women in these professions.
5. Explain why teaching and nursing became women's professions.
6. What impact did the maturing of American capitalism have on the American family?
7. What economic forces propelled women both outside the family and within the home?
8. Critically analyze Professor E. P. Thompson's distinction between the task orientation framework in an agricultural artisanal society with "time-discipline" required under industrial capitalism.
9. Describe the "putting-out" or "given-out" system in industry. Compare how this system differed from the time-oriented discipline factory system.
10. Explain why a handful of "ladies" became female reformers. What were some of their causes and why did the gap remain between nineteenth-century feminists and factory women protesters?
11. Why does Professor Cott consider the emergence of the cult of motherhood and the modernization of American life to be a major paradox if not an outright contradiction? Critically discuss.

Is There Common Ground?

Try to validate the concept of the "cult of motherhood" which Barbara Welter proposed in her seminal article. In the ideal middle-class world, the mother stays home, the children attend school, and the father works in the new industrial world. Was this ideal true for middle-class white women? What about the two-income working class whites, white immigrants, and non-whites before and after the Civil War? Do we need new frameworks to discuss the reality of these women's experiences? For an example of how fluid free and slave women's labor could be in the pre-Civil War South, see Stephanie McCurry, "Producing Dependence: Women, Work and Yeoman Households in Low-Country South Carolina," Chapter 3, in *Neither Lady nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, eds., Susanna Delfina and Michele Gilespie (University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Nancy Cott sees the 1830s as both "a turning point in women's economic participation, public activities, and social visability. . . . At the same time, an emphatic sentence of domesticity was pronounced for women." Is this different from Gerda Lerner who sees declining opportunities for the "lady" and the "mill girl," or are the two historians merely coming at the industrial revolution's impact in the 1830s from two different perspectives? Readers might want to apply the British historian E. P. Thompson's distinction between "a task oriented" agricultural/artisanal economy and a "time-discipline" framework in an industrial factory system. Does this apply to the world of the New England female textile workers of the 1830s? Has this distinction broken down in the post-industrial work world of today?

Students might try to draw up a new chronological history of American women that may or may not parallel the traditional political/military/economic mainstream framework. Where do the experiences converge, where are they different? For help in reconceptualizing, see Joan W. Scott, "Is Gender a Useful Category of Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986).

Additional Resources

The bibliography on women's history is enormous. A critical analysis of "the cult of motherhood" as a framework of analysis can be found in Linda K. Kerber's "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History,* 75/1 (June 1988), 9–39 reprinted in *Toward An Intellectual History of Women* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Two excellent textbooks on women's history with extensive bibliographies are Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: a History of Women in America* (The Free Press, 1989), and Nancy Woloch, *Woman and the American Experience,* 2nd ed. (McGraw Hill, 1994).

The essays in this issue deal with white middle-class women. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, have pulled together an excellent collection of essays and primary sources that focus on working-class women, as well as immigrants and non-white minority groups—African Americans, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans—in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol Du Bois, eds.*, Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U. S. Women's History,* 3rd ed. (Routledge, 1990). For an example of the immigrants who succeeded the "Daughters of Freemen" at the Lowell mills, see Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters* *in America; Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983). Finally, Nancy Cott et al. have collected some important primary sources of women from colonial times to 1900 in *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women*, 2nd ed. (Northeastern University Press, 1996).

The women who worked in the New England mills of the 1830s were part of a broader economic movement termed by historians as "the market revolution." When this began and who took part is the subject of historical debate. The starting point with a good summary of the arguments along with an extensive bibliography is John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Internet References . . .

Birth of a Nation & Antebellum America

This site, maintained by Mike Madin, provides links to a wide assortment of topics from the early national and antebellum eras.

http://www.academicinfo.net/usindnew.html

Reform and Reformers in the Antebellum Era

This page from the George Mason University website includes a summary essay by Professor Nancy Hewitt and links to six primary documents, each relating to a different reform initiative of the period.

http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/274

The Descendents of Mexican War Veterans

An excellent source for the history of the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), which includes images, primary documents, and maps.

http://www.dmwv.org/mexwar/mexwar1.htm

John Brown's Holy War

This site was developed to complement the Public Broadcasting System's program on John Brown. It includes interactive maps, information on many of Brown's abolitionist acquaintances, links to virtual tours of the farmhouse where Brown and his followers gathered prior to the Harpers Ferry raid, as well as the transcript of the video itself.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown

UNIT 3

Antebellum America

Pressures and trends that began building in the early years of the American nation continued to gather momentum until conflict was almost inevitable. Population growth and territorial expansion brought the country into conflict with other nations. The United States had to respond to challenges from Americans who felt alienated from or forgotten by the new nation because the ideals of human rights and democratic participation that guided the founding of the nation had been applied only to selected segments of the population.

- Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?
- Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism?
- Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?

ISSUE 11

Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?

YES: W. J. Rorabaugh, from *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1979)

NO: John J. Rumbarger, from *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (State University of New York Press, 1989)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Understand the forces that produced an "age of reform" in the first half of the nineteenth century.
- Discuss the connection between religion and social reform in the first half of the nineteenth century.
- Evaluate the economic arguments that promoted attacks on American drinking habits.
- Analyze ways in which temperance reform represented a mechanism of social control over undesirable individual behavior.
- Differentiate between the goals of "temperance," "abstinence," and "prohibition."

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: W. J. Rorabaugh points out that in the first half of the nineteenth century evangelical Christian ministers portrayed liquor as the tool of the Devil and developed temperance societies as socializing institutions to ease social tensions and anxieties that contributed to alcohol consumption.

NO: John J. Rumbarger concludes that nineteenth-century temperance reform was the product of a pro-capitalist market economy whose entrepreneurial elite led the way toward abstinence and prohibition campaigns in order to guarantee the availability of a more productive work force.

In the era following the War of 1812, several dramatic changes occurred in the United States. Andrew Jackson's military triumph over the British at the Battle of New Orleans generated a wave of nationalistic sentiment in the country, even though the victory had come two weeks *after* the Treaty of Ghent officially ended the conflict with England. The republic experienced important territorial expansion with the addition of new states in each of the half-dozen years following the end of the war. A "transportation revolution" produced a turnpike, canal, and railroad network that brought Americans closer together and enhanced the opportunities for economic growth. In politics, the demise of the nation's first two-party system, following the decline of the Federalists, was succeeded by the rise to prominence of the Democratic and, later, the Whig Parties.

Although some historians have characterized this period as the "era of good feelings," it is important to remember that many Americans were aware that the nation was not without its problems. Drawing upon intellectual precepts associated with the Enlightenment, some citizens believed in the necessity of and potential for perfecting American society. Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the sense of mission felt by many nineteenth-century men and women when he wrote: "What is man for but to be a Re-former, a Re-maker of what man has made; a renouncer of lies; a restorer of truth and good, imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all, and which sleeps no moment on an old past, but every hour repairs herself, yielding to us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life?" These ideas were reinforced by the encouragement for moral and spiritual perfection produced by the revival movement known as the Second Great Awakening. Significantly, revivalists like Charles G. Finney combined a desire to promote salvation through faith and spiritual conversion with an active interest in social change.

This "age of reform" was a multifaceted and often interrelated movement. Reformers, most of who were from the middle and upper classes, hoped to improve the condition of inmates in the country's prisons and asylums or to encourage temperance or even total abstinence from drinking. Some reformers emphasized the necessity of maintaining peace in the world, while others hoped to improve the educational system for the masses. Still others directed their energies into movements emphasizing clothing reform for women or dietary reform. Finally, large numbers of Americans sought stimulate human progress through campaigns to improve the status of women and to eliminate slavery.

Thousands of Americans belonged to one or more of these antebellum reform societies, but some controversy exists as to the motivations of these reformers. Were they driven by humanitarian impulses that surfaced in the reinvigorated American republic after 1815? Or was it merely self-interest that encouraged middle- and upper-class Americans to attempt to order society in such a way as to preserve their positions of power? Who were these reformers, and what were their strategies and goals for improving the society in which Americans lived?

Much of the scholarly writing pertaining to the "age of reform" represents a response to the path-breaking compendium published by Alice Felt

Tyler over 65 years ago. Her study, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (University of Minnesota Press, 1944), offered the thesis that antebellum reformers were motivated largely by humanitarian ideals and hoped to perfect American society. These impulses, Tyler claimed, stemmed from America's democratic spirit and the evangelical sentiment produced by the Second Great Awakening. In the following decade, other scholars began to suggest other explanations for why nineteenth-century American reformers responded as they did. For example, David Donald, in his influential essay "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1956) concluded that abolitionists were responding to a society in which power had shifted into the hands of slave owners and industrialists, thereby depriving them of leadership positions. Their crusade against slavery, then, was part of a "status revolt" designed to create for these reformers a new leadership niche and a sense of personal fulfillment.

Another significant interpretation of the antebellum reformers comes from the "social-control" school of thought. Drawing upon the works of Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman, Howard Becker, Thomas Szasz, and others, these scholars characterize American reformers as being more interested in serving their own interests than in providing assistance to mankind. As a result, middle- and upper-class reformers responding to momentous changes within their society (the same types of changes described by Donald) imposed their standards of morality and order on the lower classes and, thus, denied the latter group freedom to act as a diverse set of individuals.

Ronald G. Walters, in *American Reformers, 1815–1860* (Hill and Wang, 1978), concludes that although many nineteenth-century reformers expressed sentiments that were self-serving and bigoted, their motivations were not based entirely upon a desire to control the lower classes. Rather, reformers were convinced that improvements could and should be made to help people.

The following essays address these varying interpretations from the perspective of those involved in the efforts to moderate or abolish the consumption of alcohol in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In the YES selection, W. J. Rorabaugh insists that religious practices and temperance both were responses to the same set of underlying social tensions and anxieties. He describes a temperance movement that was launched around 1810 by evangelical Calvinist ministers who advocated religious faith as a cure for the consumption of "demon rum." Camp meeting revivals, says Rorabaugh, focused on religious conversion in general while also targeting the conversion of alcoholics, and temperance societies served as important "moral machines" and socializing agents for the nation.

In the NO selection, John J. Rumbarger argues that American temperance reform was grounded in a market economy in which employers sought to impose limits on the traditional drinking habits of their employees as a means of improving the productive capacity of their work force. Temperance reform, according to Rumbarger, became a political effort to create a social order congenial to entrepreneurial capitalism.

YES **W. J. Rorabaugh**

The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition

Demon Rum

During the 1820s per capita consumption of spirituous liquor climbed, then quite suddenly leveled off, and in the early 1830s began to plummet toward an unprecedented low. This decline marked a significant change in American culture, as a zestful, hearty drinking people became the world's most zealous abstainers. Just why this dramatic change took place is not entirely clear, due at least in part to the fact that historians who have studied the temperance movement have not analyzed it adequately. . . .

The antiliquor campaign was launched about 1810 by a number of reform-minded ministers, who were evangelical Calvinists associated with the newly founded Andover Seminary. Indeed, it appears that the movement began at one of a series of Monday night gatherings where Justin Edwards, Moses Stuart, Leonard Woods, and Ebenezer Porter met in the latter's study to discuss social questions. Early fruits of this Andover meeting were a number of militant antiliquor articles in Jeremiah Evarts' *Panoplist*, a Boston religious periodical with strong Andover ties. These articles were followed in 1814 by a seminal temperance pamphlet issued by Andover's New England Tract Society. This pamphlet was widely used by ministers to prepare sermons opposing the use of alcohol. The founders of the movement soon discovered that their cause had broad appeal, and when the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance was organized in 1812, its leaders included not only the Andover crowd but such prominent figures as Abiel Abbot, Jedidiah Morse, and Samuel Worcester. Within the next two decades these clergymen and others who subsequently joined them spread their message across the country.

Militant moral reformers succeeded in attracting public attention. A populace that had not responded to Benjamin Rush's rational warnings that spirits brought disease and death was captivated by emotional, moral exhortations warning that the drinker would be damned. The success of this emotional appeal shows clearly that Americans were more receptive to a moral argument against liquor than to a scientific argument. To persuade people to quit drinking, temperance leaders used two techniques. On the one hand, they advocated religious faith as a way for people to ease the anxieties that led to drink; on the other hand, they made drinking itself the source of anxieties

From *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* by W. J. Rorabaugh, (Oxford University Press, 1979). Copyright © 1979 by Oxford University Press. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press (USA).

by portraying liquor as the agent of the devil. Those Americans who were persuaded that Satan assumed "the shape of a bottle of spirits" found that liquor did more to increase anxieties than to lessen them. Such people preferred abstinence to alcohol.

The leaders of the temperance crusade created a significant socializing institution, the temperance society. These "moral machines" were established in many villages and towns following a visit from an agent of a state or national temperance organization. An agent commonly wrote ahead to the ministers of a town to seek support for the cause. He then visited the town, gave a public address in one of the churches, and urged the clergymen and leading citizens to form a temperance society. The agent furnished a model constitution for such an organization, blessed the project; and proceeded to the next town. If successful, he left behind a concern about drinking and a group of prominent local people who would organize a society, adopt a constitution, write a pledge against drinking intoxicants, and undertake to get members of the community to sign it. Copies of the pledge were circulated among friends and neighbors, and new signers were initiated at monthly meetings where members congratulated themselves on the strength and vigor of their organization. When a temperance society had gathered sufficient popular support, it might plan to celebrate a holiday, such as the 4th of July, with a dry parade, picnic, or public speech designed to counter traditional wet festivities. These celebrations did not always succeed. Sometimes rival wet and dry programs sparked controversy, and at least one temperance group fought a pitched battle with its opponents. What is more surprising is how often temperance societies came to dominate the life of a town. Perhaps the best indication of their strength and influence is the fact that in some localities drinkers felt sufficiently threatened to form antitemperance societies. . . .

While the campaign against alcohol was of benefit to expansionary industrialism, it also met the needs of a growing religious movement. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century the influence of religion on American life had declined, the victim of Revolutionary chaos, a loss of English subsidies to the Episcopal church, popular distrust of authority, and the prevailing ideology of Reason. After 1800 the situation changed, and Americans, particularly those on the frontier, began to take a new interest in religion. The preachers soon saw that the Lord intended them to lead a great revival, to cleanse the nation of sin and to prepare for judgment, which might well be at hand. Some, especially the Methodist preachers, organized camp meeting revivals, where hordes of people pitched their tents, gathered for days on end, listened to numerous exhortations from a host of ministers, and were converted by the dozens amid frenzy and emotion. At one such meeting in Tennessee, "hundreds, of all ages and colors, were stretched on the ground in the agonies of conviction. . . ."

Camp meetings became one of the focal points of frontier life, attracting not only those who sought salvation but also curiousity seekers, scoundrels, and scoffers. Troublemakers often crept along the edges of the camp, threatening to steal provisions, shouting obscenities, and drinking. These intoxicated scoffers presented the leaders of a revival with a dilemma. If they posted sentinels to protect the camp and bar entry, the rowdies would taunt them from the darkness of the forest. Moreover, such a policy precluded what could be the highlight of the meeting, the dramatic and inspiring conversion of a drunkard. On the other hand, if half-drunk rowdies were admitted, they might heckle or even try to force whiskey down the throat of an abstaining minister. In either case a preacher must be ever vigilant, like the incomparable Peter Cartwright. Once that pious Methodist swung a club to knock a mischief-maker off his horse; another time he stole the rowdies' whiskey. On a third occasion he drove off troublemakers by hurling chunks of a camp fire at them. As he threw the burning wood, he shouted that fire and brimstone would descend upon the wicked. Sometimes, however, the antagonists had their joke. The Reverend Joseph Thomas was horrified when several intoxicated men, having joined the celebration of the Lord's Supper, produced a loaf of bread and a bottle of spirits.

These conditions led frontier revivalists to preach sermons contrasting the defiant, unrepentant drinker with the pietistic, humble churchgoer. The consumer of alcohol was portrayed as a man of depravity and wickedness, and this idea was supported both by the presence of rowdies at camp meetings and by the emergence of a religious doctrine that demanded abstinence. Although most denominations had long condemned public drunkenness as sinful, it was revivalistic Methodists who most vigorously opposed alcohol. After 1790 the Methodist Church adopted rules that imposed strict limitations on the use of distilled spirits. In 1816 the quadrennial general conference barred ministers from distilling or selling liquor; in 1828 it praised the temperance movement; and in 1832 it urged total abstinence from all intoxicants. A similar rise in opposition occurred among Presbyterians. In 1812 their official body ordered ministers to preach against intoxication; in 1827 it pledged the church to support the temperance movement, in 1829 expressed regret that church members continued to distill, retail, or consume distilled spirits, and in 1835 recommended teetotalism.

This increased hostility to drink showed the impact of the camp meetings and revivals upon all sects. Even conservative Congregationalists and Presbyterians were, in the words of one evangelical, moving "from the labyrinth of Calvinism . . . into the rich pastures of gospelliberty." Ministers of these denominations were relieved, after a long period of religious quiescence, to find people thirsting for salvation. Although theological conservatives tried to bend the enthusiasm for revivals to their own interest, they were less successful than the Methodists, whose feverish, anti-intellectual, nondoctrinal spirit was most in harmony with the national mood. To compete in winning converts, conservative ministers were compelled to adopt an evangelical style that the public demanded and to subordinate doctrine to the task of winning hearts.

Ministers of many denominations followed the lead of the Methodists, who preached that a man was saved when he opened his heart unto the Lord. This simple doctrine appealed to millions of Americans, but it also endangered religious authority, for the concept of personal salvation meant that it was impossible for an outsider, even a preacher, to know whether a man had actually received saving grace. A man might either claim salvation falsely or believe it mistakenly. The possibility of deceit or delusion so haunted evangelical clergymen that most came to believe that salvation was only likely when inner feelings were matched by outer deeds. When a man claimed grace, the preacher looked for a visible proof of conversion, an indication of true faith and allegiance, a token of the renunciation of sin and acceptance of the Lord.

One visible outward sign of inner light was abstinence from alcoholic beverages. A man reborn of God had no need to drink spirits, since his radiant love for the Lord would fully satisfy him. Conversely, concluded one minister, "we may set it down as a probable sign of a false conversion, if he allows himself to *taste a single drop*." In the same vein it was held that a drinking man could not give himself to God; his drinking confirmed his hardness of heart; he was damned of God, because he would not save himself. Warned one clergyman, "Few intemperate men ever repent." This view led evangelicals to see alcohol as the devil's agent, the insidious means by which men were lured into Satan's works, such as gaming, theft, and debauchery and, worse still, trapped and cut off from their own eternal salvation. Said one preacher, "From the United States, then, what an army of drunkards reel into Hell each year!"

Not all Americans adopted the view that abstinence signified holiness and that drinking was damnable. Among the most prominent opponents of the temperance cause were the primitive Baptists, sometimes called Hard Shells or Forty Gallon Baptists. They were antinomians who believed that faith alone insured salvation and that the demand for proof of faith, such as requiring abstinence, was blasphemous. Indeed, some held that abstinence was sinful, because "God gave the spirit in the fruit of grain, and the ability to extract and decoct it, and then he gave them the inclination to drink." Furthermore, they believed that temperance organizations, like home missions, Sunday schools, and moral tract societies, threatened the purity of religion by involving the church in social problems that were best left to secular authority. Doctrine, however, may not have been the most important reason for this sect's opposition to temperance, for it was claimed that their illiterate preachers were "engaged largely in making and selling whisky." In any event, many primitive Baptist congregations expelled a member either for public intoxication or for joining a temperance society. This bifurcated policy led one exasperated man to bring a flask before his church board and ask, "How much of this 'ere critter does a man have to drink to stay in full fellership in this church?"

Most Americans, however, did accept abstinence as a sign of grace. During the late 1820s religious fervor peaked in a wave of revivals that swept across the country, that brought large numbers of new members into old congregations, and that led to the establishment of many new churches. This period of rising interest in religion coincided with the first popular success of the campaign against alcohol. The two were inexorably linked. In many localities revivals were held, church rosters bulged, and then six months or a year later temperance societies were organized. If this pattern had been universal, we could conclude that antiliquor sentiment was an outgrowth of religious enthusiasm, that the signing of a pledge was nothing more than proof of conversion, a symbolic act with no significance of its own. In some places, however the establishment of temperance societies preceded the revivals, a pattern that suggests a different interpretation of the relationship between abstinence and holiness. It appears that some Americans rejected liquor for secular reasons and only afterward turned to religion. The prevalence of both patterns indicates that temperance and revivalism were not causally connected. I would argue, rather, that they were interwoven because both were responses to the same underlying social tensions and anxieties.

We have already seen how the stresses of rapid change had made Americans anxious, how the failure to implement Revolutionary ideals of equality and liberty had heightened that anxiety, and how the decay of traditional institutions had left citizens of the young republic with few orderly outlets for their emotions, few acceptable means of satisfying their emotional needs. Under such circumstances many Americans had turned to strong drink, but they found alcohol emotionally unsatisfying. Then came the revivals and the temperance movement, which offered Americans new ways to resolve tensions, reduce fears, and organize their emotional impulses. The camp meeting, the evangelical church, and the. temperance society were institutions that provided new mechanisms for coping with frustrations and for controlling, structuring, rationalizing, and channeling emotions. "It is *religion,*" declared one tract, ". . . which alone contains in it the seeds of social order and stability, and which alone can make us happy and preserve us so." Both evangelical religion and the temperance cause encouraged people to subordinate emotions to rational, institutional processes. In my view the inexorable link between holiness and abstinence was that both called for emotions to be expressed and controlled, and at times repressed, within an orderly, institutional framework. . . .

Misdirection of energies is common among moral crusaders, since principled and well-intentioned leaders are often self-deluded and unable to perceive their goals objectively. Temperance advocates did not comprehend their own arrogance in attempting to impose their views upon segments of the populace that were hostile, nor did they understand that effective moral codes must develop out of a social consensus, that they cannot be dictated by an elite group that seeks reform. The cry for abstinence was an attempt to cement the broken fragments of American society, but the leaders of the temperance movement could never gain the kind of unanimous consent that would have been necessary for the success of the cause. In another, broader sense the failure of the reformers to persuade all Americans to forego alcoholic beverages voluntarily was inevitable because of a peculiarity of evangelical religion. Since abstinence was the creed of those converted to godliness, universal salvation would have insured its triumph. Such unanimity, however, would have undermined revivalistic religion, whose vitality demanded a steady flow of repentant sinners. The damned drunkard was essential to the cause. On the other hand, if abstinence were not universal, this failure to achieve complete success would show that evangelical religion was not able to improve public morals greatly and would doom the idea of temperance as a consensual social value.

Antiliquor crusaders never understood these contradictions. Instead, they emerged from each bitter clash with their enemies determined to escalate the war against alcohol in order to achieve final success. And, of course, in one sense they were right; only escalation of their efforts could keep attention focused on their goal of a dry America and obscure the contradictions inherent in their position. During the 1830s, when new pledges began to fall off, reformers turned to attacking beer and wine and proving that the wine used in the biblical accounts of the Christian sacrament was the unfermented pure wine of the grape—i.e., grape juice. Not everyone was convinced. The failure of exhortation to procure universal teetotalism led to a campaign for legal prohibition, which brought about local option licensing in the 1840s, state prohibition in the 1850s, and, ultimately, in 1919, the national constitutional prohibition of all intoxicating liquor. Each effort failed to achieve the universal abstinence that reformers sought. Again and again it was demonstrated that those who believed in abstinence could not succeed in imposing their own view of morality upon that portion of the population that did not share their vision. In 1838, when Massachusetts outlawed the retail sale of distilled spirits, Yankee ingenuity triumphed. An enterprising liquor dealer painted stripes on his pig and advertized that for 6¢ a person could see this decorated beast. The viewer also got a free glass of whiskey. Such ploys spurred a hurried repeal of the nation's first prohibition law.

The moral of the striped pig was that a belief in temperance was only one component of the American ethos. This moral was lost on antiliquor zealots, who attempted to transcend the contradictions within American society with a combination of religious fervor, postponed gratification, and promises of heavenly rewards. While the faithful found these ideas appealing, others chose to forego religious commitment for the pursuit of economic gain. They were led to a kind of pragmatism that stressed industrialization, materialism, and progress. As worldly success became the counterweight to reform, the chance for Americans to develop a consensual, holistic ethos that would serve them during the period of industrialization was lost. Some, such as abolitionist John Brown, would lapse into self-deluding fanaticism; others, such as Wall Street stock manipulator Daniel Drew, into self-destructive cynicism. Most Americans would be content with a contradictory mixture of morality and materialism that would be mindlessly played out in the years ahead. The heroes of the next generation would be entrepreneurs like Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had so few scruples that he could ignore his avaricious and rapacious pursuit of millions and without embarrassment deliver public lectures on virtue. Somehow, despite his utter baseness, Vanderbilt was more admirable than a hypocritical Henry Ward Beecher, who preached against sin while facing charges of adultery. In the years after the Civil War the hope for financial gain overshadowed the search for righteousness, although neither quest could express all the contrary desires of Americans. The times favored men such as Vanderbilt, who ignored principles, followed instincts, and subordinated both his head and his heart to his gut.

In my view the kind of society that Americans built in the nineteenth century resulted both from the way that ideology and institutions interacted with changing contemporary conditions and from the way in which society itself evolved as a consequence of those interactions. Just as historical circumstances and economic developments had led to the opportunity for increased drinking in the 1820S, the binge itself created another opportunity; the impulses toward materialism and evangelicalism dictated the shape and contour of the response to that opportunity. The campaign for abstinence and the transformation of alcohol from the Good Creature into the Demon Rum were a logical outgrowth of prevailing attitudes, values, and institutions. As drinking declined, as society was reshaped, as the framework for modern capitalism developed, and as the churches organized their moral campaign, the chance for a holistic ethos disappeared.

America was left as a culture dominated by an ambivalence that could be transcended only through an anti-intellectual faith. The potential for powerful intellects to influence American life had diminished; a unified moral code was no longer possible. By 1840 the pattern that would dominate the country for a century was set. Entrepreneurial capitalism, the corporate structure, the cult of private enterprise, and the glorification of profit were to dominate the rational, hard, masculine, and efficient side of the culture; evangelical religion, the voluntary reform society, the cult of Christian charity, and the glorification of God were to dominate the emotional, soft, feminine, and inspirational side. Institutions representing the two sides were to work in tandem to build the country. Important among those institutions were temperance societies. They were, in many ways, the crucial link between the two contrasting sides of American culture. A majority of the participants in the early temperance movement were women, but, in contrast to a later era, the leaders were men, mostly evangelical clergymen. These ministers were to be the bridge between the two sides of American culture, the men who connected the masculine and feminine, hard and soft, rational and emotional aspects. Or as one American said in the 1830s, clergymen were "a sort of people between men and women." This remark- has a second, deeper meaning. Being neither men nor women, the clergy were clearly impotent, and, ultimately, incapable of sustaining a coherent, holistic, living culture.

John J. Rumbarger **NO**

The Social and Ideological Origins of Drink Reform, 1800–1836

The roots of the temperance movement can be found in those social forces working to develop the expansionist tendencies of the American economy. Neither an abstract Puritan heritage nor paternalist conservatism can explain satisfactorily the dynamics that produced the movement to extirpate liquor drinking from America's culture. The earliest temperance societies, like that organized in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1787, resulted from the efforts of wealthy farmers to curtail drinking among their laborers during harvest time. . . .

Nevertheless, these early societies defined the movement's strategic objective: the increase of productivity by the elimination of daily work breaks for alcoholic refreshment and its unpredictable consequences. These societies also illustrated a mutual desire on the part of property holders to obtain a uniform standard of labor, regardless of considerations that worked to set them in opposition to each other. These employers assumed that it was their prerogative to determine the social conditions that would lower the costs of production. In a market economy such considerations constituted sufficient reason to eliminate customary drinking, and the more so when labor scarcity deprived employers of a traditional instrument of capital accumulation, low wages.

Early concern about popular drinking was forcefully articulated by Benjamin Rush, whose writing on the subject became an ideological touchstone for the temperance movement. . . . His objective could best be obtained by employing "the force of severe manners" to curtail the social habits of drinking. . . .

Typical of the fruits of Rush's pioneering efforts was the temperance society formed by property owners in the Moreau-Northumberland region of Saratoga County, New York. At the beginning of the nineteenth century these agriculturally rich townships supported a diversified local economy of farming, lumbering, milling, and some rudimentary manufacturing. The political and social life of the area was dominated by a squirearchy, but, as elsewhere, it was difficult for them to engage in business enterprise without supplying workers with their customary alcoholic beverages. What distinguished Moreau-Northumberland's temperance pioneers was professional training among those who galvanized the squirearchy into action against liquor drinking.

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Billy Clark had studied medicine; Esek Cowan had read law; Lebbius Armstrong was trained for the ministry. All three invested their surplus professional income in land and agricultural production. Clark, for example, owned several farms and had a large investment in a local paper mill. Cowan was a prosperous farm owner with a reputation for innovative husbandry. More important, however, for the purposes of temperance reform, was the common world view—quite like Rush's—the three shared. In one degree or another Moreau's temperance reformers believed society could improve with individual discipline and practical innovation, and that the criterion of improvement was business profits. William Hay, who subsequently headed the society, recalled that Clark was "convinced of the necessity of self-culture, and consequently acquired what are pertinently termed *business habits*." Hay admiringly described Clark as "pecuniarily successful as a physician and a businessman," and also wrote approvingly of Esek Cowan's various employments as a jurist, farmer, and classical scholar. For this kind of man "recreation was only change of employment," and employment was directed towards profit. . . .

These ideological conceptions nurtured temperance reform. But the reformers' stance towards other social classes was flexible: traditional rank or position was not an obstacle for association with like-minded men, provided the requisite social virtues of practical knowledge and disciplined effort could be demonstrated. Despite this apparent democratic appeal, the political ideology of a temperance "middle" class did not look to a reordering of society. Forged as it was in the crucible of business enterprise, it sought ultimately to redirect the energies and activities of capital and labor, but not to alter their social relationship. In the social context of Jeffersonian America, however, temperance ideology was radical in both theory and practice since it claimed to seek another reallocation of wealth and property according to utilitarian norms even as it sought an increase in social productivity. The assumption of the permanency of social stratification, to be dominated by a rationally selected elite, was but poorly masked by notions of individual worth taken to be demonstrated by the social virtues of innovation and discovery wedded to a discipline, including temperance, congenial to business. Because of this critical defect, temperance reformation, insofar as it envisioned a distinct "middle" class, was necessarily procapitalist.

The idea of a middle class proved especially valuable to the socialization process required by young America, which in the period 1820–50 could not compel people to alter their customary behavior sufficiently to modify the social order's value system. Indeed, the idea that personal characteristics and behavior were a form of capital may be seen as the *sine qua non* of American economic development in these years. Thus, all manner of ideologies, both secular and religious, that encouraged the development of internal modes of self-discipline as forms of "moral capital" were encouraged by the early advocates of liquor reform.

During the decades of the 1820s and 1830s temperance reform wherever it appeared became a political effort to create a social order universally congenial to entrepreneurial capitalism. It was during these years that the perceptions of men like Benjamin Rush and Billy Clark took root in business activity outside of agriculture, and attracted attention from such established institutions as the Protestant churches. But while local societies of employers who mutually agreed "that hereafter we will carry on our business without the use of distilled spirits as an article of refreshment, either for ourselves or those whom we may employ" remained on the reform scene, they proved insufficient to the task of extending temperance sentiment. To meet this need and to deal with the realities facing various enterprises, their politicization was required.

In Jeffersonian and Jacksonian America, maritime commerce ranked with agriculture in its importance to the economy. Here, too, liquor was customarily provided for laborers. . . .

In shipbuilding, workers enjoyed ceremonial provisions of strong drink in addition to their daily rations. At the completion of each major stage of construction they joined with shipowners and masters to toast their work's progress. Thus when the keel was put down, the ribs erected, the decking laid, and the masts raised and stepped there would be general celebrations fueled by large amounts of whiskey.

The earliest efforts at reform in these employment areas followed the boycott tactics that were being developed by agricultural temperance societies. In Medford, Massachusetts, for example, a local shipbuilder, Thacher Magoun, refused to permit rum or distilled spirits to be used in his shipyard. Magoun's 1817 no-rum edict was immediately interpreted by his laborers as "practically an increase in the working time, the employer thus saving the cost of time as well as the cost of the rum." Other Medford shipbuilders followed Magoun's lead, even to the point of raising wages. These boycotts could only be partially effective, however, because of the apprentice system and the grog shop, which furnished money and the means to smuggle the contraband refreshment into the yards.

By 1819, temperance advocates outside of agricultural societies had developed an analysis of the liquor problem that would eventually permit them to go beyond the limits of the boycott, and thus politicize the temperance movement. Thomas Hertell's *An Expose of the Causes of Intemperate Drinking and the Means by which It May Be Obviated* considered the entire social order to be the obstacle to temperance reform. Hertell implied that reform could only succeed if society in general were reformed with respect to drinking.

Hertell, who served for more than a dozen years on the bench of New York City's maritime court, asserted that his antiliquor convictions proceeded from the fact that "intemperate drinking is inimical to agricultural and mechanical, as well as moral improvement." He maintained that neither distillers nor the grog shop lay at the root of the problem; both were symptoms and consequences. The real cause of society's intemperate drinking was to be found in the "intemperate use of ardent liquor [which] originates in the fashions, habits, customs, and examples of what are called the upper or wealthy classes of the community." Because of the universal employment of such drinks by society's elites in both public and private, Hertell concluded that "inebriating drinks" had gained sanction as the "median universally adopted by society for manifesting friendship and good will, one to another."

Hertell believed that society's lower orders habitually emulated the upper, and so he argued that self-reformation by the wealthy must come before a general reform. Moreover, Hertell insisted that without a general temperance reform, nascent manufacturing enterprizes could not hope to succeed for "there is scarcely to be found among the laboring class, any who do not drink, and drink too much." Drinking customs were depriving manufacturers of quality manpower. "What single measure," he asked rhetorically, "would do more to further [manufacturing and agricultural development] than the destruction of the custom of giving ardent spirits to working people of every description."

Hertell's analysis of the liquor problem pulled together several strands in the developing temperance movement, and extended the focus of the reformers' concerns beyond agriculture and commerce to manufacturing. The reform impulse had derived from the pragmatic observation that customary drinking diminished productivity. Initially, reformers focused on the ordinary drinks—"ardent spirits"—of the working class as the principal source of abuse, and they continued to rely on the boycott as the means of curtailing and eliminating drinking.

On the other hand, Hertell insisted on the need of society's elites (including the churches) to exercise rigid self-restraint. Only when this class acted to end its sanction of drinking would "useful industry . . . become fashionable," and would "the already over-run and overrated learned professions" be abandoned for the "honorable calling" of the mechanical trades. Hertell looked to the formation of an antiliquor class consciousness that would act not only to protect its traditional base in agriculture and commerce, but also extend its concerns to American manufacturing. Of primary significance, however, is the fact that this attention to the responsibility of America's elite for the general well-being of society gave the temperance reform its peculiarly moralistic character, its ambivalence about the use of the state, and its connection with the Protestant churches.

During the years leading to the politicization of the temperance movement, American society underwent severe stress. Between 1800 and 1820, war and depression, accompanied by the introduction of the factory system, released latent hostilities that frequently expressed themselves in inchoate public drunkenness and disrespect towards religious and secular authority—or so it seemed to men like Lyman Beecher, the Congregationalist clergyman-reformer. Yet Beecher's consideration of social policy did not produce any effort to define the liquor problem in ways fundamentally different from those discussed. Indeed, during these years the established churches wedded themselves firmly to the emerging temperance movement in ways that sought to reinforce the movement's fundamental purposes. In 1812, for example, Beecher brought an ad hoc report before the General Association of Congregational and Presbyterian clergy wherein he asserted that intemperance was the mutual problem of the "Civil and Religious order," and recommended that employers cease providing liquor to their employees. Beecher also warned his colleagues that their efforts must remain within the boundaries of the "sanction of public sentiment," and thus echoed Benjamin Rush's plea for a regime of severe manners.

Ultimately the concerns of activist clergymen like Beecher were identical to those of men like Thomas Hertell and Mathew Carey, the Philadelphia publisher who helped establish the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry. In 1820 Carey brought out Beecher's sermon, "The Means of National Prosperity," which encouraged the expansion of manufacturing, presupposing an abstemious social order, and outlined a role for the nation's churches in fostering this development. . . .

The larger vision of temperance reform articulated by Thomas Hertell and Lyman Beecher took firm root within the establishments of the Northeast during and immediately following the Napoleonic wars. Mercantile capital, the center of much early temperance concern, fueled the expansion of the nation's young manufacturing enterprises and brought to them the problems of absentee owners seeking to insure their investments in an unsure world. Made aware during these years of their own role in perpetuating the "drinking usages" of society, American capitalists organized to secure a dry working class. By 1834, Walter Channing, a pioneering member of the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, recalled with some exaggerated pride that it was only when "men of great consideration . . . solemnly impressed with the ruinous progress of intemperance . . . came out as one man to make an open declaration of their convictions" that temperance reform began to progress.

The American Temperance Society (ATS), founded in January 1826 by Marcus Morton, a colleague of Channing, became the vehicle for the unified expression of class interest and coordinated action that Channing was to praise. Morton, who was "ahead of his time" in matters pertaining to labor reform, organized an umbrella society because of the deepening conviction that existing temperance societies were weak and ineffective. "Their object was," the ATS complained, "to regulate the use of ardent spirits, not to abolish it."

ATS envisioned a decentralized temperance apparatus, hierarchically organized from the local through the national level so that the smallest antiliquor organizations could "regulate their own movements and efforts according to their own views of necessity and expediency, and . . . their own wants and ability." The work of the ATS itself was to provide each and all with a common analysis of the liquor problem that corresponded to the class-conscious need for property owners to abstain totally from the use of distilled liquor, and to aid in the formation of state and local societies that adhered to this view of the problem. To oversee this work, Morton's group decided that a full-time paid secretary would be necessary and solicited contributions from "men of known and expansive benevolence, who are blessed with property," and who shared the view "that a system of general and powerful cooperation may be formed, and that a change may in a short time be effected, which will save an incalculable amount of property, and vast multitudes of valuable lives."

The man chosen to carry out the ATS reform was Justin Edwards of Andover Theological Seminary. In part Edwards's own previous skepticism about the efficacy of total abstinence from the use of distilled liquor became a major asset to the new organization. Prior to joining ATS as its secretary, Edwards had "thought [total abstinence] was going much too far . . . that the temperate use of ardent spirit was, for men who labor, in hot weather, necessary." What persuaded Edwards that the pledge of total abstinence by property owners was indeed efficacious was not theological conviction but an experiment conducted at one of the farms of a member of Morton's group in 1825. The result, Edwards testified, was that laborers "performed more labor with greater ease."

Equally and perhaps more important, in the eyes of ATS, total abstinence from hard liquor produced an apparent change in the attitude of laborers. According to Edwards the regime of enforced abstinence made the men "more respectful and uniform in their deportment . . . more contented with their living; more desirous of being present at morning and evening family devotion . . . more attentive at public worship on the Sabbath." Clearly this class-based reform effort saw a vital link between the docility of workers and their productivity on the one hand, and depriving them of liquor on the other.

The ATS, through the work of Edwards and secretaries of state societies affiliated with it, made repeated attempts to use the churches to advance the goal of abolition. Recognizing that distilleries were, for the most part, owned and operated by members of their own social class, ATS and its affiliates viewed the churches as the most appropriate vehicles available to them for the persuasion and coercion of their own. These efforts had profound and disruptive effects upon the churches and the movement itself, but what should not be lost sight of in the dogmatic hairsplitting over the extent to which abstinence was to be demanded is the intent of the reformers. "Ardent spirits" was the ordinary alcoholic beverage of workers. It had been the indifferent success of societies like the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance in seeking "to discontinue the too free use of ardent spirit" that had led to demands for total abolition. The ATS pledge committed affiliated societies to exclude all who "traffic" in ardent spirits and to "discountenance the use of them throughout the Community." It was thus that the churches became putative instruments of the reformers.

In their endeavor to persuade the churches to condemn both moderate drinking and the liquor traffic, ATS concentrated its efforts on the governing bodies of the various Protestant denominations. Such attempts met with indifferent success. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, condemned "the pestilential example of temperate drinking," but only inquired rhetorically if churches which tolerated manufacturers and sellers of whisky could be innocent of wrongdoing. The conference did not condemn the latter or move to excommunicate offending individuals. Thus, ATS had to rely upon the vague hopes of "some leading men" of the conference that by 1836 the church would be rid of the traffickers in drink.

The ATS also sought to bring pressure on the churches to expel liquor dealers through the efforts of such men as Wilbur Fisk, president of Wesleyan University, who castigated total abstinence church members for not insisting upon such expulsions and charged the churches with similar complicity. The ATS executive committee joined in this criticism: "From all parts of the country . . . the greatest difficulties in the way of Temperance Reformation . . . are those members of the church, who still sell ardent spirit."

Such pressures divided the established churches even though they produced condemnations of varying strength from national and state ecclesiastical organizations. The larger ones usually confined their expressions of opinion to vague generalities and left it to specific congregations to act. The Protestant clergy was also encouraged to advance the utilitarian purposes of the reformers. Thus, a Connecticut clergyman maintained that the cause would be well served "if farmers and mechanics would agree not to drink spirits themselves, and not provide them for their workmen."

By 1834 it was clear that the established churches had not made any deep inroads against either moderate drinking or the liquor traffic. In addition, their involvement in reform entailed a necessary hindrance to it since wine was of central importance to the Christian ritual as well as the ordinary drink of the wealthy. When, in the mid-1830s, ATS pushed for total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages and demanded state action against the liquor traffic, the difficulties posed by the churches appeared to outweigh their assets. As one clerical reformer acknowledged to the 1834 New York State Temperance Convention: "I have therefore been pained to see so many inclined to connect their religion with temperance. . . . And I know many individuals, who keep themselves aloof from the temperance society on this account, who would undoubtedly join the ranks, if the cause of temperance could be kept separate from everything else."

While the American Temperance Society concentrated its efforts on arousing the consciousness of property holders through the churches, state societies continued to recruit such people to the cause of temperance by stressing the utilitarian benefits of reform. In July 1833, the *Temperance Recorder,* the official organ of the New York State Temperance Society, reported that the consolidation of the Erie Canal's several towing firms into the Albany and Buffalo Towing Company had enabled the teamsters' employers to gain "control and government" over them, with the result that their intemperate drinking habits had been effectively checked. The same issue praised the society's forwarding of a circular letter to American consuls in Europe, warning émigrés that those who drank would find it difficult to obtain employment, and urging them to affiliate with a temperance society as an aid to finding work. The New York Society, which was dominated by mercantile and landed capitalists like Edward C. Delavan of Albany and Stephen Van Rensselaer of Saratoga, urged "the proprietors of our large, as well as our small manufacturing establishments . . . to take their subject into immediate consideration," since it was clear that intemperance was more dangerous to business prosperity than even foreign competition. The New Yorkers advised that temperance societies be organized within the factories themselves, and that proprietors and owners become the officers: "Unless proprietors or agents take the lead, nothing need be expected; but by their taking the course recommended . . . all under their control will be brought speedily into this 'ark of safety.'"

But the efforts of the New York Society and ATS to use the churches to arouse a class-conscious temperance sentiment in favor of overseas economic expansion ran afoul of the churches' difficulties and weakened the desired condemnation and divided the reformers. Many reformers recognized that the association of temperance with specific political and economic issues detracted from its class appeal. If the temperance movement were to gain the class support that its adherents believed was crucial, temperance morality would have to be divorced from specific secular and religious issues, and its moral appeal would have to come from an agency not associated with the churches.

In May 1833 ATS directors convened a national convention in Philadelphia to consider these questions and to chart the future course of reform. The four hundred delegates from twenty-four states represented the country's mercantile, manufacturing, and landed capital. Indicative of the range and scope of this class of men are Gerrit Smith and Stephen Van Rensselaer. Together with John Jacob Astor, Smith's father had acquired over one million acres of land in upstate New York, some 700,000 acres of which he passed on to his son in 1819. Van Rensselaer's holdings were equally vast. Both men were outstanding proponents of internal improvements and expanded trade with the West. Smith violently opposed a governmental role in expanding these markets, but Van Rensselaer was a strong advocate of such aid.

Other representatives of mercantile wealth included Edward C. Delavan, Roberts Vaux and his son, Richard, of Philadelphia, Samuel Ward of New York whose family's wealth had been invested in the banking firm of Prime, Ward, and King, Samuel Mifflin of Philadelphia, and John Tappan of Boston. Typical of emerging manufacturing representatives were Amasa Walker of Boston, Jonas Chickering, whose piano manufacturing concern of Stewart and Chickering developed the single casting iron frame for making grand pianos, and Matthew Newkirk, whose cotton goods business provided the funds for his railroad investments. Many of them, Delavan, Newkirk, and Smith, for example, had multiple investments in land, transportation, and manufacturing.

Also attending the first national temperance convention were luminaries from the first ranks of law, politics, religion, and science, many bearing some of the oldest family names in America. Reuben Hyde Walworth, chancellor of New York State, was named the convention's president. Joseph H. Lumpkin (whose brother Wilson was a Georgia planter and governor of the state), who would himself become a member of Georgia's Supreme Court, was named convention vice president. Timothy Pitkin, the author of the first major statistical account of American commerce, was a delegate from Connecticut. John McLean, who was to become president of the College of New Jersey, was a delegate. So also was Samuel L. Southard, Democractic senator from New Jersey. Amos Twitchell, a pioneer heart surgeon, represented New Hampshire. Jonas K. Converse of Burlington, Vermont, was a delegate, as were Philadelphia philanthropists John Sargent and Joseph B. Ingersoll; businessmen-publicists such as Mathew Carey, William Goodell, Thomas Bradford, Jr., and Sylvester Graham were typical delegates.

Other men of similar stature, like chemist Benjamin Silliman of Yale, or perhaps less well known, such as George Chambers, largest landowner in Franklin County, Pennsylvania and a reformer in education and agriculture, filled out the complement of delegates to the Philadelphia meeting. Their differences in economic interest, political affiliation, and religious persuasion were transcended by a fundamental class problem: the liquor question. . . .

In the end, this effort to rely solely upon the resources of property would fail because, as Gerrit Smith had already pointed out, America was a society where the demand for labor could not be met. Would-be employers would find the pledge inadequate and the law insufficient. But from the vantage point of 1834, the antiliquor movement had achieved astounding success. It had aroused the consciousness of virtually the entire propertied class, regardless of particular economic or political interest, to the importance of extirpating the use of distilled alcohol as a precondition of capitalist development. It had created a secular temperance morality that avoided the rigidities of various theologies while, at the same time, it had been able to enlist the churches in raising the consciousness of the "employing class." And it had developed its archetypal propaganda institution, the American Temperance Society, which was controlled by entrepreneurs of all sorts, and state and local temperance societies, which were to organize local property interests for the cause. Finally, the reform was being urged in the direction of a political attack on the liquor traffic itself.

When the United States Temperance Union and its affiliates met at Saratoga Springs in 1836, there appeared to remain but two mutually compatible tasks for the reform: first, spread the new gospel that "it has been proved a thousand times, that more labor can be accomplished in a month, or a year, under the influence of simple nourishing food and unstimulating drink than through the aid of alcohol"; second, organize and launch a political assault on the liquor traffic itself. To further these ends, the USTU named Reverend John Marsh and Edward C. Delavan to its principal offices. Both were fitting choices for the work. Marsh was related by marriage to the Tappan mercantile family of Boston and New York; his cousin Samuel would head the New York and Erie railroad. Delavan, on the other hand, was an active entrepreneur whose fortune had been made, ironically, as an importer of wine, and who came to the temperance reform after Nathaniel Prime, Lynde Catlin, and he had lost three hundred thousand dollars invested in the manufacture of steam engines and other heavy iron work because, they claimed, of "the unfortunate drinking habits [of the workers], which for best of motives, we ourselves encouraged."

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was Antebellum Temperance Reform Motivated Primarily by Religious Moralism?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What role did religion play in the efforts to reform the drinking habits of Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century? Were there some denominations that were more active in this reform than others? If so, why?
2. How were camp meeting revivals particularly useful in converting alcoholics?
3. Were there other reform initiatives of this time period in which religious moralism was a prominent component? If so, what were some of these reforms?
4. Why were industrial entrepreneurs so interested in the personal behavior of their workers? How successful were they in reforming the drinking habits of these employees?
5. To what extent can one argue that ministers and entrepreneurs both operated from a "social control" perspective in their efforts to institute temperance reform?

Is there Common Ground?

Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, in *Drinking in America: A History* (The Free Press, 1982), examine the characteristics of temperance reformers in the first half of the nineteenth century. These reformers, they argue, drew upon the perfectionist message presented during the Second Great Awakening in an effort to create a more virtuous nation. They describe a moral elite consisting of ministers and laypeople who served as "stewards of society" by leading a mass reformation in the drinking culture of the United States that shifted over time from a focus on moral suasion to bring about more moderate consumption of "ardent spirits" to political movements for total abstinence.

Both Rorabaugh and Rumbarger offer explanations for the motivations of temperance reformers that could fall into the "social control" model. Clearly, the consumption levels of alcohol in the American republic were significant enough for many Americans to conclude that the nation faced a drinking problem. To what degree did the efforts to limit this consumption fly in the face of personal freedoms that were being touted in the "age of Jackson"? Also, is it reasonable to assume that some of the demand for temperance or prohibition stemmed from a rising tide of Irish and German immigration to the United States in the 1830s and 1840s and the drinking habits these immigrants brought with them as part of their cultural baggage? Neither author pays much attention to the fact that women comprised a significant portion of the membership of temperance societies both before and after the Civil War. Some scholars have attributed this pattern to the fact that women volunteered for a wide variety of humanitarian organizations, but one could also hypothesize that they were particularly concerned about alcohol consumption because of the potential deleterious impact it had on family structure and relationships.

Additional Resources

The scholarly literature on the "age of reform" is extensive. Interested students should consult Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Harper & Row, 1957); Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800–1850* (Cornell University Press, 1950); and Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800–1865* (Rutgers University Press, 1960). David Brion Davis, ed., *Ante-Bellum Reform* (Harper and Row, 1967) is an excellent collection of readings. The social-control thesis can be traced for various reform endeavors in Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (University of Illinois Press, 1966); Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Education and Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Beacon Press, 1968); Joseph M. Harris, *Children in Urban Society: Juvenile Delinquency in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1971); David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Little, Brown, 1971); and Gerald Grob, *Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875* (Free Press, 1973). For some of the aspects of American reform generally dismissed by Tyler as "fads," see John D. Davies, *Phrenology, Fad and Science: A Nineteenth-Century American Crusade* (Yale University Press, 1955); and Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (Harper & Row, 1976). For important studies on the abolitionist movement, see citations listed in the postscript for Issue 13.

The status of women was another major concern for reformers in the antebellum period. Students interested in this topic should see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* (Summer 1966); Barbara J. Berg, *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism-The Woman and the City, 1800–1860* (Oxford University Press, 1978); Ellen C. Du Bois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Woman's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Cornell University Press, 1978); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Wesleyan University Press, 1981); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Yale University Press, 1990); and Carolyn J. Lawes, *Women and Reform in a New England Community, 1815–1860* (University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

For students seeking an excellent narrative of the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (W. W. Norton, 2005); Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (Oxford University Press, 2007); or David S. Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (HarperCollins, 2008.)

ISSUE 12

Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism?

YES: Walter Nugent, from "California and New Mexico, 1846–1848: Southward Aggression II," *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008)

NO: Norman A. Graebner, from "The Mexican War: A Study in Causation," *Pacific Historical Review* (August, 1980)

Learning Outcomes

After reading the essays you should be able to:

- Critically evaluate the causes of the Mexican War from the United States and Mexican points of view.
- Critically analyze the concepts of "manifest destiny" and "imperialism."
- Critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the "American Empire."

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Professor Walter Nugent argues that President James K. Polk was a narrow-minded, ignorant but not stupid individual with one big idea: use the power of the presidency to force Mexico to cede California and the current Southwest to the United States.

NO: Professor of diplomatic history Norman A. Graebner argues that President James Polk pursued an aggressive policy that he believed would force Mexico to sell New Mexico and California to the United States and to recognize the annexation of Texas without starting a war.

The origins of the Mexican War began with the controversy over Texas, a Spanish possession for three centuries. In 1821, Texas became the northernmost province of the newly established country of Mexico. Sparsely populated with a mixture of Hispanics and Indians, the Mexican government encouraged immigration from the United States. By 1835, the Anglo population had swelled to 30,000 plus over 2,000 slaves, whereas the Mexican population was only 5,000. Fearful of losing control over Texas, the Mexican government prohibited further immigration from the United States in 1830. But it was too late. The Mexican government was divided and had changed hands several times. The centers of power were thousands of miles from Texas. In 1829, the Mexican government abolished slavery, an edict that was difficult to enforce. Finally, General Santa Anna attempted to abolish the federation and impose military rule over the entire country. Whether it was due to Mexican intransigence or the Anglos' assertiveness, the settlers rebelled in September 1835. The war was short-lived. Santa Anna was captured at the battled of San Jacinto in April 1836, and Texas was granted her independence.

For nine years, Texas remained an independent republic. Politicians were afraid that if Texas were annexed it would be carved into four or five states, thereby upsetting the balance of power between the evenly divided free states and slave states that had been created in 1819 by the Missouri Compromise. But the pro-slavery president John Tyler pushed through Congress a resolution annexing Texas in the final three days of his presidency in 1845.

The Mexican government was incensed and broke diplomatic relations with the United States. President James K. Polk sent John Slidell as the American emissary to Mexico to negotiate monetary claims of American citizens in Mexico, purchase California, and settle the southwestern boundary of Texas at the Rio Grande River and not farther north at the Nueces River, which Mexico recognized as the boundary. Upon Slidell's arrival, news leaked out about his proposals. The Mexican government rejected Slidell's offer. In March 1846, President Polk stationed General Zachary Taylor in the disputed territory along the Rio Grande with an army of 4,000 troops. On May 9, Slidell returned to Washington and informed Polk that he was rebuffed. Polk met with his cabinet to consider war. By chance, that same evening Polk received a dispatch from General Taylor informing him that on April 25 the Mexican army crossed the Rio Grande and killed or wounded 16 of his men. On May 11, Polk submitted his war message claiming "American blood was shed on American soil." Congress voted overwhelmingly for war 174 to 14 in the House and 40 to 2 in the Senate despite the vocal minority of Whig protestors and intellectuals who opposed the war.

As David M. Plecher points out in his balanced but critical discussions of *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon and the Mexican War* (University of Missouri Press, 1973), the long-range effects on American foreign policy of the Mexican War were immense. Between 1845 and 1848, the United States acquired more than 1,200 square miles of territory and increased its size by over a third of its present area. This included the annexation of Texas and the subsequent states of the Southwest that stretched to the Pacific Coast, incorporating California and the Oregon territory up to the 49th parallel. European efforts to gain a foothold in North America virtually ceased. By the 1850s, the British gradually abandoned their political aspirations in Central America, "content to compete for economic gains with the potent but unmilitary weapon of their factory system and their merchant marine." Meanwhile, the United States flexed her muscles at the end of the Civil War and used the Monroe Doctrine for the first time to force the French puppet ruler out of Mexico.

Walter Nugent's *Habits of Empire* (Knopf, 2008), from which the first selection below is taken, is now the major synthesis of the political and military roots of American expansionism. Nugent bluntly argues that the United States was imperialistic from its very beginnings. American expansionism has gone through three phases: the first was the *continental* expansion across North America (exclusive of Canada) from 1783 to 1853, which resulted in the displacement of the Native Americans. Empire II was *overseas* expansion from 1867 to 1917, which resulted in the acquisition and rule over non-white populations in the Pacific and Central American regions. Since the end of World War II in 1945, the United States has established the third *virtual-global* empire, which resulted in regime changes during the cold war years against Russia and China as well as during the current war on terrorism.

Nugent spent most of his career writing about western American history. In this book he combines the expansion of the American people across the continent with the imperialist thrust of establishing an empire. The motivations are multicausal—"spontaneous jingoism, national security demands, and visions of overseas markets for imperial goods." If there is one key factor, it is demographics. This is especially true for Empire I when the United States increased its population from one million in 1787 to thirty million on the eve of the Civil War. "During that period," said Stephen A. Douglas in deriding Lincoln's "House Divided" speech in a debate in 1858, "we have extended our territory from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean; we have acquired the Floridas and Texas, and other territory sufficient to double our geographical extent."

The two best historiographical essays on this topic are Jerald A. Combs, "Norman Graebner and the Realist View of American Diplomatic History," *Diplomatic History*, 2 (Summer, 1987); and Dennis E. Berge, "Manifest Destiny and the Historians," Chapter 5 in Michael P. Malone, ed. *Historians and the American West* (University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

The following selections reflect two opposite views about the nature of the Mexican War. Walter Nugent is very critical of the United States' policy toward Mexico. He views President Polk as a narrow-minded bigot whose one big idea was to acquire California and as much of the Southwest as was possible either through negotiation or force. When the Mexican government, riddled with unstable governments, corrupt politicians, and incompetent generals, refused to negotiate, Polk maneuvered the Mexican government to attack American soldiers stationed in the disputed area between the Rio Grande and Nueces Rivers. This was not the first time, says Nugent, that a chief executive maneuvered Congress into a fait accompli with regard to declaring war. ". . . Madison came near to doing so in 1812. George H. Bush's troop buildup before the first Gulf War and George W. Bush's before Iraq were not novelties. There may be limits on presidential power, but there are no obvious ones on a president as commander-in-chief in sending troops and ships where he wants to."

Professor Norman Graebner, the author of the second essay was a very popular teacher with students at the University of Virginia and is considered one of the most prominent members of the "realist" school of diplomatic historians. His writings were influenced by the cold war realists, political scientists, diplomats, and journalists of the 1950s who believed that American foreign policy oscillated between heedless isolationism and crusading wars without developing coherent policies that suited the national interests of the United States. According to Graebner, President James Polk assumed that Mexico was weak and that acquiring certain Mexican territories would satisfy "the long-range interests" of the United States. But when Mexico refused Polk's attempts to purchase New Mexico and California, he was left with three options: withdraw his demands, modify and soften his proposals, or aggressively pursue his original goals. According to Graebner, the president chose the third option.

YES

Walter Nugent

California and New Mexico, 1846–1848: Southward Aggression II

> *Generally the officers of the army were indifferent whether the annexation [of Texas] was consummated or not. . . . For myself, I was bitterly opposed to the measure, and to this day regard the war, which resulted, as one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation.*
>
> —U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*

> *Our situation is truly desperate. Everything, absolutely everything, is lost, and judging by the way things are going it is doubtful whether we can save our independence, the last refuge and symbol of our honor.*
>
> —José Fernando Ramírez, 1847

The Look of Things in 1845

The Oregon acquisition was not small. It included the present states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and large pieces of Montana and Wyoming. But the "Mexican Cession" of 1848, together with its postscript, the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, was twice as large. Add Texas, whose annexation by the United States started the Mexican-American conflict, and the whole area taken from Mexico was larger than the Louisiana Purchase (949,000 square miles versus 827,000). Moreover, the method was much more violent. This was the only acquisition so far that required a war. (The invasions of Canada in 1775 and 1813 were attempts at acquisition, but they failed.) The war with Mexico might well have never happened but for the determination of one man, President James K. Polk. Polk was, to use the terminology of the philosopher-historian Isaiah Berlin, a hedgehog, not a fox. Jefferson, FDR, and Bill Clinton were foxes. Jackson, Polk, and George W. Bush were hedgehogs. Whereas a fox has many ideas, in Berlin's definition, hedgehogs like Polk have one big idea. His was to acquire for the United States the territory west of Texas to the Pacific,

From *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), pp. 187–189, 192–202, 206–210 (excerpts, notes omitted). Copyright 2008 © by Walter Nugent. Reprinted by permission of Random House Inc. For on-line information about other Random house, Inc. books and authors: www.randomhouse.com

most importantly the harbor of San Francisco, but also, maybe, the rest of Alta (Upper) California and the province of New Mexico, which happened to be en route. He would do this by diplomacy and cash, not to mention bribery, if possible; or by military force, if necessary.

Polk was a man whose interests and intellect were blinkered and narrow. Yet his vision, though tunneled, looked far. He was almost willfully ignorant, but hardly stupid, and he never shrank from using the power of the presidency as he saw fit. Like Jackson, he was a Tennessean. He was a Jacksonian loyalist as Speaker of the U.S. House during Jackson's last two presidential years and Van Buren's first two (1835–1839). He lost a couple of elections in the early 1840s and was considered finished politically. But he captured the Democratic nomination for president in 1844 as the first true "dark horse." After favorites Van Buren and Clay both came out publicly against expansion in May 1844, Polk embraced it—both the "re-occupation" of Oregon to 54°40′, and the "re-annexation" of Texas to the Rio Grande. In response, the Democratic Party and the voters rewarded him with the presidency.

In these two claims the "re" was a distortion and exaggeration. But he slipped past Clay, his more illustrious Whig opponent, by 38,367 votes out of 2.7 million, receiving 49.6 percent of the total popular vote and 50.7 percent of the Clay-Polk major-party vote. (James G. Birney of the antislavery Liberty Party got 62,000.) Polk's margin in the electoral college was 170–105. He carried neither his own Tennessee nor Clay's Kentucky. But he did win every other then-western state from Alabama to Michigan except Ohio, and he nearly won there as well. His spread-eagle platform resounded in those parts. He had to back off from the 54°40′ claim, as we saw earlier; and he did not have to "re-annex" Texas because President John Tyler and Congress had already done that just before he was inaugurated. But California (and New Mexico with it) were still out there, and Texas's full statehood brought with it the threat of war with an aggrieved Mexico. That war, he could see, was both threat and opportunity.

Polk, like Jackson and Jefferson before him, maintained that Texas had been part of the Louisiana Purchase. The claim was transparently flimsy to begin with, and had been specifically repudiated in the 1819 Adams-Onís treaty. To the Polkites, however, that treaty had "faded away" under the strong light of the American overrunning of Texas. Realistically, Texas had become American, and a few voices within Mexico and among European diplomats urged Mexico to recognize the fact, even though it was political suicide. Piling insensitivity upon intransigence, the Polk policy toward Mexico could only end violently. Before and during the outbreak of war, Polk (like Madison in 1812) employed secret agents, asserted the baseness of the other side's motives and tactics, manipulated the popular mood of manifest destiny, promised more army volunteers than he could deliver, and used other unpretty devices that were not new to presidential behavior then and have become routine since. . . .

Polk's aggressiveness, California's volatility, and Texas's Rio Grande claims might have gone nowhere if conditions in Mexico had been stable. But Mexico was chaotic and had been so since Texas broke away in 1836. There was an occasional bright spot, such as New Mexico's demolition of an invasion force of Texans who attempted to annex everything east and north of the

Rio Grande in 1841. But Mexico's problems were both fundamental and superficial. It had no effective tax-collecting system. It had too many ambitious and feuding generals, preeminently the pop-up dictator, Santa Anna. Political animosities ran deep, more in the nature of competing worldviews than the relatively consensual American partisanship, which was divisive enough. Deep divisions separated clericalists, anticlericals, liberals, conservatives, monarchists, republicans, federalists, centralists—each representing not just policies but ideologies. Compromise and concerted action, even in the face of invasion, loss of territory, or loss of national existence, eluded the troubled country. Mexico was as badly positioned to defend itself and as divided as Spain was in 1808 when Napoleon invaded it. The result by 1848 was national dismemberment. It could have been national extinction.

In this context, Polk the hedgehog held the advantage. On Oregon he had "looked John Bull in the eye," at least until Aberdeen's thirty ships of the line loomed, and he still acquired everything up to the forty-ninth parallel. He could look Mexico in the eye—Santa Anna or anyone—without worrying about any ships of the line. As a result, he did as he pleased, like a true Jacksonian.

Polk's Brinkmanship

Polk's 1844 platform and March 1845 inaugural speech were thunderously clear about Oregon and Texas. But they never mentioned California. Once in office, however, Polk moved toward his cherished if not yet public project. He had told Navy Secretary George Bancroft in early 1845 that acquiring California was the most important goal of his administration. In October 1845, he told Senator Benton that by "reasserting" Monroe's "doctrine" against allowing European incursions into the hemisphere, "I had California and the fine bay of San Francisco as much in view as Oregon." California was Polk's hidden agenda. Transpacific commercial possibilities, particularly the market potential of China, likely motivated him more than visions of settlement did, but both objectives might be achieved.

President Tyler had done Polk the favor of bringing Texas all but into the Union, after the February 28 joint resolution offering annexation. The only remaining steps were ratification by the Texas Congress and, formally, by the U.S. Congress. The first came on July 4, and the second on December 29, 1845.

Texan statehood meant, of course, a casus belli with Mexico. The Mexican foreign minister had said so bluntly as early as mid-1843. The Mexican minister in Washington, Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, also made that clear. When Congress passed its joint resolution, Almonte told Secretary of State Calhoun that annexation was aggression. He demanded his passports, left Washington, and thereby broke diplomatic relations between the two countries. Any Mexican leader would have agreed that an independent Texas might be barely acceptable but the loss of it to the United States was not. Beyond that, as an issue, were the claims (some well founded, some trumped up) of U.S. citizens against Mexican taxes, customs duties, port regulations, and the like. Even in more normal times the claims issue festered. Polk's position, to the contrary, was that Mexico owed money to Americans; it had no money; it did have sparsely settled land; therefore the claims could be paid off in territory, with some cash going to Mexico as a sweetener.

Texas, from the American standpoint, was no longer on the table, but California would do very well. Polk preferred purchase via diplomatic negotiation to war, though he would go to war "if necessary." Accordingly he sent a Louisiana congressman, John Slidell, to Mexico City in the fall of 1845 to negotiate. Already, however, he prepared to "look Mexico in the eye," and in June 1845 he ordered General Zachary Taylor to proceed from Louisiana to south Texas, and Commodore David Conner to patrol the Gulf coast of Mexico, both to be ready to act if war broke out. Taylor arrived at Corpus Christi (just south of the Nueces River) by early August with eight companies of soldiers and awaited orders.

The "Disputed" Nueces Strip

When Taylor led his troops to Corpus Christi, he arrived at the banks—the southern banks—of the Nueces River. Was he still in Texas, as Texans were claiming, or was he already inside Mexico?

In south Texas, the distance along the Gulf coast from Corpus Christi, where the Nueces River flows into the Gulf, to the mouth of the Rio Grande at Port Isabel, just east of Brownsville, is about 150 miles. Padre Island guards the shore. The Nueces commences in the hills west of San Antonio and wriggles south and east roughly parallel to the Rio Grande for about three hundred miles. The Rio Grande, much longer, rises in the Rockies, flows south through Albuquerque to El Paso and then southeast to the Gulf. If it were the border, then present New Mexico and west Texas went with it. The Nueces, because it did not flow nearly as far, included none of that vast land.

When the general run of American history books discuss the Mexican-American War, they refer to the strip south of the Nueces and north of the Rio Grande as "disputed." But it had never been disputed until Texans, newly independent in 1836, started claiming it. Earlier, to be sure, Jefferson and his followers purported that, like Texas itself, the strip was part of the Louisiana Purchase. This dated back to the spurious claim that the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 recognized French rights along the Gulf as far southwest as the Rio Grande. But Spain had been there all along, and after 1821 the region became Mexican. Here as elsewhere the Jeffersonians inflated the extent of their "noble bargain" of 1803 wherever they could. In any case the claim that Texas was part of Louisiana was specifically, and presumably permanently, abjured by the United States in the 1819 Adams-Onís treaty with Spain, which set the American-Mexican boundary at the Sabine, east and north of any conceivable historic part of Texas. The Sabine became, and is now, the border between the states of Texas and Louisiana.

Yet the claim that the Nueces strip was part of the Louisiana Purchase, and therefore part of Texas, resurfaced in the late 1820s when John Quincy Adams sent Joel Poinsett to buy Texas as far south as the Rio Grande. Following its independence in 1836, Texas claimed the Rio Grande boundary. Despite being thrown back by one of Santa Anna's armies at San Antonio in 1842, Texans maintained the claim as they traveled their bumpy road toward annexation. The United States' terms of annexation in 1845 did not explicitly accept that claim, which included not only the Gulf coast but all the land north and east of the Rio Grande to its source and then north to the forty-second parallel. In Congress's annexation resolution the border was left to be worked out over time. The time came very soon.

Clearly, the Nueces strip had never been part of Texas under either Spain or Mexico. So thinly populated was south Texas before 1821 that provincial boundaries were almost pointless, as there were virtually no people or governments there. When the San Antonio missions were founded around 1718, the Medina and San Antonio Rivers separated Texas from the province of Coahuila. By 1767 the Nueces was recognized as the boundary between Texas and Coahuila. As of 1805, Texas's southern boundary ran from the Gulf up the Nueces for over one hundred miles, then north to the Medina (near San Antonio), and then northwest another two hundred miles—none of it anywhere near the Rio Grande. The boundary stayed that way until Texas and Coahuila were made a joint state under the Mexican federal constitution of 1824. They remained a joint state, with the Texas segment consisting of the land north of the Nueces. Stephen F. Austin's empresario maps of 1829, 1833, and 1836 also showed the Nueces River, not the Rio Grande, demarcating Texas from Coahuila.

When Texans defeated Santa Anna at San Jacinto in May 1836, the captured general agreed, with his life hanging in the balance, to sign the "Treaty of Velasco." It withdrew Mexican forces to south of the Rio Grande, implying that the Nueces strip was Texan. But the Mexican Congress repudiated it. Polk, to the contrary, acted as if it were fact. In August 1845, when news came that a Mexican army was about to cross the Rio Grande, Polk asserted that the Nueces strip was "virtually" American and any Mexican crossing "must be regarded as an invasion of the United States." Thus, in his war message in May 1846, he proclaimed that "Mexico has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil." With that, the war began.

For Mexico, any American troop movement south of the Nueces was an invasion of *its* territory. The coastal strip was part of the state of Tamaulipas, and the inland area belonged to Nuevo León and Coahuila. In an 1847 book, Carlos María de Bustamante affirmed that "sending troops into Mexican territory"—Corpus Christi or anywhere else south of the Nueces—"doomed all moderation, and Mexico was left with no other recourse but to engage in battle. The territory between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers neither by fact nor by law could have belonged to Texas. Not by fact because it was not populated by [Anglo] Texans . . . nor . . . by law because all this coast, through a territorial division recognized by all the nation and by the Texas colonists themselves, has belonged to the state of Tamaulipas." He was right. No Anglos lived there; the empresario grants did not extend south of the Nueces; and even in 1845 no Texas counties had been organized there. To the contrary, the people living on the north side of the Rio Grande were Mexican, and Mexican authorities had a duty to protect them. Quite unlike east Texas and the region of the empresario grants, there was no demographic argument for the Americans to absorb the Nueces strip. No surge of people occupied it, and the three coastal counties south of Corpus Christi to Brownsville are still the least populated of any on the coast of the Gulf.

Run-up to War

Diplomacy ensued, or started to. Word reached Polk in early November 1845 that the Mexican commander on the Rio Grande and leaders in Mexico City were ready to talk, surely a sign that strong words (Polk's preferred tactic) would push the Mexicans in his direction. With cabinet agreement, and at Buchanan's suggestion, Polk sent John Slidell to Mexico City. He was to offer to take over all outstanding claims and buy California and New Mexico. The amount was negotiable up to $25 million, depending on whether Mexico would sell both provinces. As for the claims, Mexico had agreed in 1839 to pay them, made a few payments, then had to stop. Polk was ready to have the U.S. government assume the claims and pay Mexico some cash for its northern states. Did not Mexico need money more than the land? To Polk the answer was obvious. Unfortunately for peace, no one in Mexico saw it that way.

Slidell's credentials from Polk named him "envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary." But the president never asked or received the Senate's confirmation, leaving Slidell in the status of a special presidential emissary. The Mexican government accordingly refused to accept him as fully credentialed. When he arrived in Mexico City on November 29, 1845, the situation was more than usually turbulent. General Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga, commander of field forces, ousted the then unpopular Santa Anna and by early December replaced him as president with another general, José Joaquin Herrera. The foreign minister, Manuel Peña y Peña, a distinguished lawyer and jurist, was a moderate. Peña made clear to Slidell that he would be happy to receive him to discuss his purchase proposal as well as outstanding problems like the claims and borders. But if he recognized him as a new U.S. minister, he would be acquiescing in the Texas annexation, the main reason why Almonte had broken relations the previous spring. This was no quibble—John Quincy Adams would have scoffed if another country had sent someone with Slidell's faulty credentials—but Polk and Buchanan chose to be incensed at the rebuff of Slidell. The president decided that the time had come to move from "diplomacy if possible" to "force if necessary."

Herrera had taken a great risk in allowing Slidell into Mexico at all, and it cost him his job. In late December 1845, General Paredes removed Herrera (in office less than four weeks) and installed himself as president on January 2, 1846. A semicovert monarchist, Paredes followed a harder line: no truck with the United States, no recognition of Texas, certainly no boundary south of the Nueces, and no Slidell. As Polk's biographer states, "the Polk-Slidell policy of combined bullying and bribery was precisely what no Mexican regime could submit to and survive"—Paredes's least of all. Slidell dallied in Mexico City in vain hope. Meanwhile, on January 13, the Polk administration ordered General Taylor to move his forces to the Rio Grande opposite the Mexican coastal town of Matamoros, with Commodore Conner to proceed to the Texas coast for naval support. Slidell informed Polk on March 15 that he was returning empty-handed, and on March 30 he sailed home.

In cabinet meetings through February and March, Polk resisted any further action against Mexico until Slidell reported back. He did not explain why in his diary, but this was the very time when he and the cabinet were absorbing Lord Aberdeen's "thirty sail of the line" remark, and when the abrogation of the 1827 joint occupancy of Oregon was stalled in Congress. Polk paused regarding Mexico until Oregon was clarified. Nevertheless, he had still not received a response from London on the abrogation notice when he learned on May 9 that Mexican forces had crossed the Rio Grande and that several of Taylor's troops had been killed and wounded on April 25. Polk immediately wrote a message to Congress, which received it on May 11. It asked for a declaration of war, a levy of 50,000 volunteers, and $10 million.

Polk was teetering on the brink of a double war as a result of his own blunt diplomacy. He was very lucky that Aberdeen and Peel remained in power long enough to settle the Oregon question amicably, that Aberdeen's "thirty sail of the line" thus became ghosts, and that Taylor's forces were strong enough to win the first small engagements with the Mexicans. Was his stubbornness just tactical? Whatever his private thoughts, he did not admit any wavering, even to his diary. Oregon was not becoming American as a free area to balance slave-state Texas, but because the opportunity played out that way. Polk was not performing a balancing act; to the contrary, he was going to the brink of a double war. (Nor, despite suspicions that lingered for generations, was he or anyone the instrument of a "slave-power conspiracy" to annex northern Mexico to expand slavery. As events transpired, slavery never extended west of Texas. In fact, antislavery feelings strengthened because of the Mexican-American War; it was no plus for slavery.)

The war message reflects either an invincibly stubborn tunnel vision or enormous mendacity on Polk's part. In it, the president insisted and reiterated, unequivocally, that "the grievous wrongs perpetrated by Mexico upon our citizens throughout a long period of years remain unredressed. . . . We have tried every effort at reconciliation. . . . Now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil." This was the first, but not the last, presidential call to arms in American history based on a string of false contentions.

On May 12 the House considered the president's requests. His friends attached to it a "preamble" blaming Mexico for invading American soil. The Democratic leadership limited House debate to two hours and much of that was consumed by the reading of supporting documents. The bill passed, 174–14. Some members objected to the preamble, because it put them on record as agreeing with Polk's claims. Yet they did not dare refuse to support the war. Garrett Davis of Kentucky, one of the few allowed to speak, objected to the preamble:

> It recites that war exists . . . and was begun by Mexico. . . . That . . . is utterly untrue. I am decidedly, strongly, in favor of the appropriation of the money. . . . For these purposes, it is sufficient for me that our country

> is at war. . . . If the bill contained any recitation upon that point in truth and justice, it should be that this war was begun by the President. The river Nueces is the true western boundary of Texas. The country between that stream and the Del Norte [the Rio Grande] is part of Mexico.

Davis nonetheless voted for the bill, as did all but fourteen diehards—all Whigs and abolitionists who abhorred slavery's extension. Forty-eight Whigs voted "yea" to avoid being branded unpatriotic.

Debate in the Senate took another day, much of it centered on who owned the Nueces strip. But the bill passed there too, 40 yea (26 Democrats and 14 Whigs) to 2 nay (both Whigs), with John C. Calhoun and two others not voting. Polk signed the bill on May 13. War was declared.

The now familiar tactic of the chief executive maneuvering Congress into a fait accompli with regard to declaring war was certainly employed by Polk in 1846. . . . Polk put Taylor's army on the Rio Grande and Conner's navy off the Mexican coast. When the inevitable skirmish happened, congressmen had no option. Either go along, declare war, or be criticized for undercutting the troops. Once American troops were "in harm's way," although Polk placed them there and thereby contrived to have Mexico fire the first shot, it was too late to object. Public opinion soon split on the Mexican War, but at the outset Congress could not buck the belligerent spirit.

As soon as the Senate passed the war bill, and before it even reached Polk for signature, he reaffirmed to Navy Secretary Bancroft that Commodore Sloat and the Pacific squadron should occupy Monterey and San Francisco. The next day Polk sent orders to Colonel (soon General) Stephen Watts Kearny at Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri River, to head for Santa Fe and secure it. The grand strategy, set at least eleven months earlier in mid-1845, was reaching fruition: try diplomacy (Slidell and money) but position forces (Taylor and Conner). If and when diplomacy failed, send Taylor to the Rio Grande, claim the Nueces strip, provoke Mexico into armed defense of it, and then insist that American blood had been shed on American soil. Congress could not resist that strategy. Meanwhile, make a deal with Britain over Oregon, and forget about the unattainable (and baseless) claim of 54°40′. With war declared, send the army to New Mexico and the navy to the California coast. How it would all end—how much it would cost, how many would be killed, how much of Mexico would be occupied or kept—was not clear at all. But Polk's primary objective, making California American, was nearly in his grasp.

Mexico was prepared for war with the United States only in the strength of its sense of *nacionalidad,* and that existed primarily among its small elites. At the opening of the war, its land area was close to that of the United States, but its population was considerably smaller—about 7.5 or 8 million compared to the States' 17 million. As had been true since Aztec times, most lived in central Mexico. The northern states had always been underpopulated and only distantly connected to the center. The majority of the people were Indians or mestizos, divided in languages, often innocent of Spanish, practicing something close to subsistence farming and contributing little to national product or tax base. Many were Catholics, after more than three centuries of the

Spanish presence. Some, however, the *indios bárbaros* of the California interior and the Great Plains, were not only unassimilated but hostile. Comanches and Apaches raided at will many miles south of the Rio Grande, as they had ever since the Spanish pushed north of it. Mexico's preoccupation with the American invasion in 1846 provided the Comanches with further opportunities. As a result, Mexico found itself fighting on two fronts, against both the Americans and the Plains Indians.

Mexico's class structure made a unified war effort difficult. Above the Indian majority were a smaller number of largely mestizo artisans, shopkeepers, peasants, parish clergy, and others, comprising, to stretch a somewhat anachronistic term, a lower middle class. On top were people of European (usually Spanish) stock, the well landed, the upper clergy, military officers, the educated professionals. These Europeans split further into *criollos,* if they were Mexican-born, or *gachupines,* if they were the envied and often disliked Spanish-born. Ideological fissures separated the elites—clericals versus liberals, federalists versus centralists, monarchists versus republicans. Leadership, up to and including the presidency, oscillated among these groups.

Add to all that the epidemic of politically involved generals, including above all the charismatic Santa Anna, with his remarkable ability to raise armies and his ineptitude in leading them; the lack of any effective tax system and, for that matter, anything much to tax; the exemptions of the clergy and the military from the ordinary system of laws and courts; and in 1846, an army poorly paid, fed, clothed, equipped, and armed. The outcome was almost foreordained.

As nationalistic and full of their sense of destiny as the Americans of that day were, the Mexicans were equally so. No one monopolized nationalism in the nineteenth century. Though lacking the illusion that their "destiny" was "manifest," they were just as sensitive to insults to national honor and to threats to the integrity of their national territory. Americans were aggressive expansionists; Mexicans were determined to defend what they had.

The decade prior to 1846 brought Mexico's internal problems and divisions to a boil. Since the defeat at San Jacinto and de facto Texan independence in 1836, politics had never been calm. Santa Anna rode in and out of power, donning whatever cloak—centralist, federalist, liberal, conservative—would bring him back or keep him there. Only one thing was a given: no president or general could alienate any territory, even the lost territory of Texas. If he gave even a hint of that, as Herrera did by admitting Slidell in late 1845, he was ousted by someone more "patriotic." Thus war would surely come, however unready Mexico was. Defeat (and despite all of Mexico's handicaps it was not a certainty until it actually happened) was preferable to dishonor. In the two years beginning in late 1845, *during wartime,* five presidents succeeded one another; finance ministers and war ministers and commanders tumbled after one another; armies coalesced and crumbled. Mexico lost every significant battle of the war. But some were close, and most were valiantly defended. That was a wonder, in view of the country's lack of resources. . . .

Negotiations had already started. Polk had sent a negotiator, Nicholas P. Trist, with Scott, and after some initial friction Trist and Scott worked very well together. Following the capture of Mexico City, the obvious question was how to wind up the war. It could have ended in March 1847, in theory, since Polk's territorial objectives were satisfied by then. But neither side was ready to stop fighting, and the Scott campaign followed. By the fall of 1847, with the American victory seemingly complete, the question to many Americans was how much of Mexico to absorb. The United States was positioned to take more than New Mexico and California, but should it? . . .

Polk's and Mexico's Dilemmas, 1847

The Mexican dilemma was whether to round up yet more armies, fight, and probably lose more pitched battles; or to continue a war of guerrilla attrition until the Americans gave up and left; or to accept the losses of California and New Mexico, as well as Texas to the Rio Grande, sign whatever treaty they could, and stop the carnage. A strong faction, the *puros,* wanted to keep going. *Moderados* wanted a treaty. Local independence movements in Yucatán, Oaxaca, and other states threatened to spin off from the nation. How best to keep Mexico together as an independent country, and if that succeeded, should it be federal or centralized? A Mexican pamphleteer beseeched any reorganized government to "direct all its efforts to conserve the principle of *nationality* . . . at all costs." But should it agree, therefore, "to make peace, or to continue the war?"

For Polk the dilemma was whether to continue occupying Mexico, for how long, and for what. The American victories, while hardly overwhelming or even clear-cut in many cases, were trumpeted in much of the press in late 1847 as validation for putting large parts or even the whole of Mexico under American rule. The recent clamor for 54°40′ in Oregon was paralleled by cries of "all of Mexico," annexing it as far south as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, or even extending American rule all the way to Colombia. Since the army was there, why not let it stay?

From Polk's perspective there were good reasons not to. It was expensive. He'd had to plead with Congress for the money to wage the war, and he would have to do so again to fund an occupation. He had faced an antiwar minority from the start—a tiny one in May 1846 when Congress voted to declare war, but a substantial one in 1847. The Whigs won a majority in the House of Representatives in the 1846 election and would take over in December 1847. They would write no large checks for Polk. The 1848 presidential election loomed, and both of the war-hero generals, Taylor and Scott, were Whigs. (Taylor would win the Whig nomination and the 1848 election; Scott was the 1852 Whig nominee but lost to a Democratic general, Franklin Pierce.)

In August 1846, with Congress just hours away from recessing until December, a Pennsylvania Democrat named David Wilmot added a "proviso" to an appropriations bill to the effect that slavery would not be countenanced in any territory acquired from Mexico. No sharper wedge issue existed. The Wilmot proviso did not pass then or in later forms, but it began to split the Democratic Party. Polk confided to his diary on August 10, 1846, that the bill he desired, appropriating $2 million for peace negotiations, had passed the House, but with this "mischievous & foolish amendment. . . . What connection slavery had with making peace with Mexico it is difficult to conceive." He never understood the connection, only that it further complicated ending the war, even threatening his California prize.

But "how much to take"? As early as January 1847, if not before, American occupation of the Nueces strip, New Mexico, and Upper California was an accomplished fact. The United States would not give them back. But what of the next tier of occupied states to the south: Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California? What about the Gulf coast to Tampico or Veracruz? What about central Mexico itself, if the Americans conquered it—which they had by September 1847?

Opinions differed in the American public and press, but ambitions broadly surged after the capture of Mexico City in September 1847 and through that fall. The extension of slavery was directly in question, whether Polk understood it or not. It had, however, the surprising effect of moderating territorial demands. The "all of Mexico" proponents never quite answered whether Mexico or its states should become, in time, states of the American union or remain permanent territories. That question provoked argument in 1898, after the United States acquired Puerto Rico and the Philippines. It probably would have done so in 1848 had "all of Mexico" actually been annexed. Proponents resisted any idea that annexed Mexicans would become American citizens with full and equal rights, and they would do the same regarding Filipinos and Puerto Ricans later on.

Yet the temptation was as huge as Mexico was prostrate. Had not Taylor and Scott beaten the Mexicans thoroughly? Was it not the right, even duty, of Americans to spread their culture, religion, and beneficent rule over a lazy, benighted, and degenerate race? Didn't manifest destiny demand taking what could be taken? Wouldn't Providence be insulted if Americans refused this gift? A Boston pamphleteer in 1846 summed up a widespread conviction that "the Mexican republic is politically, socially and morally dissolute. . . . Anarchy is its only domestic rule; treachery its only foreign policy. . . . Her conquest would be practicable . . . her annexation would be a barrier to slavery." The author argued that if Mexico were annexed into the union as "a series of States of free laboring men," it would "stand as an impassable barrier to the extension of slavery southward." But if Mexico continued to exist, unannexed but supine, "the slavery of Texas will gradually encroach upon the northern Mexican provinces, and its course be indefinite."

From the West and Southwest came loud hyperpatriotic arguments. Eastern newspapers pointed out the need to keep a weakened Mexico from falling into European hands (as indeed happened a few years later when the Austrian archduke Maximilian was made emperor of Mexico). The lure of an Atlantic-to-Pacific canal across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was strong, and though that did not happen, the idea persisted until the Panama Canal opened sixty-six years later. Westerners, from editors and politicians to army volunteers, coveted Mexican land. The political split on "how much to take" followed the division over the war itself, with Whigs opposed, most Democrats in favor. Abraham Lincoln, elected a Whig congressman from Illinois in 1846, served only one term in large part because he opposed the war, the all-Mexico movement, and Polk himself, whose "mind," Lincoln told the House, "taxed beyond its power, is running hither and thither, like some tortured creature on a burning surface." On December 22, 1847, Lincoln introduced eight "spot resolutions" calling on Polk to answer whether "the *spot* on which the blood of [American] citizens was shed as in his messages declared was not within the territory of Spain [and then] . . . Mexico," and related questions. Lincoln expanded the resolutions into his first major speech, which he gave on January 12, 1848. Polk never responded.

The all-Mexico debate raged in the Senate from December 15, 1847, into February 1848. Southern Democrats, John C. Calhoun most prominently, opposed "all Mexico" because absorbing it would mean expanding nonslave areas—he assumed that Mexico would never reintroduce slavery—and taking on a huge nonwhite population. In a private conversation with Polk, Calhoun "said he did not desire to extend slavery," though he would vote against a Wilmot-like antislavery provision in any peace treaty as a matter of "principle."

Many southerners, however, supported the all-Mexico movement. Among them was the powerful Treasury secretary, Robert J. Walker of Mississippi. Some military men (though not Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant) favored large, possibly total, acquisition. The always aggressive Commodore Stockton roared in December 1847 that "if the war were to be prolonged for fifty years, and cost money enough to demand from us each half of all that we possess," he would nevertheless be confident that "the inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty should be guaranteed to Mexico." Walt Whitman, then editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle,* called for "fifty thousand fresh troops" to "make our authority respectable," as "this talk about a peace party is all moonshine." Various generals urged permanent occupation of Mexico north of the Sierra Madre Oriental (it actually runs more north and south, but what they wanted was Tamaulipas and the coast south beyond Tampico). Others coveted the whole country.

Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan, who became the Democratic presidential nominee in 1848, agreed. When John Crittenden, a Kentucky Whig, demanded in the Senate to know why the army needed ten more regiments unless they were to occupy and perhaps annex the whole country, Cass argued that the troops had to be there to produce a "moral effect"—that is, intimidate guerrillas.

The most cogent speech against the all-Mexico idea came from Andrew Pickens Butler, a Democrat and Calhoun's South Carolina colleague. If we persist in "conquering and subjugating the Republic of Mexico," either making it part of "this Confederacy" or keeping it as a dependency, then "it would not be an extravagant proposition for the President to ask for two hundred thousand men to do it with security and safety." In other words, it would be a quagmire. American troops would not be in Mexico to fight, but "to overrun the Mexican states, to disarm the population, to confiscate the public property, to sequester the revenues, and to become . . . armed jailers." Every part of Europe, and many at home, are "a formidable opposition . . . against us."

Heated discussion continued into February, with many nuances worth noting because they reveal the twists of territorial ambition at that time. John Bell of Tennessee opposed strengthening the army and occupying Mexico, because four of the eight million Mexicans are “degraded, vile, addicted to every vice,” including “the Romish religion.” Annexation would eventually mean “fifty new Representatives [and] forty new Senators, men of this mixed race.” Most speakers steered clear of slavery. Southerners were not of one mind, but Calhoun’s belief that large-scale annexation would weaken, not strengthen, slavery found support from Senator Jefferson Davis, among others.

As for Polk himself, his initial targets of California and New Mexico expanded after Scott’s successes. In late 1847, privately and in the cabinet, he toyed with annexing everything north of the twenty-sixth parallel. His annual message to Congress of December 1847 left the door open for substantial acquisitions south of the Rio Grande. Partly as a result, the all-Mexico sentiment strengthened that winter. On January 2, 1848, he told Secretary of State Buchanan that he would be happy with Upper and Lower California, New Mexico, the Tehuantepec Isthmus, and Tampico.

But the Whig-majority House of Representatives elected in 1846 took office in December 1847 (Lincoln among them). It debated for weeks how much of Mexico to annex. Whigs were not likely to embrace the all-Mexico idea, strong though it was in the press and among the military. New England Whig papers insinuated that the real motive for large annexation was to capture the silver mines of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí and extend slavery to all of Mexico. It was a way to provide an “outlet for our slaves,” who were rapidly multiplying and threatening to overrun the South. Nor were the Whigs eager to finance the army or call for more volunteers.

The all-Mexico debate stopped abruptly when a draft peace treaty from Mexico City arrived and became known in late February 1848, because it limited the gains to New Mexico and Upper California. . . .

Norman A. Graebner **NO**

The Mexican War: A Study in Causation

On May 11, 1846, President James K. Polk presented his war message to Congress. After reviewing the skirmish between General Zachary Taylor's dragoons and a body of Mexican soldiers along the Rio Grande, the president asserted that Mexico "has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. . . . War exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by act of Mexico." No country could have had a superior case for war. Democrats in large numbers (for it was largely a partisan matter) responded with the patriotic fervor which Polk expected of them. "Our government has permitted itself to be insulted long enough," wrote one Georgian. "The blood of her citizens has been spilt on her own soil. It appeals to us for vengeance." Still, some members of Congress, recalling more accurately than the president the circumstances of the conflict, soon rendered the Mexican War the most reviled in American history—at least until the Vietnam War of the 1960s. One outraged Whig termed the war "illegal, unrighteous, and damnable," and Whigs questioned both Polk's honesty and his sense of geography. Congressman Joshua R. Giddings of Ohio accused the president of "planting the standard of the United States on foreign soil, and using the military forces of the United States to violate every principle of international law and moral justice." To vote for the war, admitted Senator John C. Calhoun, was "to plunge a dagger into his own heart, and more so." Indeed, some critics in Congress openly wished the Mexicans well.

For over a century such profound differences in perception have pervaded American writings on the Mexican War. Even in the past decade, historians have reached conclusions on the question of war guilt as disparate as those which separated Polk from his wartime conservative and abolitionist critics. . . .

In some measure the diversity of judgment on the Mexican War, as on other wars, is understandable. By basing their analyses on official rationalizations, historians often ignore the more universal causes of war which transcend individual conflicts and which can establish the bases for greater consensus. Neither the officials in Washington nor those in Mexico City ever acknowledged any alternatives to the actions which they took. But governments generally have more choices in any controversy than they are prepared to admit. Circumstances determine their extent. The more powerful a nation, the more

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remote its dangers, the greater its options between action and inaction. Often for the weak, unfortunately, the alternative is capitulation or war. . . . Polk and his advisers developed their Mexican policies on the dual assumption that Mexico was weak and that the acquisition of certain Mexican territories would satisfy admirably the long-range interests of the United States. Within that context, Polk's policies were direct, timely, and successful. But the president had choices. Mexico, whatever its internal condition, was no direct threat to the United States. Polk, had he so desired, could have avoided war; indeed, he could have ignored Mexico in 1845 with absolute impunity.

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In explaining the Mexican War historians have dwelled on the causes of friction in American-Mexican relations. In part these lay in the disparate qualities of the two populations, in part in the vast discrepancies between the two countries in energy, efficiency, power, and national wealth. Through two decades of independence Mexico had experienced a continuous rise and fall of governments; by the 1840s survival had become the primary concern of every regime. Conscious of their weakness, the successive governments in Mexico City resented the superior power and effectiveness of the United States and feared American notions of destiny that anticipated the annexation of Mexico's northern provinces. Having failed to prevent the formation of the Texas Republic, Mexico reacted to Andrew Jackson's recognition of Texan independence in March 1837 with deep indignation. Thereafter the Mexican raids into Texas, such as the one on San Antonio in 1842, aggravated the bitterness of Texans toward Mexico, for such forays had no purpose beyond terrorizing the frontier settlements.

Such mutual animosities, extensive as they were, do not account for the Mexican War. Governments as divided and chaotic as the Mexican regimes of the 1840s usually have difficulty in maintaining positive and profitable relations with their neighbors; their behavior often produces annoyance, but seldom armed conflict. Belligerence toward other countries had flowed through U.S. history like a torrent without, in itself, setting off a war. Nations do not fight over cultural differences or verbal recriminations; they fight over perceived threats to their interests created by the ambitions or demands of others.

What increased the animosity between Mexico City and Washington was a series of specific issues over which the two countries perennially quarreled—claims, boundaries, and the future of Texas. Nations have made claims a pretext for intervention, but never a pretext for war. Every nineteenth-century effort to collect debts through force assumed the absence of effective resistance, for no debt was worth the price of war. To collect its debt from Mexico in 1838, for example, France blockaded Mexico's gulf ports and bombarded Vera Cruz. The U.S. claims against Mexico created special problems which discounted their seriousness as a rationale for war. True, the Mexican government failed to protect the possessions and the safety of Americans in Mexico from robbery, theft, and other illegal actions, but U.S. citizens were under no obligation to do business in

Mexico and should have understood the risk of transporting goods and money in that country. Minister Waddy Thompson wrote from Mexico City in 1842 that it would be "with somewhat of bad grace that we should war upon a country because it could not pay its debts when so many of our own states are in the same situation." Even as the United States after 1842 attempted futilely to collect the $2 million awarded its citizens by a claims commission, it was far more deeply in debt to Britain over speculative losses. Minister Wilson Shannon reported in the summer of 1844 that the claims issue defied settlement in Mexico City and recommended that Washington take the needed action to compel Mexico to pay. If Polk would take up the challenge and sacrifice American human and material resources in a war against Mexico, he would do so for reasons other than the enforcement of claims. The president knew well that Mexico could not pay, yet as late as May 9, 1846, he was ready to ask Congress for a declaration of war on the question of unpaid claims alone.

Congress's joint resolution for Texas annexation in February 1845 raised the specter of war among editors and politicians alike. As early as 1843 the Mexican government had warned the American minister in Mexico City that annexation would render war inevitable; Mexican officials in Washington repeated that warning. To Mexico, therefore, the move to annex Texas was an unbearable affront. Within one month after Polk's inauguration on March 4, General Juan Almonte, the Mexican minister in Washington, boarded a packet in New York and sailed for Vera Cruz to sever his country's diplomatic relations with the United States. Even before the Texas Convention could meet on July 4 to vote annexation, rumors of a possible Mexican invasion of Texas prompted Polk to advance Taylor's forces from Fort Jesup in Louisiana down the Texas coast. Polk instructed Taylor to extend his protection to the Rio Grande but to avoid any areas to the north of that river occupied by Mexican troops. Simultaneously the president reinforced the American squadron in the Gulf of Mexico. "The threatened invasion of Texas by a large Mexican army," Polk informed Andrew J. Donelson, the American charge in Texas, on June 15, "is well calculated to excite great interest here and increases our solicitude concerning the final action by the Congress and the Convention of Texas." Polk assured Donelson that he intended to defend Texas to the limit of his constitutional power. Donelson resisted the pressure of those Texans who wanted Taylor to advance to the Rio Grande; instead, he placed the general at Corpus Christi on the Nueces River. Taylor agreed that the line from the mouth of the Nueces to San Antonio covered the Texas settlements and afforded a favorable base from which to defend the frontier.

Those who took the rumors of Mexican aggressiveness seriously lauded the president's action. With Texas virtually a part of the United States, argued the *Washington Union,* "We owe it to ourselves, to the proud and elevated character which America maintains among the nations of the earth, to guard our own territory from the invasion of the ruthless Mexicans." The *New York Morning News* observed that Polk's policy would, on the whole, "command a general concurrence of the public opinion of his country." Some Democratic leaders, fearful of a Mexican attack, urged the president to strengthen Taylor's forces and order them to take the offensive should Mexican soldiers cross the Rio Grande. Others believed the reports from Mexico exaggerated, for there was no apparent relationship between the country's expressions of belligerence and its capacity to act. Secretary of War William L. Marcy admitted that his information was no better than that of other commentators. "I have at no time," he wrote in July, "felt that war with Mexico was probable—and do not now believe it is, yet it is in the range of possible occurrences. I have officially acted on the hypothesis that our peace may be temporarily disturbed without however believing it will be." Still convinced that the administration had no grounds for alarm, Marcy wrote on August 12: "The presence of a considerable force in Texas will do no hurt and possibly may be of great use." In September William S. Parrott, Polk's special agent in Mexico, assured the president that there would be neither a Mexican declaration of war nor an invasion of Texas.

Polk insisted that the administration's show of force in Texas would prevent rather than provoke war. "I do not anticipate that Mexico will be mad enough to declare war," he wrote in July, but "I think she would have done so but for the appearance of a strong naval force in the Gulf and our army moving in the direction of her frontier on land." Polk restated this judgment on July 28 in a letter to General Robert Armstrong, the U.S. consul at Liverpool: "I think there need be but little apprehension of war with Mexico. If however she shall be mad enough to make war we are prepared to meet her." The president assured Senator William H. Haywood of North Carolina that the American forces in Texas would never aggress against Mexico; however, they would prevent any Mexican forces from crossing the Rio Grande. In conversation with Senator William S. Archer of Virginia on September 1, the president added confidently that "the appearance of our land and naval forces on the borders of Mexico & in the Gulf would probably deter and prevent Mexico from either declaring war or invading Texas." Polk's continuing conviction that Mexico would not attack suggests that his deployment of U.S. land and naval forces along Mexico's periphery was designed less to protect Texas than to support an aggressive diplomacy which might extract a satisfactory treaty from Mexico without war. For Anson Jones, the last president of the Texas Republic, Polk's deployments had precisely that purpose:

> Texas never actually needed the protection of the United States after I came into office. . . . There was no necessity for it after the 'preliminary Treaty,' as we were at peace with Mexico, and knew perfectly well that that Government, though she might bluster a little, had not the slightest idea of invading Texas either by land or water; and that nothing would provoke her to (active) hostilities, but the presence of troops in the immediate neighborhood of the Rio Grande, threatening her towns and settlements on the southwest side of that river. . . . But Donelson appeared so intent upon 'encumbering us with help,' that finally, to get rid of his annoyance, he was told he might give us as much protection as he pleased. . . . The protection asked for was only *prospective* and contingent; the *protection* he had in view was *immediate and aggressive.*

For Polk the exertion of military and diplomatic pressure on a disorganized Mexico was not a prelude to war. Whig critics of annexation had predicted war; this alone compelled the administration to avoid a conflict over Texas. In his memoirs Jones recalled that in 1845 Commodore Robert F. Stockton, with either the approval or the connivance of Polk, attempted to convince him that he should place Texas "in an attitude of active hostility toward Mexico, so that, when Texas was finally brought into the Union, *she might bring war with her.*" If Stockton engaged in such an intrigue, he apparently did so on his own initiative, for no evidence exists to implicate the administration. Polk not only preferred to achieve his purposes by means other than war but also assumed that his military measures in Texas, limited as they were, would convince the Mexican government that it could not escape the necessity of coming to terms with the United States. Washington's policy toward Mexico during 1845 achieved the broad national purpose of Texas annexation. Beyond that it brought U.S. power to bear on Mexico in a manner calculated to further the processes of negotiation. Whether the burgeoning tension would lead to a negotiated boundary settlement or to war hinged on two factors: the nature of Polk's demands and Mexico's response to them. The president announced his objectives to Mexico's troubled officialdom through his instructions to John Slidell, his special emissary who departed for Mexico in November 1845 with the assurance that the government there was prepared to reestablish formal diplomatic relations with the United States and negotiate a territorial settlement. . . .

* * *

Actually, Slidell's presence in Mexico inaugurated a diplomatic crisis not unlike those which precede most wars. Fundamentally the Polk administration, in dispatching Slidell, gave the Mexicans the same two choices that the dominant power in any confrontation gives to the weaker: the acceptance of a body of concrete diplomatic demands or eventual war. Slidell's instructions described U.S. territorial objectives with considerable clarity. If Mexico knew little of Polk's growing acquisitiveness toward California during the autumn of 1845, Slidell proclaimed the president's intentions with his proposals to purchase varying portions of California for as much as $25 million. Other countries such as England and Spain had consigned important areas of the New World through peaceful negotiations, but the United States, except in its Mexican relations, had never asked any country to part with a portion of its own territory. Yet Polk could not understand why Mexico should reveal any special reluctance to part with Texas, the Rio Grande, New Mexico, or California. What made the terms of Slidell's instructions appear fair to him was Mexico's military and financial helplessness. Polk's defenders noted that California was not a sine qua non of any settlement and that the president offered to settle the immediate controversy over the acquisition of the Rio Grande boundary alone in exchange for the cancellation of claims. Unfortunately, amid the passions of December 1845, such distinctions were lost. Furthermore, a settlement of the Texas boundary would not have resolved the California question at all.

Throughout the crisis months of 1845 and 1846, spokesmen of the Polk administration repeatedly warned the Mexican government that its choices were limited. In June 1845, Polk's mouthpiece, the *Washington Union,* had observed characteristically that, if Mexico resisted Washington's demands, "a corps of properly organized volunteers . . . would invade, overrun, and occupy Mexico. They would enable us not only to take California, but to keep it." American officials, in their contempt for Mexico, spoke privately of the need to chastize that country for its annoyances and insults. Parrott wrote to Secretary of State James Buchanan in October that he wished "to see this people well flogged by Uncle Sam's boys, ere we enter upon negotiations. . . . I know [the Mexicans] better, perhaps, than any other American citizen and I am fully persuaded, they can never love or respect us, as we should be loved and respected by them, until we shall have given them a positive proof of our superiority." Mexico's pretensions would continue, wrote Slidell in late December, "until the Mexican people shall be convinced by hostile demonstrations, that our differences must be settled promptly, either by negotiation or the sword." In January 1846 the *Union* publicly threatened Mexico with war if it rejected the just demands of the United States: "The result of such a course on her part may compel us to resort to more decisive measures. . . . to obtain the settlement of our legitimate claims." As Slidell prepared to leave Mexico in March 1846, he again reminded the administration: "Depend upon it, we can never get along well with them, until we have given them a good drubbing." In Washington on May 8, Slidell advised the president "to take the redress of the wrongs and injuries which we had so long borne from Mexico into our own hands, and to act with promptness and energy."

Mexico responded to Polk's challenge with an outward display of belligerence and an inward dread of war. Mexicans feared above all that the United States intended to overrun their country and seize much of their territory. Polk and his advisers assumed that Mexico, to avoid an American invasion, would give up its provinces peacefully. Obviously Mexico faced growing diplomatic and military pressures to negotiate away its territories; it faced no moral obligation to do so. Herrera and Paredes had the sovereign right to protect their regimes by avoiding any formal recognition of Slidell and by rejecting any of the boundary proposals embodied in his instructions, provided that in the process they did not endanger any legitimate interests of the American people. At least to some Mexicans, Slidell's terms demanded nothing less than Mexico's capitulation. By what standard was $2 million a proper payment for the Rio Grande boundary, or $25 million a fair price for California? No government would have accepted such terms. Having rejected negotiation in the face of superior force, Mexico would meet the challenge with a final gesture of defiance. In either case it was destined to lose, but historically nations have preferred to fight than to give away territory under diplomatic pressure alone. Gene M. Brack, in his long study of Mexico's deep-seated fear and resentment of the United States, explained Mexico's ultimate behavior in such terms:

> President Polk knew that Mexico could offer but feeble resistance militarily, and he knew that Mexico needed money. No proper American would exchange territory and the national honor for cash, but President Polk mistakenly believed that the application of military pressure would

> convince Mexicans to do so. They did not respond logically, but patriotically. Left with the choice of war or territorial concessions, the former course, however dim the prospects of success, could be the only one.

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Mexico, in its resistance, gave Polk the three choices which every nation gives another in an uncompromisable confrontation: to withdraw his demands and permit the issues to drift, unresolved; to reduce his goals in the interest of an immediate settlement; or to escalate the pressures in the hope of securing an eventual settlement on his own terms. Normally when the internal conditions of a country undermine its relations with others, a diplomatic corps simply removes itself from the hostile environment and awaits a better day. Mexico, despite its animosity, did not endanger the security interests of the United States; it had not invaded Texas and did not contemplate doing so. Mexico had refused to pay the claims, but those claims were not equal to the price of a one-week war. Whether Mexico negotiated a boundary for Texas in 1846 mattered little; the United States had lived with unsettled boundaries for decades without considering war. Settlers, in time, would have forced a decision, but in 1846 the region between the Nueces and the Rio Grande was a vast, generally unoccupied wilderness. Thus there was nothing, other than Polk's ambitions, to prevent the United States from withdrawing its diplomats from Mexico City and permitting its relations to drift. But Polk, whatever the language of his instructions, did not send Slidell to Mexico to normalize relations with that government. He expected Slidell to negotiate an immediate boundary settlement favorable to the United States, and nothing less.

Recognizing no need to reduce his demands on Mexico, Polk, without hesitation, took the third course which Mexico offered. Congress bound the president to the annexation of Texas; thereafter the Polk administration was free to formulate its own policies toward Mexico. With the Slidell mission Polk embarked upon a program of gradual coercion to achieve a settlement, preferably without war. That program led logically from his dispatching an army to Texas and his denunciation of Mexico in his annual message of December 1845 to his new instructions of January 1846, which ordered General Taylor to the Rio Grande. Colonel Atocha, spokesman for the deposed Mexican leader, Antonio López de Santa Anna, encouraged Polk to pursue his policy of escalation. The president recorded Atocha's advice:

> He said our army should be marched at once from Corpus Christi to the Del Norte, and a strong naval force assembled at Vera Cruz, that Mr. Slidell, the U.S. Minister, should withdraw from Jalappa, and go on board one of our ships of War at Vera Cruz, and in that position should demand the payment of [the] amount due our citizens; that it was well known the Mexican Government was unable to pay in money, and that when they saw a strong force ready to strike on their coasts and border, they would, he had no doubt, feel their danger and agree to the boundary suggested. He said that Paredes, Almonte, & Gen'l Santa

> Anna were all willing for such an arrangement, but that they dare not make it until it was made apparent to the Archbishop of Mexico & the people generally that it was necessary to save their country from a war with the U. States.

Thereafter Polk never questioned the efficacy of coercion. He asserted at a cabinet meeting on February 17 that "it would be necessary to take strong measures towards Mexico before our difficulties with that Government could be settled." Similarly on April 18 Polk told Calhoun that "our relations with Mexico had reached a point where we could not stand still but must treat all nations whether weak or strong alike, and that I saw no alternative but strong measures towards Mexico." A week later the president again brought the Mexican question before the cabinet. "I expressed my opinion," he noted in his diary, "that we must take redress for the injuries done us into our own hands, that we had attempted to conciliate Mexico in vain, and had forborne until forbearance was no longer either a virtue or patriotic." Convinced that Paredes needed money, Polk suggested to leading senators that Congress appropriate $1 million both to encourage Paredes to negotiate and to sustain him in power until the United States could ratify the treaty. The president failed to secure Calhoun's required support.

Polk's persistence led him and the country to war. Like all escalations in the exertion of force, his decision responded less to unwanted and unanticipated resistance than to the requirements of the clearly perceived and inflexible purposes which guided the administration. What perpetuated the president's escalation to the point of war was his determination to pursue goals to the end whose achievement lay outside the possibilities of successful negotiations. Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri saw this situation when he wrote: "It is impossible to conceive of an administration less warlike, or more intriguing, than that of Mr. Polk. They were *men of peace, with objects to be accomplished by means of war;* so that war was a necessity and an indispensability to their purpose."

Polk understood fully the state of Mexican opinion. In placing General Taylor on the Rio Grande he revealed again his contempt for Mexico. Under no national obligation to expose the country's armed forces, he would not have advanced Taylor in the face of a superior military force. Mexico had been undiplomatic; its denunciations of the United States were insulting and provocative. But if Mexico's behavior antagonized Polk, it did not antagonize the Whigs, the abolitionists, or even much of the Democratic party. Such groups did not regard Mexico as a threat; they warned the administration repeatedly that Taylor's presence on the Rio Grande would provoke war. But in the balance against peace was the pressure of American expansionism. Much of the Democratic and expansionist press, having accepted without restraint both the purposes of the Polk administration and its charges of Mexican perfidy, urged the president on to more vigorous action. . . .

Confronted with the prospect of further decline which they could neither accept nor prevent, [the Mexicans] lashed out with the intention of protecting their self-esteem and compelling the United States, if it was determined to have the Rio Grande, New Mexico, and California, to pay for its prizes with something other than money. On April 23, Paredes issued a proclamation declaring a defensive war against the United States. Predictably, one day later the Mexicans fired on a detachment of U.S. dragoons. Taylor's report of the attack reached Polk on Saturday evening, May 9. On Sunday the president drafted his war message and delivered it to Congress on the following day. Had Polk avoided the crisis, he might have gained the time required to permit the emigrants of 1845 and 1846 to settle the California issue without war.

What clouds the issue of the Mexican War's justification was the acquisition of New Mexico and California, for contemporaries and historians could not logically condemn the war and laud the Polk administration for its territorial achievements. Perhaps it is true that time would have permitted American pioneers to transform California into another Texas. But even then California's acquisition by the United States would have emanated from the use of force, for the elimination of Mexican sovereignty, whether through revolution or war, demanded the successful use of power. If the power employed in revolution would have been less obtrusive than that exerted in war, its role would have been no less essential. There simply was no way that the United States could acquire California peacefully. If the distraught Mexico of 1845 would not sell the distant province, no regime thereafter would have done so. Without forceful destruction of Mexico's sovereign power, California would have entered the twentieth century as an increasingly important region of another country.

Thus the Mexican War poses the dilemma of all international relations. Nations whose geographic and political status fails to coincide with their ambition and power can balance the two sets of factors in only one manner: through the employment of force. They succeed or fail according to circumstances; and for the United States, the conditions for achieving its empire in the Southwest and its desired frontage on the Pacific were so ideal that later generations could refer to the process as the mere fulfillment of destiny. "The Mexican Republic," lamented a Mexican writer in 1848, ". . . had among other misfortunes of less account, the great one of being in the vicinity of a strong and energetic people." What the Mexican War revealed in equal measure is the simple fact that only those countries which have achieved their destiny, whatever that may be, can afford to extol the virtues of peaceful change.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was the Mexican War an Exercise in American Imperialism?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. Define *imperialism* by looking up the definition in a dictionary.
    a. Discuss whether or not the dictionary definition is too narrow.
    b. Does a nation need to control a country territorially to be imperialistic?
    c. Discuss whether or not the United States pursued an imperialistic policy toward Mexico in the 1840s.
2. Define *Manifest Destiny*.
    a. Where did the term originate?
    b. Did Manifest Destiny express the true feelings of the American people? Of American politicians? Or was it an exaggeration?
    c. Was Manifest Destiny merely a cover for American expansionist policies in Mexico as Ramón Ruiz contends?
    d. Was Manifest Destiny racist? Explain.
    e. Compare Nugent's viewpoint with the viewpoint of traditional diplomatic historians concerning the reasons why all of Mexico was not incorporated into the territorial boundaries of the United States.
3. a. Explain what Professor Nugent means when he titles his book *Habits of Empire*.
    b. Explain how the Mexican War fits into his thesis of the creation and extension of the American empire.
4. Nugent believes the expansion of the frontier and the "habit of empire" go together. Critically analyze.
5. Professor Graebner believes that Polk thought Mexico would cave in to diplomatic and military pressure. But Professor Nugent believes that Polk expected Mexico would attack American troops when he stationed them in the disputed territory. Compare and contrast the arguments of both authors citing any evidence used to support their views.
6. What is a "realist diplomatic historian?
    a. Examine the influences of the cold war and the influences of political scientists on Graebner's thinking.
    b. Analyze the following statement made by Graebner: "Nations do not fight over cultural differences or verbal recriminations; they fight over perceived threats to their interests created by the ambitions or demands of others."
7. Discuss the following three options, which Polk could have taken after the Mexican government refused to back down in Texas or to sell New Mexico and California to the United States: (1) withdraw

the demands; (2) scale down the demands; and (3) keep up the pressure until demands are met.

8. What other courses of action could President Polk have followed to achieve his objectives and to avoid a war?
9. Could California, like Texas, have become part of the United States through an internal revolution? Explain.
   a. Has Mexico been hurt economically for the past 150 years because she lost control of Texas, New Mexico, and California?
10. Compare the cases of President Polk in 1846 with the two President Bushes in the ways in which they waged the Iraq Wars in 1991 and 2003.

Is There Common Ground?

Graebner disagrees with Nugent over who started the Mexican War. He argues that Polk truly believed that President Paredes would back down and negotiate. Nugent, along with other writers such as Richard Kluger, in *Seizing Destiny: How America Grew from Sea to Shining Sea* (Knopf, 2007), maintains that Polk really wanted the war, especially after the Oregon boundary dispute with England was settled at the 49th parallel. Other historians support Graebner by putting the events into a broader focus. Walter A. McDougall, in *Promised Land, Crusader State: the American Encounter with World since 1776,* states that aside from "sheer ambition" or "the fact that Americans inhabited an undeveloped continent devoid of serious rivals . . . expansion derived from the primordial exceptional American commitment to liberty." The four barriers to expansion, continues McDougall, included Indian tribes, British lords, Mexican juntas, and "U.S. federal authorities themselves telling farmers, trappers, ranchers, merchants and missionaries: No, you can't settle here, or do business there. Go back where you came from!" (p. 78) Finally Robert Kagan, in *Dangerous Nation* (Knopf, 2006), emphasizes how the acquisition of California and the territories of New Mexico and Arizona could upset the balance of power between the equal number of free and slave states that had been created.

There are many issues that an instructor could discuss about the early foreign policy of the United States. First is the notion of American "exceptionalism." The policies of American isolationism, neutrality, and the Monroe Doctrine were premised on the rejection of the traditional European notion of balance-of-power politics. Manifest Destiny was a concept that extolled the spread of the unique American ideals of freedom, democracy, and capitalism across the North American continent (not including Canada). Europe, by contrast, was wedded to old-fashioned kingdoms that restrained economic development via mercantilist controls. American foreign policy was based on ideals; European diplomacy was based on cynical realism in which nations played games with one another to maintain a balance of power.

The issue of American "exceptionalism" raises several questions. Was Benjamin Franklin playing power politics when he violated the alliance with France and negotiated a separate peace treaty with England to gain American independence? Can your students name other examples in the pre-Civil War period in which American presidents negotiated realistic agreements with foreign countries? In his book *Unmanifest Destiny: Mayhem and Illusion in American Foreign Policy—From the Monroe Doctrine to Reagan's War in El Salvador* (Dial Press, 1984), journalist T. D. Allman asserts that American foreign policy has run amuck, spreading its unmanifested destiny to Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s and to El Salvador and Nicaragua in the late 1980s. Was the American invasion of Grenada a violation of the Monroe Doctrine? Is American foreign policy imperialistic? Was Manifest Destiny merely a cover for American imperialism? Was Manifest Destiny also racist, as some Mexican historians contend? For a view that perceives empire as a way of life in America, consult the first chapter of Professor William Appleman Williams's classic *Tragedy of Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (Delta, 1972). For the perspective of the Mexican side see the older collections on the Mexican War by Archie McDonald, ed., *The Mexican War: Crisis for American Democracy* (D. D. Heath, 1969) and Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, ed., *The Mexican War: Was It Manifest Destiny?* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

Graebner is a member of the "realist" school. Influenced in the 1950s by political scientists Robert Osgood, Hans Morgenthau, and historian diplomat George Kennan, he explores the Mexican War as a case study of the causes of war. Explore the three options that Graebner says President Polk had available to him when Mexico was pressuring Texas with border attacks after the United States' annexation of the new territory. Examine the same options after Mexico refused Slidell's offer to buy New Mexico and California for $25 million. Which one of the following options do students think Polk should have chosen? (1) Withdraw his demands and permit the issues to drift unresolved; (2) Reduce his goals in the interest of an immediate settlement; or (3) Escalate pressures in order to achieve a settlement on his own terms. Was President Polk naïve, when he applied pressure by stationing troops in the disputed territory between the Rio Grande River and the Neuces River, to believe that Mexico would back down and respond, according to Gene Brack, "logically instead of patriotically"? If the United States had de-escalated the crisis, would California have fallen into America's hands by an internal revolution of its settlers in the same way Texas did? Were these three options the only ones available? If not, list others and critically discuss!

Finally, students might want to compare President Polk's negotiations with Mexico during 1845–1846 and the two President Bushes' negotiations with Iraq during 1990–1991 and 2001–2002. What are wars of preemption and prevention? Is this policy part of America's imperialistic foreign policy? For a yes answer to this question, see Nugent, "The American Habit of Empire, and the Cases of Polk and Bush," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 38 (Spring 2007). More sympathetic to Polk and the two Bushes is John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security and the American Experience* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

The Bush war on terror has elicited a debate between the neoconservatives and the neoisolationists (for lack of a better term). In "Cowboy Nation: Against the Myth of American Innocence," *The New Republic* (October 23, 2006), neoconservative historian Robert Kagan summarizes the arguments of his book *Dangerous Nation*. Former *Wall Street Journal* features writer Max Boot summarizes "The Case for American Empire: The Most Realistic Response to Terrorism is for the United States Unambiguously to Embrace Its Imperial Role," *The Weekly Standard* (October 15, 2001). On the other side, see former West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran and now professor of history at Boston University Andrew J. Bacevich on *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced By War* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (Metropolitan Books, 2003); and William Pfaff, "Manifest Destiny: A New Direction for America," *The New York Review of Books* (February 15, 2007). An older but still valuable left critique is Richard W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago, 1965).

Additional Resources

Two major works on the Mexican side of the war are Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 3rd ed. (Harper and Row, 1988) and Ramón Ruiz, *Triumphs and Tragedy: A History of the Mexican People* (W. W. Norton, 1992). Polk's most recent biographer, Robert W. Merry, *A Country of Vast Designs: James K. Polk, the Mexican War and the Conquest of America* (Simon & Schuster, 2009), provides a favorable view of the president shared by Graebner, but older writers are more critical of Polk's actions in pushing the Mexican government to assert its authority in the disputed territory. See both David M. Pletcher's *The Diplomacy of Annexation* (University of Missouri Press, 1973) and Charles Sellers's biography *James K. Polk*, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1957–1966).

ISSUE 13

Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?

YES: James N. Gilbert, from "A Behavioral Analysis of John Brown: Martyr or Terrorist?" in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005)

NO: Scott John Hammond, from "John Brown as Founder: America's Violent Confrontation with Its First Principles," in Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Define "terrorism" and place this concept in a broad historical context that does not simply include the present.
- Determine whether John Brown's actions amount to terrorist tactics.
- Compare the abolitionists' goals for freedom for African American slaves with the political freedom sought by the founders of the American republic.
- Assess the legitimacy of employing violence to end the institution of slavery.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: James N. Gilbert says that John Brown's actions conform to a modern definition of terrorist behavior in that Brown considered the United States incapable of reforming itself by abolishing slavery, believed that only violence would accomplish that goal, and justified his actions by proclaiming adherence to a "higher" power.

NO: Scott John Hammond insists that John Brown's commitment to higher moral and political goals conformed to the basic principles of human freedom and political and legal equality that formed the heart of the creed articulated by the founders of the American nation.

Opposition to slavery in the area that became the United States dates back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when Puritan leaders, such as Samuel Sewall, and Quakers, such as John Woolman and Anthony Benezet, published a number of pamphlets condemning the existence of the slave system. This religious link to antislavery sentiment is also evident in the writings of John Wesley as well as in the decision of the Society of Friends in 1688 to prohibit their members from owning bond servants. Slavery was said to be contrary to Christian principles. These attacks, however, did little to diminish the institution. Complaints that the English government had instituted a series of measures that "enslaved" the colonies in British North America raised thorny questions about the presence of *real* slavery in those colonies. How could American colonists demand their freedom from King George III, who was cast in the role of oppressive master, while denying freedom and liberty to African American slaves? Such a contradiction inspired a gradual emancipation movement in the North, which often was accompanied by compensation for the former slave owners.

In addition, antislavery societies sprang up throughout the nation to continue the crusade against bondage. Interestingly, the majority of these organizations were located in the South. Prior to the 1830s, the most prominent antislavery organization was the American Colonization Society, which offered a twofold program: (1) gradual, compensated emancipation of slaves and (2) exportation of the newly freed to colonies outside the boundaries of the United States, mostly to Africa.

In the 1830s, antislavery activity underwent an important transformation. A new strain of antislavery sentiment expressed itself in the abolitionist movement. Drawing momentum both from the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening and the example set by England (which prohibited slavery in its imperial holdings in 1833), abolitionists called for the immediate end to slavery without compensation to masters for the loss of their property. Abolitionists viewed slavery not so much as a practical problem to be resolved, but rather as a moral offense incapable of resolution through traditional channels of political compromise. In January 1831, William Lloyd Garrison, who for many came to symbolize the abolitionist crusade, published the first issue of *The Liberator*, a newspaper dedicated to the immediate end to slavery. In his first editorial, Garrison expressed the self-righteous indignation of many in the abolitionist movement when he warned slaveholders and their supporters to "urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. . . ."

Unfortunately for Garrison, relatively few Americans were inclined to respond positively to his call. His newspaper generated little interest outside Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other major urban centers of the North. This situation, however, changed within a matter of months. In August 1831, a slave preacher named Nat Turner led a rebellion of slaves in Southampton County, Virginia, that resulted in the death of 58 whites. Although the revolt was quickly suppressed and Turner and his supporters were executed, the incident spread fear throughout the South. Governor John B. Floyd of Virginia turned an accusatory finger toward the abolitionists when he concluded that the Turner uprising was "undoubtedly designed and matured by unrestrained fanatics in some of the neighboring states."

One of the weaknesses of most studies of abolitionism is that they generally are written from a monochromatic perspective. In other words, historians typically discuss whites within the abolitionist crusade and give little, if any, attention to the roles African Americans played in the movement. Whites are portrayed as the active agents of reform, while blacks are the passive recipients of humanitarian efforts to eliminate the scourge of slavery. Students should be aware that African Americans, slave and free, also rebelled against the institution of slavery both directly and indirectly, although very few rallied to the call of John Brown.

Benjamin Quarles in *Black Abolitionists* (Oxford University Press, 1969) describes a wide range of roles played by blacks in the abolitionist movement. The African American challenge to the slave system is also evident in the network known as the "underground railroad." Larry Gara, in *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (University of Kentucky Press, 1961), concludes that the real heroes of the underground railroad were not white abolitionists but the slaves themselves who depended primarily upon their own resources or assistance they received from other African Americans, slave and free.

Other studies treating the role of black abolitionists in the antislavery movement include James M. McPherson, *The Struggle For Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton University Press, 1964); Jane H. and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830–1861* (Atheneum, 1974); R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830–1860* (Louisiana State University Press, 1983) and *Beating Against the Barriers: The Lives of Six Nineteenth-Century Afro-Americans* (Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Ronald K. Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist* (Garland, 1995), Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (W. W. Norton, 1997); and Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (2004). Frederick Douglass' contributions are evaluated in Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (Atheneum, 1968; originally published 1948), Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Slave and Citizen: The Life of Frederick Douglass* (Little, Brown, 1980), Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (University of North Carolina Press, 1984), and William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (W. W. Norton, 1991).

The following essays focus on a white abolitionist who perhaps best fits the characterization of an "unrestrained fanatic" but who became a martyr in the antislavery pantheon when he was executed following his unsuccessful raid on the federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1859. James N. Gilbert argues that Brown's attack was comparable to recent acts of terrorism in the United States and that, despite the continuing tendency to portray his actions as those of a martyred hero, Brown clearly fits the modern definition of a domestic terrorist.

In the second selection, Scott John Hammond characterizes Brown in a more positive light. While recognizing flaws in Brown's personality and actions, Hammond nevertheless concludes that John Brown acted on the highest of principles to thwart evil by articulating an undiluted commitment to the basic principles of America's founding—individual liberty and political and legal equality.

YES

James N. Gilbert

A Behavioral Analysis of John Brown: Martyr or Terrorist?

The scholarly examination of the topic of terrorism has developed into a significant area of legal and criminological research. Academic and governmental studies pertaining to terrorist crimes and those who perpetrate them are now voluminous and continue to be actively pursued. Emerging as what appeared to be a new form of criminal deviance, the definition and cause of the "disease of the 70s" has challenged criminologists. While most contemporary documented incidents continue to occur outside the United States, the fear of domestic terrorism, as recent events have illustrated, remains a legitimate concern. The public and researchers alike have in the past commonly assumed that this country would continue to be spared from acts that conform to our contemporary definition of terrorist activity. Terrorism was associated with a foreign environment and viewed as exceptional in the history of American criminal violence.

But after February 26, 1993, when the New York World Trade Center was the target of a massive terrorist bombing, the attention of Americans became riveted upon the unique form of criminality that we have collectively termed terrorism. And of course this criminal act was followed by the far more deadly bombing in Oklahoma City and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Although much of the media and public has treated these terrorist acts as precedent-setting domestic attacks, the history of terrorism in the United States actually dates to the founding of the nation. Of the many such violent episodes in our earlier history, John Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry in October 1859 is comparable to these more recent acts in terms of national terror and consequent social and political upheaval.

In late 1859 John Brown and twenty-one followers attempted to rally and arm large numbers of slaves by attacking and briefly holding the United States arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (presently West Virginia). Captured by federal military forces and local militia, Brown was hastily tried and executed. While the life and deeds of John Brown are immensely important for their impact on abolitionism and the American Civil War, this powerful historical figure is rarely defined as a terrorist. Instead, a vast collection of literature generally portrays Brown as either saint or madman. On one hand, there is the sympathetic traditional portrait of John Brown as an American hero of near mythical

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proportions. Such an image is certainly not viewed as criminally deviant, nor does it suggest the status of criminal folk hero. But while a minority historical judgment has questioned his sanity or the radical end-justification logic he appeared to employ, few even in this camp would declare his actions truly terrorist. Civil War and military historian John Hubbell reflects this multidimensional view. Stating that while John Brown was, "in fact, a combination of humility and arrogance, submission and aggression, murder and martyrdom," his true motivation may not have been calculated terroristic cause and effect, but "an unresolved resentment of his father; his hatred of slaveholders may have been the unconscious resolution of his anger."

Thus, one can only question how and why this imagery has persisted throughout the decades. Is the terrorist label lacking due to the singular rationale of his crimes: the massive evil of slavery? Alternatively, are we correct in excluding Brown from the definition of terrorist because his actions simply fail to conform to contemporary elements that constitute such a criminal? For example, a similar definitional confusion currently exists regarding various violent attacks on abortion clinics and their personnel by those who, like Brown, rationalize their violence by moral or religious conviction. Some would define convicted murderer Paul Hill as a domestic terrorist for his premeditated attack on an abortion doctor and an escort during the summer of 1994. Yet others would fail to define his actions as terroristic due to Hill's justification of his act as a "lesser evil."

In order to define Brown precisely as a terrorist rather than as a martyr, the meaning of terrorism must be explored. As with many singular, emotion-producing labels of criminality, terrorism is easier to describe than define. The *Vice President's Task Force on Combating Terrorism* describes terrorism as a phenomenon involving "the unlawful use of threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives." In a similar vein, the FBI's Terrorist Research and Analytical Center states that terroristic activity "is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." Both definitions agree with views commonly provided by various governments. This traditional bureaucratic view stresses a triad in which both property and people are potential targets with the necessary presence of illegal actions and social or political motivations as the causative agent.

Additional attempts to conceptualize the terrorist often focus on the perpetrator's motive rather than legal definitions. To this economist Bill Anderson links the economic viewpoint, stressing that fundamental principles of economic theory are the real, often hidden, motives of such crimes. Anderson believes that after we "peel away the ideological skins and fig leaves that terrorists use to justify their violence, we come to the core reason for their actions: the terrorists' own desire for power and influence. In other words, the terrorists are seeking wealth transfers and/or power (all of which can be defined as economic or political rents) through violent means because they are not willing to pay the cost of participating in the political process."

Others prefer to explain away terrorism through an apologist approach, stressing the anger, hopelessness, and governmental violence brought against various victimized populations from which, inevitably, terrorists will be mobilized. Eqbal Ahmad, a research fellow at the Washington, D.C.–based Institute for Policy Studies, stresses this sympathetic theme when he links terrorism to government indifference to violence. He believes that individuals turn to terrorism to exercise "their need to be heard, the combination of anger and helplessness producing the impulse for retributive violence. The experience of violence by a stronger party has historically turned victims into terrorists." Thus, the apologist view firmly supports the recurring belief that terrorism is merely situational, constantly coming in and out of criminal focus according to prevailing political power or orientation. Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman clearly embraced the situational view when he claimed to be a victim rather than an alleged conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Angered over his conspiracy indictment and subsequent incarceration, he stated, "but what bothers me, and makes me feel bitter about the whole thing, is when a person who was called a freedom fighter then is now called, when the war is over, a terrorist."

A final view, particularly popular in fictional portrayals of terrorists, suggests individual psychopathology as the chief cause of terrorism. As detailed by political philosopher and professor of religion Moshe Amon, one form of terroristic crime may originate within the disturbed minds of some perpetrators, triggering myths and fantasies that can be categorized as messianic or apocalyptic. The messianic terrorist ideology streams from a conviction that one has special insight that produces an individual state of enlightenment. Terrorists are then convinced that "they are the only ones who see the real world, and the only ones who are not affected by its depravity. It is their mission, therefore, to liberate the blind people of this world from the rule of the unjust." Although this concept may be traced to early Hebrew origins, a more contemporary form is common among Latin American terrorists. Political scientist John Pottenger concludes, "The existence of social injustice and [the] individual's commitment to human liberation, demand that a radical change can turn the Christian into a revolutionary vanguard demonstrating that God not only intervenes in human history but He does so on the right side of the oppressed."

Other psychological theorists believe that the most common type of terrorist has a psychopathic or sociopathic personality. The classic traits of the psychopath—impulsiveness, lack of guilt, inability to experience emotional depth, and manipulation—are perceived as ideally suited to the commission of terrorism. The ability to kill often large numbers of strangers without compunction or to manipulate others to unwittingly further criminal ends convinces many that the psychopathic personality is a requirement for terroristic action.

With such definitions of terrorism in mind, how are we to view John Brown? After almost a century and a half, the actions of Brown have been preserved with stark clarity, yet his personality and related psychological motivations can only be surmised. John Brown was fifty-nine years old when he was executed by the state of Virginia for treason, conspiring with blacks to produce insurrection, and murder in the first degree. His criminal activities of record include embezzlement and assault with a deadly weapon against an Ohio sheriff in 1842. In 1856 a warrant was issued by a proslavery Kansas district court charging Brown with "organizing against slavery." A month later he and eight other men kidnapped and murdered five Kansans, including a constable and his two sons. The killings were particularly brutal: the victims were hacked to death by repeated sword blows. In December 1858 the state of Missouri and the federal government offered a reward for Brown's capture because he was the chief suspect in yet another criminal homicide. Finally, Brown's criminal activities culminated in the seizure of the federal armory at Harpers Ferry on October 16, 1859. A company of U.S. Marines captured him the following day, and history records his execution less than fifty days after his attack against the armory.

The question of whether John Brown was indeed a terrorist must be based on a definitional standard that defies emotional or mythical distortion. The linkage of Brown's cause to the horrors of slavery circumvents the true nature of the man and of his crimes. According to Albert Parry, author of a best-selling work on the history of terror and revolutionary violence, terrorists and those who study them offer innumerable explanations of their violence; yet their motivations can be compacted into three main concepts:

1. Society is sick and cannot be cured by half measures of reform.
2. The state is in itself violent and can be countered and overcome only by violence.
3. The truth of the terrorist cause justifies any action that supports it. While some terrorists recognize no moral law, others have their own "higher" morality.

Comparing John Brown's actions to these criteria produces an inescapable match. On many occasions Brown expressed his solid belief that society, particularly a society that would embrace slavery, was sick beyond its own cure. Brown had clearly given up on public policy reforms or legal remedies regarding slavery when he drafted his own constitution for the benefit of his followers. The document attempts to define his justifications for the upcoming attack at Harpers Ferry and utterly rejects the legal and moral foundation of the United States: "Therefore, we citizens of the United States and the Oppressed People, who by a Recent Decision of the Supreme Court are declared to have no rights which the white man is bound to respect; together with all other people regarded by the laws thereof, do for the time being, ordain and establish for ourselves the following provisional constitution and ordinances, the better to protect our persons, property, lives, and liberties: and to govern our actions."

As to the terroristic belief that violent government can only be overcome by violence, Brown's convictions were preserved for posterity by a note he handed to a jailer while being led to the gallows: "I John Brown am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty land: will* never be purged *away;* but with Blood. I had *as I now think: vainly* flattered myself that without *very much* bloodshed: it might be done."

With similar conformity, Brown's beliefs and actions demonstrated his rigid "higher" morality, which served to justify numerous crimes, including multiple homicides. As described by historian Stephen Oates, "Brown knew the Missourians would come after him . . . yet he was not afraid of the consequences for God would keep and deliver him: God alone was his judge. Now that the work was done, he believed that he had been guided by a just and wrathful God."

Brown's deeds conform to contemporary definitions of terrorism, and his psychological predispositions are consistent with the terrorist model. As observed by David Hubbard, founder of the Aberrant Behavior Center and psychiatric consultant to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the actions and personality of the terrorist are not "merely bizarre and willfully antisocial; but a reflection of deep-seated personal and cultural pathologies." Such behavioral pathology is commonly linked to the psychopathic personality or, less frequently, to some form of paranoia. Virtually unknown to mental health authorities during Brown's lifetime, the psychopathic personality is currently considered a relatively common criminal mental abnormality among violent offenders. Although psychopathic criminals account for a small percentage of overall lawbreakers, psychologist William McCord notes that they commit a disproportionate percentage of violent crime. While psychopaths may be encountered within any violent criminal typology, they appear to be particularly well represented in various crimes of serial violence, confidence fraud, and terrorism.

The concept of psychopathy focuses on the unsocialized criminal, who is devoid of conscience and consequently in repeated conflict with society; he or she fails to learn from prior experiences. As observed by Herbert Strean, professor of social work and psychotherapy researcher at Rutgers University, the psychopath is often arrogant, callous, and lacking in empathy and tends to offer plausible rationalizations for his or her reckless behavior. While John Brown demonstrated a guilt-free conscience on many occasions, his calculating leadership in the kidnapping and murder of five people in Kansas provided beyond question his capacity to free himself of normal emotion. On the night of May 26, 1856, Brown led a small party of followers to the various cabins of his political enemies, which included Constable James Doyle and his sons. During what would later be termed the Pottawatomie Massacre, the Brown party systematically dragged the five unarmed and terrified men from their homes and murdered them in a frenzy of brutal violence. "About a hundred yards down the road Salmon and Owen [Brown's sons] fell on the Doyles with broadswords. They put up a struggle, striking out, trying to shield themselves from the slashing blades as they staggered back down the road. But in a few moments the grisly work was done. Brown, who must have watched the executions in a kind of trance, now walked over and shot Doyle in the forehead with a revolver, to make certain work of it." When later questioned about his motives during the Kansas murders, Brown offered a classic messianic psychopathic rationalization. Without a trace of remorse, he stated that the victims all deserved to die as they "had committed murder in their hearts already, according to the Big Book . . . their killing had been decreed by Almighty God, ordained from eternity."

. . . John Brown does not stand alone in the annals of American-based terrorism. Yet he obviously remains a unique, paradoxical example of a terrorist whom history has often viewed through rose-colored lenses. As opposed to alarm or disgust, the deeds of John Brown have moved some to great literary inspiration, such as Stephen Vincent Benét's epic poem *John Brown's Body.* Ralph Waldo Emerson, writing shortly before Brown's execution, referred to Brown as "the Saint, whose fate yet hangs in suspense, but whose martyrdom, if it shall be perfected, will make the gallows glorious like the Cross." Other towering figures of the arts echo the purity of Brown while conveniently ignoring his murderous past. Henry David Thoreau wrote, "No man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for a man, and the equal of any and all governments. . . . He could not have been tried by a jury of his peers, because his peers did not exist." Other, more contemporary sources, including scores of textbooks, continue to echo such laudatory sentiments, informing generation after generation of young Americans that John Brown was a genuine hero. Typical of many such high school and middle school American history texts, one leading book praises Brown through Emerson's words as "a new saint," while another considers him "a martyr and hero, as he walked resolutely to the scaffold."

In a pragmatic sense, it is doubtful that the heroic legend of John Brown will ever include the terrorist truth of his crimes. As observed by guerrilla warfare essayist Walter Laqueur, "terrorism has long exercised a great fascination, especially at a safe distance . . . the fascination it exerts and the difficulty of interpreting it have the same roots: its unexpected, shocking and outrageous character." While many American terrorists exert a continuing fascination, none have occupied the unique position of John Brown. By contemporary definition, he was undoubtedly a terrorist to his core, demonstrating repeatedly the various axioms from which we shape this unique crime. Brown quite purposely waged war for political and social change while simultaneously committing the most heinous crimes. As political scientist Charles Hazelip would say when defining a terrorist, he had "crossed over the blurred line of demarcation between crime and war where political terrorism begins."

Yet John Brown's obsessive target, the focus of all his energy and murderous deeds, has by its nature absolved him from the cold label of *terrorist.* History and popular opinion have quite naturally found the greater criminality of slavery to far outweigh his illegal acts. The bold tactics at Harpers Ferry, coupled with his humanistic motives to free the Virginia slaves, compels us to forgive his disturbed personality and deadly past. The attack on a key government arsenal and armory, which in a contemporary context would horrify the nation, has been judged through the passage of time to be an inevitable, gallant first strike against the soon to be formed Southern Confederacy. When taken as a whole, and to the natural dismay of our justice system, Brown's actions quite convincingly demonstrate that if the weight of moral sentiment is on one's side, terroristic violence can be absorbed into a nation's historiography in a positive sense. [Christopher] Dobson and [Ronald] Payne conclude, "the main aim of terror is to make murderers into heroes." While many will continue to debate the magnitude of John Brown's terrorism, his heroic stature has been secured by the often paradoxical judgment of history.

Scott John Hammond **NO**

John Brown as Founder: America's Violent Confrontation with Its First Principles

John Brown moves at an angle through our history, a transfigured personage who is deemed a force of nature, an avenging angel wielding the scourge of God, a fearsome vessel of pure fanaticism that is seductive in the abstract as well as a terrifyingly demonic power in the flesh. Some would call him a tragic hero, flawed only in his insistence on purity in thought and action coupled with a mystical detachment from the political realities of his day; and some would see in him a prototerrorist, a criminal mind living on the lunatic fringe of history, condemned by rational people in both the North and South. Lincoln, in spite of his deep opposition to slavery, saw in Brown's raid the very archetype of lawless violence and was quick to distance both himself and his party from such obviously treasonous actions. For example, directing his remarks to Southern whites in a speech at the Cooper Union Institute on February 27, 1860, Lincoln declared: "You charge that we stir up insurrections among your slaves. We deny it; and what is your proof? Harper's [*sic*] Ferry! John Brown! John Brown is no Republican, and you have [yet] to implicate a single Republican in his Harper's [*sic*] Ferry enterprise." Conversely, Emerson praised Brown and remarked that Brown would elevate the gallows to a symbol of martyrdom on the same order and import as the Cross. It was, and perhaps still is, difficult for one to be objective or neutral about Osawatomie Brown: one was either with him or against him.

What we know of Brown's life fuels all these interpretations. As a lover of freedom steeled by a devotion to strict Calvinism, Brown appears to have been a practitioner of the Christian ethic framed by the imperative of universal love and compassion for others, especially those who suffer under the yoke of oppression and injustice. For in loving and caring for "the least" of his fellow human beings, he epitomized the purity of a love of human freedom that often comes from a sense of oneness with higher moral ends. Nonetheless, this is the same John Brown who, in the course of one night, assumed the visage of the Night Rider and personally directed and participated in the murder of five defenseless men. Since these men were supporters of slavery, and some of them had previously committed violence against Free State settlers, Brown's decision to kill them is perceived by some as part of his greater mission on behalf of even

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more defenseless slaves. Still, the manner in which Brown summarily executed these five resembles that of the vicious terrorist more than that of the righteous warrior, and the Pottawatomie Massacre chills the blood of even the most ardent foe of oppression.

These aspects of Brown's psyche reflect something about our own political soul—our "political psyche" writ large. If Brown embodies the essence of us all, then it might be conceded that Brown's more pathological qualities replicate a profound dissonance within our general political and social culture. We must consider the inevitable consequences inherent within a sociopolitical condition fractured by the collision between the ideals of democratic liberty and the appalling realities of slavery and racism. No American will impugn the principles of liberty and equality, for however they are construed or comprehended, the structuring principles of the American polity are derived from a noble vision and an aspiration for a free and dignified humanity. The presence of slavery in a country committed, at least in principle, to freedom is the worst possible incidence of ideational failure. Brown's fractured self is an embodiment of the tangled forces of light and darkness that grappled for the republic's soul; his character and actions demonstrate this, and in so doing, make him no different from the ruptured essence of our collective political self-consciousness. The Pottawatomie slaughter represents a symptom of the deeper malady, just as the abuse of any slave by an overseer represents the same type of symptomatic manifestation. In contrast to Brown's avenging violence in Kansas, the incident at Harpers Ferry was driven by a spirit imbued with the transfiguring fire of the idea of universal freedom, in the same manner as the Underground Railroad or the individual dissent of the most famous resident of Walden Pond. Both America and Brown reveal this self-negating duality.

That Brown could be so moved to action by the tragedy of his times further amplifies his character and conviction. Most citizens, absorbed in the daily process and considerations of private interest and obligation, ignore or suppress the maladies of the deeper social structure. The affairs of the state frequently demand too much concentration and emotional investment for the average citizen. Nevertheless, there will always be those among us who, like Brown, seriously regard the structuring principles of a political culture with unabashed sincerity and are thus impelled to hold our institutions and practices accountable to our own higher ideas and political ideals.

Brown judged society according to the laws of God, and he saw with a piercing clarity that neither the ruling political doctrine nor, more important, the commandments of Providence were being properly revered. Nothing could absolve us from the sin of slavery, and the distinctions between righteousness and evil were easily and sharply drawn. No ambiguity, no "gray in gray," no compromise or allowance would be tolerated; either one was with the warriors for freedom and divine righteousness or among the profane legions who served on behalf of sinful oppression. For Brown, unlike most of his fellow Americans, the only solution was an obvious one—brook no sympathy for or concession to the minions of evil, and unconditionally submit without hesitation or diffidence to the Higher Authority, never relenting until total emancipation was achieved or sublime retribution judiciously dispensed. This is what drove John

Brown to act with such intensity of conviction, which magnified every hidden idiosyncrasy. Hence, Brown is at once liberator and fanatic, messiah and monster, the very incarnation of the conflicted American political soul.

This leads us to a more direct consideration of the notion of foundations and founding. The act of founding involves at least an abstract comprehension of those first principles that constitute a political soul and the resolve to forward those principles in an undiluted form. . . .

Upon examining those individuals who are noted for participating in an act of founding, we notice something unique that separates them from the ordinary politician, activist, or statesman. This is explained with considerable clarity by Machiavelli, who typically adds the ingredient of realpolitik to his observations of founding and reformative leadership. Given the fact that all founders and reformers will inevitably encounter resistance from those enemies who "profit from the old order," and assuming that a purely good leader will "bring about his own ruin among so many who are not good," Machiavelli notes that a lawgiver or prophet must go forth armed and prepared for struggle. Machiavelli's idea of a founder is consonant with the idea of virtue, or grandeur of soul—a character of extraordinary proportions, defined in terms of "ingenuity, skill, and excellence." Machiavelli seeks a type of transcending leadership, attaching a significant martial quality to his model founders. Even Moses, a religious founder, employs the might of God against Pharaoh in order to liberate the enslaved Israelites, something that those who follow the New Testament model of the suffering Christ would unequivocally reject.

Brown's actions are like those of a prophet-warrior. However, Machiavelli's armed prophet is also a conqueror; failure is associated with those who attempt to establish founding law without the enforcing power of arms. Brown does not seem to conform easily to the prophet-warrior model, for his arms were poor, his numbers few, and his plan thwarted by overextension and local hostility. Moses was at least able to extricate the Israelite slaves from their Egyptian oppressors. Moses conquered by overcoming the power of Egypt and then *founded* both a religion and a nation through the transmission of the Law of God. It is an understatement to say that Brown's achievement falls far short of this mark.

But if one considers the substance of Brown's commitment (the emancipation of the enslaved) and the method of Brown's action (confrontation with the sinful oppressor on behalf of the oppressed), Brown's character and actions do approximate the Machiavellian hero-founder. Furthermore, although he does not conquer in the physical or political sense, he does emerge triumphant. Brown was defeated but martyred, and in the end emancipation came for his people through the violence that he had prophesied. In a sobering moment of synchronicity, Lincoln's retrospective utterance in his second inaugural address, that "until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword," echoes Brown's last testimony. Two years earlier, Lincoln, at Gettysburg, had referred to a "new birth of freedom," and thus implicitly defined a new act of founding in the context and terms of the emancipation. From the blood and ashes of the war against slavery, the nation would be re-formed; Brown, who did not survive to witness the nation's second birth, nonetheless prophesied the act in his words. The nation was literally made anew but in a way that reaffirmed more completely the first principles of the republic. This represents an act of founding, and Brown's strike at Harpers Ferry was the prophetic prelude. Even though John Brown is distinct from Machiavelli's legendary types in a number of ways, he certainly shares in the role of founding/reforming visionary. Indeed, Lincoln, generally regarded as the heroic and tragic, even Christlike figure of the Civil War, resembles Brown in the end, only on a larger scale and from the comparatively more acceptable authority of his office. For Lincoln used violence to preserve the Union and purge the new nation of slavery. In his second inaugural address, he finally admits what he most likely knew from the beginning, that slavery was "somehow the cause of the war," and in so doing, for a brief moment toward the end of that war, the Great Emancipator shows himself akin to the Prophet of Osawatomie.

An alternative discussion of the founder-legislator is found in Rousseau's *Social Contract.* The Rousseauian founder is less applicable to the case of John Brown than the Machiavellian model. Rousseau's founder-legislator possesses a "superior intelligence" and is capable of "beholding all the passions of human beings without experiencing them." It is unlikely that Brown possessed a superior intelligence, and Brown's personality was far from the dispassionate character that Rousseau requires of his legislator. Furthermore, Rousseau's concept of the founder is identical to the concept of the first lawgiver and by no means resembles a prophet-warrior. Martial skill is not a requisite quality of Rousseau's founder, for Rousseau is always careful to mark an acute distinction between government based on consent and authority imposed by force. . . .

At another level, however, there is a similarity between Brown and Rousseau's founder. Rousseau's founder is an individual of superhuman qualities; indeed, Rousseau's description compares the creation of human first laws to the actions of gods. Rousseau's ideal founder is not afraid to act in a way that would challenge "human nature" itself. Brown seems to act against the natural order, but he does not intend to "change" human nature so much as to salvage it and even to save us from it. As a Calvinist, Brown undoubtedly believed that our nature is fixed by original sin; hence, he departed from Rousseau in yet another way. Brown fought against our sinful nature on behalf of redemption. Again, this seems to depart from Rousseau, but one must note that Rousseau's overall view of human nature was not much different from that of Calvin. Rousseau and Calvin both argued that humanity exists in a fallen condition, and although we cannot return to our original innocence, we can recover something of it through the affirmation of freedom and morality. For Calvin and John Brown, that higher state could be achieved through the Redeemer; for Rousseau, redemption is possible through the Social Contract. Both Rousseau and Brown sought a kind of recovery and affirmation of a better state of existence, and both insisted that in order to achieve such a goal, we must struggle mightily against our corrupted natures in order to reform and ennoble our humanity.

It should also be emphasized that the element of consent is vital to Rousseau. Brown's actions cannot admit of either direct or indirect consent of the governed for a number of reasons; most obvious of these is that Brown governed no one and possessed no legal or political authority, and that Brown was wholly dissociated from normal political channels. Even so, Brown acted in a way that relates indirectly to the notion of consensual governance. Brown sought neither the approval nor the consent of the populace, for the majority of the populace ignored, permitted, supported, or participated in the possession of human beings. More importantly, the law of God is not based on consent, but like Rousseau's general will, it is always right. Additionally, a minority of the population, both the enslaved victims and the various types of free dissenters and abolitionists, had been effectively deprived of their fundamental right to consent. The only rule that the slave knew was the rule of force, and the only rule that the abolitionist experienced was ultimately deemed immoral. The case of John Brown and his small group of followers and sympathizers exemplifies the latter, and it is compatible with Rousseau's theory of consent and resistance.

Even if Brown is not a founder-legislator in the strict Rousseauian sense, there are at least two arguments in the *Social Contract* that provide theoretical and moral support for Brown's extreme actions. First, Rousseau follows Locke in affirming that the notion of consent unequivocally requires unanimity. A political culture that either legitimizes or permits slavery violates this fundamental principle of universal consent. No one consents to be a slave; the enslaved population constitutes an excluded group that indicates a government based (partially) on force that is thus (wholly) illegitimate. Lincoln saw this as well and employed a similar argument in one of his many criticisms directed at the continued allowance of slavery. Even if one counters this argument by *incorrectly* objecting that Rousseau would not have included a slave population when considering the origins of the social contract, one would still have to take into account the abolitionists who, in acting against slavery from first principles, withdrew their consent to be governed by the current instrument. The unanimity that Rousseau demanded in theory never existed in practice under a regime that allowed slavery; thus, according to these standards, the Constitution, if it did indeed support or permit slavery (an issue that is in itself open to further analysis and argument within a different context) *was therefore not legitimate.* The founding act had occurred under an initial condition that was shaped by a great error.

This directs us back to our second point. Rousseau states without ambiguity that slavery is in every instance illegitimate and immoral. Freedom cannot be surrendered or usurped, for to "renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties." Thus, slavery can never be rendered legitimate or permitted by a government or any portion of its population. Rousseau makes this clear in the cases of both voluntary and involuntary submission. Slavery can be based neither on a voluntary arrangement nor on coercion or conquest. In the case of the former, one who agrees to be a slave is "out of one's mind," for it is madness to "renounce one's very humanity." Of course, American slavery was anything but voluntary, and for Rousseau, this form of slavery is equally inhumane. . . . As Rousseau powerfully states, "So, from whatever aspect we regard the question, the right of slavery is null and void, not only as being illegitimate, but also because it is absurd and meaningless. The words *slave* and *right* contradict each other, and are mutually exclusive. It will always be equally foolish for a man to say to a man or people: 'I make with you a convention wholly at your expense, and wholly to my advantage; I shall keep it as long as I like, and you will keep it as long as I like.'" Thus, not only is a social contract left unformed if it does not include the affirmation of *every* voice that is present within the polity, it is also morally incompatible given the presence of an enslaved group regardless of how the enslavement came about. In refusing to seek the consent of the majority, Brown chose to act on behalf of those who had been excluded from the founding act of consent and against a government that under Rousseau's definition can only be interpreted as illegitimate. Surely an analysis of Brown's actions from this perspective can better illuminate the questions that revolve around the accusation of his "lawlessness."

The notion of founding entails far more than establishment of institutions or governmental charters; it also, and above all, includes critical political and social reform in the pursuit of the higher principles of a given political culture. If we are to accept, along with such martyred luminaries as Lincoln and King, the proposition that the first principles of the American founding are to be understood as the guarantee of both individual liberty *and* the advance of political and legal equality, and if we add to this Rousseau's theoretical demolition of any claim to the alleged right to own human beings as property, then we can see in Brown's holy war against slavery an act that does indeed resonate with the spirit of the founding movement. . . .

Significantly, Brown made one major attempt to assume the mantle of legislator. The provisional constitution that was drafted and signed at the antislavery convention in Chatham, Ontario, was intended to provide the foundations for the new society that Brown envisioned establishing in the South after his successful liberation of the slaves and, as such, emulates the type of effort associated with a founder-legislator. In the Chatham document, Brown once again shares something in common with Lincoln in the latter's reaffirmation of the first principles established within the Declaration of Independence. Brown included in the Chatham document a statement that his provisional constitution was not meant to dissolve the federal constitution, but only to reaffirm the principles of the American Revolution through amendment and modification. The banner of the Spirit of '76 was to serve as the flag of the provisional government, thus echoing Lincoln's belief that the true founding of the nation began in the struggle for liberty and equality during the Revolution. In addition to the expression of higher political ideals, Brown also provided plans for framing a new government for the freed slaves and their allies, a proposed political system that, to many, was original and revolutionary. The Brown document departed dramatically from all previous constitutional examples because of such features as a supreme court that was to be elected by the widest possible popular vote; government officials who were "to serve without pay" and be removed and punished upon misconduct; extensive public reclamation of all property that was formerly acquired at the expense of the slaves; protection of female prisoners from violation; and plans for the "moral instruction" of the new citizens. Here again, Brown comes close to Rousseau's concept of the founder: a lawgiver who attempts to make human nature anew, one who is committed through law more than through force to the moral elevation of the human spirit. This is an example of Brown designing a more democratic government aimed toward human advancement and intended to restore the principles of the original American founding. . . . Brown's actions at Chatham are also similar to the steps taken at the convention of 1776, and once his supporters had signed the document, Brown felt prepared to enter the field of battle, knowing that his deeds were formally supported by written principles and political ideals as well as by his steadfast religious faith. At Chatham, Brown exchanged arms for pen and ink and, like Jefferson and Madison, attempted to establish a new order for humanity through law. . . .

In turning back to Harpers Ferry, we must also raise the following question: Why weren't more people of conscience moved to arms, as was John Brown? This can be partially explained by the close connection between abolition and nonviolent moral suasion, as in the case of William Lloyd Garrison and the Transcendentalists, but that connection notwithstanding, it is still remarkable that, after conceding the pacifism of most free opponents of slavery, we cannot remember another case that resembles or emulates the Harpers Ferry raid. This might be the best evidence on behalf of the case for Brown as founder, for his was an act consistent both with the tenets of scripture and with the political principles of the polity within which he lived. It was committed out of the purest motivations, it was directed to the achievement of the goal of purging the pathology responsible for the republic's social and cultural ills, and it anticipated the violent methods in which slavery was finally abolished. John Brown acted from high principles against evil, and while his methods were decidedly flawed, the moral necessity of his act of resistance remains evident. Although Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry was ultimately unsuccessful, he exemplifies the true spirit of just liberty; and while he contributed neither new law to support democracy nor any new concept to develop the idea of freedom, his deeds accelerated its progress. Thomas Jefferson proclaimed the egalitarian creed when he drafted the Declaration, but he was unable to renounce his own status as master or overcome his idiosyncratic ideas about racial difference. Abraham Lincoln sincerely and eloquently reaffirmed this creed on a higher and more authentically universal level at Gettysburg, but he was unable to act immediately and abolish the pernicious institution. John Brown, however, perhaps more than any founder since Thomas Paine, fully incorporated the creed into his actions and lived the idea of equality and racial friendship with unparalleled purity and ardor. John Brown compels us to think of him as a founder—one who, unlike Jefferson and Lincoln, appears to live and act on the fringes of society, but one who, on closer examination, springs from its very center.

Measuring the character and relevance of any historical figure is a task that lends itself to a certain degree of ambiguity. Figures such as Jefferson, Lincoln, and King have all been assessed differently by their champions and critics, and interpretations of their character and descriptions of their heroism as well as their lesser acts have all undergone continual redefinition. Yet they remain, for us, heroes all the same, for in spite of any inadequacies, they reflect the perpetual quest for the affirmation of higher political principle and remain among the great movers who helped shape the conscience and the development of the republic.

John Brown differs from these men because he shaped nothing tangible, at least nothing that we can point to today as the direct creation of his actions or product of his influence. However, he is similar to them because he represents the pursuit of high ideas consistent with action. In some aspects, John Brown is more relevant than they, for in his perpetually frustrated zeal for freedom and justice, he embodies the core of the American story; we see in the growth of the nation writ large the same constant buffeting between the idea of freedom and the reality of its interminable frustration that created a similar tension in the turbulent psyche of the Osawatomie Prophet. That tension was felt by the Sage of Monticello and was manifested in the visage of the Melancholy President, but it was *incarnate* in John Brown, and through that incarnation, the hope and dread of the American soul became flesh.

If some can embrace as a great hero the figure of Robert E. Lee, the defender of a commonwealth that included slavery as an accepted institution, then is it implausible to recognize heroism in the more astonishing figure of Brown? Lee never supported secession until the deed was committed, yet he chose to renounce his commission and past loyalties after years of distinction under arms only in order to side with his state. Other distinguished Southern warriors, such as David Farragut of Tennessee and Winfield Scott, Lee's fellow Virginian, went with the North, but Lee reluctantly followed the Old Dominion into the Confederacy. Is it fair to say that whereas Lee chose his homeland, Brown chose humanity? To his credit, Lee worried over the possibility of siding against his family and friends, thus exhibiting a tenderness for his communal roots and native land that is not as evident in Brown, so is it fair to argue that Lee chose to defend the hearth while Brown chose to fight for an abstraction? Whose abstraction is more meaningful: Lee's insistence on abiding with Virginia right or wrong or Brown's devotion to a people sealed in bondage? We must bear in mind that, in spite of his protestations, Lee owned slaves, and his wife owned even more than he did. Regardless of the answer to these questions, popular history has made its judgments, and Lee is known (by most) today as a gentleman warrior, acting from duty and on principle, while Brown is considered (by many) as the guerrilla fanatic, blinded by undignified zeal and without honor. But we must ask which of the two acted on the higher principle, which violated the greater law, which one carries more blood on his hands, and who between them is a more genuinely American hero? If it is madness to conduct a private, unruly, and suicidal war against an enemy that one perceives as the very cause of sinful oppression, then what state of mind could cause a man of principle to lead thousands into death out of questionable loyalty to a political system that acknowledges oppression as a venerable institution? Who acted on the real spirit of liberty as expressed in the motto *Sic semper tyrannis?* Without intending to detract from the achievement of either man, it is still instructive to compare the actions and motivations of these past contemporaries, one widely deemed a hero, the other, quite often, a villain. At Harpers Ferry, these two men of different principles fatally met, and it is primarily on principle that their legacies stand before us today.

If we are to judge heroes on the principles that they attempt to advance, then we must develop a more comprehensive sense of the value and purity of those ideals that stir one to action. By any measure, John Brown represents the more startling manifestation of the murky dynamics that course within the continual process of the unfolding and founding of America's first principles; thus, he represents an individual of heroic, if still frightening, proportions who speaks powerfully to us today as we continue to confront our higher purposes as a political culture and democratic nation. Perhaps for this reason he is the most typical founder of all: the most consistently idealistic, the most existentially frustrated, the most American.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was John Brown an Irrational Terrorist?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. Is it more appropriate to characterize John Brown as a domestic terrorist or a martyr? Explain.
2. What are the three main concepts that terrorists use to justify their actions? Did John Brown adhere to those concepts?
3. Is there a distinction to be drawn between Brown's antislavery activities in Kansas and his leadership of the raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry?
4. Is it legitimate to liken John Brown to Machiavelli's "prophet-warrior" and/or to Rousseau's "founder-legislator"?
5. Was Brown making "just war" on the institution of slavery?

Is There Common Ground?

Is John Brown representative of all abolitionists? While all of the abolitionists condemned the institution of slavery, few if any matched the behavior of John Brown. Some, like Garrison, used rhetorical or symbolic violence when speaking or writing of the immorality of the slave system in the United States. But burning copies of the Constitution of the United States was a far cry from executing proslavery settlers in Kansas or waging armed battle with local citizens and state troops in Virginia. But is such activity so different from American colonists waging war to free themselves from the bondage of an imperial power?

It is also important to remind ourselves that not all abolitionists agreed as to how best to attack the foundation of slavery in America. Some, like Garrison, took a moral suasionist approach that made no room for political action; others insisted that political involvement was essential in lobbying for the elimination of slavery. Most African American abolitionists, with the significant exception of Frederick Douglass who remained loyal to Garrison for a while longer, followed the political activists led by Theodore Dwight Weld and Arthur and Lewis Tappan. And as a group they tended to steer clear of John Brown. What does this suggest about the "radicalism" of abolitionists in general, whether black or white?

Additional Resources

Conflicting views of the abolitionists are presented in Richard O. Curry, ed., *The Abolitionists: Reformers or Fanatics?* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965). For general discussions of the abolitionist movement, see Gerald Sorin, *Abolitionism: A*

New Perspective (Praeger, 1972); Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Cornell University Press, 1973); James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (Hill and Wang, 1976); Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830–1870* (Cambridge University Press, 1982); Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists in the South, 1831–1861* (University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Harvard University Press, 2002). The lives of individual participants in the abolitionist movement are discussed in Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (St. Martin's, 1998); Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman's Rights and Abolition* (Schocken Books, 1967); and Irving H. Bartlett*, Wendell and Ann Phillips: The Community of Reform, 1840–1880* (Harvard University Press, 1979).

John Brown's controversial role in the movement is evaluated in W. E. B. Du Bois, *John Brown* (G. W. Jacobs, 1909); Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown, 1800–1859; A Biography Fifty Years After* (Houghton Mifflin, 1910); Herbert Aptheker, *John Brown: American Martyr* (New Century, 1960); Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (Harper and Row, 1970); Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom: Blacks and John Brown* (Oxford University Press, 1974); Paul Finkelman, ed., *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harper's Ferry Raid* (University of Virginia Press, 1995), Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., *"Fire From the Midst of You": A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York University Press, 2002); Merrill D. Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (University of Virginia Press, 2002); David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); and Jonathan Earle, ed., *John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008).

Internet References . . .

AmericanCivilWar.com

The goal of this site is to provide a comprehensive source of Civil War information from the public domain or works published with the authors' permission. The sources are directed at students and Civil War buffs of all ages.

http://americancivilwar.com/index.html

The Valley of the Shadow Project

Developed under the direction of Edward Ayers and his graduate students at the University of Virginia, this site includes digital archives of thousands of primary source materials related to life in the Civil War era communities in Augusta County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania.

http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/

Abraham Lincoln Online

Dedicated to the 16th president of the United States, this site offers educational links, Lincoln's speeches and writings, information on historic places, and much more.

http://www.netins.net/showcase/creative/lincoln.html

Images of Battle

Drawing from the manuscript collections at the University of North Carolina, this site contains an excellent collection of Civil War letters.

http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/exhibits/civilwar/index.html

Reconstruction Era Documents

This page includes links to various Reconstruction era documents by such authors as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. DuBois.

https://www-iris-rutgers-edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi/0/0/0/123?srchfield1=GENERAL^SUBJECT^GENERAL^^words%20anywhere&searchdata1=reconstruction%20era&library=ALL

Freedmen's Bureau Online

This site provides access to an excellent collection of materials related to this fascinating aspect of the Reconstruction era with links to individual states.

http://www.freedmensbureau.com

UNIT 4

Conflict and Resolution

The changing nature of the United States and the demands of its own principles finally erupted into violent conflict. Perhaps it was an inevitable step in the process of building a coherent nation from a number of distinct and diverse groups. The leaders, attitudes, and resources that were available to the North and the South were to determine the course of the war itself, as well as the national healing process that followed.

- Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?
- Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"?
- Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President?
- Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?

ISSUE 14

Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?

YES: Charles B. Dew, from *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (University of Virginia Press, 2001)

NO: Marc Egnal, from "Rethinking the Secession of the Lower South: The Clash of Two Groups," *Civil War History* 50 (September 2004)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Describe the process used in the South to gain support for secession.
- Evaluate the validity of the states' rights argument in pressing for secession.
- Understand that white southerners were not of one mind when it came to the decision to leave the Union.
- Some of the economic explanations employed both for and against secession.
- Analyze the extent to which race and slavery were the keys to the sectional conflict leading to the American Civil War.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Charles B. Dew uses the speeches and public letters of 41 white southerners who, as commissioners in 1860 and 1861, attempted to secure support for secession by appealing to their audiences' commitment to the preservation of slavery and the doctrine of white supremacy.

NO: Marc Egnal argues that the decision of Lower South states to secede from the Union was determined by an economically-based struggle between residents with strong ties to the North and

Upper South who embraced an entrepreneurial outlook, on one hand, and those who were largely isolated from the North and who opposed the implementation of a diversified economy, on the other hand.

In April 1861, less than a month after his inauguration, President Abraham Lincoln attempted to send provisions to Fort Sumter in South Carolina, part of the newly formed Confederate States of America. Southern troops under the command of General P. G. T. Beauregard opened fire on the fort, forcing its surrender on April 14. The American Civil War had begun.

Numerous explanations have been offered for the cause of this "war between the states." Many contemporaries and some historians saw the conflict as the product of a conspiracy housed either in the North or South, depending upon one's regional perspective. For many in the northern states, the chief culprits were the planters and their political allies who were willing to defend southern institutions at all costs. South of the Mason–Dixon line, blame was laid at the feet of the fanatical abolitionists, like John Brown (see Issue 13), and the free-soil architects of the Republican party. Some viewed secession and war as the consequence of a constitutional struggle between states' rights advocates and defenders of the U.S. federal government, whereas others focused upon the economic rivalries or the cultural differences between North and South. Embedded in each of these interpretations, however, is the powerful influence of the institution of slavery.

In the 85 years between the start of the American Revolution and the coming of the Civil War, Americans made the necessary political compromises on the slavery issue in order not to split the nation apart. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 forbade slavery from spreading into those designated territories under its control, and the new Constitution written in the same year held out the possibility that the Atlantic slave trade would be prohibited after 1808.

There was some hope in the early nineteenth century that slavery might die from natural causes. The Revolutionary generation was well aware of the contradiction between the values of an egalitarian society and the practices of a slaveholding aristocracy. Philosophically, slavery was viewed as a necessary evil, not a positive good. The northern states were well on their way to abolishing slavery by 1800, and the erosion of the tobacco lands in Virginia and Maryland contributed to the lessening importance of a slave labor system.

Unfortunately, two factors—territorial expansion and the market economy—made slavery the key to the South's wealth in the 35 years before the Civil War. First, new slave states were created out of a population expanding into lands ceded to the United States as a result of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 and the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Second, slaves were sold from the upper to the lower regions of the South because the invention of the cotton gin made it possible to harvest large quantities of cotton, ship it to the textile mills in New England and the British Isles, and turn it into cloth and finished clothing as part of the new, specialized market economy.

The slavery issue came to the forefront in 1819 when some northern congressmen proposed that slavery be banned from the states being carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. A heated debate ensued, but the Missouri Compromise drew a line that preserved the balance between free and slave states and that (with the exception of Missouri) prohibited slavery north of the 36°30' latitude.

The annexation of Texas in 1845 and the acquisition of New Mexico, Utah, and California, as a result of the Mexican-American War (see Issue 12), reopened the slavery question. Attempts at compromises in 1850 and 1854 only accelerated the conflict. The Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, allowed citizens in the new territories to decide whether or not they wanted slavery on the basis of the doctrine of popular sovereignty. As the second party system of Whigs and Democrats fell apart, the Republican party, whose members hoped to confine slavery to existing slave states, mounted a successful challenge against the Democrats and in 1860 elected Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States, a result that 11 slaveholding states in the South refused to accept.

In *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (Oxford University Press, 1990), Kenneth M. Stampp argues that conflict became inevitable after the election of James Buchanan (not Lincoln) to the presidency, the continuing firestorm in Kansas, and the Supreme Court's decision in the Dred Scott case. Eric Foner, who has written extensively on the influence of the free soil ideology and its impact on the coming of the Civil War in such works as *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 1970), also points out that the argument for states' rights as an explanation for the cause of the war is largely a product of the post-Civil War era and, hence, more or less an afterthought on the part of southerners who hoped to distance themselves from the institution of slavery that dominated their region in the antebellum period.

A challenge to the belief that slavery was the sole cause of the war can be found in the works of Joel Silbey. In "The Civil War Synthesis in American Political History," *Civil War History* (June 1964); *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 1985); and *Party Over Section: The Rough and Ready Presidential Election of 1848 (University Press of Kansas, 2009),* Silbey argues that historians, by positioning slavery as the major issue that divided the United States, have distorted "the reality of American political life between 1844 and 1861." Silbey is one of the "new political historians" who have applied the techniques of modern-day political scientists in analyzing the election returns and voting patterns of Americans' nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century predecessors. These historians use computers and regression analysis of voting patterns, favor a quantitative analysis of past behavior, and reject the traditional sources of quotations from partisan newspapers and major politicians because these sources provide anecdotal and often misleading portraits of our past. Silbey and other new political historians maintain that all politics are local. Therefore, the primary issues for voters and their politicians in the 1860 election were ethnic and cultural, and party loyalty was more important than sectional considerations.

Another approach is presented by Michael F. Holt in *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (John Wiley & Sons, 1978). Holt also is interested in analyzing the struggles for power at the state and local levels by the major political parties, but he is critical of the ethnocultural school represented by Silbey. In Holt's view, Silbey's emphasis on voter analysis does not explain why the Whig Party disappeared nor why the Republican Party became the majority party in the northern and western states in the 1850s. Holt also rejects the more traditional view that the Civil War resulted from the "intensifying sectional disagreements over slavery." Instead, he promotes a more complicated picture of the events leading to the Civil War. Between 1845 and 1860, he maintains, three important things happened: (1) the breakdown of the Whig Party; (2) the realignment of voters; and (3) "a shift from a nationally balanced party system where both major parties competed on fairly even terms in all parts of the nation to a sectionalized polarized one with Republicans dominant in the North and Democrats in the South."

In the following essays, Charles B. Dew makes a very powerful argument challenging the neo-Confederate insistence that the decision to secede was driven by the U.S. federal government's abuse of states' rights. Whose attitudes would provide a better window into the thinking of white southerners on the eve of the Civil War than those individuals commissioned to travel throughout the region to drum up support for secession?

Marc Egnal's essay provides a nuanced interpretation that focuses upon economics as the main issue in determining support for secession in the Lower South. Noting that it is overly simplistic to assert that slave owners supported secession while small farmers who owned no slaves did not, Egnal goes on to assert that the debate over secession can be boiled down to a clash of two societies in the Lower South defined by the origin of the settlers and distinctive patterns of the regional economy: those in the northern parts of the states who often had ties with the North and Upper South and who favored a diversified economy that included manufacturing and industrial production; and those in the southern regions of the states who were largely isolated from the Upper South and who persisted in their commitment to cash-crop agriculture. It was this latter group, Egnal points out, which was most likely to support secession whether or not they were slave owners. Egnal's interpretation is presented in an expanded form in *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Hill & Wang, 2009).

YES

Charles B. Dew

Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War

Slavery, States' Rights, and Secession Commissioners

"The Civil War was fought over what important issue?" So reads one of twenty questions on an exam administered by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to prospective American citizens. According to the INS, you are correct if you offer either one of the following answers: "Slavery or states rights."

It is reassuring to know that the INS has a flexible approach to one of the critical questions in American history, but one might ask how the single "issue" raised in the question can have an either/or answer in this instance—the only time such an option occurs on the test. Beyond that, some might want to know whether "slavery" or "states rights" is the more correct answer. But it is probably unfair to chide the test preparers at the INS for trying to fudge the issue. Their uncertainty reflects the deep division and profound ambivalence in contemporary American culture over the origins of the Civil War. One hundred and forty years after the beginning of that fratricidal conflict, neither the public nor the scholarly community has reached anything approaching a consensus as to what caused the bloodiest four years in this country's history. . . .

There is, however, a remarkably clear window into the secessionist mind that has been largely ignored by students of this era. If we want to know what role slavery may or may not have played in the coming of the Civil War, there is no better place to look than in the speeches and letters of the men who served their states as secession commissioners on the eve of the conflict.

As sectional tension mounted in late 1860 and early 1861, five states of the lower South—Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana—appointed commissioners to other slave states and instructed them to spread the secessionist message across the entire region. These commissioners often explained in detail why their states were exiting the Union, and they did everything in their power to persuade laggard slave states to join the secessionist cause. From December 1860 to April 1861, they carried the *gospel of disunion* to the far corners of the South.

From *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* by Charles B. Dew (University of Virginia Press, 2001), pp. 4, 18–21, 74–81. Copyright © 2001 by the Rectors and Visitors of the University of Virginia. Reprinted by permission of University of Virginia Press.

The overwhelming majority of the commissioners came from the four Deep South states of Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia. In Mississippi and Alabama the commissioners were appointed by the governor and thus took the field first. In South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana, the secession conventions chose the commissioners.

The number of men sent on this vital mission varied from state to state. Mississippi and Alabama named commissioners to every one of the fourteen other slave states. South Carolina, however, only appointed commissioners to those states which had announced they were calling secession conventions, so only nine representatives eventually went out from the cradle of the secession movement—to Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Virginia, and North Carolina. Georgia dispatched commissioners to six of these same states—Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Virginia—and added the border slave states of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri to the list. The Louisiana Convention appointed a single commissioner, to neighboring Texas, and he did not arrive in Austin until well after the Texas Convention had passed its ordinance of secession.

In all, some fifty-two men served as secession commissioners in the critical weeks just before the Civil War. These individuals were not, by and large, the famous names of antebellum Southern politics. They were often relatively obscure figures—judges, lawyers, doctors, newspaper editors, planters, and farmers—who had had modest political careers but who possessed a reputation for oratory. Sometimes they were better known—ex-governors or state attorney generals or members of Congress. Often they had been born in the states to which they were sent; place of birth was clearly an important factor in the choice of a number of commissioners.

The commissioners appeared in a host of different venues. They addressed state legislatures, they spoke before state conventions called to consider the question of secession, they took the platform before crowds in meeting halls and in the streets, and they wrote letters to governors whose legislatures were not in session. To a man, what they had to say was, and remains, exceedingly instructive and highly illuminating.

Despite their enormous value, the commissioners' speeches and letters have been almost completely overlooked by historians and, as a consequence, by the public at large. This scholarly neglect is difficult to understand. Contemporaries in both North and South paid close attention to the commissioners' movements and what they had to say. Many of their speeches were reprinted in full in newspapers and official state publications, and several appeared in pamphlet form and apparently gained wide circulation. Accounts of the secession crisis published during and just after the war also devoted considerable space to their activities. In the late nineteenth century when editors at the War Department were assembling a documentary record of the Civil War, they included extensive coverage of the commissioners in the volume dealing with the onset of the conflict—a clear indication that they considered these men to be key players in the sequence of events leading up to the war.

Dwight Lowell Dumond highlighted the importance of the commissioners in his 1931 study of the secession movement, a book that remains the most detailed scholarly treatment of this subject. He described the commissioners' words as extraordinarily important and revealing. "From the speeches and writings of the commissioners, as nowhere else, one may realize the depth of feeling and the lack of sympathy between the two sections of the country," Dumond wrote. "Vividly denunciatory of a party pledged to the destruction of Southern institutions, almost tragic in their prophetic tone, and pleading for a unity of allied interests, they constitute one of the most interesting series of documents in American history," he went on to say.

Yet Professor Dumond's book provides little detailed coverage of what these men actually said, and that pattern has persisted in the torrent of literature on the Civil War that has appeared in subsequent decades. As Jon L. Wakelyn notes in his recent *Southern Pamphlets on Secession,* "No adequate study of the Lower South delegates sent to the Upper South exists," and that same observation could be made about the commissioners who addressed their remarks to fellow Southerners in the states of the Deep South as well. Indeed, Professor Wakelyn does not include the full text of a single commissioner's speech in his otherwise superb collection of pamphlet literature, even though, in my opinion, several of the addresses published in pamphlet form are among the most powerful and revealing expressions of the secessionist persuasion put to paper on the eve of the war.

I have managed to locate the full texts or detailed synopses of forty-one of the commissioners' speeches and public letters. It is, as Professor Dumond suggested, a truly remarkable set of documents. What is most striking about them is their amazing openness and frankness. The commissioners' words convey an unmistakable impression of candor, of white Southerners talking to fellow Southerners with no need to hold back out of deference to outside sensibilities. These men infused their speeches and letters with emotion, with passion, and with a powerful "Let's cut to the chase" analysis that reveals, better than any other sources I know, what was really driving the Deep South states toward disunion.

The explanations the commissioners offered and the arguments the commissioners made, in short, provide us with extraordinary insight into the secession of the lower South in 1860–61. And by helping us to understand the "why" of secession, these apostles of disunion have gone a long way toward answering that all-important question, "The Civil War was fought over what important issue?" . . .

John Smith Preston spent the war years in uniform. After serving in a number of different staff positions in the army, he found a home in the Confederate Bureau of Conscription. He took over that agency in 1863, was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in 1864, and headed the Conscript Bureau until the South went down to defeat. Preston lived for a time in England after the war, but in 1868 he went back to South Carolina. His reputation as an orator still intact, Preston was invited to return to his native state in 1868 to address the Washington and Jefferson Societies of the University of Virginia. On June 30 of that year, Preston spoke in Charlottesville to the young Virginians.

Much of his address was an eloquent tribute to the Founding Fathers and their principal handiwork—the Revolution, the state constitutions, and the

Constitution of the United States. Through their efforts "your fathers achieved that liberty which comes of a free government, founded on justice, order and peace," Preston said. In order to preserve the principles and the constitutional forms established by the Revolutionary generation, "you, the immediate offspring of the founders, went forth to that death grapple which has prevailed against you," he continued. It was the North, "the victors," who rejected "the principles," destroyed "the forms," and defeated "the promised destiny of America," Preston charged. "The Constitution you fought for"—the Confederate Constitution—"embodied every principle of the Constitution of the United States, and guaranteed the free Constitution of Virginia. It did not omit one essential for liberty and the public welfare," he claimed. The Confederacy was in ashes, however, and so was true constitutional liberty. "That liberty was lost, and now the loud hosanna is shouted over land and sea—'Liberty may be dead, but the Union is preserved. Glory, glory, glory to Massachusetts and her Hessian and Milesian mercenaries,'" Preston declaimed. Yet all was not lost. Even though "cruel, bloody, remorseless tyrants may rule at Fort Sumter and at Richmond . . . they cannot crush that immortal hope, which rises from the blood soaked earth of Virginia," Preston believed. "I see the sacred image of regenerate Virginia, and cry aloud, in the hearing of a God of Right, and in the hearing of all the nations of the earth—ALL HAIL OUR MOTHER."

Passionate, unregenerate, unapologetic, unreconstructed—all these and more apply to Preston's remarks on this occasion. But so do words like "conveniently forgetful," "strongly revisionist," and "purposely misleading." Nowhere to be found are references to many of the arguments and descriptions he had used over and over again before the Virginia Convention in February 1861—things like "the subject race . . . rising and murdering their masters" or "the conflict between slavery and non-slavery is a conflict for life and death," or his insistence that "the South cannot exist without African slavery," or his portrait of the "fermenting millions" of the North as "canting, fanatics, festering in the licentiousness of abolition and amalgamation." All this was swept aside as Preston sought to paint the Civil War as a mighty struggle over differing concepts of constitutional liberty. Like Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens in their postwar writings, Preston was trying to reframe the causes of the conflict in terms that would be much more favorable to the South.

Preston was not the only former secession commissioner to launch such an effort after the war. Jabez L. M. Curry, who had served as Alabama's commissioner to Maryland in December 1860, became a leading figure in the drive to improve primary and secondary education in the postwar South. As agent for both the Peabody and Slater Funds and as supervising director of the Southern Education Board, Curry worked tirelessly to establish public schools and teacher training for both races in the states of the former Confederacy. Curry also worked diligently to justify the Lost Cause of the Confederacy. In his *Civil History of the Government of the Confederate States, with Some Personal Reminiscences,* published in Richmond in 1901, Curry offered an analysis of the coming of the war that closely paralleled the argument used by John S. Preston in 1868. "The object in quitting the Union was not to destroy, but to save the principles of the Constitution," Curry wrote. "The Southern States from the beginning of the government had striven to keep it within the orbit prescribed by the Constitution and failed." The Curry of 1901 would hardly have recognized the Curry of 1860, who told the governor of Maryland that secession meant "deliverance from Abolition domination," and who predicted that under Republican rule the South's slave-based social system would "be assaulted, humbled, dwarfed, degraded, and finally crushed out."

In 1860 and 1861 Preston, Curry, and the other commissioners had seen a horrific future facing their region within the confines of Abraham Lincoln's Union. When they used words like "submission" and "degradation," when they referred to "final subjugation" and "annihilation," they were not talking about constitutional differences or political arguments. They were talking about the dawning of an abominable new world in the South, a world created by the Republican destruction of the institution of slavery.

The secession commissioners knew what this new and hateful world would look like. Over and over again they called up three stark images that, taken together, constituted the white South's worst nightmare.

The first threat was the looming specter of racial equality. The commissioners insisted almost to a man that Republican ascendancy in Washington placed white supremacy in the South in mortal peril. Mississippi commissioner William L. Harris made this point clearly and unambiguously in his speech to the Georgia legislature in December 1860. "Our fathers made this a government for the white man," Harris told the Georgians, "rejecting the negro, as an ignorant, inferior, barbarian race, incapable of self-government, and not, therefore, entitled to be associated with the white man upon terms of civil, political, or social equality." But the Republicans intended "to overturn and strike down this great feature of our Union . . . and to substitute in its stead their new theory of the universal equality of the black and white races." Alabama's commissioners to North Carolina, Isham W. Garrott and Robert H. Smith, predicted that the white children of their state would "be compelled to flee from the land of their birth, and from the slaves their parents have toiled to acquire as an inheritance for them, or to submit to the degradation of being reduced to an equality with them, and all its attendant horrors." South Carolina's John McQueen warned the Texas Convention that Lincoln and the Republicans were bent upon "the abolition of slavery upon this continent and the elevation of our own slaves to an equality with ourselves and our children." And so it went, as commissioner after commissioner—Leonidas Spratt of South Carolina, David Clopton and Arthur F. Hopkins of Alabama, Henry L. Benning of Georgia—hammered home this same point.

The impending imposition of racial equality informed the speeches of other commissioners as well. Thomas J. Wharton, Mississippi's attorney general and that state's commissioner to Tennessee, said in Nashville on January 8, 1861, that the Republican Party would, "at no distant day, inaugurate the reign of equality of all races and colors, and the universality of the elective franchise." Commissioner Samuel L. Hall of Georgia told the North Carolina legislature on February 13, 1861, that only a people "dead to all sense of virtue and dignity" would embrace the Republican doctrine of "the social and political equality of the black and white races." Another Georgia commissioner, Luther J. Glenn of Atlanta, made the same point to the Missouri legislature on March 2, 1861. The Republican platform, press, and principal spokesmen had made their "purposes, objects, and motives" crystal clear, Glenn insisted: "hostility to the South, the extinction of slavery, and the ultimate elevation of the negro to civil, political and social equality with the white man." These reasons and these reasons alone had prompted his state "to dissolve her connexion with the General Government," Glenn insisted.

The second element in the commissioners' prophecy was the prospect of a race war. Mississippi commissioner Alexander H. Handy raised this threat in his Baltimore speech in December 1860—Republican agents infiltrating the South "to excite the slave to cut the throat of his master." Alabamians Garrott and Smith told their Raleigh audience that Republican policies would force the South either to abandon slavery "or be doomed to a servile war." William Cooper, Alabama's commissioner to Missouri, delivered a similar message in Jefferson City. "Under the policy of the Republican party, the time would arrive when the scenes of San Domingo and Hayti, with all their attendant horrors, would be enacted in the slaveholding States," he told the Missourians. David Clopton of Alabama wrote the governor of Delaware that Republican ascendancy "endangers instead of insuring domestic tranquility by the possession of channels through which to circulate insurrectionary documents and disseminate insurrectionary sentiments among a hitherto contented servile population." Wharton of Mississippi told the Tennessee legislature that Southerners "will not, cannot surrender our institutions," and that Republican attempts to subvert slavery "will drench the country in blood, and extirpate one or other of the races." In their speeches to the Virginia Convention, Fulton Anderson, Henry L. Benning, and John S. Preston all forecast a Republican-inspired race war that would, as Benning put it, "break out everywhere like hidden fire from the earth."

The third prospect in the commissioners' doomsday vision was, in many ways, the most dire: racial amalgamation. Judge Harris of Mississippi sounded this note in Georgia in December 1860 when he spoke of Republican insistence on "equality in the rights of matrimony." Other commissioners repeated this warning in the weeks that followed. In Virginia, Henry Benning insisted that under Republican-led abolition "our women" would suffer "horrors . . . we cannot contemplate in imagination." There was not an adult present who could not imagine exactly what Benning was talking about. Leroy Pope Walker, Alabama's commissioner to Tennessee and subsequently the first Confederate secretary of war, predicted that in the absence of secession all would be lost—first, "our property," and "then our liberties," and finally the South's greatest treasure, "the sacred purity of our daughters."

No commissioner articulated the racial fears of the secessionists better, or more graphically, than Alabama's Stephen F. Hale. When he wrote of a South facing "amalgamation or extermination," when he referred to "all the horrors of a San Domingo servile insurrection," when he described every white Southerner "degraded to a position of equality with free negroes," when he foresaw the "sons and daughters" of the South "associating with free negroes upon terms of political and social equality," when he spoke of the Lincoln administration consigning the citizens of the South "to assassinations and her wives and daughters to pollution and violation to gratify the lust of half-civilized Africans," he was giving voice to the night terrors of the secessionist South. States' rights, historic political abuses, territorial questions, economic differences, constitutional arguments—all these and more paled into insignificance when placed alongside this vision of the South's future under Republican domination.

The choice was absolutely clear. The slave states could secede and establish their independence, or they could submit to "Black Republican" rule with its inevitable consequences: Armageddon or amalgamation. Whites forced to endure racial equality, race war, a staining of the blood—who could tolerate such things?

The commissioners sent out to spread the secessionist gospel in late 1860 and early 1861 clearly believed that the racial fate of their region was hanging in the balance in the wake of Lincoln's election. Only through disunion could the South be saved from the disastrous effects of Republican principles and Republican malevolence. Hesitation, submission—any course other than immediate secession—would place both slavery and white supremacy on the road to certain extinction. The commissioners were arguing that disunion, even if it meant risking war, was the only way to save the white race.

Did these men really believe these things? Did they honestly think that secession was necessary in order to stay the frenzied hand of the Republican abolitionist, preserve racial purity and racial supremacy, and save their women and children from rape and slaughter at the hands of "half-civilized Africans"? They made these statements, and used the appropriate code words, too many times in too many places with too much fervor and raw emotion to leave much room for doubt. They knew these things in the marrow of their bones, and they destroyed a political union because of what they believed and what they foresaw.

But, we might ask, could they not see the illogicality, indeed the absurdity, of their insistence that Lincoln's election meant that the white South faced the sure prospect of either massive miscegenation or a race war to the finish? They seem to have been totally untroubled by logical inconsistencies of this sort. Indeed, the capacity for compartmentalization among this generation of white Southerners appears to have been practically boundless. How else can we explain Judge William L. Harris's comments before the Mississippi State Agricultural Society in November 1858? "It has been said by an eminent statesman," Harris observed on this occasion, " 'that nothing can advance the mass of society in prosperity and happiness, nothing can uphold the substantial interest and steadily improve the general condition and character of the whole, but this one thing—compensating rewards for labor.' " It apparently never occurred to Harris that this observation might apply to the hundreds of thousands of slaves working in Mississippi in 1858 as well as to the white farmers and mechanics of his adopted state. His mind could not even comprehend the possibility that slaves, too, were human beings who, if given the opportunity, might well respond to "compensating rewards" for their labor.

In setting out to explain secession to their fellow Southerners, the commissioners have explained a very great deal to us as well. By illuminating so clearly the racial content of the secession persuasion, the commissioners would seem to have laid to rest, once and for all, any notion that slavery had nothing to do with the coming of the Civil War. To put it quite simply, slavery and race were absolutely critical elements in the coming of the war. Neo-Confederate groups may have “a problem” with this interpretation, as the leader of the Virginia Heritage Preservation Association put it. But these defenders of the Lost Cause need only read the speeches and letters of the secession commissioners to learn what was really driving the Deep South to the brink of war in 1860–61.

Marc Egnal **NO**

Rethinking the Secession of the Lower South: The Clash of Two Groups

Despite almost a century and a half of writing on secession by participants, engaged amateurs, and professional historians, there is no clear answer to the question, "Why did the Lower South secede?" In a thoughtful discussion of several books on the topic, James Moore remarked in 1986 that the picture that emerges is more a "mosaic than a monolith, a cacophony rather than a consensus." That conclusion still holds true. Some historians contend that psychology trumped rationality. Steven Channing, for example, argues that South Carolina seceded because of a "crisis of fear" fed by anxieties about abolitionists and the large slave population. Others point to more rational motives. William Barney's book on Mississippi and Alabama underscores the desperate need of the planters for fresh soils, which the newly elected Republican party now denied them. Still others emphasize ideology. Lacy K. Ford Jr. argues that South Carolinians were dedicated to republican values and preferred secession to abandoning their principles. A few scholars bring internal discord to the fore: Michael P. Johnson suggests that the tension between wealthy slaveholders and poorer whites lay at the heart of the story in Georgia. The slave lords spearheaded secession and created a "patriarchal republic" because of concerns that Republican patronage might exacerbate class conflict. Finally, and most recently, many historians have returned to the traditional wisdom that the defense of slavery drove the Confederates. James McPherson remarks that "the primacy of the slavery issue . . . has reemerged in modern historiography as the principal cause of secession."

Serious problems, however, confront any interpretation that explains secession by reference to a single ideology or mind-set, whether rational or irrational, whether focused on slavery or republicanism. Citizens in almost every state in the Deep South were seriously divided over the wisdom of secession. Explanations that trumpet a single theme might explain those who chose disunion, but they ignore the sizeable minority that rejected such rash actions. At least 40 percent of voters, and in some cases half, opposed immediate secession in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida. In Texas more than 20 percent of the electorate rejected disunion, and even South Carolina had important pockets of resistance.

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The nature of this division has proven elusive. Several scholars have suggested a split between unionist small farmers and secessionist slaveholders, but any generalization that seeks to link the split over secession in the Deep South to wealth or slaveholding will not stand. The ranks of ardent secessionists included many small farmers in the southern districts of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi; in peninsular Florida; and in southwestern Louisiana. To be sure, *some* nonslaveholding farmers in the Lower South were consistent, outspoken unionists; but their role should not lead us to generalize about a whole class.

Two studies that closely analyze the opposing sides in the secession debate highlight the weak connection between slaveholding and disunion in the Lower South. An analysis of the votes for the secession conventions in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana concludes that "the variance in the cooperationist vote is explained by factors other than the percentage of slaveholders." The correlation computed was extremely low, with slaveholding explaining only 17 percent of the vote for secession. Another scholar reaches the same conclusion through a different method. Ralph Wooster's study of the members of the secession conventions demonstrates that comparable groups of small farmers and slaveholders stood on both sides of the issue. Wooster observes: "In the conventions of the lower South the percentage of those who held 20 slaves or more was almost the same for the secessionists and their opponents, 41.8 percent of secessionists and 41.0 percent of the cooperationists."

This essay suggests a new approach to secession and the events leading up to that crisis by contending that the battle over secession in the Lower South was the culmination of a long-standing struggle between two groups—one with strong ties to the Union and one that flourished in relative isolation from the states to the north. . . .

Two factors in particular shaped the clashing societies of the cotton states—the origins of the settlers and the patterns of the regional economy. These elements also gave rise to conflicting worldviews that guided the behavior of the two groups. The two camps, it should be emphasized, were loose coalitions. No firm geographical features defined their boundaries. Their ideological borders were permeable and shifted from issue to issue. Furthermore, the opposing sides shared many fundamental values, including a dedication to slavery and a deep-rooted racism. References to two "societies" must be taken figuratively, not literally.

Still these qualifications should not obscure the importance of these groupings. The opposing sides are not ahistorical conceptions. Contemporaries were well aware of the lines that split several states of the Deep South into northern and southern reaches and divided others along similar, geographical lines. During the crisis of 1849–52 and the secession winter of 1860–61, these warring camps shattered the Democratic party and disrupted the Whig-Opposition party. A close analysis of this division helps us understand the ardent secessionists as well as their more moderate opponents.

The first of the two forces shaping these groups was the origins of the settlers. The white people who populated the Lower South came from distinct sending areas and set the imprint of contrasting cultures on states from

South Carolina to Texas. One set of migrants came from the Upper South, although many could trace their family ties back to Northern Ireland and the continent of Europe. Typically, the ancestors of these migrants had landed in Philadelphia and resided for a time in southeastern Pennsylvania. Over the course of generations, these families had migrated south through the Appalachian highlands before spreading through large areas of the Upper and Lower South. These migrants from the Upper South arrived in South Carolina and Georgia before the Revolution and moved into the other Gulf states during the period of initial settlement. A second group of migrants came from a different "hearth": the tidewater region of South Carolina and Georgia. Many of these Lower South residents had ancestors who hailed from southern England. These two large-scale migrations divided the Deep South into distinct regions. The most important line of division separated several states into northern and southern regions. Settlers from the Upper South predominated in the northern reaches of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, as well as northeastern Mississippi; Lower South residents dominated the southern districts in these states. The two groups of migrants had different outlooks, distinct family histories, and different ways of building their homes and talking to their neighbors.

John C. Calhoun described the two societies within his own state of South Carolina. "Our State was first settled on the coast by emigrants principally from England, but with no inconsiderable intermixture of Huguenots from France . . . ," he noted in 1846. "The portion of the State along the falls of the rivers and back to the mountains had a very different origin and settlement. Its settlement commenced long after, at a period, but little anterior to the war of the Revolution, and consisted principally of emigrants who followed the course of the mountains, from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia & North Carolina. They had very little connection, or intercourse for a long time with the old settlement on the coast."

Migrants from the two hearths influenced politics and society in Texas and Florida, although these groups did not follow the pattern of settling along a north-south axis. In Texas, Upper South migrants dominated the northern and west central counties. Similarly, a study of Florida shows that Upper South settlers arrived in the 1830s, became wealthy cotton planters, and controlled the politics of "Middle Florida," the term for the Panhandle counties between the Suwannee and Apalachicola Rivers. These districts supported the Whigs and were moderate in sectional politics. The most striking difference between the Democratic and Whig leaders was their origins. Fully 64 percent of prominent Florida Democrats were from the Deep South, while only 37 percent of the Whigs originated from that area.

Conflicts over Southern rights often featured politicians with different origins. For example, the clash in Texas pitted John Reagan and Sam Houston, both with strong Tennessee roots, against Louis Wigfall of South Carolina. The division in Mississippi found on one side cooperationist James Alcorn, who was raised in Kentucky, and on the other side secessionist Albert Gallatin Brown of South Carolina. In Alabama moderates William King and George Smith Houston from the Upper South clashed with Georgians Dixon Hall Lewis and William Lowndes Yancey. There were exceptions to the rule. Some prominent secessionists, such as Kentuckian Jefferson Davis, were scions of the Upper South.

The distinction between these two migrations constituted the most important cultural divide in the Lower South, but it was not the only one. Several groups in the more southerly reaches of the Deep South stood apart from the migrants from South Carolina and Georgia. In Louisiana the Creoles and Acadians rejected the cotton planters' Southern nationalism. In 1842 William Elmore reported from Louisiana about Calhoun's supporters: "In the city of New Orleans he has a great many friends among the American democrats, but among the french and creole population his claims have not been canvassed." The majority of Germans in south-central Texas opposed slavery and secession; in 1854 a group of them met in San Antonio to endorse a free soil movement.The Mexicans in Texas also denounced slavery and disunion and frequently sheltered runaway slaves.

Most Northerners who settled in the Deep South decried the extremes of Southern nationalism. Such individuals composed an influential minority in the towns. For example, in Mobile, Alabama, nonresident cotton factors and representatives of Northern firms dominated commerce. "Half our real estate is owned by non residents of the same section [i.e., the North]," Joseph Lesesne reported from Mobile in 1847. "Our whole sale and retail business—every thing in short worth mentioning is in the hands of men who invest their profits at the North. The commercial privileges extended by the Constitution to these people has wholly deprived us of a mercantile class."

This discussion of migration and its impact, it should be noted, dovetails with a growing body of scholarship on antebellum mobility. These studies suggest how stable social and political structures coexisted with the "torrent of migration." In each community the small group of "persisters" held a disproportionate share of wealth and influence and provided continuity in turbulent times. Works on the antebellum North also emphasize the far-reaching impact of migration on politics. Greater New England provided a foundation for the Republican party, while settlers from the Upper South became the strongest supporters of the Democrats. Richard Steckel's precinct-level voting study illustrates this point. He concludes: "Migration was a major force—perhaps a dominant factor—shaping political conflict in the Midwest."

Economic activities constituted a second set of factors that divided the citizenry of the Lower South, reinforcing (for the most part) the divisions established by the patterns of settlement. To begin with, wheat cultivation, garden crops, and home manufactures gave the northern reaches of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas an economic unity that mirrored the settlers' shared origins. Wheat was a common note throughout much of this region. Although the quantities raised were far below the levels in the North, wheat growing was an important facet of the regional culture. The crop fostered a society of independent farmers, small milling centers, skilled craftspeople, and vigorous local exchanges. Steven Hahn's study of counties in northern Georgia indicates that seven of ten households had spinning wheels and looms, and one in ten heads of free households was an artisan. The union-leaning population of northern South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, it must be emphasized, included large planters as well as yeomen. But nonslaveholding farmers were a particularly vigorous component.

Lines of transportation also did more to divide the Lower South than to unify it. Most of the rivers that drained these states, from the Pee Dee in South Carolina to the Pearl in Mississippi and from the Sabine to the Nueces in Texas, served the coastal region but not the counties that lay further inland. Only the Mississippi, Savannah, and Red Rivers provided navigation that went far into the interior. The Tennessee River was the route of choice for northern Alabama, but it flowed north, joining the Ohio River near Paducah, Kentucky. Beginning in the 1820s the planters of northern Alabama lobbied for improvements to this waterway, which was obstructed at Muscle Shoals. With funds from the sale of land donated by the federal government, a canal was completed in 1831. But this route soon fell into disrepair. The state legislature refused to provide the small sum needed for its upkeep, arguing the canal helped Tennessee more than Alabama.

Similarly, railroads failed to tie together the coast and northern reaches of the Lower South. Before the Civil War lines were built north from Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans. The impact of these railroads was mixed. The route from Charleston, which reached Atlanta by the mid-1840s, was flawed. The line did not bridge the Savannah River. While this gap inconvenienced travelers, it posed an insurmountable obstacle to the shipment of bulky goods. The Savannah line successfully spanned Georgia, entering Atlanta in 1846 and Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1849. But in linking Georgia to the railroad terminus at Chattanooga, it strengthened the bonds between north Georgia and the Upper South. The lines that went north from Mobile and New Orleans did not reach Tennessee until the eve of the Civil War. During the 1840s and 1850s the most important railways for northern Alabama and Mississippi traveled east-west and linked these regions to the entrepots of the Upper South. In the mid-1840s capitalists in northern Alabama completed a line that paralleled the defunct canal and allowed the shipment of goods around Muscle Shoals. The Memphis & Charleston Railroad, chartered in 1850, constructed a road that began in Memphis, traversed northern Mississippi and northern Alabama, and entered Chattanooga by 1857.

The result of these links between the Upper South and the northern part of the cotton states was an overland trade that expanded markedly in the years before secession. Finished goods and foodstuffs were shipped to the Deep South; bales of cotton moved northward. Hence, commercial ties separated small farmers and planters in the northern reaches of the Deep South from small farmers and planters residing in southern parts of these states.

The decision by the Confederacy in February 1861 to levy a tariff on the import of goods provoked a discussion about the expanding trade between the Upper and Lower South. Observers also noted the correlation between this trade and divisions within the cotton states. "The inland export of cotton," B. G. Wilkins of Charleston remarked, "has assumed proportions alarming to our tradesmen, injurious to the ports, and a heavy distress upon the incomes of the tributary rail roads, besides there is a political significance that should challenge notice and command arrest. . . . Self interest will beget the opposition of the planters residing upon the confines [i.e., outskirts] of the Confederacy." William McBurney also fretted about the growth of inland trade. He remarked, "What is to hinder Wilmington and Charlotte, N.C., from becoming depots from which the upcountry of S.C. may be supplied. And so of Knoxville, Chattanooga, & Memphis, Tennessee, for the other states?" McBurney favored a light duty on goods entering the Confederacy: "A small percentage would have the advantage of giving to the Seaboard Cities the importing business and the supply of the interior merchants, whereas an entire exemption would enable to the interior merchant to do as many of them have always done—buy in northern cities—at least there would be no impediment in their way of so doing."

The separation of the Deep South into northern and southern regions was the most important division produced by economic activities, but others may be noted. The Louisiana sugar planters, who enjoyed the protection of federal tariffs, looked favorably on the Union. In the Bayou State crop preferences often became political preferences. Finally, commercial activities tied many city and townsfolk to the North and made them less willing to entertain extreme states' rights views during the secession crisis. Northern capital financed the sale of Southern staples and the import of finished goods into the South. A few traders advocated secession, but most were unionists. These city dwellers were more likely to join the Whig party, which became the party of moderation.

The division that emerged from differences in birthplaces and economic activities reflected opposing outlooks. These distinct mind-sets can best be understood in the context of the debate between historians James Oakes and Eugene Genovese. For Oakes the South was characterized by an "entrepreneurial ethos" and an "intense devotion to the capitalistic spirit of accumulation." Genovese, by contrast, emphasizes the "premodern quality of the Southern world." The slave lords, he asserted, were "precapitalist, quasi-aristocratic landowners" who "grew into the closest thing to feudal lords imaginable in a nineteenth-century bourgeois republic." Other historians and economists have chosen sides in this debate. Both sides suggest the universality of their conclusions. All planters, indeed, all white Southerners, these works contend, conformed to a single mold.

A closer look at the divisions within the Lower South suggests that we must credit the insights of both Oakes and Genovese—but in each case for only one of the two groups. The cohort with roots in the Upper South and North embodied the buoyant, entrepreneurial spirit that Oakes delineates. The bustling economic activities of the small farmers in northern counties of their states disturbed outspoken advocates of Southern rights. Daniel Hamilton of Charleston shared his concerns with radical congressman William Porcher Miles. "How long would it be after disunion," Hamilton asked in January 1860, "before we should have the same hungry manufacturing population infesting the upper part of So. Ca., Cherokee [i.e., northern] Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina (French Broad [River] with its exhaustless water power) and even the upper portion of Alabama?" He continued: "Why not five years would elapse before they would be setting their looms to work on every stream in these locations under the impulse of occupation and the introduction of numbers, they would soon make their presence felt. . . . A few years more and you would have a strong party of our own people in favour of a protective Tariff, and advocating all those extravagant expenditures for Internal Improvements."

Wealthy planters as well as small farmers in this region shared this entrepreneurial outlook and a desire to build a more diversified economy. James Orr, the upcountry leader of the South Carolina National Democrats, pointed out the path to growth. "The first step to be taken . . . ," he explained in an 1855 speech, "to reinvigorate our decaying prosperity, and to develop our exhaustless resources, is for our planters and farmers to invest the whole of the net profits on agricultural capital in some species of manufacturing; the field is broad and inviting, and but little has yet been occupied. With prudence and energy there can be no failure in any branch." Fellow upcountry politician Benjamin Perry, who often boosted manufacturing in his newspaper, applauded these remarks: "One such speech as this of Col. Orr's will do more good in the State than all the patriotic fustian and bombast which have been delivered in South Carolina for the last twenty years." Other planters shared these views. James Alcorn, the prominent north Mississippi politician (and opponent of secession), hoped the state would support new enterprises. He observed, "The wealth of a State consists in the property and intelligence of her people; every intelligent proposition which has for its object the increase of knowledge, or the enhancement of aggregate wealth, should receive the calm judgment of the Legislature."

Merchants, traders, and other townsfolk also applauded diversification, and their views were reflected in the Whig press. The Milledgeville, Georgia, *Southern Recorder* noted in 1843 that "our climate, the face of our country, our copious and unfailing water power, the abundant supply of raw materials, and the cheap labor which we command, invite us to apply a portion of our labor and capital to manufactures." The *Mobile Advertiser* concurred, remarking in 1848 that cotton planters, "instead of investing their surplus capital in negroes and lands, [should] invest it in manufactures."

Spokesmen for the settlers who came from the South Carolina—Georgia "hearth" enunciated a different outlook, one that was more in keeping with Genovese's depiction of the Southern economy. These individuals were proud that Southerners were not like the hard-trading, entrepreneurial Yankees. In 1855 Alabama fire-eater William Lowndes Yancey expounded on the differences between the North and South: "The climate, the soil and productions of these two grand divisions of the land, have made the character of their inhabitants. Those who occupy the one are cool, calculating, enterprising, selfish and grasping; the inhabitants of the other, are ardent, brave and magnanimous, more disposed to give than to accumulate, to enjoy ease rather than to labor." Mississippi radical John F. H. Claiborne agreed. He remarked in 1860, "Sedentary and agricultural, we cherish the homesteads and laws of our ancestors, and live among the reminiscences of the past." Jefferson Davis echoed these views. During the Panic of 1857 he rejoiced in the strengths of the Southern way. "Ours was an agricultural people, and in that consisted their strength," he told an audience in Jackson, Mississippi. "Their prosperity was not at the mercy of such a commercial crisis as the one with which the country had just been visited. Our great staple was our safety."

These states' rights advocates relegated manufacturing to a minor role. Few went as far in condemning enterprise as John Forsythe, the editor of the *Columbus (Georgia) Times,* who declared in 1850, "I would to God we had fewer miles of railroad, fewer millions invested in manufactures and stocks, fewer proofs of enterprise, and thrift and money-making, and more of that chivalry of Georgia, of the olden time, which, on more than one occasion, has interposed her sovereignty to check the usurpations of the federal government." Most politicians of all persuasions favored railroads, but states' rights leaders condemned the spread of manufacturing and argued that fresh soils, not factories, were the key to continuing prosperity.

In short, the origins of the settlers and their economic activities created within the Lower South two opposing societies whose spokesmen expounded different approaches to development. One set of individuals, typically located in the towns and northern counties, favored diversification and saw advantages in links with the states to the north and, more generally, in the Union. The other group, whose strength lay in the southern reaches of the Lower South, defended an economy focused on slaves, cotton, and rice. They were more ready to separate as the threat to Southern institutions increased in the 1840s and 1850s. . . .

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was Slavery the Key Issue in the Sectional Conflict Leading to the Civil War?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What role did southern commissioners play in 1860 and 1861 in drumming up support for secession from the Union?
2. What arguments did southern commissioners make to justify secession?
3. Evaluate the continued support for the Union demonstrated by white southerners in several southern states right up to the time of secession.
4. Analyze the extent to which economic concerns determined the decision in the South to secede from the Union.

Is There Common Ground?

Most historians of the Civil War era recognize the centrality of slavery in the sectional conflict that led ultimately to the secession of 11 southern states by 1861. The institution of slavery was so intricately wound into the fabric of southern society that even those who have insisted that the Civil War was a product of the propaganda of fanatics in either the North or South, blundering politicians, conflicting views of the Constitution of the United States, differences between the northern and southern economies, a conflict of cultures, or debates over majority rule and minority rights must realize how slavery imbedded itself into each of those factors. For those who insist that the debate was about states' rights, it is reasonably clear that the rights the southern states were seeking were the rights to keep the North and the U.S. federal government from meddling with the sanctity of the "peculiar institution." Similarly, scholars are hard-pressed to offer an economic explanation without recognizing that the most important economic institution in the South was slavery.

Additional Resources

The literature on the causes of the Civil War is extensive. Kenneth M. Stampp, ed., *The Causes of the Civil War* (Prentice-Hall, 1965) provides a collection of primary documents and historical interpretations by leading scholars. Other edited volumes of scholarly interpretations can be found in William R. Brock, ed., *The Civil War* (Harper & Row, 1969); Hans L. Trefousse, ed., *The Causes of the Civil War: Institutional Failure or Human Blunder?* (Holt, Rinehart and Watson, 1971); and Michael Perman, ed., *The Coming of the American Civil War* (3rd ed.;

D. C. Heath, 1993). John Niven's, *The Coming of the Civil War, 1837–1861* (Harlan Davidson, 1990) is a brief presentation, while Edward L. Ayers' essay "What Caused the Civil War?" in *What Caused the Civil War? Reflections on the South and Southern History* (W. W. Norton, 2005) makes a plea for appreciating the complexity ("deep contingency") posed by this question. Readers seeking a compelling narrative cannot do any better than David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* (Harper & Row, 1976), one of the best volumes in the prestigious New American Nation Series.

Allen Nevins' *Ordeal of the Union* (2 vols.; Scribner's, 1947) and Kenneth M. Stampp's *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis* (Louisiana State University Press, 1950) are both older but still excellent reads. Important states studies include Steven A. Canning, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (Simon & Schuster, 1970), William L. Barney, *The Secessionist Impulse: Alabama and Mississippi in 1860* (Princeton University Press, 1974), and Michael P. Johnson, *Toward a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia* (Louisiana State University Press, 1977).

ISSUE 15

Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"?

YES: Mark E. Neely, Jr., from "Was the Civil War a Total War?" *Civil War History* 50 (2004)

NO: James M. McPherson, from "From Limited to Total War: Missouri and the Nation, 1861–1865," *Gateway Heritage Magazine* (vol. 12, no. 4, Spring, 1992)

Learning Outcomes

After reading the essays, you should be able to:

- Define "total war."
- Distinguish "total war," "unconditional surrender," and "modern war" from earlier types of warfare.
- List arguments for and against the Civil War as a total war and critically analyze the validity of these arguments.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Professor Mark E. Neely, Jr., argues that the Civil War was not a total war because President Lincoln and the Union military leaders, such as General William T. Sherman, respected the distinction between soldiers and civilians, combatants and noncombatants. In addition, the North did not fully mobilize its resources nor engage in centralized planning and state intervention as was typical of twentieth-century wartime economies.

NO: Professor James M. McPherson argues that the Civil War was a total war. While conceding the distinction between combatants and noncombatants, he insists that the war accomplished the abolition of slavery and the extinction of a national state system—the Confederacy.

The confusion around the issue of whether the Civil War was a total war centers around the terms which historians use to describe the conflict. Are the terms "unconditional surrender" and "modern war" synonymous with total war? Was the policy of unconditional surrender which the Americans applied against Germany and Japan to end World War II also used by Lincoln against the Confederacy? Apparently Jefferson Davis thought so when Lincoln's negotiators at the Hampton Roads Peace Conference in early 1865 demanded "no cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the government."

Yet even though Lincoln was determined to free the slaves, he stopped short of unconditional surrender when he drafted a bill after the Hampton Roads conference which would have compensated the former slave owners $400 per slave if they ended the war before April 1865. Professor Neely also points out that if Lincoln really believed in unconditional surrender, he could have demanded "the exclusion of Confederate political leaders from future public office, disenfranchisement of Confederate soldiers, enfranchisement of freed blacks, legal protection for the Republican Party in former Confederate states, recognition of West Virginia's statehood, the partition of other Southern states, no reprisals against ex-slaves who served in Union armies, and so on."

Many historians consider the Civil War the most modern war because of the enormous number of casualties suffered—over 600,000 lives, 400,000 on the Union side and 200,000 on the Confederate. There is some question as to whether the weapons used, such as the development of the rifle musket, gave an advantage to the defense in repelling frontal assaults engaged by the infamous Pickett's charge at Gettysburg which caused so many deaths. Professor Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson argue in *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (University of Alabama Press, 1982) that the "celtic heritage" caused southerners to engage in these frontal attacks. But Professors Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones in *How the North Won: a Military History of the Civil War* (University of Illinois Press, 1983) downplay the importance of specific battles and actions taken by individuals and believe that the North was victorious because the Union was more effective than the Confederacy in marshaling its resources.

Professor Mark Neely challenges the conventional wisdom of the time when he denies that the Civil War was a total war. According to Neely, not until after World War II when improved technology with its aerial bombing raids rendered the distinction between combatants and noncombatants meaningless that true "total war" was a reality. In his assessment of Sherman, Neely believes his rhetoric was more ferocious than his actions. Sherman did not make war against noncombatants. Whatever atrocities that were suffered in the war were mostly by soldiers against other soldiers on both sides. Whenever possible, Sherman tried to restrain his men from destroying the lives of civilians and their personal property. (South Carolina was the exception because it started the war.) If one seeks the earliest application of total war, Neely says it can be found in the speeches of President Jefferson Davis.

Neely also argues that the Lincoln administration did not mobilize its economy or its scientific community very well. There was no Manhattan Project which developed America's first atomic bomb. Nor were key industries mobilized under the rubric of state planning. Neely's argument on this point is partially substantiated by Stanley L. Engerman and J. Matthew Galman, "The Civil War Economy: A Modern View" in Steg Forster, et al., *The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) who argue that it was the South and not the North that had to levy taxes, draft white southerners, and engage in economic planning because its economic base was primarily agricultural.

Professor McPherson makes a strong case that the Civil War was a total war. Statistically, the war was devastating: 620,000 soldiers lost their lives, a number that equals almost all the number of soldiers killed in all the other American wars combined. One quarter of white men of military age lost their lives. Altogether, about 4 percent of southern people, black and white, were killed. Most were not killed in combat, but were victims of malnutrition and disease. It has been estimated that the war destroyed two-thirds of the region's wealth including the market value of slaves. In short, McPherson believes the Union war effort was "total" in its objectives because it destroyed the Confederate government and ended slavery.

McPherson argues familiarly that Lincoln shifted the objective of the war from restoring the Union with or without slavery intact to the destruction of both the Confederacy and slavery. His case for a shift from partial to total war is supported in his essay on "Union Generalship, Political Leadership and Total War" in the Forster collection cited above. Professor Edward Hagerman agrees with McPherson by saying that when Lincoln fired McClellan, he shifted his objective from a limited to a total war.

Did the North wage a total war against the South? In the YES selection, Professor Mark E. Neely, Jr., denies that the Civil War was a total war because the Union leaders respected the distinction between combatants and noncombatants and did not fully mobilize the country's economic resources. In the NO selection, Professor James M. McPherson says that Lincoln shifted the policy from limited to total war in the fall of 1862 and accomplished his objectives of abolishing slavery and destroying the Confederate government.

YES

Mark E. Neely, Jr.

Was the Civil War a Total War?

. . . The idea of total war was first applied to the Civil War in an article about William T. Sherman published in the *Journal of Southern History* in 1948: John B. Walters's "General William T. Sherman and Total War."[1] After this initial use of the term, it was quickly adopted by T. Harry Williams, whose influential book *Lincoln and His Generals,* published in 1952, began with this memorable sentence: "The Civil War was the first of the modern total wars, and the American democracy was almost totally unready to fight it." Among the more popular Civil War writers, the idea also fared well. Bruce Catton, for example, wrote in a 1964 essay on "The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant" that "He was fighting . . . a total war, and in a total war the enemy's economy is to be undermined in any way possible." Scholarly writers continued to use the term as well. In his masterful *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era,* Princeton University's James M. McPherson writes, "By 1863, Lincoln's remarkable abilities gave him a wide edge over Davis as a war leader, while in Grant and Sherman the North acquired commanders with a concept of total war and the necessary determination to make it succeed." Professor McPherson's book forms part of the prestigious Oxford History of the United States. In another landmark volume, *"A People's Contest": The Union and the Civil War* (Harper & Row's New American Nation series), historian Phillip Shaw Paludan writes, "Grant's war making has come to stand for the American way of war. For one thing, that image is one of total war demanding unconditional surrender."[2]

Surely any idea about the military conduct of the Civil War that has been championed by Williams, Catton, McPherson, and Paludan, that is embodied in the Oxford History of the United States and in the New American Nation series, can fairly be called accepted wisdom on the subject. Most writers on the military history of the war, if forced to articulate a brief general description of the nature of that conflict, would now say, as McPherson has, that the Civil War began in 1861 with a purpose in the North "to suppress this insurrection and restore loyal Unionists to control of the southern states. The conflict was therefore a limited war . . . with the limited goal of restoring the status quo ante bellum, not an unlimited war to destroy an enemy nation and reshape its society." Gradually, or as McPherson puts it, "willy-nilly," the war became "a total war rather than a limited one." Eventually, "Union generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Sheridan saw more clearly than anyone else the nature of modern, total war, a war between peoples rather than simply between armies, a war in which the fighting left nothing untouched or unchanged."

From *Civil War History* by Mark E. Neely, Jr., December 2004. Copyright © 2004 by Kent State University Press. Reprinted by permission.

President Lincoln came to realize the nature of the military contest and "sanctioned this policy of 'being terrible' on the enemy." Finally, "when the Civil War became a total war, the invading army intentionally destroyed the economic capacity of the South to wage war." Northern victory resulted from this gradual realization and the subsequent application of new and harsh doctrines in the war's later phase. . . .

Northerner and Southerner alike have come to agree on the use of this term, total war, but what does it mean exactly? It was never used in the Civil War itself. Where does it come from?. . . .

Unfortunately, like many parts of everyday vocabulary, total war is a loose term with several meanings. Since World War II, it has come to mean, in part, a war requiring the full economic mobilization of a society. From the start, it meant the obverse of the idea as well: making war on the economic resources of the enemy rather than directly on its armed forces alone. Yet there was nothing really new about attacking an enemy's economic resources; that was the very essence of naval blockades and they long predated the Civil War. The crucial and terrible new aspect of the notion of total war was embodied in the following idea, part of a definition of the term cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary:* "Every citizen is in a sense a combatant and also the object of attack." Every systematic definition of the term embodies the concept of destroying the ages-old distinction between civilians and soldiers, whatever other ideas may be present. Another citation in the *OED,* for example, terms it "a war to which all resources and the whole population are committed; loosely, a war conducted without any scruple or limitations." *Webster's . . . Unabridged* dictionary describes total war as "warfare that uses all possible means of attack, military, scientific, and psychological, against both enemy troops and civilians." And James Turner Johnson, in his study of *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War,* asserts that in total war "there must be disregard of restraints imposed by custom, law, and morality on the prosecution of the war. Especially, . . . total war bears hardest on noncombatants, whose traditional protection from harm according to the traditions of just and limited warfare appears to evaporate here."

Close application of this twentieth-century term (the product of the age of strategic bombing and blitzkrieg and powerful totalitarian governments capable of mobilizing science and psychology) to the Civil War seems fraught with difficulty. Surely no one believes, for example, that the Civil War was fought "without any scruple or limitations." From the ten thousand plus pages of documents in the eight full volumes of the *Official Records* dealing with prisoners of war, to the many copies of General Orders No. 100, a brief code of the laws of war distributed throughout the Union army in 1863, evidence abounds that this war knew careful limitation and conscientious scruple. Even World War II followed the rules bearing on prisoners of war. Any assessment of the Civil War's nearness to being a total war can be no more than that: an assertion that it *approached* total war in some ways. By no definition of the term can it be said to *be* a total war.

Occasionally, the term total war approximates the meaning of modernity. T. Harry Williams used the terms interchangeably, as in this passage from a later work in which he hedged a bit on calling the Civil War a total war: "Trite it may be to say that the Civil War was the first of the modern wars, but this is a truth that needs to be repeated. If the Civil War was not quite total, it missed totality by only a narrow margin."

Modernity is not a very useful concept in military history. Surely every war is thought to be modern by its participants—save possibly those fought by Japan in the strange era when firearms were consciously rejected. As a historian's term, modern when applied to warfare has a widely accepted meaning different from total. Modern warfare generally connotes wars fought after the French Revolution by large citizen armies equipped with the products of the Industrial Revolution and motivated more by ideology than the lash or strictly mercenary considerations. The Civil War certainly was a modern war in that sense, but it was not a total war in the sense that civilians were commonly thought of as legitimate military targets.

Perhaps no one who maintains the Civil War was a total war means it so literally. Historian Brian Bond provides a useful idea when he writes, "strictly speaking, total war is just as much a myth as total victory or total peace. What is true, however, is that the fragile barriers separating war from peace and soldiers from civilians—already eroded in the First World War—virtually disappeared between 1939 and 1945." Seeing how often that fragile barrier broke in the Civil War will tell how nearly it approached being a total war. All such matters of degree contain dangers for the historian trying to answer the question; the risk of sinking under a mass of piecemeal objections raised afterward by critics is very high. Even the most conservative of Civil War generals occasionally stepped over the boundaries of customarily accepted behavior in nineteenth-century warfare. General George B. McClellan, for example, did so in the Peninsula campaign, after only about a year's fighting. On May 4, 1862, he informed Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton: "The rebels have been guilty of the most murderous & barbarous conduct in placing torpedoes [land mines] *within* the abandoned works, near wells & springs, near flag staffs, magazines, telegraph offices, in carpet bags, barrels of flour etc. Fortunately we have not lost many men in this manner—some 4 or 5 killed & perhaps a dozen wounded. I shall make the prisoners remove them at their own peril." . . .

John B. Walters cited General Sherman's use of prisoners to clear mines as an example of his total war practices, but Sherman's reaction was in fact exactly like McClellan's. When Sherman saw a "handsome young officer" with all the flesh blown off one of his legs by a Confederate mine in Georgia in December 1864, he grew "very angry," because "this was not war, but murder." Sherman then retaliated by using Confederate prisoners to clear the mines. What at first may seem an incident suggesting the degeneration of warfare, in fact proves the belief of the protagonists in rules and codes of civilized behavior that have in the twentieth century long since vanished from the world's battlefields. The real point is that Union and Confederate authorities were in substantial agreement about the laws of war, and they usually tried to stay within them.

Leaving aside similar isolated instances caused by temporary rage, can a historian seeking to describe the war's direction toward or away from total war examine larger aspects of the war where the "fragile barriers" between soldiers and civilians may have broken down? Since the conscious application of a new doctrine in warfare forms part of the total war interpretation, can a historian focus on certain figures in high command who held such doctrines and applied them to the enemy in the Civil War? Throughout, can the historian keep an eye on the dictionary definition of total war to measure the proximity of the Civil War to it? Surely this can be done, and short of a study of the Civil War day by day, there can hardly be any other test. . . .

Sherman is the Civil War soldier most often quoted on the subject of total war. An article about him gave rise to this interpretation of the Civil War, and indeed it is now widely held that, as historian John E. Marszalek has expressed it, William T. Sherman was the "Inventor of Total Warfare." "We are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies," Sherman told Gen. Hency W. Halleck on Christmas Eve 1864. As early as October 1862 he said, "We cannot change the hearts of these people of the South, but we can make war so terrible . . . [and] make them so sick of war that generations would pass away before they would again appeal to it."[3]

The gift of sounding like a twentieth-century man was peculiarly Sherman's. Nearly every other Civil War general sounds ancient by comparison, but many historians may have allowed themselves to be fooled by his style while ignoring the substance of his campaigns.

Historians, moreover, quote Sherman selectively. In fact, he said many things and when gathered together they do not add up to any coherent "total-war philosophy," as one historian describes it. Sherman was not a philosopher; he was a general and a garrulous one at that. "He talked incessantly and more rapidly than any man I ever saw," Maj. John Chipman Gray reported. "It would be easier to say what he did not talk about than what he did." Chauncey Depew said Sherman was "the readiest and most original talker in the United States." And what Sherman said during the war was often provoked by exasperating, momentary circumstance. Therefore, he occasionally uttered frightening statements. "To secure the safety of the navigation of the Mississippi River I would slay millions," Sherman told Gen. John A. Logan on December 21,1863. "On that point I am not only insane, but mad . . . For every bullet shot at a steamboat, I would shoot a thousand 30-pounder Parrotts into even helpless towns on Red, Oachita, Yazoo, or wherever a boat can float or soldier march." This statement was all the more striking, coming from a man widely reputed by newspaper critics to be insane. On another occasion, Sherman said, "To the petulant and persistent secessionists, why, death is mercy, and the quicker he or *she is* disposed of the better" (italics added).[4]

In other moods and in different circumstances, Sherman could sound as mild as Robert E. Lee. "War," the alleged inventor of total war wrote on April 19, 1863, "at best is barbarism, but to involve all—children, women, old and helpless—is more than can be justified." And he went on to caution against seizing so many stores that family necessities were endangered. Later, in the summer of 1863 when General Sherman sent a cavalry expedition toward Memphis from Mississippi, General Grant instructed him to "impress upon the men the importance of going through the State in an orderly manner, abstaining from taking anything not absolutely necessary for their subsistence while travelling. They should try to create as favorable an impression as possible upon the people." These may seem hopeless orders to give General Sherman, but his enthusiastic reply was this: "It will give me excessive pleasure to instruct the Cavalry as you direct, for the Policy you point out meets every wish of my heart."[5]

Scholars who pay less heed to the seductively modern sound of Sherman's harsher statements and look closely instead at what he actually did on his celebrated campaigns in Georgia and the Carolinas, find a nineteenth-century soldier at work—certainly not a man who made war on noncombatants. Joseph T. Glatthaar's study of Sherman's campaigns confirmed that, for the most part, Sherman's men did not physically abuse civilians who kept to themselves: atrocities were suffered mostly by soldiers on *both* sides; in Georgia and the Carolinas, Sherman's army recovered the bodies of at least 172 Union soldiers hanged, shot in the head at close range, with their throats slit, or "actually butchered." And only in South Carolina, the state blamed for starting the war, did Sherman fail to restrain his men in their destruction of private property. Before the idea of total war came to Civil War studies, shrewd students of the conflict had noted the essentially nineteenth-century nature of Sherman's campaigns. Gamaliel Bradford's *Union Portraits,* for example, written during World War I, observed: "Events . . . have made the vandalism of Sherman seem like discipline and order. The injury done by him seldom directly affected anything but property. There was no systematic cruelty in the treatment of noncombatants, and to the eternal glory of American soldiers be it recorded that insult and abuse toward women were practically unknown during the Civil War."[6]

Though not a systematic military thinker, General Sherman did compose a letter addressing the problem of noncombatants in the Civil War, and it described his actual policies better than his frequently quoted statements of a more sensational nature. He sent the letter to Maj. R. M. Sawyer, whom Sherman left behind to manage Huntsville, Alabama, when he departed for Meridian, Mississippi, early in 1864. Sherman also sent a copy to his brother, Republican Senator John Sherman, with an eye to possible publication:

> In my former letters I have answered all your questions save one, and that relates to the treatment of inhabitants known or suspected to be hostile or "Secesh." This is in truth the most difficult business of our army as it advances and occupies the Southern country. It is almost impossible to lay down rules, and I invariably leave the whole subject to the local commanders, but am willing to give them the benefit of my acquired knowledge and experience. In Europe, whence we derive our principles of war, wars are between kings or rulers through hired armies, and not between peoples. These remain, as it were, neutral, and sell their produce to whatever army is in possession.
>
> Napoleon when at war with Prussia, Austria, and Russia bought forage and provisions of the inhabitants and consequently had an interest to protect the farms and factories which ministered to his wants. In like manner the allied Armies in France could buy of the

> French inhabitants whatever they needed, the produce of the soil or manufactures of the country. Therefore, the general rule was and is that war is confined to the armies engaged, and should not visit the houses of families or private interests. But in other examples a different rule obtained the sanction of historical authority. I will only instance one, where in the siege of William and Mary the English army occupied Ireland, then in a state of revolt. The inhabitants were actually driven into foreign lands, and were dispossessed of their property and a new population introduced.
>
> . . . The question then arises, Should we treat as absolute enemies all in the South who differ from us in opinion or prejudice, kill or banish them, or should we give them time to think and gradually change their conduct so as to conform to the new order of things which is slowly and gradually creeping into their country?
>
> When men take up arms to resist a rightful authority, we are compelled to use like force. . . . When the provisions, forage, horses, mules, wagons, etc., are used by our enemy, it is clearly our duty and right to take them also, because otherwise they might be used against us. In like manner all houses left vacant by an inimical people are clearly our right, and as such are needed as storehouses, hospitals, and quarters. But the question arises as to dwellings used by women, children and non-combatants. So long as non-combatants remain in their houses and keep to their accustomed peaceful business, their opinions and prejudices can in no wise influence the war, and therefore should not be noticed; but if any one comes out into the public streets and creates disorder, he or she should be punished, restrained, or banished. . . . If the people, or any of them, keep up a correspondence with parties in hostility, they are spies, and can be punished according to law with death or minor punishment. These are well-established principles of war, and the people of the South having appealed to war, are barred from appealing for protection to our constitution, which they have practically and publicly defied. They have appealed to war, and must abide its rules and laws.

Excepting incidents of retaliation, Sherman by and large lived by these "principles of war."[7]

Leaving "the whole subject" to local commanders nevertheless permitted considerable latitude for pillage or destruction and was in itself an important principle. Moreover, Sherman, who was a critic of universal suffrage and loathed the free press, thought a volunteer army, the product of America's ultra-individualistic society, would inevitably loot and burn private property. His conservative social views thus led to a career-long fatalism about pillage.[8]

Sherman's purposes in the Georgia and Carolinas campaigns, usually pointed to as the epitome of total war in the Civil War, are obscured by two months of the general's letters to other generals describing his desire to cut loose from Atlanta and his long, thin line of supply to march to the sea. From mid-September to mid-November 1864, Sherman worried the idea, and his superiors, explaining it in several ways. At first he argued from his knowledge of the political disputes between Jefferson Davis and Georgia governor

Joseph E. Brown that the march would sever the state from the Confederacy. "They may stand the fall of Richmond," Sherman told Grant on September 20, "but not of all Georgia." At the same time he belittled the effects of mere destruction: "the more I study the game the more I am convinced that it would be wrong for me to penetrate much farther into Georgia without an objective beyond. It would not be productive of much good. I can start east and make a circuit south and back, *doing vast damage to the State,* but resulting in no permanent good" (italics added).[9]

Less than three weeks later, Sherman gave a rather different explanation to Grant: "Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless to occupy it, but the utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources. By attempting to hold the roads we will lose 1,000 men monthly, and will gain no result. I can make the march, and make Georgia howl."

Ten days after that, he more or less combined his different arguments in a letter to General Halleck. "This movement is not purely military or strategic," he now said, "but it will illustrate the vulnerability of the South." Only when Sherman's armies arrived and "fences and corn and hogs and sheep" vanished would "the rich planters of the Oconee and Savannah" know "what war means." He spoke more tersely to his subordinates. "I want to prepare for my big raid," he explained on October 19 to a colonel in charge of supply, and with that Sherman arranged to send his impedimenta to the rear.

With plans more or less set, Sherman explained to Gen. George Thomas, who would be left to deal with Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood's army, "I propose to demonstrate the vulnerability of the South, and make its inhabitants feel that war and individual ruin are synonymous terms." Delays ensued and Sherman decided to remain in place until after election day. On the twelfth he cut his telegraph lines, and the confusing explanations of the campaign ceased pouring out of Georgia.

Sherman did not attempt the "utter destruction" of Georgia's "people." He did not really attack noncombatants directly or make any serious attempt to destroy "the economic capacity of the south to wage war," as one historian has described his purpose. After capturing Atlanta, for example, Sherman moved to capture Savannah and then attacked the symbolic capital of secession, South Carolina. He did not attack Augusta, Georgia, which he knew to contain "the only powder mills and factories remaining in the South." Though he did systematically destroy railroad lines, Sherman otherwise had little conception of eliminating essential industries. Indeed, there were few to eliminate, for the South, in comparison with the North, was a premodern, underdeveloped, agrarian region where determined men with rifles were the real problem—not the ability of the area's industries to manufacture high-technology weapons. Despite scorching a sixty-mile-wide swath through the Confederacy, Sherman was never going to starve this agrarian economy into submission, either. He had remarked in the past on how well fed and even shod the Confederate armies were despite their backward economy.

What Sherman was doing embodied traditional geopolitical objectives in a civil war: convincing the enemy's people and the world that the Confederate government and upper classes were too weak to maintain nationhood. He did this with a "big raid." "If we can march a well-appointed army right through his [Jefferson Davis's] territory," Sherman told Grant on November 6, 1864, "it is a demonstration to the world, foreign and domestic, that we have a power which Davis cannot resist." In *Battle Cry of Freedom* this statement is followed by ellipsis marks and the statement, "I can make the march, and make Georgia howl!" But that appears to be a misquotation. In fact, Sherman went on to say something much less vivid and scorching:

> This may not be war, but rather statesmanship, nevertheless it is overwhelming to my mind that there are thousands of people abroad and in the South who will reason thus: If the North can march an army right through the south, it is proof positive that the North can prevail in this contest, leaving only open the question of its willingness to use that power.
>
> Now, Mr. Lincoln's election, which is assured, coupled with the conclusion just reached, makes a complete, logical whole.

And Mr. Lincoln himself endorsed the view. In his letter congratulating Sherman on his Christmas capture of Savannah, the president counted the campaign "a great success" not only in affording "the obvious and immediate military advantages" but also "in showing to the world that your army could be divided, putting the stronger part to an important new service, and yet leaving enough to vanquish the old opposing force of the whole—Hood's army." This, Lincoln said, "brings those who sat in darkness, to see a great light." Neither Sherman nor Lincoln put the emphasis on the role of sheer destructiveness or economic deprivation. . . .

In fact, no Northerner at any time in the nineteenth century embraced as his own the cold-blooded ideas now associated with total war. If one seeks the earliest application of the idea (rather than the actual term) to the Civil War, it lies perhaps in the following document, written in the midst of the Civil War itself:

> [T]hey [the U.S.] have repudiated the foolish conceit that the inhabitants of this confederacy are still citizens of the United States, for they are waging an indiscriminate war upon them all, with a savage ferocity unknown to modern civilization. In this war, rapine is the rule: private residences, in peaceful rural retreats, are bombarded and burnt: Grain crops in the field are consumed by the torch and when the torch is not convenient, careful labor is bestowed to render complete the destruction of every article of use or ornament remaining in private dwellings, after their inhabitants have fled from the outrages of a brutal soldiery.
>
> Mankind will shudder to hear of the tales of outrages committed on defenceless females by soldiers of the United States now invading our homes: yet these outrages are prompted by inflamed passions and madness of intoxication.

The source of the idea was, of course, Confederate, and it was a high Confederate source indeed: Jefferson Davis.

It may sound as though Davis was describing Sherman's march through Georgia or perhaps Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley—most probably in a late speech, in 1864 or 1865. In fact, President Davis made the statement in 1861, in his Message to Congress of July 20. Davis not only described total war three years before Sherman entered Georgia; he described total war before the First Battle of Bull Run had been fought. It was fought the day *after* Davis delivered his message to Congress.

The first application of the *idea* to the Civil War came, then, in Confederate propaganda. Though it may not be a sectional interpretation now, it was an entirely sectional idea in the beginning. Its origins give perhaps the best clue to the usefulness of the idea in describing the Civil War. Total war may describe certain isolated and uncharacteristic aspects of the Civil War but is at most a partial view.

The point is not merely semantic. The use of the idea of total war prevents historians from understanding the era properly. . . .

Likewise, the economic aspect of total war is misleading when used to describe characteristics of the Civil War reputedly more forward looking than naval blockades. The ideas of economic planning and control from World War II cannot be applied to the Civil War. Hardly anyone then thought in such macroeconomic terms. Abraham Lincoln did calculate the total daily cost of the war, but he did not do so to aid long-range economic planning for the Union war effort. Instead he used the figure to show how relatively inexpensive it would be for the U.S. government to purchase the freedom of all the slaves in the border states through compensated emancipation. At $400 a head, the $2 million daily war expenditure would buy every slave in Delaware at "less than one half-day's cost," and "less than eighty seven days cost of this war would, at the same price, pay for all in Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Kentucky, and Missouri."

From the Confederate perspective, the economic insight seems ironically somewhat more appropriate. The blockade induced scarcities on which almost all Confederate civilian diarists commented—coffee, shoe leather, and needles were sorely missed. The Confederate government's attempts to supply scarce war necessities led some historians to call the resulting system "state socialism" or a "revolutionary experience." Yet these were the outcome less of deliberate Northern military strategy (the blockade aside) than of the circumstance that the South was agrarian and the North more industrialized.

For its part, the North did little to mobilize its resources—little, that is, that would resemble the centralized planning and state intervention typical of twentieth-century economies in war. There was no rationing, North or South, and the Yankees' society knew only the sacrifice of men, not of materials. As Phillip Paludan has shown, agriculture thrived, and other parts of Northern society suffered only modestly; college enrollments fell, except at the University of Michigan, but young men still continued to go to college in substantial numbers. Inflation and a graduated income tax did little to trouble the claims made by most Republicans of surprising prosperity in the midst of war. The

Republican president stated in his annual message to the United States Congress in December 1864:

> It is of noteworthy interest that the steady expansion of population, improvement and governmental institutions over the new and unoccupied portions of our country have scarcely been checked, much less impeded or destroyed, by our great civil war, which at first glance would seem to have absorbed almost the entire energies of the nation.
>
> . . . It is not material to inquire *how* the increase has been produced, or to show that it would have been *greater* but for the war. . . . The important fact remains demonstrated, that we have *more* men *now* than we had when the war *began*. . . . This as to men. Material resources are now more complete and abundant than ever.
>
> The national resources, then; are unexhausted, and, as we believe, inexhaustible.

Democrats generally conceded prosperity by their silence and focused instead on race and civil liberties as campaign issues.

The essential aspect of any definition of total war asserts that it breaks down the distinction between soldiers and civilians, combatants and noncombatants, and this no one in the Civil War did systematically, including William T. Sherman. He and his fellow generals waged war the same way most Victorian gentlemen did, and other Victorian gentlemen in the world knew it. That is one reason why British, French, and Prussian observers failed to comment on any startling developments seen in the American war: there was little new to report. The conservative monarchies of the old world surely would have seized with delight on any evidence that warfare in the New World was degenerating to the level of starving and killing civilians. Their observers encountered no such spectacle. It required airplanes and tanks and heartless twentieth-century ideas born in the hopeless trenches of World War I to break down distinctions adhered to in practice by almost all Civil War generals. Their war did little to usher in the shock of the new in the twentieth century.

Notes

1. John B. Walters, "General William T. Sherman and Total War," *Journal of Southern History* 14 (November 1948): 447–80. See also John B. Walters, *Merchant of Terror: General Sherman and Total War* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973). Phillip Paludan mistakes the origins of Walters's ideas as being a product of the Vietnam War era, ignoring the anti-Yankee roots of the idea apparent in the earlier article. See Philip Paludan, *"A People's Contest": The Union and the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 456. Other books on Sherman embracing the total war thesis include: John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1956); Burke Davis, *Sherman's March* (New York: Random House, 1980); and James M. Reston Jr., *Sherman's March and Viet Nam* (New York: Macmillan, 1984).

2. T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 3; Bruce Catton, “The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant,” in *Grant, Lee, Lincoln and the Radicals: Essays on Civil War Leadership,* ed. Grady McWhiney (New York: Harper Colophon, 1966), 8; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 857; Paludan, *“A People’s Contest,”* 296.
3. *OR* 44:798; *OR* 17, 2:261.
4. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 809; John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes, *War Letters 1862–1865* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1927), 425, 427; Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), 205; *OR* 31, 3:459; *OR* 32, 2:281.
5. *OR* 24, 2:209; John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant,* 16 vols. to date (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1967–), 9:155, 156n.
6. Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman’s Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1985), 72–73, 127–28; Gamaliel Bradford, *Union Portraits* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1916), 154n–155n, Paludan, though he says Sherman “helped announce the coming of total war,” also states that “Sherman’s idea of war was more description than doctrine.” Paludan, *“A People’s Contest.”* 291, 302.
7. Rachel Sherman Thorndike, ed., *The Sherman Letters: Correspondence between General and Senator Sherman from 1837 to 1891* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1894), 228–30.
8. Ibid. 175–76,181–82,185; M. A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909), 209.
9. *OR* 39, 2:412.

James M. McPherson **NO**

From Limited to Total War: Missouri and the Nation, 1861–1865

A few years after the Civil War, Mark Twain described that great conflict as having "uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people, transformed the social life of half the country, and wrought so profoundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be measured short of two or three generations." This profound transformation was achieved at enormous cost in lives and property. Fully one-quarter of the white men of military age in the Confederacy lost their lives. And that terrible toll does not include an unknown number of civilian deaths in the South. Altogether nearly 4 percent of the Southern people, black and white, civilians and soldiers, died as a consequence of the war. This percentage exceeded the human cost of any country in World War I and was outstripped only by the region between the Rhine and the Volga in World War II. The amount of property and resources destroyed in the Confederate States is almost incalculable. It has been estimated at two-thirds of all assessed wealth, including the market value of slaves.

This is the negative side of that radical transformation described by Mark Twain. The positive side included preservation of the United States as a unified nation, the liberation of four million slaves, and the abolition by constitutional amendment of the institution of bondage that had plagued the nation since the beginning, inhibited its progress, and made a mockery of the libertarian values on which it was founded. No other society in history freed so many slaves in so short a time—but also at such a cost in violence.

The Civil War mobilized human resources on a scale unmatched by any other event in American history except, perhaps, World War II. For actual combat duty the Civil War mustered a considerably larger proportion of American manpower than did World War II. And, in another comparison with that global conflict, the victorious power in the Civil War did all it could to devastate the enemy's economic resources as well as the morale of its home-front population, which was considered almost as important as enemy armies in the war effort. In World War II this was done by strategic bombing; in the Civil War it was done by cavalry and infantry penetrating deep into the Confederate heartland.

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It is these factors—the devastation wrought by the war, the radical changes it accomplished, and the mobilization of the whole society to sustain the war effort that have caused many historians to label the Civil War a "total war." Recently, however, some analysts have questioned this terminology. They maintain that true total war—or in the words of Carl von Clausewitz, "absolute war"—makes no distinction between combatants and noncombatants, no discrimination between taking the lives of enemy soldiers and those of enemy civilians; it is war "without any scruple or limitations," war in which combatants give no quarter and take no prisoners.

Some wars have approached this totality—for example, World War II, in which Germany deliberately murdered millions of civilians in eastern Europe, Allied strategic bombing killed hundreds of thousands of German and Japanese civilians, and both sides sometimes refused to take prisoners and shot those who tried to surrender. In that sense of totality, the Civil War was not a total war. Although suffering and disease mortality were high among prisoners of war, and Confederates occasionally murdered captured black soldiers, there was no systematic effort to kill prisoners. And while soldiers on both sides in the Civil War pillaged and looted civilian property, and several Union commanders systematized this destruction into a policy, they did not deliberately kill civilians. Mark Neely, the chief critic of the notion of the Civil War as a total war, maintains that "the *essential* aspect of any definition of total war asserts that it breaks down the distinction between soldiers and civilians, combatants and noncombatants, and this no one in the Civil War did systematically."

Even William T. Sherman, widely regarded as the progenitor of total war, was more bark than bite according to Neely. Sherman wrote and spoke in a nervous, rapid-fire, sometimes offhand manner; he said extreme things about "slaying millions" and "repopulating Georgia" if necessary to win the war. But this was rhetorical exaggeration. One of Sherman's most widely quoted statements—"We are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war"—did not really erase the distinction between combatants and noncombatants, for Sherman did not mean it to justify killing civilians.

To note the difference between rhetoric and substance in the Civil War is to make a valid point. The rhetoric not only of Sherman but also of many other people on both sides was far more ferocious than anything that actually happened. Northerners had no monopoly on such rhetoric. A Savannah newspaper proclaimed in 1863: "Let Yankee cities burn and their fields be laid waste," while a Richmond editor echoed: "It surely must be made plain at last that this is to be a war of extermination." A month after the firing on Fort Sumter, a Nashville woman prayed that "God may be with us to give us strength to conquer them, to exterminate them, to lay waste every Northern city, town and village, to destroy them utterly." Yankees used similar language. In the first month of the war a Milwaukee judge said that Northern armies should "restore New Orleans to its native marshes, then march across the country, burn Montgomery to ashes, and serve Charleston in the same way. . . . We must starve, drown, burn, shoot the traitors." In St. Louis the uneasy truce between Union and Confederate factions that had followed the riots and fighting in May 1861 broke down a month later when the Union commander Nathaniel Lyon rejected a compromise with pro-Confederate elements, which included the governor, with these words: “Rather than concede to the State of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my Government in any matter . . . I would see you . . . and every man, woman, and child in the State, dead and buried.”

These statements certainly sound like total war, war without limits or restraints. But of course none of the scenarios sketched out in these quotations literally came true—not even in Missouri, where reality came closer to rhetoric than anywhere else. Therefore, those who insist that the Civil War was not a total war appear to have won their case, at least semantically. Recognizing this, a few historians have sought different adjectives to describe the kind of conflict the Civil War became: One uses the phrase “destructive war”; another prefers “hard war.”

But these phrases, though accurate, do not convey the true dimensions of devastation in the Civil War. All wars are hard and destructive in some degree; what made the Civil War distinctive in the American experience? It *was* that overwhelming involvement of the whole population, the shocking loss of life, the wholesale devastation and radical social and political transformations that it wrought. In the experience of Americans, especially Southerners, this approached totality; it *seemed* total. Thus the concept, and label, of total war remains a useful one. It is what the sociologist Max Weber called an “ideal type”—a theoretical model used to measure a reality that never fully conforms to the model, but that nevertheless remains a useful tool for analyzing the reality.

That is the sense in which this essay will analyze the evolution of the Civil War from a limited to a total war. Despite that fierce rhetoric of destruction quoted earlier, the official war aims of both sides in 1861 were quite limited. In his first message to the Confederate Congress after the firing on Fort Sumter by his troops had provoked war, Jefferson Davis declared that “we seek no conquest, no aggrandizement, no concession of any kind from the States with which we were lately confederated; all we ask is to be let alone.” As for the Union government, its initial conception of the war was one of a domestic insurrection, an uprising against national authority by certain lawless hotheads who had gained temporary sway over the otherwise law-abiding citizens of a few Southern states—or as Lincoln put it in his proclamation calling out seventy-five thousand state militia to put down the uprising, “combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings.” This was a strategy of limited war—indeed, so limited that it was scarcely seen as a war at all, but rather as a police action to quell a large riot. It was a strategy founded on an assumption of residual loyalty among the silent majority of Southerners. Once the national government demonstrated its firmness by regaining control of its forts and by blockading Southern ports, those presumed legions of Unionists would come to the fore and bring their states back into the Union. To cultivate this loyalty, and to temper firmness with restraint, Lincoln promised that the federalized ninety-day militia would avoid "any devastation, any destruction of, or interference with, property, or any disturbance of peaceful citizens."

None other than William Tecumseh Sherman echoed these sentiments in the summer of 1861. Commander of a brigade that fought at Bull Run, Sherman deplored the marauding tendencies of his poorly disciplined soldiers. "No curse could be greater than invasion by a volunteer army," he wrote. "No Goths or Vandals ever had less respect for the lives and properties of friends and foes, and henceforth we should never hope for any friends in Virginia. . . . My only hope now is that a common sense of decency may be infused into this soldiery to respect life and property."

The most important and vulnerable form of Southern property was slaves. The Lincoln administration went out of its way to reassure Southerners in 1861 that it had no designs on slavery. Congress followed suit, passing by an overwhelming majority in July 1861 a resolution affirming that Union war aims included no intention "of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of the States"—in plain words, slavery—but intended only "to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired."

There were, to be sure, murmurings in the North against this soft-war approach, this "kid-glove policy." Abolitionists and radical Republicans insisted that a rebellion sustained *by* slavery in defense *of* slavery could be crushed only by striking *against* slavery. As Frederick Douglass put it: "To fight against Slaveholders, without fighting against slavery, is but a half-hearted business, and paralyzes the hands engaged in it. . . . Fire must be met with water. War for the destruction of liberty must be met with war for the destruction of slavery." Several Union soldiers and their officers, some with no previous antislavery convictions, also began to grumble about protecting the property of traitors in arms against the United States.

The first practical manifestation of such sentiments came in Missouri. Thus began a pattern whereby events in that state set the pace for the transformation from a limited to a total war, radiating eastward and southward from Missouri. The commander of the Western Department of the Union army in the summer of 1861, with headquarters at St. Louis, was John C. Frémont, famed explorer of the West, first Republican presidential candidate (in 1856), and now ambitious for military glory. Handicapped by his own administrative incompetence, bedeviled by a Confederate invasion of southwest Missouri that defeated and killed Nathaniel Lyon at Wilson's Creek on August 10 and then marched northward to the Missouri River, and driven to distraction by Confederate guerrilla bands that sprang up almost everywhere, Frémont on August 30 took a bold step toward total war. He placed the whole state of Missouri under martial law, announced the death penalty for guerrillas captured behind Union lines, and confiscated the property and emancipated the slaves of Confederate activists.

Northern radicals applauded, but conservatives shuddered and border-state Unionists expressed outrage. Still pursuing a strategy of trying to cultivate

Southern Unionists as the best way to restore the Union, Lincoln feared that the emancipation provision of Frémont's edict would

> alarm our Southern Union friends, and turn them against us—perhaps ruin our rather fair prospect for Kentucky. . . . To lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol.

Lincoln thus revoked the confiscation and emancipation provisions of Frémont's decree. He also ordered the general to execute no guerrillas without specific presidential approval. Lincoln feared that such a policy would only provoke reprisals whereby guerrillas would shoot captured Union soldiers "man for man, indefinitely." His apprehensions were well founded. One guerrilla leader in southeast Missouri had already issued a counterproclamation declaring that for every man executed under Frémont's order, he would "HANG, DRAW, and QUARTER a minion of said Abraham Lincoln."

Lincoln probably had the Missouri situation in mind when he told Congress in his annual message of December 1861 that "in considering the policy to be adopted for suppressing the insurrection, I have been anxious and careful that the inevitable conflict for this purpose shall not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle." But that was already happening. The momentum of a war that had already mobilized nearly a million men on both sides was becoming remorseless even as Lincoln spoke, and it would soon become revolutionary.

Nowhere was this more true than in Missouri. There occurred the tragedy of a civil war within the Civil War, of neighbor against neighbor and sometimes literally brother against brother, of an armed conflict along the Kansas border that went back to 1854 and had never really stopped, of ugly, vicious, no-holds-barred bushwhacking that constituted pretty much a total war in fact as well as in theory. Bands of Confederate guerrillas led by the notorious William Clarke Quantrill, Bloody Bill Anderson, and other pathological killers, and containing such famous desperadoes as the James and Younger brothers, ambushed, murdered, and burned out Missouri Unionists and tied down thousands of Union troops by hit-and-run raids. Union militia and Kansas Jayhawkers retaliated in kind. In contrapuntal disharmony guerrillas and Jayhawkers plundered and pillaged their way across the state, taking no prisoners, killing in cold blood, terrorizing the civilian population, leaving large parts of Missouri a scorched earth.

In 1863 Quantrill's band rode into Kansas to the hated Yankee settlement of Lawrence and murdered almost every adult male they found there, more than 150 in all. A year later Bloody Bill Anderson's gang took twenty-four unarmed Union soldiers from a train, shot them in the head, then turned on a posse of pursuing militia and slaughtered 127 of them including the wounded and captured. In April 1864 the Missourian John S. Marmaduke, a Confederate general (and later governor of Missouri), led an attack on Union supply wagons at Poison Springs, Arkansas, killing in cold blood almost as many black soldiers as Nathan Bedford Forrest's troops did at almost the same time in the more famous Fort Pillow massacre in Tennessee.

Confederate guerrillas had no monopoly on atrocities and scorched-earth practices in Missouri. The Seventh Kansas Cavalry—"Jennison's Jayhawkers"—containing many abolitionists including a son of John Brown, seemed determined to exterminate rebellion and slaveholders in the most literal manner. The Union commander in western Missouri where guerrilla activity was most rife, Thomas Ewing, issued his notorious Order No. 11 after Quantrill's raid to Lawrence. Order No. 11 forcibly removed thousands of families from four Missouri counties along the Kansas border and burned their farms to deny the guerrillas the sanctuary they had enjoyed in this region. Interestingly, Ewing was William T. Sherman's brother-in-law. In fact, most of the Union commanders who subsequently became famous as practitioners of total war spent part of their early Civil War careers in Missouri—including Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan. This was more than coincidence. What they saw and experienced in that state helped to predispose them toward a conviction that, in Sherman's words, "we are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people" and must make them "feel the hard hand of war."

That conviction took root and began to grow among the Northern people and their leaders in the summer of 1862. Before then, for several months in the winter and spring, Union forces had seemed on the verge of winning the war without resorting to such measures. The capture of Forts Henry and Donelson, the victories at Mill Springs in Kentucky, Pea Ridge in Arkansas, Shiloh in Tennessee, Roanoke Island and New Bern in North Carolina, the capture of Nashville, New Orleans, and Memphis, the expulsion of organized Confederate armies from Missouri, Kentucky, and West Virginia, the Union occupation of much of the lower Mississippi Valley and a large part of the state of Tennessee, and the advance of the splendidly equipped Army of the Potomac to within five miles of Richmond in May 1862 seemed to herald the Confederacy's doom. But then came counteroffensives by Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee in Virginia and by Braxton Bragg and Kirby Smith in Tennessee, which took Confederate armies almost to the Ohio River and across the Potomac River by September 1862.

Those deceptively easy Union advances and victories in early 1862 had apparently confirmed the validity of a limited-war strategy. Grant's capture of Forts Henry and Donelson, for example, had convinced him that the Confederacy was a hollow shell about to collapse. But when the rebels regrouped and counterpunched so hard at Shiloh that they nearly whipped him, Grant changed his mind. He now "gave up all idea," he later wrote, "of saving the Union except by complete conquest." Conmplete conquest meant not merely the occupation of territory, but also the crippling or destruction of Confederate armies. For if these armies remained intact they could reconquer territory, as they did in the summer of 1862. Grant's new conception of the war also included the seizure or destruction of any property or other resources used to sustain the Confederate war effort. Before those Southern counteroffensives, Grant said that he had been careful "to protect the property of the citizens whose territory was invaded"; afterwards his policy became to "consume everything that could be used to support or supply armies."

"Everything" included slaves, whose labor was one of the principal resources used to support and supply Confederate armies. If the Confederacy "cannot be whipped in any other way than through a war against slavery," wrote Grant, "let it come to that." Union armies in the field as well as Republican leaders in Congress had been edging toward an emancipation policy ever since May 1861 when General Benjamin Butler had admitted three escaped slaves to his lines at Fort Monroe, labeled them contraband of war, and put them to work for wages to help support and supply *Union* forces. By the summer of 1862, tens of thousands of these contrabands had come within Union lines. Congress had forbidden army officers to return them. Legislation passed in July 1862 declared free all of those belonging to masters who supported the Confederacy. Frémont in Missouri turned out to have been not wrong, but a year ahead of his time.

By the summer of 1862 Lincoln too had come to the position enunciated a year earlier by Frederick Douglass: "To fight against slaveholders, without fighting against slavery, is but a half-hearted business." Acting in his capacity as commander in chief with power to seize property used to wage war against the United States, Lincoln decided to issue a proclamation freeing all slaves in those states engaged in rebellion. Emancipation, he told his cabinet in July 1862, had become "a military necessity, absolutely essential to the preservation of the Union. . . . We must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued. The slaves [are] undeniably an element of strength to those who [have] their service, and we must decide whether that element should be with us or against us. . . . Decisive and extensive measures must be adopted. . . . We [want] the army to strike more vigorous blows. The Administration must set an example, and strike at the heart of the rebellion." After a wait of two months for a victory to give the proclamation credibility, Lincoln announced it on September 22, 1862, to go into effect on January 1, 1863.

With this action Lincoln embraced the idea of the Civil War as a revolutionary conflict. Things had changed a great deal since he had promised to avoid "any devastation, or destruction of, or interference with, property." The Emancipation Proclamation was just what the *Springfield Republican* pronounced it: "the greatest social and political revolution of the age." No less an authority on revolutions than Karl Marx exulted: *"Never* has such a gigantic transformation taken place so rapidly." General Henry W. Halleck, who had been called from his headquarters in St. Louis (where he was commander of the Western Department) to Washington to become general in chief, made clear the practical import of the Emancipation Proclamation in a dispatch to Grant at Memphis in January 1863. "The character of the war has very much changed within the last year," he wrote. "There is now no possible hope of reconciliation with the rebels. . . . We must conquer the rebels or be conquered by them. . . . Every slave withdrawn from the enemy is the equivalent of a white man put *hors de combat.*" One of Grant's field commanders explained that the new "policy is to be terrible on the enemy. I am using negroes all the time for my work as teamsters, and have 1,000 employed."

The program of "being terrible on the enemy" soon went beyond emancipating slaves and using them as teamsters. In early 1863 the Lincoln administration committed itself to a policy that had first emerged, like other total-war practices, in the trans-Mississippi theater. The First Kansas Colored Volunteers, composed mostly of contrabands from Missouri, were the earliest black soldiers to see combat, in 1862, and along with the Louisiana Native Guards the first to take shape as organized units. Arms in the hands of slaves constituted the South's ultimate revolutionary nightmare. After initial hesitation, Lincoln embraced this revolution as well. In March 1863 he wrote to Andrew Johnson, military governor of occupied Tennessee: "The bare sight of fifty thousand armed, and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi, would end the rebellion at once. And who doubts that we can present that sight, if we but take hold in earnest?" By August 1863 Lincoln could declare in a public letter that "the emancipation policy, and the use of colored troops, constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion."

Well before then the conflict had become remorseless as well as revolutionary, with Lincoln's approval. Two of the generals he brought to Washington from the West in the summer of 1862, John Pope and Henry W. Halleck, helped to define and enunciate the remorselessness. Both had spent the previous winter and spring in Missouri, where experience with guerrillas had shaped their hardwar approach. One of Pope's first actions upon becoming commander of the Army of Virginia was a series of orders authorizing his officers to seize Confederate property without compensation, to execute captured guerrillas who had fired on Union troops, and to expel from occupied territory any civilians who sheltered guerrillas or who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the United States. From Halleck's office as general in chief in August 1862 went orders to Grant, now commander of Union forces in western Tennessee and Mississippi. "Take up all active [rebel] sympathizers," wrote Halleck, "and either hold them as prisoners or put them beyond our lines. Handle that class without gloves, and take their property for public use. . . . It is time that they should begin to feel the presence of the war."

With or without such orders, Union soldiers in the South were erasing the distinction between military and civilian property belonging to the enemy. A soldier from St. Louis with his regiment in west Tennessee wrote home that "this thing of guarding rebels' property has about 'played out.'" "The iron gauntlet," wrote another officer in the Mississippi Valley, "must be used more than the silken glove to crush this serpent."

Inevitably, bitter protests against this harshness reached Lincoln from purported Southern Unionists. A few months earlier the president would have rebuked the harshness, as he had rebuked Frémont, for alienating potential Unionist friends in the South. But in July 1862 Lincoln rebuked the protesters instead. He asked one of them sarcastically if they expected him to fight the war "with elder-stalk squirts, charged with rose water?" Did they think he would "surrender the government to save them from losing all"? Lincoln had lost faith in those professed Unionists:

> The paralysis—the dead palsy—of the government in this whole struggle is, that this class of men will do nothing for the government . . . except [demand] that the government shall not strike its open enemies, lest they be struck by accident! . . . This government cannot much

> longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government, and if they fail still come back into the Union unhurt.

Using one of his favorite metaphors, Lincoln warned Southern whites that "broken eggs cannot be mended." The rebels had already cracked the egg of slavery by their own rash behavior; the sooner they gave up and ceased the insurrection, "the smaller will be the amount of [eggs] which will be past mending."

William Tecumseh Sherman eventually became the foremost military spokesman for remorseless war and the most effective general in carrying it out. Sherman too had spent part of the winter of 1861–1862 in Missouri where he stored up impressions of guerrilla ferocity. Nonetheless, even as late as July 1862, as commander of Union occupation forces around Memphis, he complained of some Northern troops who took several mules and horses from farmers. Such "petty thieving and pillaging," he wrote, "does us infinite harm." This scarcely sounds like the Sherman that Southerners love to hate. But his command problems in western Tennessee soon taught him what his brother-in-law Thomas Ewing was also learning about guerrillas and the civilian population that sheltered them across the river in Arkansas and Missouri. Nearly every white man, woman, and child in Sherman's district seemed to hate the Yankees and to abet the bushwhackers who fired into Union supply boats on the river, burned railroad bridges and ripped up the tracks, attacked Union picket outposts, ambushed Northern soldiers unless they moved in large groups, and generally raised hell behind Union lines. Some of the cavalry troopers who rode with Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Hunt Morgan on devastating raids behind Union lines also functioned in the manner of guerrillas, fading away to their homes and melting into the civilian population after a raid.

These operations convinced Sherman to take off the gloves. The distinction between enemy civilians and soldiers grew blurred. After fair warning, Sherman burned houses and sometimes whole villages in western Tennessee that he suspected of harboring snipers and guerrillas. The Union army, he now said, must act "on the proper rule that all in the South *are* enemies of all in the North. . . . The whole country is full of guerrilla bands. . . . The entire South, man, woman, and child, is against us, armed and determined." This conviction governed Sherman's subsequent operations which left smoldering ruins in his track from Vicksburg to Meridian, from Atlanta to the sea, and from the sea to Goldsboro, North Carolina.

When Mississippians protested, Sherman told them that they were lucky to get off so lightly: A commander

> may take your house, your fields, your everything, and turn you all out, helpless, to starve. It may be wrong, but that don't alter the case. In war you can't help yourselves, and the only possible remedy is to stop the war. . . . Our duty is not to build up; it is rather to destroy both

> the rebel army and whatever of wealth or property it has founded its boasted strength upon.

When Confederate General John Bell Hood charged him with barbarism for expelling the civilian population from Atlanta, Sherman gave Hood a tongue-lashing. Accusations of barbarity, he said, came with a fine irony from "you who, in the midst of peace and prosperity, have plunged a nation into war . . . who dared and badgered us to battle, insulted our flag . . . turned loose your privateers to plunder unarmed ships, expelled Union families by the thousands [and] burned their houses. . . . Talk thus to the marines, but not to me, who have seen these things." Sherman vowed to "make Georgia howl" in his march from Atlanta to Savannah, and afterwards expressed satisfaction with having done so. He estimated the damage to Confederate resources "at $100,000,000; at least $20,000,000 of which has inured to our advantage, and the remainder is simple waste and destruction." And this turned out to be mere child's play compared with what awaited South Carolina.

Sherman was convinced that not only the economic resources but also the will of Southern civilians sustained the Confederate war effort. His campaigns of devastation were intended to break that will as much as to destroy the resources. This is certainly a feature of modern total war; Sherman was a pioneer in the concept of psychological warfare as part of a total war against the whole enemy population. Sherman was well aware of the fear that his soldiers inspired among Southern whites. This terror "was a power," he wrote, "and I intended to utilize it . . . to humble their pride, to follow them to their inmost recesses, and to make them fear and dread us. . . . We cannot change the hearts and minds of those people of the South, but we can make war so terrible . . . [and] make them so sick of war that generations would pass away before they would again appeal to it."

This strategy seemed to work; Sherman's destruction not only deprived Confederate armies of desperately needed supplies; it also crippled morale both on the home front and in the army. Numerous soldiers deserted from Confederate armies in response to letters of despair from home in the wake of Sherman's juggernaut. One Southern soldier wrote after the march through Georgia: "I hev conckludud that the dam fulishness uv tryin to lick shurmin Had better be stoped, we have gettin nuthin but hell & lots uv it ever since we saw the dam yankys & I am tirde uv it . . . thair thicker than lise on a hen and a dam site ornraier." After the march through South Carolina, a civilian in that state wrote: "All is gloom, despondency, and inactivity. Our army is demoralized and the people panic stricken. To fight longer seems to be madness."

Philip Sheridan carried out a similar policy of scorched earth in the Shenandoah Valley. Interestingly, Sheridan too had spent most of the war's first year in Missouri. There as well as subsequently in Tennessee and Virginia he saw the ravages of Confederate guerrillas, and responded as Sherman did. If guerrilla operations and Union counterinsurgency activities in Virginia during 1864 were slightly less vicious than in Missouri, it was perhaps only because the proximity of Washington and Richmond and of large field armies imposed some restraint. Nevertheless, plenty of atrocities piled up in John Singleton

Mosby's Confederacy just east of the Blue Ridge and in the Shenandoah Valley to the west. In retaliation, and with a purpose similar to Sherman's to destroy the Valley's resources which helped supply Lee's army, Sheridan carried out a campaign of devastation that left nothing to sustain Confederate armies or even to enable the Valley's inhabitants to get through the winter. In little more than a week, wrote Sheridan in one of his reports, his army had "destroyed over 2,000 barns filled with wheat, hay, and farming implements; over seventy mills filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over 4,000 head of stock, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than 3,000 sheep." That was just the beginning, Sheridan promised. By the time he was through, "the Valley, from Winchester up to Staunton, ninety-two miles, will have little in it for man or beast."

Several years later, while serving as an American observer at German headquarters during the Franco-Prussian War, Sheridan lectured his hosts on the correct way to wage war. The "proper strategy," said Sheridan, consisted first of "inflicting as telling blows as possible on the enemy's army, and then in causing the inhabitants so much suffering that they must long for peace, and force the government to demand it. The people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war."

Abraham Lincoln is famed for his compassion; he issued many pardons and commuted many sentences of execution; the concluding passage of his second inaugural address, beginning "With malice toward none; with charity for all," is one of his most familiar utterances. Lincoln regretted the devastation and suffering caused by the army's scorched-earth policy in the South. Yet he had warned Southerners in 1862 that the longer they fought, the more eggs would be broken. He would have agreed with Sherman's words to a Southerner: "You brought all this on yourselves." In 1864, after the march to the sea, Lincoln officially conveyed to Sherman's army the "grateful acknowledgments" of the nation; to Sheridan he offered the "thanks of the nation, and my own personal admiration, for [your] operations in the Shenandoah Valley." And while the words in the second inaugural about malice toward none and charity for all promised a generous peace, the victory that must precede that peace could be achieved only by hard war—indeed, by total war. Consider *these* words from the second inaugural:

> Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

The kind of conflict the Civil War had become merits the label of total war. To be sure, Union soldiers did not set out to kill Southern civilians. Sherman's bummers destroyed property; Allied bombers in World War II destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives as well. But the strategic purpose of both was the same: to eliminate the resources and break the will of the people to sustain war. White people in large parts of the Confederacy were indeed left with “nothing but their eyes to weep with.” This was not pretty; it was not glorious; it did not conform to the image of war held by most Americans in 1861 of flags waving, bands playing, and people cheering on a spring afternoon. But as Sherman himself put it, in a speech to young men of a new generation fifteen years after the Civil War, the notion that war is glorious was nothing but moonshine. “When . . . you come down to the practical realities, boys,” said Sherman, “war is all hell.”

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Are Historians Wrong to Consider the War Between the States a "Total War"?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. a. Define total war.
   b. Given your definition, compare the arguments of Professors Neely and McPherson for their respective positions.
   c. For example, do you agree with McPherson that the distinction between combatants and noncombatants refers to the twentieth-century world wars and that it is possible to have a total war without such a distinction? Critically evaluate the arguments of both authors.
2. Critically evaluate the different arguments of Neely and McPherson about the rhetoric and actions of General William T. Sherman. Did Sherman wage a total war? How similar and how different were Sherman's actions compared to those of the Allied Commanders in World War II?
3. Professor Neely argues that neither Lincoln, Grant nor Sherman had a total war philosophy. Critically analyze what he means by this. How does Professor McPherson counter this argument?
4. Professor Neely argues elsewhere that President Lincoln's surrender terms—end hostilities, abolish the Confederacy, and emancipate the slaves—were lenient surrender terms. McPherson disagrees. Critically discuss.
5. Was it politically possible for Lincoln to have been tougher when Lee surrendered and have demanded the following:
   a. Exclude all Confederate political leaders from public office;
   b. disenfranchise all Confederate soldiers;
   c. give free blacks the right to vote;
   d. give legal protection to the Republic party in former Confederate states;
   e. recognize the statehood of West Virginia;
   f. partition the Southern states;
   g. protect the ex-slaves who fought in the Union from reprisals.
   Critically discuss.

Is There Common Ground?

The "total war" issue raises a side question. Was the North's victory inevitable because of its superior leadership, nationalist ideology, and its overwhelming numbers in terms of population and natural resources? Most historians argue yes, but Professor James M. McPherson disagrees with the conventional wisdom. In a Gettysburg symposium, edited by Gabor S. Boritt, on *Why the Confederacy Lost* (Oxford University Press, 1992), McPherson dismisses all the external and internal explanations for the South's defeat listed above. In his critique, McPherson applies the theory of *reversibility*. Briefly stated, the hindsight provided by knowing the outcome of the war allows the writer to attribute causes that explain the northern victory. But what if the South had won the Civil War? Could the same external explanations that are attributed to the Union victory also be used to explain a Confederate win? Would Jefferson Davis' leadership emerge as superior to Abraham Lincoln's? Would the great military leaders be Robert E. Lee, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and Braxton Bragg instead of Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan? Would one Confederate soldier be considered equal to four Union soldiers? Would a triumvirate of yeoman farmers, slaveholding planters, and small industrialists have proven the superiority of agrarian values over industrial ones?

In addition to the theory of reversibility, McPherson advances the theory of *contingency* as an explanation for the Union victory. During the war, four turning points that altered the course of the war could have gone either way. First, during the summer of 1862 the southern victories prolonged the war. Second, at the Battle of Antietam in the fall of 1862, the southern advance into the North stalled. Third, the battle of Gettysburg in July 1863 turned the tide of war in favor of the Union. Fourth, the Atlanta and western campaigns in the fall of 1864 enabled Lincoln to win the presidential election and eventually led the northern forces to defeat the Confederacy and abolish slavery. These arguments merit serious consideration by students and scholars seeking to characterize the nature of the American Civil War.

Additional Resources

The literature on the Civil War is enormous. Just about all the essays in the symposium *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871*, edited by Stig Forster and Jorg Nagler (Cambridge University Press, 1997), are worth reading for both an American and comparative perspective. Two older essays provide a detailed look and ask the right questions about military tactics and strategy as well as bottom-up social history questions about the role of the average Civil War soldier. See Marvin R. Cain, "A 'Face of Battle' Needed: An Assessment of Motives and Men in Civil War Historiography," *Civil War History* 28 (1982); and Joseph T. Glatthaar, "The 'New' Civil War History," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (July, 1991). Other essays on an important related question can be found in "Why the South Lost the Civil War: Ten Experts Explain the Fall of Dixie," *American History* (October, 1995).

James M. McPherson is the dean of Civil War history. In addition to his *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Oxford, 1998), the Princeton professor has published numerous critical review essays for *The New York Review of Books* which are conveniently collected in *Drawn with the Sword* (Oxford, 1996) and *This Mighty Scourge* (Oxford, 2007).

Gary Gallagher of the University of Virginia is the leader of a younger generation of historians whose collection of articles on Civil War battlefields, television documentaries, and other related topics is found in *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Louisiana State University Press, 1998). Gallagher defends Lee for his brilliance as a tactician and strategist, though he also includes critical assessments in *Lee the Soldier* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

Both Gary Gallagher and Edward Ayers have challenged the interpretations by historians James McPherson and Eric Foner who came of age during the civil rights revolution of the 1960s with their books emphasizing slavery as the main force during the Civil War. In *The Union War* (Harvard University Press, 2011) Gallagher brings back the old argument that the northern soldiers fought to save the Union with the goal of emancipating the slaves of secondary importance. Needless to say, Gallagher was gently chided in a review essay of five new Civil War histories by James M. McPherson in *The New York Review of Books* (July 14, 2011) and roughed up in Eric Foner's review "Reconcilable Differences," *The New York Times Book Review* (May 12, 2011).

University of Virginia Professor Edward Ayers accomplishes two goals in his books *Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War* (Norton, 2000) and *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859–1863* (Norton, 2003). In these works, he concentrates on two counties—Confederate Augusta County in Virginia, (right next door to Charlottesville), and Unionist Franklin County in Pennsylvania. Working with one graduate student and a colleague, Ayers introduces the reader to the new social history by studying the problems that citizens faced in the two counties during the war. What is unique about the book is the accompanying CD-ROM package which provides a user-friendly compendium of newspaper accounts of human interest and census information about civilian families and data on every soldier from the two counties. Utilizing a bottom-up microscopic approach to history, Ayers challenges McPherson's thesis that Lincoln turned the war into a referendum on industrial society and the place of Blacks in America. "It's a convenient argument," says Ayers, "but it ignores that we backed into emancipation, did everything possible to avoid it, and then reneged on it after the war." For an explanation of how "The Valley of the Shadow Project" was conceived, see Ayers' essay in *What Caused the Civil War: Reflections on the South and Southern History* (W.W. Norton, 2005).

Visual approaches to the Civil War via movies and the computer are available. Ken Burns' prize-winning 11-hour PBS television series *The Civil War* achieved the highest ratings for a noncommercial television station in 1991. The series is compelling and is divided into 10- and 15-minute segments that make it useful as a supplement to class lectures. Professional historians have criticized Burns for too much emphasis on military history and a neglect of the new social history. See Geoffrey C. Ward et al., *The Civil War: an Illustrated History* (Knopf, 1990), a coffee table book which contains the text and visuals of Burns' television miniseries. For a critical analysis of Burns' approach to the Civil War, see Robert Toplin, ed., *Ken Burns' The Civil War: The Historians Respond* (Oxford, 1996). Additional perspectives include Bruce Chadwick's *The*

Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film (Knopf, 2001) and Gary Edgerton, *Ken Burns' America: Packaging the Past for Television* (Palgrave, 2001).

There are numerous Web sources on the Civil War. In addition to those listed in the reader, Alice E. Carter and Richard Jensen have edited *The Civil War on the Web: a Guide to the Very Best Sites,* Completely revised and updated (S.R. Books, 2003). Anne Sarah Rubin, "Review Essay: The Virtual War," *Civil War History* 48 (2002) critically analyzes the Web sites at LSU, University of Tennessee, and Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland.

ISSUE 16

Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President?

YES: Phillip Shaw Paludan, from *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (University Press of Kansas, 1994)

NO: Melvin E. Bradford, from *Remembering Who We Are: Observations of a Southern Conservative* (University of Georgia Press, 1985)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the criteria historians use to assess presidential performance.
- Analyze Lincoln's leadership from the perspective of the concept of the "imperial presidency."
- Identify and assess Lincoln's policies as a wartime president.
- Summarize the major points of criticism of Lincoln's presidency.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Phillip Shaw Paludan contends that Abraham Lincoln's greatness exceeds that of all other American presidents because Lincoln, in the face of unparalleled challenges associated with the Civil War, succeeded in preserving the Union and freeing the slaves.

NO: Melvin E. Bradford characterizes Lincoln as a cynical politician whose abuse of authority as president and commander-in-chief during the Civil War marked a serious departure from the republican goals of the Founding Fathers and established the prototype for the "imperial presidency" of the twentieth century.

The American Civil War (1861–1865) produced what Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has called "our greatest national trauma." To be sure, the War Between the

States was a searing event that etched itself on the collective memory of the American people and inspired an interest that has made it the most thoroughly studied episode in American history. During the last century and a quarter, scholars have identified a variety of factors (including slavery, economic sectionalism, cultural distinctions between North and South, the doctrine of states' rights, and the irresponsibility of abolitionists and proslavery advocates) that contributed to sectional tensions and that ultimately led to war. Although often presented as "sole causes," these factors are complicated, interconnected, and controversial. Consequently, historians must consider as many of them as possible in their evaluations of the war, even if they choose to spotlight one or another as the main explanation (see Issue 14).

Most historians, however, agree that the war would not have occurred had 11 southern states not seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America following Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency in 1860. Why was Lincoln viewed as a threat to the South? A southerner by birth, Lincoln's career in national politics (as a congressman representing his adopted state of Illinois) apparently had been short-circuited by his unpopular opposition to the Mexican War. His attempt to emerge from political obscurity a decade later failed when he was defeated by Stephen Douglas in a bid for a Senate seat from Illinois. This campaign, however, gained for Lincoln a reputation as a powerful orator, and in 1860 Republican Party managers passed over some of their more well-known leaders, such as William Henry Seward, and nominated the moderate Mr. Lincoln for the presidency. His victory was guaranteed by factionalism within Democratic ranks, but the election results revealed that the new president received only 39 percent of the popular vote. This fact, however, provided little solace for southerners, who mistook the new president's opposition to the extension of slavery into the territories as evidence that he supported the abolitionist wing of the Republican Party. Despite assurances during the campaign that he would not tamper with slavery where it already existed, Lincoln could not prevent the splintering of the Union.

Given such an inauspicious beginning, few observers at the time could have predicted that future generations would view Lincoln as our nation's greatest president. What factors have contributed to this assessment? The answer would appear to lie in his role as commander-in-chief during the Civil War. Is this reputation deserved?

Lincoln's assassination at the hands of John Wilkes Booth shortly following the end of the Civil War pretty much guaranteed for the fallen leader a martyrdom that had the potential to cloud balanced appraisals of his leadership. Biographer Stephen B. Oates, in *Abraham Lincoln: The Man Behind the Myths* (Harper & Row, 1984), accurately reminds us that Lincoln, at the time of his assassination, was perhaps the most hated president in history. But since Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., first polled experts on the subject in 1948, historians consistently have rated Lincoln the nation's best chief executive. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson have done well in presidential polls conducted by Gary Maranell (1970), Steve Neal (1982), and Robert K. Murray (1983), but none so well as Abraham Lincoln. Another president, Harry Truman, himself ranked

Lincoln in the category of "great" chief executives. Truman wrote of Lincoln: "He was a strong executive who saved the government, saved the United States. He was a President who understood people, and, when it came time to make decisions, he was willing to take the responsibility and make those decisions, no matter how difficult they were. He knew how to treat people and how to make a decision stick, and that's why his is regarded as such a great Administration."

Some of the most incisive writing on various aspects of Lincoln's life appeared almost 50 years ago but still offers incisive interpretations of many aspects of Lincoln's political career and philosophy. See, for example, David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era* (Knopf, 1956) and Richard Current, *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (McGraw-Hill, 1958). Lincoln's responsibility for the precipitating event of the war is explored in Richard N. Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot* (Lippincott, 1963). Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (Simon & Schuster, 2005) is a beautifully written more recent appraisal of Lincoln's approach to leadership. Goodwin, in particular, notes that in the selection of Cabinet members, Lincoln chose individuals representing many different factions but who overcame their contentiousness to handle competently the burdens of wartime governing.

The best studies of Lincoln's attitudes toward race and slavery are by the generally sympathetic Benjamin Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro* (Oxford University Press, 1962), and by LaWanda Cox, *Lincoln and Black Freedom: A Study in Presidential Leadership* (University of South Carolina Press, 1981). Lerone Bennett, *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Johnson Publishing, 2000) characterizes Lincoln as a white supremacist and argues that African American slaves themselves were far more effective agents of emancipation than was the "Great Emancipator."

The selections that follow assess Lincoln's presidency from dramatically different perspectives. Phillip Shaw Paludan sees unparalleled greatness in the leadership of the United States' 16th chief executive. Lincoln's greatness, Paludan concludes, derived from his ability to mobilize public opinion in the North behind his goal of saving the Union and freeing the slaves. Significantly, Paludan does not separate these accomplishments. Rather, he argues that they were inextricably connected; one could not be realized without the other.

Melvin Bradford offers a sharp critique of the conclusions reached by Paludan. By pursuing an anti-southern strategy, Bradford argues, President Lincoln perverted the republican goals advanced by the Founding Fathers and destroyed the Democratic majority that was essential to the preservation of the Union. Furthermore, Bradford asserts, Lincoln abused his executive authority by cynically expanding the scope of presidential powers to an unhealthy extent. Finally, Bradford charges that Lincoln was uncommitted to the cause of black Americans.

YES

Phillip Shaw Paludan

The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln

The oath is a simple one, made all the more austere because there is no coronation, no anointing by priest or predecessor. The office has passed from one person to another months before, first by popular election and then by a ritualistic casting of votes by presidential electors, whose names are forgotten if anyone knew them in the first place. The only requirement on the day the president takes office is an oath or affirmation: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Each president in the history of the nation has tried to protect and defend the Constitution—some with more dedication than others. Each responded to the challenges and the opportunity that his time gave him. No president had larger challenges than Abraham Lincoln, and the testimony to his greatness rests in his keeping of that oath, which led him to be responsible for two enormous accomplishments that are part of folk legend as well as fact. He saved the Union and he freed the slaves.

He preserved the unity of the nation both in size and in structure. There were still thirty-six states at the end of his presidency; there might have been twenty-five. The population of the nation when he died was 30 million; it might have been 20 million. The constitutional instrument for changing governments was still in 1865 what it had been in 1861—win a free election and gain the majority of the electoral votes. Another option might have existed—secede from the country and make war if necessary after losing the election. A divided nation might have been more easily divided again—perhaps when angry westerners felt exploited by eastern capitalists, perhaps when urban minorities felt oppressed by powerful majorities. And there were lasting international consequences from Lincoln's achievement: Foreign oppressors of the twentieth century were not allowed to run free, disregarding the two or perhaps three or four countries that might have existed between Canada and Mexico.

Because of Lincoln, 4 million black Americans gained options beyond a life of slavery for themselves and their children. Men, women, and children were no longer bought and sold, denied their humanity—because of Lincoln,

From *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* by Philip Shaw Paludan (University Press of Kansas, 1994), pp. xiii–xvii, 315–319. Copyright © 1994 by University Press of Kansas. Reprinted by permission.

but certainly not because of Lincoln alone. Perhaps 2 million Union soldiers fought to achieve these goals. Women behind the lines and near the battlefields did jobs that men would not or could not do. Workers on farms and in factories supplied the huge army and the society that sustained it. Managers and entrepreneurs organized the resources that helped gain the victory. But Lincoln's was the voice that inspired and explained and guided soldiers and civilians to continue the fight.

Black soldiers, too, preserved the Union and freed slaves. And these black soldiers were in the army because Lincoln wanted them there, accepted the demands of black and white abolitionists and growing numbers of soldiers and sailors that they be there. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of slaves, given the chance, walked away from slavery and thus "stole" from their masters the labor needed to sustain the Confederacy and the ability of those masters to enslave them. No one would ever again sell their children, their husbands, their wives; no one would rape and murder and mutilate them, control their work and much of their leisure.

Lincoln kept his oath by leading the nation, guiding it, insisting that it keep on with the task of saving the Union and freeing the slaves.

Too often historians and the general populace (which cares very much, and may define itself in vital ways by what Lincoln did and means) have divided his two great achievements. They have made saving the Union, at least for the first half of his presidency, a different task from freeing the slaves. They have noted that Lincoln explained to Horace Greeley that he could not answer Greeley's "Prayer of Twenty Million" and simply free the slaves. His prime goal, he told Greeley, was to save the Union, and he would free none, some, or all the slaves to save that Union. But before Lincoln wrote those words he had already decided that to save the Union he would have to free the slaves.

. . . Freeing the slaves and saving the Union were linked as one goal, not two optional goals. The Union that Lincoln wanted to save was not a union where slavery was safe. He wanted to outlaw slavery in the territories and thus begin a process that would end it in the states. Slave states understood this; that is why they seceded and why the Union needed saving.

Freeing the slaves, more precisely ending slavery, was the indispensable means to saving the Union. In an immediate practical sense, those 180,000 black soldiers were an essential part of the Union army in the last two years of the war. They made up almost 12 percent of the total Union land forces by 1865, adding not only to Union numbers but subtracting from the Confederate labor force. Moreover, those black soldiers liberated even where they did not march. Their example was noted throughout the South so that slaves far from Union occupation knew that blacks could be soldiers, not just property, and they began to march toward freedom.

Ending slavery also meant saving the Union in a larger sense. Slavery had endangered the Union, hurting black people but also hurting white people, and not only by allowing them to be brutes, as Jefferson had lamented. Slavery had divided the nation, threatening the processes of government by making debate over the most crucial issue of the age intolerable in the South and, for decades, dangerous in the Congress of the United States. To protect slavery the

Confederate States of America would challenge the peaceful, lawful, orderly means of changing governments in the United States, even by resorting to war. Lincoln led the successful effort to stop them and thus simultaneously saved the Union and freed the slaves.

Why does it matter that Lincoln linked saving the Union and the emancipation of the nation from slavery? First, it is necessary to get the historical record straight. It matters also because in understanding our history Americans gain access to the kind of faith that Lincoln held that our means, our legal processes, our political-constitutional system work to achieve our best ideals. Too many people, among them the first black justice of the United States Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall, have doubted that respect for the law and the Constitution can lead to greater equality. "The system" too often has been the villain, "institutional racism" the disease that obstructs the struggle for equality. The underlying premise of this book is that the political-constitutional system, conceived of and operated at its best, inescapably leads to equality. Lincoln operated on that premise and through his presidency tried to achieve that goal.

But how did he do that? One of his accomplishments, the one that took most of his time, was fighting and winning a war. He chose the generals, gathered the armies, set the overall strategy; he restrained the dissenters and the opponents of the war; he helped to gather the resources that would maintain the Union economy and that would enable the Union military to remain strong and unrelenting. He kept himself and his party in office, the only party that was dedicated to saving the Union and ending slavery. And he kept an eye on foreign affairs, seeing to it that Great Britain remained willing to negotiate and to watch the conflict rather than joining or trying to stop it. . . .

I am particularly interested in what Lincoln said, for the most important power of a president, as Richard Neustadt has argued, is the power to persuade. Thus it is vital for a president to inform and to inspire, to warn and to empower the polity, to bring out the "better angels of our nature"—better in the sense of allowing the nation to achieve its best aspirations. "Events have controlled me," Lincoln said, but what he did most effectively was to define those events and to shape the public opinion that, he noted, was "everything in this country." In the 1840s a Whig newspaper came close to the mark I am admiring in assessing Lincoln:

> Put the case that the same multitude were addressed by two orators, and on the same question and occasion; that the first of these orators considered in his mind that the people he addressed were to be controlled by several passions . . . the orator may be fairly said to have no faith in the people; he rather believes that they are creatures of passion, and subject to none but base and selfish impulses. But now a second orator arises, a Chatham, a Webster, a Pericles, a Clay; his generous spirit expands itself through the vast auditory, and he believes that he is addressing a company of high spirited men, citizens. . . . When he says "fellow citizens," they believe him, and at once, from a tumultuous herd they are converted into men . . . their thoughts and feeling

> rise to an heroical heights, beyond that of common men or common times. The second orator "had faith in the people"; he addressed the better part of each man's nature, supposing it to be in him—and it *was* in him.

At their best American presidents recognize that their duty as the chief opinion maker is to shape a public understanding that opens options and tells the truth about what the people can be and what their problems are. Appealing to the fears we have, manipulating them to win office or pass a law or achieve another goal, does not so much *reflect* who we are as it in fact *creates* who we are. It affirms us as legitimately fearful—afraid of something that our leaders confirm to be frightening—and as being citizens whose fears properly define us.

Appealing to better angels is more complicated—it requires calling on history for original aspirations—reminding Americans for example that the basic ideal of the nation is that "all men are created equal." Equally vital, such an appeal also requires reminding Americans that they have in fact established institutions that work to that end—not only reminding them of their aspirations but also reassuring them that their history, their lived experience, reveals legitimate paths to achieving those goals. History thus acts to recall the nation's best dreams, but it also restores faith that the means to approach the dream live, abide in the institutions as well as in the values that shape the nation.

I believe that a history of the presidency of Abraham Lincoln can show how Lincoln managed to shape a public understanding, how at times he failed, but how he usually succeeded. Thus he set a standard that makes it legitimate that we, when the better angels of our nature prevail, define ourselves in important ways by who Lincoln was, by what he did, and by what he said.

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The Lincoln presidency did not end through the operation of the political-constitutional system. There was no joyous ritual, no abiding process that had gone on for generations. It was the first assassination of a president in history. A single bullet erased the decision by the people of the Union that Abraham Lincoln should be their president. It was stunning, an awful repudiation of the system that helped define them as a people, that they had been fighting for over the last four years, that had cost them such blood and treasure.

Yet the process endured. Reacting to the murder of the president newspapers throughout the country spoke of the need to "let law and order resume their sway," as the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted. "The law must reign supreme," the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* declared, "or in this great crisis chaos will overwhelm us, and our own maddening feeling bring upon us national wreck and ruin which traitor arms have failed to accomplish." More specifically there was admiration and recognition for a system that could overcome even assassination. "When Andrew Johnson was sworn in as President," the Reverend Joseph Thompson told a New York audience, "the Statue of Liberty that surmounts the dome of the Capitol and was put there by Lincoln, looked down on the city and on the nation and said 'Our Government is unchanged—it has merely passed from the hands of one man into those of another.'"

The words reflected part of a larger legacy. The Union was saved, and thus the political-constitutional process endured—the nation would change governments, settle controversies, and debate alternatives at the polls, in legislative halls, and in courtrooms, not on bloody battlefields. It would be a nation whose size and diversity gave it wealth and opportunities for its citizens and huge potential influence in the world. Future autocrats would have reason to fear that influence, just as future immigrants would be drawn to it. Its power would not always be used well. Native Americans who "obstructed" national mission, foreign governments deemed "un-American" had reason to fear and to protest against invasions of their rights and the destruction of their people. But within the nation itself, because of what it stood for and fought for and preserved, there remained a conscience that could be appealed to in the name of the ideals it symbolized and had demonstrated in its greatest war. Saving the Union had meant killing slavery.

Slavery was dead. Its power to divide the Union, to erode and destroy constitutional and political debate was over. No longer was the highest court in the land able to rule that under the Constitution black people had no rights that white people had to respect and that no political party legally could say otherwise. No longer could men, women, and children be bought and sold: treated as things without ties to each other, without the capacity to fulfill their own dreams. The Thirteenth Amendment, ending slavery throughout the nation and moving through the states toward ratification, ensured that. And in the van of that amendment came protection for civil rights and suffrage. Blacks were promised that they would enter the political arena and the constitutional system—this time as participants, not as objects.

This more perfect Union was achieved chiefly through an extraordinary outreach of national authority. Certainly Lincoln extended presidential power beyond any limits seen before his time—the war demanded that; Congress agreed, the Supreme Court acquiesced, and the people sustained his power. If one compares Lincoln's use of power with executive actions before 1861, popular and even scholarly use of a word such as "dictatorship" makes limited sense. Lincoln had produced, as Edwin S. Corwin observes, "a complete transformation in the President's role as Commander in Chief." Yet war was about the expansion of power, and Congress also stepped forward, expanding national power, extending its authority. Even state governments reached further than precedent admitted, increasing expenditures, strengthening their police powers over health, morals, and safety, and establishing new regulatory agencies to shape the economy.

After the war public pressures demanded a return to peacetime boundaries. Executive authority in most areas, once the fight between Johnson and Congress was settled, rapidly contracted. A few outbursts of presidential influence showed that the White House was still occupied. Grant fought senators bitterly over the Santo Domingo Treaty and presided over an effective Treaty of Washington, which resolved claims against the British for building rebel raiders. Hayes sent federal troops to settle labor protests and worked for civil service reforms. Garfield, Arthur, and Harrison also kept busy; Cleveland's vetoes showed signs of vigor. Generally, however, the presidency declined in power. With the exception of Grant a series of one-term presidents did little to inspire demands that they stay in office. For the rest of the century no president came within miles of Lincoln's power or even close to Polk or Jackson, for that matter. By 1886 Woodrow Wilson was able to write that national government in the United States was "congressional government." M. Ostrogorsky, telling foreign audiences about America, described a lawmaking environment in which "after the [civil] war the eclipse of the executive was complete and definitive"; Lord Bryce told British and American audiences in 1894 that "the domestic authority of the President is in time of peace small." These late-nineteenth-century images may have inspired Theodore Lowi to assert in 1992 that "by 1875 you would not know there had been a war or a Lincoln."

But Lord Bryce had added a caveat about the president's domestic authority: In time of war, "especially in a civil war, it expands with portentous speed." Clearly it had been thus with Lincoln. Despite calls to retreat from the vast domains of Civil War there is a sense in which Lincoln's legacy of power in the presidency survived the retreat. Certainly presidential authority, like the national authority with which it was connected, diminished when the war was over. But national power was still available after Appomattox and for the fundamental purpose that had called it forth originally: to destroy slavery and its vestiges. The fight between Congress and Lincoln's successor has obscured the fact that congressional Republicans were acting in the same cause for which Lincoln had acted. They were not recapturing power lost to the president; they were claiming power that they had shared increasingly with Lincoln.

Before Lincoln died many of the more radical Republicans had been attacking him for moving too slowly toward emancipation and then for yielding too much to military necessity and Southern loyalists. After early statements of satisfaction with Johnson they quickly came to their senses as Johnson proved not only to be slower than Lincoln to march to their goals but also to be a bitter racist obstructionist. Thus they fought against Johnson and for goals that Lincoln had espoused and had used his power to try to achieve: civil rights, education, suffrage for the freedmen. The army, which had been the major instrument of Lincoln's expanding egalitarianism and which looked to its commander in chief for direction, shifted its allegiance to Congress. Soldiers such as Grant, whom Lincoln had charged with leading the army to save the Union, did not think it incongruous to support Congress in its battle to preserve the gains of war. And when legislators moved to weaken executive power over the army with the Tenure of Office and the Command of the Army acts, they were trying to save Lincoln's legacy by weakening Johnson.

Although President Grant retreated on other issues, he tried to protect former slaves from white Southerners' efforts to restore as much of the prewar South as they could. Grant sent troops into Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina to effect the Force Acts and to destroy the Ku Klux Klan. A vocal element in the Republican party continued to push for federal intervention in the South in the form of national civil rights and suffrage-enforcement laws well into the 1890s. Despite retreating from the broadest definitions of federal power when it interpreted the Civil War amendments, the Supreme Court struck down laws that kept blacks off juries, and that denied Chinese Americans equal chances to work, and it upheld federal power to protect blacks from political violence. The Justice Department prosecuted thousands of election officers under this power. Local juries usually acquitted their white neighbors, but the national prohibition remained. Because of the Lincoln presidency the constitutional system carried promises of equality, and the processes to bring those promises to life endured. One hundred years after Lincoln had been awakened by the Kansas Nebraska Act to the dangers of slavery to the constitutional system, blacks and whites would see the United States Supreme Court strike down inequality in that system (that case would, interestingly enough, also involve Kansas).

Not every element, even in that reformed constitutional system, promised equal justice. The Union that Lincoln and his forces had saved remained a Union of states. Lincoln's respect for those states, demonstrated in his commitment to reconstruct them rather than to allow Congress to govern territories and in his insistence that only a constitutional amendment, ratified by states, would secure slavery's death, strengthened later arguments that states should control the fate of their citizens, old and new. Lincoln's abiding insistence that the Constitution guided his actions meant that black equality could be hindered or denied by constitutional claims of states' rights and local self-government. Brutal racism could find shelter in such legal arguments.

Yet the triumph and the irony of his administration resided in Lincoln's commitment to the Constitution; without that there would have been no promises to keep to 4 million black Americans. Because so many Americans cherished the Union that the Constitution forged, they made war on slave masters and their friends, on a government that Alexander Stephens claimed rested "on the great truth that the negro is not the equal of the white man; that slavery . . . is his natural and normal condition."

Without the president's devotion to and mastery of the political-constitutional institutions of his time, in all probability the Union would have lacked the capacity to focus its will and its resources on defeating that Confederacy. Without Lincoln's unmatched ability to integrate egalitarian ends and constitutional means he could not have enlisted the range of supporters and soldiers necessary for victory. His great accomplishment was to energize and mobilize the nation by affirming its better angels, by showing the nation at its best: engaged in the imperative, life-preserving conversation between structure and purpose, ideal and institution, means and ends.

Melvin E. Bradford

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Remembering Who We Are: Observations of a Southern Conservative

The Lincoln Legacy: A Long View

With the time and manner of his death Abraham Lincoln, as leader of a Puritan people who had just won a great victory over "the forces of evil," was placed beyond the reach of ordinary historical inquiry and assessment. Through Booth's bullet he became the one who had "died to make men free," who had perished that his country's "new birth" might occur: a "second founder" who, in Ford's theater, had been transformed into an American version of the "dying god." Our common life, according to this construction, owes its continuation to the shedding of the sacred blood. Now after over a century of devotion to the myth of the "political messiah," it is still impossible for most Americans to see through and beyond the magical events of April 1865. However, Lincoln's daily purchase upon the ongoing business of the nation requires that we devise a way of setting aside the martyrdom to look behind it at Lincoln's place in the total context of American history and discover in him a major source of our present confusion, our distance from the republicanism of the Fathers, the models of political conduct which we profess most to admire. . . .

Of course, nothing that we can identify as part of Lincoln's legacy belongs to him alone. In some respects the Emancipator was carried along with the tides. Yet a measure of his importance is that he was at the heart of the major political events of his era. Therefore what signifies in a final evaluation of this melancholy man is that many of these changes in the country would never have come to pass had Lincoln not pushed them forward. Or at least not come so quickly, or with such dreadful violence. I will emphasize only the events that he most certainly shaped according to his relentless will, alterations in the character of our country for which he was clearly responsible. For related developments touched by Lincoln's wand, I can have only a passing word. The major charges advanced here, if proved, are sufficient to impeach the most famous and respected of public men. More would only overdo.

The first and most obvious item in my bill of particulars for indictment concerns Lincoln's dishonesty and obfuscation with respect to the nation's

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future obligations to the Negro, slave and free. It was of course an essential ingredient of Lincoln's position that he make a success at being anti-Southern or antislavery without at the same time appearing to be significantly impious about the beginnings of the Republic (which was neither anti-Southern nor antislavery)—or significantly pro-Negro. He was the first Northern politician of any rank to combine these attitudes into a viable platform persona, the first to make his moral position on slavery in the South into a part of his national politics. It was a posture that enabled him to unite elements of the Northern electorate not ordinarily willing to cooperate in any political undertaking. And thus enabled him to destroy the old Democratic majority—a coalition necessary to preserving the union of the states. Then came the explosion. But this calculated posturing has had more durable consequences than secession and the Federal confiscation of property in slaves. . . .

In the nation as a whole what moves toward fruition is a train of events set in motion by the duplicitous rhetoric concerning the Negro that helped make Abraham Lincoln into our first "sectional" president. Central to this appeal is a claim to a kind of moral superiority that costs absolutely nothing in the way of conduct. Lincoln, in insisting that the Negro was included in the promise of the Declaration of Independence and that the Declaration bound his countrymen to fulfill a pledge hidden in that document, seemed clearly to point toward a radical transformation of American society. Carried within his rejection of Negro slavery as a continuing feature of the American regime, his assertion that the equality clause of the Declaration of Independence was "the father of all moral principle among us," were certain muted corollaries. By promising that the peculiar institution would be made to disappear if candidates for national office adopted the proper "moral attitude" on that subject, Lincoln recited as a litany the general terms of his regard for universal human rights. But at the same time he added certain modifications to this high doctrine: modifications required by those of his countrymen to whom he hoped to appeal, by the rigid racism of the Northern electorate, and by "what his own feelings would admit." The most important of these reservations was that none of his doctrine should apply significantly to the Negro in the North. Or, after freedom, to what he could expect in the South. It was a very broad, very general, and very abstract principle to which he made reference. By it he could divide the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff, the patriot from the conspirator. But for the Negro it provided nothing more than a technical freedom, best to be enjoyed far away. Or the valuable opportunity to "root, hog, or die." For the sake of such vapid distinctions he urged his countrymen to wade through seas of blood.

To be sure, this position does not push the "feelings" of that moralist who was our sixteenth president too far from what was comfortable for him. And it goes without saying that a commitment to "natural rights" which will not challenge the Black Codes of Illinois, which promises something like them for the freedman in the South, or else offers him as alternative the proverbial "one-way-ticket to nowhere" is a commitment of empty words. It is only an accident of political history that the final Reconstruction settlement provided a bit more for the former slave—principally, the chance to vote Republican;

and even that "right" didn't last, once a better deal was made available to his erstwhile protectors. But the point is that Lincoln's commitment was precisely of the sort that the North was ready to make—while passing legislation to restrict the flow of Negroes into its own territories, elaborating its own system of segregation by race, and exploiting black labor through its representatives in a conquered South. Lincoln's double talk left his part of the country with a durable heritage of pious self-congratulation. . . .

The second heading in this "case against Lincoln" involves no complicated pleading. Neither will it confuse any reader who examines his record with care. For it has to do with Lincoln's political economy, his management of the commercial and business life of the part of the Republic under his authority. This material is obvious, even though it is not always connected with the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. Nevertheless, it must be developed at this point. For it leads directly into the more serious charges upon which this argument depends. It is customary to deplore the Gilded Age, the era of the Great Barbecue. It is true that many of the corruptions of the Republican Era came to a head after Lincoln lay at rest in Springfield. But it is a matter of fact that they began either under his direction or with his sponsorship. Military necessity, the "War for the Union," provided an excuse, an umbrella of sanction, under which the essential nature of the changes being made in the relation of government to commerce could be concealed. Of his total policy the Northern historian Robert Sharkey has written, "Human ingenuity would have had difficulty in contriving a more perfect engine for class and sectional exploration, creditors finally obtaining the upper hand as opposed to debtors, and the developed East holding the whip over the underdeveloped West and South." Until the South left the Union, until a High Whig sat in the White House, none of this return to the "energetic government" of Hamilton's design was possible. Indeed, even in the heyday of the Federalists it had never been so simple a matter to translate power into wealth. Now Lincoln could try again the internal improvements of the early days in Illinois. The difference was that this time the funding would not be restrained by political reversal or a failure of credit. For if anything fell short, Mr. Salmon P. Chase, "the foreman" of his "green printing office," could be instructed "to give his paper mill another turn." And the inflationary policy of rewarding the friends of the government sustained. The euphemism of our time calls this "income redistribution." But it was theft in 1864, and is theft today.

A great increase in the tariff and the formation of a national banking network were, of course, the cornerstones of this great alteration in the posture of the Federal government toward the sponsorship of business. From the beginning of the Republican Party Lincoln warned his associates not to talk about their views on these subjects. Their alliance, he knew, was a negative thing: a league against the Slave Power and its Northern friends. But in private he made it clear that the hidden agenda of the Republicans would have its turn, once the stick was in their hand. In this he promised well. Between 1861 and 1865, the tariff rose from 18.84 percent to 47.56 percent. And it stayed above 40 percent in all but two years of the period concluded with the election of Woodrow Wilson. Writes the Virginia historian Ludwell H. Johnson, it would "facilitate a massive transfer of wealth, satisfying the dreariest predictions of John C. Calhoun." The new Republican system of banking (for which we should note Lincoln was directly accountable) was part of the same large design of "refounding." The National Banking Acts of 1863 and 1864, with the earlier Legal Tender Act, flooded the country with $480 million of fiat money that was soon depreciated by about two-thirds in relation to specie. Then all notes but the greenback dollar were taxed out of existence, excepting only United States Treasury bonds that all banks were required to purchase if they were to have a share in the war boom. The support for these special bonds was thus the debt itself—Hamilton's old standby. Specie disappeared. Moreover, the bank laws controlled the money supply, credit, and the balance of power. New banks and credit for farms, small businesses, or small town operations were discouraged. And the Federalist model, after four score and seven years, finally achieved.

As chief executive, Lincoln naturally supported heavy taxes. Plus a scheme of tax graduation. The war was a legitimate explanation for these measures. Lincoln's participation in huge subsidies or bounties for railroads and in other legislation granting economic favors is not so readily linked to "saving the Union." All of his life Lincoln was a friend of the big corporations. He had no moral problem in signing a bill which gifted the Union Pacific Railway with a huge strip of land running across the West and an almost unsecured loan of $16,000 to $48,000 per mile of track. The final result of this bill was the Credit Mobilier scandal. With other laws favoring land speculation it helped to negate the seemingly noble promise of the Homestead Act of 1862—under which less than 19 percent of the open lands settled between 1860 and 1900 went to legitimate homesteaders. The Northern policy of importing immigrants with the promise of this land, only to force them into the ranks of General Grant's meatgrinder or into near slavery in the cities of the East, requires little comment. Nor need we belabor the rotten army contracts given to politically faithful crooks. Nor the massive thefts by law performed during the war in the South. More significant is Lincoln's openly disgraceful policy of allowing special cronies and favorites of his friends to trade in Southern cotton—even with "the enemy" across the line—and his calculated use of the patronage and the pork barrel. Between 1860 and 1880, the Republicans spent almost $10 million breathing life into state and local Republican organizations. Lincoln pointed them down that road. There can be no doubt of his responsibility for the depressing spectacle of greed and peculation concerning which so many loyal Northern men of the day spoke with sorrow, disappointment, and outrage. . . .

A large part of the complaint against Lincoln as a political precedent for later declensions from the example of the Fathers has to do with his expansion of the powers of the presidency and his alteration of the basis for the Federal Union. With reference to his role in changing the office of chief magistrate from what it had been under his predecessors, it is important to remember that he defined himself through the war powers that belonged to his post. In this way Lincoln could profess allegiance to the Whig ideal of the modest, self-effacing leader, the antitype of Andrew Jackson, and, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, do whatever he wished. That is, if he could do it in the name of preserving the Union. As Clinton Rossiter has stated, Lincoln believed there were "no limits" to his powers if he exercised them in that "holy cause." Gottfried Dietze compares Lincoln in this role to the Committee of Public Safety as it operated in the French Revolution. Except for the absence of mass executions, the results were similar. War is of course the occasion for concentration of power and the limitation of liberties within any nation. But an internal war, a war between states in a union of states, is not like a war to repel invasion or to acquire territory. For it is an extension into violence of a domestic political difference. And it is thus subject to extraordinary abuses of authority—confusions or conflations of purpose which convert the effort to win the war into an effort to effect even larger, essentially political changes in the structure of government. War, in these terms, is not only an engine for preserving the Union; it is also an instrument for transforming its nature. But without overdeveloping this structure of theory, let us shore it up with specific instances of presidential misconduct by Lincoln: abuses that mark him as our first imperial president. Lincoln began his tenure as a dictator when between April 12 and July 4 of 1861, without interference from Congress, he summoned militia, spent millions, suspended law, authorized recruiting, decreed a blockade, defied the Supreme Court, and pledged the nation's credit. In the following months and years he created units of government not known to the Constitution and officers to rule over them in "conquered" sections of the South, seized property throughout both sections, arrested upwards of twenty thousand of his political enemies and confined them without trial in a Northern "Gulag," closed over three hundred newspapers critical of his policy, imported an army of foreign mercenaries (of perhaps five hundred thousand men), interrupted the assembly of duly elected legislatures and employed the Federal hosts to secure his own reelection—in a contest where about thirty-eight thousand votes, if shifted, might have produced an armistice and a negotiated peace under a President McClellan. To the same end he created a state in West Virginia, arguing of this blatant violation of the explicit provisions of the Constitution that it was "expedient." But the worst of this bold and ruthless dealing (and I have given but a very selective list of Lincoln's "high crimes") has to do with his role as military leader per se: as the commander and selector of Northern generals, chief commissary of the Federal forces, and head of government in dealing with the leaders of an opposing power. In this role the image of Lincoln grows to be very dark—indeed, almost sinister.

The worst that we may say of Lincoln is that he led the North in war so as to put the domestic political priorities of his political machine ahead of the lives and the well-being of his soldiers in the field. The appointment of the venal Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania as his secretary of war, and of lesser hacks and rascals to direct the victualing of Federal armies, was part of this malfeasance. By breaking up their bodies, the locust hoard of contractors even found a profit in the Union dead. And better money still in the living. They made of Lincoln (who winked at their activities) an accessory to lost horses, rotten meat, and worthless guns. But all such mendacity was nothing in comparison to the price in blood paid for Lincoln's attempts to give the nation a genuine Republican hero. He had a problem with this project throughout the entire course of the war. That is, until Grant and Sherman "converted" to radicalism. Prior to their emergence all of Lincoln's "loyal" generals disapproved of either his politics or of his character. These, as with McClellan, he could use and discharge at will. Or demote to minor tasks. One thinks immediately of George G. Meade—who defeated Lee at Gettysburg, and yet made the mistake of defining himself as the defender of a separate Northern nation from whose soil he would drive a foreign Southern "invader." Or of Fitz John Porter, William B. Franklin, and Don Carlos Buell—all scapegoats thrown by Lincoln to the radical wolves. In place of these heterodox professionals, Lincoln assigned such champions of the "new freedom" as Nathaniel P. ("Commissary") Banks, Benjamin F. ("Beast") Butler, John C. Fremont, and John A. McClernand. Speaking in summary despair of these appointments (and adding to my list, Franz Sigel and Lew Wallace), General Henry Halleck, Lincoln's chief-of-staff, declared that they were "little better than murder." Yet in the East, with the Army of the Potomac, Lincoln made promotions even more difficult to defend, placing not special projects, divisions, and brigades but entire commands under the authority of such "right thinking" incompetents as John Pope (son of an old crony in Illinois) and "Fighting Joe" Hooker. Or with that "tame" Democrat and late favorite of the radicals, Ambrose E. Burnside. Thousands of Northern boys lost their lives in order that the Republican Party might experience rejuvenation, to serve its partisan goals. And those were "party supremacy within a Northern dominated Union." A Democratic "man-on-horseback" could not serve those ends, however faithful to "the Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was" (the motto of the Democrats) they might be. For neither of these commitments promised a Republican hegemony. To provide for his faction both security and continuity in office, Lincoln sounded out his commanders in correspondence (much of which still survives), suborned their military integrity, and employed their focus in purely political operation. Writes Johnson:

> Although extreme measures were most common in the border states, they were often used elsewhere too. By extreme measures is meant the arrest of anti-Republican candidates and voters, driving anti-Republican voters from the polls or forcing them to vote the Republican ticket, preventing opposition parties from holding meetings, removing names from ballots, and so forth. These methods were employed in national, state and local elections. Not only did the army interfere by force, it was used to supply votes. Soldiers whose states did not allow absentee voting were sent home by order of the President to swell the Republican totals. When voting in the field was used, Democratic commissioners carrying ballots to soldiers from their state were . . . unceremoniously thrown into prison, while Republican agents were offered every assistance. Votes of Democratic soldiers were sometimes discarded as defective, replaced by Republican ballots, or simply not counted.

All Lincoln asked of the ordinary Billy Yank was that he be prepared to give himself up to no real purpose—at least until Father Abraham found a general with the proper moral and political credentials to lead him on to

Richmond. How this part of Lincoln's career can be reconciled to the myth of the "suffering savior" I cannot imagine.

We might dwell for some time on what injury Lincoln did to the dignity of his office through the methods he employed in prosecuting the war. It was no small thing to disavow the ancient Christian code of "limited war," as did his minions, acting in his name. However, it is enough in this connection to remember his policy of denying medicines to the South, even for the sake of Northern prisoners held behind the lines. We can imagine what a modern "war crimes" tribunal would do with that decision. There may have been practicality in such inhumane decisions. *Practicality* indeed! As Charles Francis Adams, Lincoln's ambassador to the Court of St. James and the scion of the most notable family in the North, wrote in his diary of his leader, the "President and his chief advisers are not without the spirit of the serpent mixed in with their wisdom." And he knew whereof he spoke. For practical politics, the necessities of the campaign of 1864, had led Lincoln and Seward to a decision far more serious than unethical practices against prisoners and civilians in the South. I speak of the rejection by the Lincoln administration of peace feelers authorized by the Confederate government in Richmond: feelers that met Lincoln's announced terms for an end to the Federal invasion of the South. The emissary in this negotiation was sponsored by Charles Francis Adams. He was a Tennessean living in France, one Thomas Yeatman. After arriving in the United States, he was swiftly deported by direct order of the government before he could properly explore the possibility of an armistice on the conditions of reunion and an end to slavery. Lincoln sought these goals, but only on his terms. And in his own time. He wanted total victory. And he needed a still-resisting, impenitent Confederacy to justify his re-election. We can only speculate as to why President Davis allowed the Yeatman mission. We know that he expected little of such peace feelers. (There were many in the last stages of the conflict.) He knew his enemy too well to expect anything but subjection, however benign the rhetoric used to disguise its rigor. Adams's peace plan was perhaps impossible, even if his superiors in Washington had behaved in good faith. The point is that none of the peace moves of 1864 was given any chance of success. Over one hundred thousand Americans may have died because of the Rail-Splitter's rejection of an inexpedient peace. Yet we have still not touched upon the most serious of Lincoln's violations of the Presidential responsibility. I speak, finally, of his role in bringing on the War Between the States.

There is, we should recall, a great body of scholarly argument concerning Lincoln's intentions in 1860 and early 1861. A respectable portion of this work comes to the conclusion that the first Republican president expected a "tug," a "crisis," to follow his election. And then, once secession had occurred, also expected to put it down swiftly with a combination of persuasion, force, and Southern loyalty to the Union. The last of these, it is agreed, he completely overestimated. In a similar fashion he exaggerated the force of Southern "realism," the region's capacity to act in its own pecuniary interest. The authority on Lincoln's political economy has remarked that the Illinois lawyer-politician and old line Whig always made the mistake of explaining in simple economic terms the South's hostile reaction to anti-slavery proposals. To that blunder he added the related mistake of attempting to end the "rebellion" with the same sort of simplistic appeals to the prospect of riches. Or with fear of a servile insurrection brought on by his greatest "war measure," the emancipation of slaves behind Southern lines, beyond his control. A full-scale Southern revolution, a revolution of all classes of men against the way he and some of his supporters thought, was beyond his imagination. There was no "policy" in such extravagant behavior, no human nature as he perceived it. Therefore, on the basis of my understanding of his overall career, I am compelled to agree with Charles W. Ramsdell concerning Lincoln and his war. Though he was no sadist and no warmonger, and though he got for his pains much more of a conflict than he had in mind, Lincoln hoped for an "insurrection" of some sort—an "uprising" he could use.

The "rational" transformation of our form of government which he had first predicted in the "Springfield Lyceum Speech" required some kind of passionate disorder to justify the enforcement of a new Federalism. And needed also for the voting representatives of the South to be out of their seats in the Congress. It is out of keeping with his total performance as a public man and in contradiction of his campaigning after 1854 not to believe that Lincoln hoped for a Southern attack on Fort Sumter. As he told his old friend Senator Orville H. Browning of Illinois: "The plan succeeded. They attacked Sumter—it fell, and thus did more service than it otherwise could." And to others he wrote or spoke to the same effect. If the Confederacy's offer of money for Federal property were made known in the North and business relations of the sections remained unaffected, if the Mississippi remained open to Northern shipping, there would be no support for "restoring" the Union on a basis of force. Americans were in the habit of thinking of the unity of the nation as a reflex of their agreement in the Constitution, of law as limit on government and on the authority of temporary majorities, and of revisions in law as the product of the ordinary course of push and pull within a pluralistic society, not as a response to the extralegal authority of some admirable abstraction like equality. In other words, they thought of the country as being defined by the way in which we conducted our political business, not by where we were trying to go in a body. Though once a disciple of Henry Clay, Lincoln changed the basis of our common bond away from the doctrine of his mentor, away from the patterns of compromise and dialectic of interests and values under a limited, Federal sovereignty with which we as a people began our adventure with the Great Compromise of 1787–1788. The nature of the Union left to us by Lincoln is thus always at stake in every major election, in every refinement in our civil theology; the Constitution is still to be defined by the latest wave of big ideas, the most recent mass emotion. Writes Dietze:

> Concentrations of power in the national and executive branches of government, brought about by Lincoln in the name of the people, were processes that conceivably complemented each other to the detriment of free government. Lincoln's administration thus opened the way for the development of an omnipotent national executive who as

> a spokesman for the people might consider himself entitled to do whatever he felt was good for the Nation, irrespective of the interests and rights of states, Congress, the judiciary, and the individual. . . .

But in my opinion the capstone of this case against Lincoln . . . is what he has done to the language of American political discourse that makes it so difficult for us to reverse the ill effects of trends he set in motion with his executive fiat. When I say that Lincoln was our first Puritan president, I am chiefly referring to a distinction of style, to his habit of wrapping up his policy in the idiom of Holy Scripture, concealing within the Trojan horse of his gasconade and moral superiority an agenda that would never have been approved if presented in any other form. It is this rhetoric in particular, a rhetoric confirmed in its authority by his martyrdom, that is enshrined in the iconography of the Lincoln myth preserved against examination by monuments such as the Lincoln Memorial, where his oversized likeness is elevated above us like that of a deified Roman emperor. . . .

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Was Abraham Lincoln America's Greatest President?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What were the major issues Abraham Lincoln faced as President of the United States, and how effective was he in addressing these matters?
2. What were Lincoln's major goals in the Civil War?
3. How did Lincoln respond to his opponents during the war?
4. Based on your understanding of his leadership during the Civil War, was Abraham Lincoln an effective commander-in-chief?
5. What approach did President Lincoln take with respect to the institution of slavery?

Is There Common Ground?

Historians consistently rank Abraham Lincoln in the highest echelon of American presidents even when they do not place him in the top spot. Over the years, Lincoln has had competition from George Washington, mainly for being the first president and providing a sterling role model for those who followed, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, for his leadership during the Great Depression and most of World War II. Nevertheless, Lincoln more often than not ends up on the top of the heap. Melvin Bradford's assessment, therefore, is extreme in its departure from tradition. At the same time, however, most Lincoln scholars, without embracing many of Bradford's specific conclusions, would agree that during the Civil War, Lincoln plumbed the well of executive powers and found it almost limitless. Lincoln himself told Senator Chandler in 1864, "I conceive that I may in this emergency do things on military grounds which cannot be done constitutionally even by Congress." To this end, he suspended the writ of habeas corpus, suppressed hostile newspapers, declared a blockade of southern ports before war was declared, raised a national army without an enabling act, and prepared for the reconstruction of the Union without seeking anyone's advice on how best to proceed. Clearly, however, most historians view these steps as necessary in prosecuting the war against the recalcitrant southerners who formed the Confederacy.

Additional Resources

The shelves of any library will attest to the fact that Abraham Lincoln is the most written-about President. Carl Sandburg's classic *Abraham Lincoln* (6 vols.; Harcourt, Brace and World, 1926–1939), is a poetic panorama that focuses upon the mythic Lincoln. Benjamin Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (Knopf, 1952) and Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Harper and Row, 1977) are both excellent one-volume biographies, as is David Donald's *Lincoln* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), which won the Lincoln Prize. Several volumes on Lincoln have appeared in conjunction with the bicentennial of his birth. The best of these include Michael Burlingame's exhaustive *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), and two more manageable volumes for general readers and specialists alike: George McGovern, *Abraham Lincoln* (Times Books, 2008), and James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Psychoanalytical approaches to Lincoln are offered by George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation* (Norton, 1979) and Dwight G. Anderson, *Abraham Lincoln: The Quest for Immortality* (Knopf, 1982). Gabor S. Boritt, ed., *The Historian's Lincoln: Pseudohistory, Psychohistory, and History* (University of Illinois Press, 1988) is a valuable collection of essays.

T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (Knopf, 1952) looks at Lincoln as commander-in-chief; while Peyton McCrary, *Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction: The Louisiana Experiment* (Princeton University Press, 1978) examines Lincoln's plan for restoring the southern states to the Union. The intellectual origins and inspiring words of the Gettysburg Address are explored by Gary Wills in *Lincoln at Gettysburg: the Words That Remade America* (Simon & Schuster, 1992). Mark E. Neely, Jr.'s *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (Oxford University Press, 1991) presents a more evenhanded assessment of some of the criticisms raised by Melvin Bradford.

There are a number of important works that treat Lincoln's attitudes and policies toward African Americans. James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (W. W. Norton, 2007) analyzes the relationship between the President and the nation's leading black abolitionist. Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (Simon & Schuster, 2004) confirms Lincoln's role as "the Great Emancipator."

Modern-day disciples of Melvin Bradford, who, like their mentor, do not possess academic credentials as historians, have offered shrill indictments of Lincoln and those scholars who praise his presidential leadership. For examples of the writings of this group, see Sam Dickson, "Shattering the Icon of Abraham Lincoln," *Journal for Historical Review*, 7 (Fall 1987), and two volumes by Thomas J. DiLorenzo: *The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War* (Prima Lifestyles, 2002) and *Lincoln Unmasked: What You're Not Supposed to Know About Dishonest Abe* (Crown Forum, 2006).

ISSUE 17

Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?

YES: LeeAnna Keith, from *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

NO: Heather Cox Richardson, from *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Harvard University Press, 2001)

Learning Outcomes

After reading this issue, you should be able to:

- Explain several factors that prevented the Reconstruction process from being more successful.
- Analyze the political, economic, and social implications of the era of Reconstruction.
- Evaluate the role played by race in the reaction to the Reconstruction governments in the South following the Civil War.
- Define free labor ideology and explain its influence on Reconstruction.

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: LeeAnna Keith characterizes the assault on the Grant Parish courthouse in Colfax, Louisiana on Easter Sunday in 1873 as a product of white racism and unwillingness by local whites to tolerate African American political power during the era of Reconstruction.

NO: Heather Cox Richardson argues that the failure of Radical Reconstruction was primarily a consequence of a national commitment to a free labor ideology that opposed an expanding central government that legislated rights to African Americans that other citizens had acquired through hard work.

Given the complex issues of the post-Civil War years, it is not surprising that the era of Reconstruction (1865–1877) is shrouded in controversy. For the better part of a century following the war, historians typically characterized Reconstruction as a total failure that had proved detrimental to all Americans—northerners and southerners, whites and blacks. According to this traditional interpretation, a vengeful Congress, dominated by radical Republicans, imposed military rule upon the southern states. Carpetbaggers from the North, along with traitorous white scalawags and their black accomplices in the South, established coalition governments that rewrote state constitutions, raised taxes, looted state treasuries, and disenfranchised former Confederates while extending the ballot to the freedmen. This era finally ended in 1877 when courageous southern white Democrats successfully "redeemed" their region from "Negro rule" by toppling the Republican state governments.

This portrait of Reconstruction dominated the historical profession until the 1960s. One reason for this is that white historians (both northerners and southerners) who wrote about this period operated from two basic assumptions: (1) the South was capable of solving its own problems without federal government interference; and (2) the former slaves were intellectually inferior to whites and incapable of running a government (much less one in which some whites would be their subordinates). African American historians, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, wrote several essays and books that challenged this negative portrayal of Reconstruction, but their works seldom were taken seriously in the academic world and rarely were read by the general public. Still, these black historians foreshadowed the acceptance of revisionist interpretations of Reconstruction, which coincided with the successes of the civil rights movement (or "Second Reconstruction") in the 1960s.

Without ignoring obvious problems and limitations connected with this period, revisionist historians identified a number of accomplishments of the Republican state governments in the South and their supporters in Washington, D. C. For example, revisionists argued that the state constitutions that were written during Reconstruction were the most democratic documents that the South had seen up to that time. Also, although taxes increased in the southern states, the revenues generated by these levies financed the rebuilding and expansion of the South's railroad network, the creation of a number of social service institutions, and the establishment of a public school system that benefited African Americans as well as whites. At the federal level, Reconstruction achieved the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which extended significant privileges of citizenship (including the right to vote) to African Americans, both North and South. Revisionists also placed the charges of corruption leveled by traditionalists against the Republican regimes in the South in a more appropriate context by insisting that political corruption was a *national* malady. Although the leaders of the Republican state governments in the South engaged in a number of corrupt activities, they were no more guilty than several federal officeholders in the Grant administration, or the members of New York City's notorious Tweed Ring (a Democratic urban political machine), or even the southern white Democrats (the Redeemers) who replaced the radical Republicans in positions of power in the former Confederate states. Finally, revisionist historians sharply attacked the notion that African Americans dominated the reconstructed governments of the South.

There can be little doubt that racism played some role in the failure of the Radical Republicans to realize their most ambitious goals for integrating African Americans into the mainstream of American society in the years following the Civil War. After all, white supremacy was a powerful doctrine. At the same time, we should not so cavalierly dismiss some of the more positive conclusions reached by that first generation of revisionist historians who built upon W. E. B. Du Bois' characterization of Reconstruction as a "splendid failure." For example, Kenneth Stampp's *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1965) ends with the following statement: "The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which could have been adopted only under the conditions of radical reconstruction, make the blunders of that era, tragic though they were, dwindle into insignificance. For if it was worth a few years of civil war to save the Union, it was worth a few years of radical reconstruction to give the American Negro the ultimate promise of equal civil and political rights." Eric Foner, too, recognizes something of a silver lining in the nation's post-Civil War reconstruction process. In *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (Harper & Row, 1988), Foner claims that Reconstruction, while perhaps not all that radical, offered African Americans at least a temporary vision of a free society. Similarly, in *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Louisiana State University Press, 1984), Foner advances his interpretation by comparing the treatment of ex-slaves in the United States with that of newly emancipated slaves in Haiti and the British West Indies. Only in the United States, he contends, were the freedmen given voting and economic rights. Although these rights had been stripped away from the majority of black southerners by 1900, Reconstruction had, nevertheless, created a legacy of freedom that inspired succeeding generations of African Americans.

On the other hand, C. Vann Woodward, in "Reconstruction: A Counterfactual Playback," an essay in his thought-provoking *The Future of the Past* (Oxford University Press, 1988), challenges Foner's conclusions by insisting that former slaves were as poorly treated in the United States as they were in other countries. He also maintains that the confiscation of former plantations and the redistribution of land to the former slaves would have failed in the same way that the Homestead Act of 1862 failed to generate equal distribution of government lands to poor white settlers.

Thomas Holt's *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (University of Illinois Press, 1977) is representative of state and local studies that employ modern social science methodology to yield new perspectives. While critical of white Republican leaders, Holt (who is African American) also blames the failure of Reconstruction in South Carolina on freeborn mulatto politicians, whose background distanced them economically, socially, and culturally from the masses of freedmen. Consequently, these political leaders failed to develop a clear and unifying ideology to challenge white South Carolinians who wanted to restore white supremacy.

In the essays that follow, LeeAnna Keith and Heather Cox Richardson present thought-provoking analyses of the influence racism played in the failure of Reconstruction. In the first selection, Keith describes the events surrounding the military assault by white Louisianans on the Grant Parish courthouse located in the town of Colfax. Rumors had circulated for some time that such an attack would take place, and African American militiamen, who had been empowered by the Republican leaders in Louisiana, were prepared to protect the building that had become the symbol to whites of "Negro rule" in their region. The resulting massacre (most of the casualties occurred as a result of wholesale executions after a surrender had occurred) of over 150 blacks by southerners seeking to uphold the doctrine of white supremacy represented the deadliest incident of racial violence in United States history and paved the way for the end of Radical Reconstruction in Louisiana.

Heather Cox Richardson offers a post-revisionist interpretation of the failure of Reconstruction and contends that the key barrier to postwar assistance for African Americans was the nation's commitment to a free labor ideology. Believing that social equality derived from economic success, most Americans opposed legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which appeared to provide special interest legislation solely for the benefit of the former slaves.

YES

LeeAnna Keith

The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction

The Battle of Colfax Courthouse

The Republican faction in control of the courthouse was prepared for trouble, but Jesse McKinney was not. McKinney tried to stay out of trouble—a goal that required a black man to steer clear of politics in general and to keep away from the town of Colfax in particular, after the seizure of the courthouse initiated its militarization. In the two weeks before his death, McKinney had observed the passage of armed men of both races from his home near the ferry crossing on Bayou Darrow. He stuck close to his wife and six young children. The family was watching on April 5, 1873 when the white men shot him in the head. They heard him scream—"like a pig," as a black neighbor remembered it—and they heard some of the white men asking if McKinney was killed. "Yes," came the answer, "he is dead as hell."

Republican commentators in Louisiana would later deplore the killing of a man at work, as they said, "peaceably building a fence around his property." In fact, in the charged environment of post–Civil War Louisiana, where black ownership seemed to threaten the social and economic order, the act of building a fence approximated a kind of defiance. McKinney had money. Like his father and brother, he acknowledged almost $500 in personal property in the 1870 census. Late in the season, his corn crib and pantries were fully stocked.

The white men who killed him were far from home. They needed food for their horses and water and provisions for their growing ranks. After they shot McKinney, they dismounted and "danced like mad" for two hours, then settled in to feed their horses out of his supply.

Jesse McKinney did not die instantly, but lingered for six or eight hours. Assisted by another woman, Eliza Smith, his wife Laurinda loaded him and the children into a wagon while the whites in the yard mocked them, hooting lecherously and calling them "bad names." Laurinda McKinney drove to her stepfather's house and laid her husband's body on the floor. At sundown, when he died, his wife found her way to Mirabeau Plantation to ask for a coffin and a

From *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* by LeeAnna Keith, (Oxford University Press, 2008). Copyright © 2008 by Oxford University Press. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press (USA).

safe place to sleep. All of her neighbors had fled. The body remained unburied, attracting so many turkey vultures by the end of the week that the roof of the house was covered with birds.

The raiding party at McKinney's farm brought together an unlikely handful of area whites. Among participants later identified by the widow and other eyewitnesses, representatives from distant parishes made up the party that pulled the trigger. Denis Lemoine, a rollicking Creole from 60 miles away in Avoyelles Parish, joined his cousins from the extensive Natchitoches clan of Lemoines. On April 5, Lemoine was riding with Bill Irwin, a poor farmer from the Rapides section of Grant Parish. Their unlikely company suggested the reach and strategy of the white supremacist organizations that planned the attack on the Colfax courthouse. In fact, the Knights of the White Camellia and a group calling itself the "Old Time Ku Klux Klan" played a major organizational role. Acting as scouts, Lemoine, Irwin, and their associates secured a site to feed and water the horses of a growing contingent of armed men. They would visit the abandoned McKinney house on patrol and make liaisons there until supplies ran out.

Like many who would join their ranks in the area around Colfax, Irwin and Lemoine were Confederate veterans. Apart from the killing of civilians and other excesses, white preparations betrayed a jaunty military spirit. Where former officers such as George Stafford and David Paul took the lead, volunteers formed "companies" and even designated ranks. Rapides Parishes offered three such units, under Captains Stafford, Paul, and Joseph W. Texada, all prominent planters and former slaveholders. Contingents from Catahoula, Concordia, and Winn Parishes traveled long distances under similar leadership. Others, such as Denis Lemoine, arrived as individuals or in small groups. Local residents offered directions and hospitality, putting up out-of-towners and providing meals as possible. Veterans figured prominently in the mix, but a significant number of young men joined in, including many, such as Stafford, who had lost older brothers and other relatives in the Civil War.

The talk around their campfires was of genocide. Many expressed the strong conviction that the seizure of the Colfax courthouse was the first step in a war of conquest to eradicate the white race.

> The Negroes at Colfax shouted daily across the river to our people that they intended killing every white man and boy, keeping only the young women to raise from them a new breed [explained the organizer of an elite Rapides Parish contingent]. On their part if ever successful, you may safely expect that neither age, nor sex, nor helpless infancy will be spared.

"[T]he open threats of the negroes were to kill the white men and violate the white women," remembered one participant. Another account suggested the participation of militant organizations in fanning the rumor.

> We were all startled and terrified at the news by a Courier who had just gotten in from our Parish Site, that the Negroes under the leadership of a few unprincipled white men had captured the Court House & driven

> all white inhabitants out of the Town, and were raiding stealing & driving the cattle out of the surrounding country. The Negro men making their brags that they would clean out the white men & then take their women folks for wifes.

Another fragment of the rhetoric of such claims referred in Klan-style idiom to the way the "Tytanic Black Hand was sweeping over the Red River Valley in 1873," and to the urgent response of white manhood in the state. . . .

As Easter Sunday approached, the military character of the confrontation became increasingly pronounced. Blacks in Colfax drilled in formation and worked to stockpile ammunition, including homemade "blue whistlers" for bullets. With the assistance of the remaining Union veterans in the crowd . . . the men prepared three makeshift cannons using stovepipe and gunpowder and constructed shallow breastworks on two sides of the courthouse. . . .

Fortified by their faith in their rights as citizens, blacks in Colfax girded for the fight.

Whites made their own preparations, taking advantage of their control of the countryside surrounding Colfax to steal horses and mules from undefended black households. Creating army-style squadrons under the leadership of selected men, the whites assembled a version of a cavalry outfit. The white paramilitary patrolled constantly, assessing the strength of black defenses and scouting for the arrival of new recruits. . . . By Easter Sunday, according to their own estimate, the white line consisted of 140 men and teenage boys. . . .

Despite the intensity of the buildup on both sides, Easter Sunday started slowly in Colfax. A handful of lost stalwarts departed the radical camp in the morning. A prominent African American from Rock Island came to town to implore the men to surrender the fight. No formal observance of the holiday could be discerned. A bustle of activity, in contrast, occupied the white force as it prepared to move in concert from its network of campsites around the town. Riding to a designated spot on Bayou Darrow, the white captains paused to review the plan of attack. Captain Dave Paul read the muster roll and made a final address to the men.

"I close my eyes [and] his face and form comes before my mind just as he was that morning," wrote a participant, 50 years afterward. "Boys," said Paul, "there are one hundred and sixty-five of us to go into Colfax this morning; God knows how many will come out of it alive."

Upon the signal, the men swam their horses across the Bayou Darrow, crossing onto the Calhoun estate and initiating the hostile phase of their maneuvers. They rode in one company to the main road to Colfax and paused in battle formation where they could be seen from the courthouse and Smithfield Quarters. Christopher Columbus Nash—the former lieutenant—yielded military authority to Captains Paul, Stafford, and Wiggins but assumed formal responsibility for the fight as the Fusion ticket sheriff of the parish. . . . As such, Nash rode forward, accompanied by two men, to issue a final order for the blacks to disperse.

Bearing a white flag, Nash approached the Smithfield Quarters and asked for John Miles, a man later celebrated as a favorite of the white community. Miles would make the journey to the courthouse on Nash's behalf, walking out along the open road between the main positions of the armed rivals. Nash withdrew with his seconds to a point forward of the white line and observed as a black man exited the courthouse and mounted a dappled gray horse.

Benjamin L. Allen—known locally as Levy, Levin, or Lev—identified himself as the commander of the courthouse defense. Allen was one of two Buffalo Soldiers to remain in the radical camp. . . . Like the storekeeper, Peter Borland, who also chose to stay, Allen had long years of military experience, including the defense of stationary targets, such as garrisons and telegraph and railroad installations, against mounted Apaches on the Texas frontier. Though he never stood for office or played a visible role in Republican Party affairs, his commitment to preserving the possibility for black advancement in the parish was second to none. Allen had traveled the countryside during the buildup to the conflict, recruiting new men by appealing to the pride of their race. Even if he had no arms, he insisted, all black men should lend their hands to the defense. As for weapons, he said, "they could have his when he was killed."

The interview between Allen and Nash was dignified and brief, despite the breach of protocol that placed the black military commander, not the sheriff, as the counterpart of the would-be white officeholder. In fact, Sheriff Dan Shaw, the last of the white men in the courthouse defense, had headed for Mirabeau Plantation just as Nash and the others rode into view. Lev Allen himself had given Sheriff Shaw the go-ahead. "Old man," said Allen, "go away and save yourself, if you can." . . .

Having stated their cases, the two sides agreed to proceed with hostilities. Allen rode back to the courthouse redoubt, where he "received the approbation of the whole posse, the men all believing that the proposal of their assailants was a ruse to entrap them into disarming, that they might be incapable of resisting in case of a massacre."

Nash had agreed to give Allen 30 minutes to remove the women and children from the line of fire. Most headed for Mirabeau Plantation on the open road. Stragglers, a group that included the elderly and mothers of small children, became reluctant to enter the line of fire as the deadline approached. Scaling the riverbank, six to eight feet to a narrow shore, a contingent waited out the battle from just below the action.

A flanking maneuver brought one of the three white squadrons face to face with the noncombatants at the Red River shoreline, as a picked group of 30 men sought a new angle on the courthouse, some 75 yards from the riverbank. The encounter must have marked the interlude before the fighting with considerable tension down below, as the white men warned the gathering not to betray their location. No injuries or killings were reported, however, and the white squadron retained the element of surprise until the critical moment.

Up in the town, a kind of comic indolence set in as the warning period extended to about two hours. The improbability of the coming confrontation taxed the comprehension of men on both sides, the majority of whom knew one another by long acquaintance or at least reputation. In fact, the interlude of silence was repeatedly broken by shouted threats against specific individuals and their families, with most of the taunting emanating from the white side. Some of the white irregulars went into the Smithfield cabins, even helping themselves to hot lunches abandoned in haste. Another group played cards.

Black defenders showed defiance and disbelief (except for Baptiste Elzie, one of three local brothers in the fight, who had fallen asleep in the trench). A sniper on the courthouse roof took potshots in the vicinity of the card game, causing the whites to reform their ranks around 2 P.M. As the white line moved forward, firing a few shots, one man jumped to the top of the courthouse earthworks in a dramatic show of begging and pleading, "bowing his head and throwing up his hands several times, adding some expression, the precise words not being understood," as a white eyewitness remembered it. By some gesture, the black supplicant made clear that he was mocking them. Then the firing began in earnest.

The white offensive proceeded in three parts. Wheeling the cannon into action, a crew of artillerymen led by a northern-born white Union veteran fired on the courthouse, using a supply of iron slugs cut from two-by-two-inch bars in lieu of cannonballs. To protect the artillery charge, a squadron of men dismounted, approaching on foot in infantry formation. A mounted component, essentially disengaged from the action, maintained the rear.

Cannon fire penetrated the line of defenders in the courthouse earthworks, claiming the first fatality of the fight. According to the account of Baptiste Elzie, who described it years afterward, a slug cut across the abdomen of Adam Kimball, who was standing. His bowels torn open, Kimball ran inside the courthouse, where his intestines fell out. . . .

Some of the black defenders broke for the road, where they were shot. Others, such as Zach White, made their way to the river, where White swam a mile and a half to safety wearing clothes and carrying his shot pouch and powder horn. A white contingent led by Captain J.P.G. Hooe of Alexandria—who carried a sawed-off shotgun—awaited black militiamen who fled to the nearby black community of Cuny's Point. Those who ran for the woods—including Captain Lev Allen, who fled on horseback—fared best, capitalizing on the whites' uncertainty about black defenses that could not be seen. Allen freed his horse and found a hiding place with a view of the courthouse where he would remain until the fighting was done. Another handful of survivors spent the night up to their chins in a pond.

The largest contingent—an estimated 65 men—retreated into the courthouse, where accommodations for a siege had been prepared. Only one of the 25th Infantry veterans, the storekeeper Peter Borland, remained with the defense, which also included the local Union soldiers [Cuffy] Gaines, [Alabama] Mitchell, and [Edmund] Dancer. Shots from inside the courthouse felled the Yankee artilleryman, who survived, and fatally wounded a local man, Stephen Parish, also in the cannon crew. The black militia's jury-rigged artillery malfunctioned, but the brick walls and shuttered windows of the courthouse held firm against the last blasts of shrapnel. For the space of an hour, desultory gunshots (and the sound of shots fired in pursuit nearby) marked the standoff phase of the fight.

In their cleanup operations around town, the Fusionists and Klansmen had taken prisoner a handful of men in the warehouse and one hiding under a building nearby. From these, the captains chose a man named Pinkney Chambers and handed him a pole they had affixed to a saddle blanket doused in coal oil. "[Here's] a chance to save your life," they said; "we are going to light this and you must take it and put it on the roof." With "ten [double barrel] shotguns trained on him from his back, and I suppose 50 guns in front of him [in the courthouse]," as a white man remembered it, Chambers put the torch on the cypress shingles to start a lively fire.

The men inside the courthouse observed as Pinkney Chambers set the roof on fire, but did not shoot him. Instead, they tried to knock the burning cypress shingles from the roof from the building's rough upper story. The cause was hopeless, and many of the men inside began to despair.

> I warned our people not to go into the courthouse [a black participant told a reporter one month after the event]. I knowed it would be the end of 'em. But when the cannon went off we were all skeered, and huddled into the building like a herd of sheep. Then the burning roof began to fall on us, and every one was praying and shrieking and singing and calling on God to have mercy. The flesh of those furtherest from the door began to roast. I could smell it. . . . The hair bunt off our heads, our clothes burn [ed] and our skin roast[ed].

Among those fighting the fire on the second storey, a local man named Shack (or Jack or Jacques) White strayed too close to an open window. With the invaders deliberately shooting at the fire, providing cover as it grew, White took a bullet to the neck.

By this time, the white line had mostly dismounted and drawn close to the burning building. They were close enough for Shack White to recognize a friend among the men nearby. "Save me, Bill Irwin," he called from the window. Irwin replied that he owed him one, perhaps assuring him of the services of the surgeon and doctor in the company of whites. White tore the sleeve from his white shirt (some accounts say a large sheet of paper), put it out the window, and shouted, "We surrender!" Too late to save his life, he brought the courthouse siege to an unexpected halt.

Was he heard downstairs above the crackling of the fire on the roof? Could they know below about the improvised flag of truce? What they saw, within the incalculable space of time between two incidents, was the approach of armed white men to the door. The first, Sidney Harris, carrying a gun, opened the door. At his rear walked a man dressed in a sword and wearing the red rosette of his secret order, James West Hadnot.

Fast as thought, Harris was dead and Hadnot lay mortally wounded in the gut. . . .

The horror that gripped the body of whites at the courthouse—a group that included "Old Man" Hadnot's three young adult sons—turned the momentum of the fighting as if on a switch. By this time, a handful of black men had emerged from the courthouse and begun to stack their arms. They were overwhelmed by a blast of gunfire from the white side. With men pressing out of the burning building amid continuing fire, bodies fell in a stack by the door, including several who were slightly injured or not hurt. Using pistols and Bowie knives, the whites killed several in close combat. The door slammed. Those afraid to surrender hid under the floorboards. The cinders crackled overhead, as white men sorted out the living from the dead at the doorway and just beyond.

"Get up, old man, you're not dead," said a man. Benjamin Brimm was 56 years old, the father of four girls, a former slave. He was directed to the base of a pecan tree some distance from the courthouse and made to wait with other prisoners. Fifteen minutes later, he was told to go inside the burning courthouse to retrieve the last of the holdouts before it collapsed.

"They was under the floor in the little back room," he later testified. "[YJ'all had better come," he called. They agreed, all but one. "I might just as well to be burned up as to be shot," said the man, who burned to death some time in the next hour. The others, including Alabama Mitchell, emerged safely and were taken prisoner. A few dozen—28 or 48, in typical accounts—waited under the pecan tree to learn the final resolution of the fight.

After sunset it began to rain. The wounded blacks were moved to the porch of the nearby boardinghouse, while the remainder of the prisoners made do under the shelter of the tree. Black women, emboldened by the lack of gunfire, left their hiding places and moved within sight of the battlefield, staying well away from both the prisoners and the dead.

The armed force of whites was breaking up, with hungry men eager to make camp and others preparing for a long journey home. . . . The semblance of military discipline abated, as the remaining white chiefs discussed the fate of the last living black men in the town.

Nash wanted to set them free. "[N]ow boys," he asked Benjamin Brimm and the others, "if I take you all and send you home to your cotton, will you go to work?"

"I answered quick," remembered Brimm, "[as] I knowed Mr. Nash and he knowed me." Brimm promised he would.

A white man objected: "[B]y God, Nash . . . if you send these God Dam Negroes home you won't live to see two weeks." Having killed 50 or more in the courthouse fight and cleanup operations, many in the crowd may have feared reprisals, legal and personal, after the prisoners returned home. . . . Liquor whetted the appetite for violence in the group. One man said that he had ridden 60 miles to kill niggers, and was not yet prepared to stop. Overriding Nash's objections, the remainder of the white force decided to execute the prisoners. "Unless these niggers are killed," a Grant Parish man, Thomas Hickman, told Nash, "we will kill you." . . .

The white men told the remaining prisoners to line up and prepare to be marched to the sugarhouse, where they would spend the night and be set free in the morning. Luke Hadnot, whose dying father had recently departed on a boat to Alexandria, called out the names of five men. The five stepped forward; Hadnot lined them up in close ranks, and killed all five with two gunshots.

Others likewise identified their victims of choice. Clement Penn, for example, selected and killed Etienne Elzie while Elzie's wife, Annie, stood by only a few feet away. "I was looking directly at Penn when he shot my husband," Annie Elzie later testified. "I heard him beg for his life." . . .

Chaos reigned in Colfax on Monday, when the excesses of the previous hours saw light of day. Scores of white men, including many who had not participated in the fight, came to town to witness the outcome of the struggle. The distribution of the bodies told much of the story. In the shallow breastworks around the courthouse, the bodies of the earliest victims could be seen. A significant number of corpses fanned out from the courthouse door, with piles on either side of the door in mute witness to the gunfire that greeted those trying to escape the fire. The ruins of the courthouse contained the smoldering remains of the man who feared to exit, and a few others were found killed beneath the warehouse and other buildings in the town.

Something special—still secret—could be found in the vicinity of the old pecan tree, which later became the object of special pride among area whites. According to some accounts, thirteen prisoners were hanged from its branches, and may have remained visible to visitors on April 14. By the time authorities arrived on Tuesday, however, the only bodies near the tree were the victims of gun violence. Most revealed gunshots to the head. One man's skull had been crushed. He had died with his hands still clasped in the act of begging for his life.

Whites in Colfax Monday attempted to count the number of dead, a task complicated by the pursuit of some black participants by men on horseback. At least three of the identifiable victims on April 13 had been killed outside the town, one more than ten miles downriver in Cotile, Louisiana. The removal and burial of some of the bodies on Monday further disrupted the count. Among those who attended to the numbers, the final tally varied on a wide range, with the most conservative reckoning the number of victims at 71. Whites may have indulged in exaggeration, but the most morbidly diligent white veteran historian of the massacre accepted the high number presented in Oscar Watson's reminiscences, "An Incident of My Boyhood Days":

> Next morning myself & 8 or 10 others went back to look and count the dead[. A]fter making the rounds of the town 165 dead was reported within the entrenchment [and] no one will ever know how many met their fate further out[,] as some 25 or 30 men scoured the Country for 4 or 5 miles [and] no report ever reached us of how many they killed in this raid.

The black men had brought it on themselves, he reasoned.

> [I]t was a sorry blunder the negroes made in [firing] on our men after surrender, for only their leaders would have been dealt with[. B]ut after their treachery the order went let none escape. The order was carried out.

Whether 70 or 165 or many more, the accepted number of victims was larger than any other incident of racial violence in American history (the only comparable number of casualties, the victims of the New York City Draft Riot of

1863, included large numbers of unfortunate whites). In surveying the damage, white men in Colfax were taking the measure of their terrible success.

White men also took liberties with the bodies of dead men and the possessions of those displaced by the violence. They mutilated the bodies, most often by shooting the corpses. In one awful case, mischief-makers used gunpowder or some other means to blow up the corpse of a local man known as Big Frank. One widow reported finding her husband's corpse with the pockets ripped open and wallet missing. Blacks in the area later complained about the theft of horses, mules, wagons, furniture, and money. "[Y]ea, even the clothes and shoes of the murdered men were taken and carried off," according to victims, "and this practice was being pursued for days after the massacre." W. R. Rutland, still aggrieved by his own loss of property in the burglary of his Colfax home, was seen riding a stolen horse around town.

Whites in Colfax sought to publicize their victory on Monday while most of the bodies remained unburied, encouraging blacks they encountered to go view the dead. "Go to town, if you want to see a mess of dead beeves," said a man to a woman whose husband was killed in the fight. Others used bad language, forced strangers to bury bodies or cook food, and taunted the widows with references to sexual favors.

Dorcas Pittman, the mother of one of the victims, arrived in Colfax on Monday to learn the fate of her son Lank, who had perished in the fight.

> When I went to Colfax the day after the fight I found my dead son's body; dogs were eating him; I took the remains home and buried them; I felt so bad that I didn't know what I did.

Whites permitted the removal of Lank Pittman's body because of the extreme circumstances, and may have allowed other burials as well. On the whole, however, they were satisfied to leave the bodies where they fell.

Their pride in display revealed the symbolic significance of the white raid on the town. Conceived as a lesson to those who advanced the black cause in politics, the rout of the courthouse defense served notice of white determination. The white men of Louisiana would unite to defeat their enemies within, killing and dying for white supremacy and home rule.

Heather Cox Richardson **NO**

The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901

Civil Rights and the Growth of the National Government, 1870–1883

Northern Republican disillusionment with African-American attitudes toward social issues compounded the Northern association of Southern freedmen with labor radicals who advocated confiscation of wealth. Taking place during and immediately after the South Carolina tax crisis, the civil rights debates of the 1870s seemed to confirm that African-Americans were turning increasingly to legislation to afford them the privileges for which other Americans had worked individually. Civil rights agitation did more than simply flesh out an existing sketch of disaffected black workers, however; it suggested that advocates of African-American rights were actively working to expand the national government to cater to those who rejected the free labor ideal.

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"Civil rights," in the immediate aftermath of the war, meant something different than it gradually came to mean over the next several years. *Harper's Weekly* distinguished between "natural rights" to life, liberty, and "the fruits of . . . honest labor," and "civil rights," which were critical to a freedperson's ability to function as a free worker. Civil rights, it explained, were "such rights as to sue, to give evidence, to inherit, buy, lease, sell, convey, and hold property, and others. Few intelligent persons in this country would now deny or forbid equality of natural and civil rights," it asserted in 1867. The 1866 Civil Rights Act, written by the man who had drafted the Thirteenth Amendment, Illinois senator Lyman Trumbull, was intended to secure to African-Americans "full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property as is enjoyed by white citizens." It guaranteed only that the legal playing field would be level for all citizens; state legislatures could not enact legislation endangering a black person's right to his life or his land. By 1867, hoping to woo conservative Republican voters into the Democratic camp and

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to undercut the justification for black suffrage, even moderate Democrats claimed to be willing to back civil rights for African-Americans "with every token of sincerity . . . from a free and spontaneous sense of justice."

"Social" equality was a different thing—it was a result of a person's economic success rather than a condition for it. It was something to be earned by whites and blacks alike. Directly related to economic standing, a man's social standing rose as he prospered. A good social position also required that a person possess other attributes that the community valued. A place in upwardly mobile American society required religious observance and apparently moral behavior, as well as the habits of thrift and economy dictated by a plan for economic success. This gradual social elevation became a mirror of gradual economic elevation through hard work as a traditional free laborer.

Immediately after the Civil War, as Democrats insisted that black freedom would usher in social mixing between races and intermarriage, almost all Northern Republicans emphatically denied that emancipation was intended to have any effect on social issues and reiterated that African-Americans must rise in society only through the same hard effort that had brought other Americans to prominence. In 1867, a correspondent to the radical *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* from Louisiana painted a complimentary portrait of Louisiana African-Americans, then concluded that they had neither the expectation nor the desire for "social equality, that favorite bugbear." They would ridicule any attempt to break down social distinctions by legislation, knowing that the government could give them only political equality, the writer claimed, quoting his informants as saying, "Our own brains, our own conduct, is what we must depend upon for our future elevation; each one of us striving for himself and laboring to improve his mental and moral condition." Adding credence to the correspondent's representations, the Georgia Freedmen's Convention of 1866 resolved, "We do not in any respect desire social equality beyond the transactions of the ordinary business of life, inasmuch as we deem our own race, equal to all our wants of purely social enjoyment."

As the Republicans enacted legislation promoting the interests of African-Americans, however, racist Democrats insisted they were forcing social interaction to promote African-Americans artificially, at the expense of whites. When the Civil Rights Act of 1866 took effect, Democrats charged that the Republican concept of black equality before the law meant Republicans believed that blacks and whites were entirely equal. The *New York World* predicted interracial marriages; the *Columbus (Ohio) Crisis* insisted that a black orator in Richmond had told his black audience to "vote for the man who will bring you into his parlor, who will eat dinner with you, and who, if you want her, will let you marry his daughter." In 1868, *De Bow's Review* argued that negro suffrage meant that African-Americans would "next meet us at the marriage altar and in the burial vault," where they would "order the white ancestors' bones to be disinterred and removed elsewhere, and their own transferred into these hitherto held sacred white family sepulchers."

In response to Democratic attacks, in 1868 the *New York Times* reiterated that Republicans planned only for African-Americans to share the rights and opportunities of typical free laborers. It maintained that "reconstruction did not fly in the face of nature by attempting to impose social . . . equality," it simply established political and legal equality. These rights would eventually "obliterate" social prejudices as white men sought black votes. The next year the *Times* approvingly reported that abolitionist agitator Wendell Phillips had said that "the social equality of the black race will have to be worked out by their own exertion." Frederick Douglass put out the best idea, it continued later, namely: "Let the negro alone."

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Republican insistence that social equality would work itself out as freedpeople worked their way up to prosperity could not provide an answer for the overwhelming discrimination African-Americans faced. While many black and white Southerners accepted the established patterns of segregation, those practices meant that African-Americans' public life was inferior to that of their white counterparts. Black people could not sit on juries in most of the South, they could not be certain of transportation on railroads or accommodation at inns, their schools were poor copies of white schools. In addition to creating a climate of constant harassment for African-Americans, discrimination, especially discrimination in schooling, seemed to hamper their ability to rise economically. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments had made all Americans equal before the law, but they could not guarantee equal access to transportation, accommodations, or schools, and while many ex-slaves accepted conditions as an improvement on the past and dismissed civil rights bills as impractical, those African-Americans who had worked hard to become members of the "better classes" deeply resented their exclusion from public facilities. "Education amounts to nothing, good behavior counts for nothing, even money cannot buy for a colored man or woman decent treatment and the comforts that white people claim and can obtain," complained Mississippi Sheriff John M. Brown. Prominent African-Americans called for legislation to counter the constant discrimination they faced.

African-American proponents of a new civil rights law to enforce nondiscrimination in public services had a champion in the former abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. An exceedingly prominent man, the tall, aloof Sumner was the nation's leading champion of African-American rights after the war and had advocated a civil rights measure supplementary to the Civil Rights Act of 1866 since May 1870, when he introduced to the Senate a bill (S. 916) making the federal government responsible for the enforcement of equal rights in public transportation, hotels, theaters, schools, churches, public cemeteries, and juries.

But Sumner's sponsorship of a civil rights bill immediately made more moderate congressmen wary of it; his enthusiasm for black rights frequently made him advocate measures that seemed to remove African-Americans from the free labor system and make them favored wards of a government that was expanding to serve them. Only two months after the ratification of the fifteenth Amendment had reassured moderate Republicans and Democrats alike that they had done everything possible to make all men equal in America, Sumner told the Senate that black men were not actually equal enough, but that his new bill would do the trick. When it passes, he said, "I [will] know nothing further to be done in the way of legislation for the security of equal rights in this Republic." . . .

* * *

By 1874, most Republicans were ready to cut the freedpeople's ties to the government in order to force African-Americans to fall back on their own resources and to protect the government from the machinations of demagogues pushing special-interest legislation. When Mississippi Republicans asked President Grant in January 1874 to use the administration to shore up their state organization, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* enthusiastically reported his refusal. Grant "remove[d] his segar from his mouth and enunciate[d] a great truth with startling emphasis," according to a writer for the newspaper. The president said it was "time for the Republican party to unload." The party could not continue to carry the "dead weight" of intrastate quarrels. Grant was sick and tired of it, he told listeners. "This nursing of monstrosities has nearly exhausted the life of the party. I am done with them, and they will have to take care of themselves." The *Philadelphia Inquirer* agreed that the federal government had to cease to support the Southern Republican organizations of freedpeople and their demagogic leaders. The *New York Daily Tribune* approved Grant's similar hands-off policy in Texas, thrilled that "there [was] no longer any cause to apprehend that another State Government will be overturned by Federal bayonets."

Benjamin Butler's role as the House manager of the civil rights bill only hurt its chances, for he embodied the connection between freedpeople and a government in thrall to special interests. The symbol of the "corruption" of American government, Butler was popularly credited with strong-arming the House into recognizing the Louisiana representatives backed by the Kellogg government, which was generally believed to be an illegal creation of Louisiana's largely black Republican party, supported not by the people of the state but by federal officers. Honest men wanted to destroy "the principle which Mr. Butler and his followers represent," wrote the *New York Daily Tribune* and others. "The force in our politics of which he is the recognized exponent, and of which thousands of our politicians of less prominence are the creatures." "Butlerism" meant gaining power by promising an uneducated public patronage or legislation in their favor, and all but the stalwart Republicans and Democratic machine politicians hoped for the downfall of both Butler and what he represented.

Despite the fact that it was prosperous African-Americans who advocated the bill, it appeared to opponents that the civil rights bill was an extraordinary piece of unconstitutional legislation by which demagogues hoped to hold on to power in the South, and thus in the nation, by catering to the whims of disaffected African-Americans who were unwilling to work. The proposed law seemed to offer nothing to the nation but a trampled constitution, lazy freedpeople, and a growing government corrupted into a vehicle for catering to the undeserving.

The civil rights bill would probably never have passed the Senate had it not been for the sudden death of Charles Sumner on March 11, 1874. Before he died, Sumner charged fellow Massachusetts senator George F. Hoar to "take care of the civil-rights bill,—my bill, the civil-rights bill, don't let it fail." Even Republican enemies of the bill eulogized the "great man"; the *Chicago Tribune* reflected that "there is no man, friend or enemy, who does not pause to pay respect to the memory of Charles Sumner." African-Americans across the country mourned Sumner's death and called for the passage of his "last and grandest work," and on April 14, 1874, from the Committee on the Judiciary Senator Frederick T. Frelinghuysen reported Sumner's civil rights bill protecting African-Americans from discrimination in public facilities, schools, and juries. The committee's amendments placed firmly in the national legal apparatus responsibility for overseeing violations of the proposed law. In caucus on May 8, some Republican senators objected to "certain features" of the bill but expressed a desire to act "harmoniously" on the measure. In the next caucus, the Republicans decided to support the bill without amendments.

After an all-night session of the Senate, a handful of African-American men in the galleries applauded as the Senate passed the bill on May 23, 1874, by a vote of twenty-nine to sixteen. Rumors circulated that the president had "some doubts about signing it" if it should pass the House, and many Republicans indicated they would not mind the loss of the bill. "Respect for the dead is incumbent on us all," snarled the *New York Times*, "—but legislation should be based on a careful and wise regard for the welfare of the living, not upon 'mandates,' real or fictitious, of the dead." Referring to the apparent African-American control of Southern governments, the *Times* asked whether the freedman "stands in need of protection from the white man, or the white man stands in need of protection from him." The House Judiciary Committee could not agree on its own civil rights measure and decided to replace its bill with the Senate's. The House then tabled the bill for the rest of the session, despite the continued urging of "leading colored men" that Benjamin Butler get it taken up and passed. . . .

The civil rights bill was rescued from oblivion only by Democratic wins in the 1874 elections. Republican congressmen's desire to consolidate Reconstruction before the Democrats arrived barely outweighed party members' fears that the measure was an attempt of corrupt politicians to harness the black vote by offering African-Americans extraordinary benefits that would undermine their willingness to work. When the lame-duck Congress reconvened in December 1874, House Republican leader Benjamin Butler tried to pass a bill protecting freedmen at the polls and an army appropriations bill to shore up stalwart Republicans in the South. Democrats filibustered. Butler was unable to get a suspension of the rules to maneuver around them as fifteen Republicans joined the opposition, worried that Butler's attempt to suspend the rules was simply a means "to get through a lot of jobbing measures under cover of Civil Rights and protection of the South." With his reputation as a special-interest broker, Butler had a terrible time getting the civil rights bill off the Speaker's table. Finally Republicans agreed to let Butler take it to the floor in late January.

The galleries were full as the House discussed the bill in early February. After omitting provisions for integrated schools, churches, and cemeteries, the House passed the bill on February 5 by a vote of 162 to 100. While African-Americans in favor of a civil rights bill were horrified at the sacrifice of the school clause, all but the most radical Republicans approved the omission. "The bill . . . is worthy [of] the support of every congressman who wishes to deal equitably with the citizens of the United States, white and black," wrote even the *Boston Evening Transcript*. "This measure simply provides for the education of the blacks, and does not force their children into association with white scholars," at the same time demanding that the schools be equal. "The Republicans can stand upon such a platform as that," the *Transcript* chided unwilling party members. "The great desire and solicitude of the people are to support 'civil rights' and so execute in good faith the constitutional pledges of the nation." After initial reluctance, the Senate passed the school amendment by a vote of 38 to 62, and despite Democratic plans to talk the bill to death, the Senate repassed the civil rights bill without further amendment on February 27, 1875, with Democrats in the opposition. Grant signed the civil rights bill into law on March 1, 1875.

While some radical papers like the *Boston Evening Transcript* defended the bill—wondering "[i]f the blacks and whites cannot shave and drink together . . . how can they remain tolerably peaceful in the same community?"—its passage drew fire from conservative and moderate Northern Republicans who still read into the measure a larger political story of the corruption of a growing government by those determined to advance through government support rather than through productive labor. The *New York Times* noted that Nothern African-Americans were "quiet, inoffensive people who live for and to themselves, and have no desire to intrude where they are not welcome." In the South, however, it continued, "there are many colored men and women who delight in 'scenes' and cheap notoriety." It was these people, the "negro politician, . . . the ignorant field hand, who, by his very brutality has forced his way into, and disgraces, public positions of honor and trust—men . . . who have no feeling and no sensibility," who would "take every opportunity of inflicting petty annoyances upon their former masters." The author concluded that the law would not be enforceable, and that "it is a great mistake to seek to impose new social customs on a people by act of Congress." Noticing the immediate efforts of Southerners to circumvent the law by giving up public licenses and legislating against public disturbances, the *San Francisco Daily Alta California* agreed that the act was likely to produce more trouble than equality, and reiterated that social equality must be earned rather than enforced by law.

The true way for African-Americans to achieve equality, Republicans argued, was to work. The *New York Times* approvingly quoted an African-American minister in the South who reiterated the idea that laborers must rise socially only as they acquired wealth and standing. The *Times* recorded his warning that "character, education, and wealth will determine their position, and all the laws in the world cannot give them a high position if they are not worthy of it." Even a correspondent for the staunchly Republican *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* reflected that "Sambo . . . can go to the hotels, ride in first-class cars, and enjoy a box in the theater. To what good is all this? . . . He needs now, to be let alone, and let work out his own destiny, aided only as his wants make him an object of charity. . . .

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In 1883, the U.S. Supreme Court considered five civil rights cases, one each from Tennessee, New York, Kansas, Missouri, and California. On October 15, 1883, the court decided that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional because federal authority could overrule only state institutional discrimination, not private actions; Justice John Marshall Harlan of Kentucky cast the only dissenting vote. With the decision, Northern Republicans stated that they had never liked the law, because it removed African-Americans from the tenets of a free labor society, using the government to give them benefits for which others had to work. The *New York Times* declared that African-Americans "should be treated on their merits as individuals precisely as other citizens are treated in like circumstances" and admitted that there was, indeed, "a good deal of unjust prejudice against" them. But the *Times* remained skeptical that legislation could resolve the problem. Even newspapers like the *Hartford Courant*, which supported the law, said it did so only because it proved that Americans were sincere in their quest for equal rights. Three days later that newspaper mused that the law had been necessary only for "the reorganization of a disordered society," and that freedpeople no longer needed its protection. The *Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin* agreed that public sentiment had changed so dramatically that the law was now unnecessary. Even the radical African-American *Cleveland Gazette*, which mourned the court's decision, agreed that the law was a dead letter anyway. The *New York Times* welcomed the decision, going so far as to charge the law with keeping "alive a prejudice against the negroes . . . which without it would have gradually died out."

Instead of supporting the Civil Rights Act, Republicans reiterated the idea that right-thinking African-Americans wanted to succeed on their own. The *New York Times* applauded the public address of the Louisville, Kentucky, National Convention of Colored Men that concentrated largely on the needs of Southern agricultural labor and referred not at all to civil rights. That the convention had pointedly rejected chairman Frederick Douglass's draft address, which had included support for civil rights legislation, made the *Times* conclude that most attendees were "opposed to the extreme views uttered by Mr. Douglass," and that the great African-American leader should retire, since his "role as a leader of his race is about played out."

Despite the *Times*'s conclusion, African-Americans across the country protested the decision both as individuals and in mass meetings, reflecting, "It is a mercy that Charles Sumner is not alive to mourn for his cherished Civil Rights bill." At a mass meeting in Washington, D.C., Frederick Douglass admonished that the decision "had inflicted a heavy calamity on the 7,000,000 of colored people of this country, and had left them naked and defenceless against the action of a malignant, vulgar and pitiless prejudice." When the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church Conference of Western States, in session in Denver, discussed the decision, delegates made "incendiary" speeches and "[a] Bishop declared that if the negroes' rights were thus trampled upon a revolution would be the result." . . .

Republicans and Democrats agreed that the only way for African-Americans to garner more rights was to work to deserve them, as all others did in America's free labor system. The *Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin* repeated this view:

> [F]urther advancement depends chiefly upon themselves, on their earnest pursuit of education, on their progress in morality and religion, on their thoughtful exercise of their duties as citizens, on their persistent practice of industry, on their self-reliance, and on their determination to exalt themselves, not as proscribed or despised Africans, but as American men clothed with the privileges of citizenship in the one great republic of the earth. They have it in their power to secure for themselves, by their own conduct, more really important "rights" than can be given to them by any formal legislation of Congress.

The Democratic *Hartford Weekly Times* agreed, and asserted that true black leaders, "not men like Fred. Douglass, who are 'professional' colored men, and who have been agitating something and been paid for it all of their lives," approved of the decision. "They say there is no such thing as social equality among white men, and that the colored man cannot get it by law, but by the way he conducts himself."

Republican and Democratic newspapers highlighted those African-Americans who cheerfully told their neighbors "to acquire knowledge and wealth as the surest way of obtaining our rights." From Baltimore came the news that "Mr. John F. Cook, a colored man of character, who deservedly enjoys the respect of this entire community, who has held and administered with marked ability for years the responsible office of Collector of Taxes for the District of Columbia," told a reporter that he had no fears of white reprisals after the decision, expecting whites to accord to African-Americans "what legislation could never accomplish." "These are golden words, and if all men of his race were like Mr. Cook there would never be any trouble on this subject," concluded the Republican *Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin*.

Even many Northern Democrats painted their own picture of an egalitarian free labor society that had no need of a civil rights law. First they restated the idea that Republican efforts for African-Americans had simply been a ploy to control the government by marshalling the black vote. Trying to make new ties to African-American voters, the Democratic *San Francisco Examiner* emphasized that Republicans had only wanted to use the black vote to create a Republican empire and that the reversal showed that Republicanism no longer offered advantages to black citizens. A reporter noted that members of the black community had said that "it was about time to shake off the Republican yoke and act in politics as American citizens, not as chattels of a party who cared but for their votes."

While the rhetoric of the *San Francisco Examiner* repeated long-standing Democratic arguments, it also reinforced the idea that some hardworking African-Americans had indeed prospered in America, and that these upwardly mobile blacks were fully accepted even in Democratic circles. In San Francisco, the paper noted, "there are . . . many intelligent and educated men and women of African descent." Using the Republican pattern of according prosperous African-Americans names, descriptions, and their own words, it interviewed the Reverend Alexander Walters, whom it described respectfully as an educated and well-traveled young man, and happily printed both his assertion that in cities across the nation and "in the West . . . race prejudice has died out," and his prediction that the court's decision would drive black voters from the Republican party. Similarly, it quoted P. A. Bell, "the veteran editor of the *Elevator*, the organ of the colored people," as saying that in California—a Democratic state—"we people are treated just as well as if there were fifty Civil Rights bills."

With the overturning of the 1875 Civil Rights Act, mainstream Republicans and Democrats, black and white, agreed that there must be no extraordinary legislation on behalf of African-Americans, who had to work their way up in society like everyone else. Stalwart Republicans who advocated additional protection for black citizens were seen as either political demagogues who wanted the black vote to maintain their power or misguided reformers duped by stories of white atrocities against freedpeople. Northern black citizens who advocated civil rights legislation, like Frederick Douglass, were either scheming politicians who, like their white counterparts, needed the votes of uneducated African-Americans, or they were disaffected workers who believed in class struggle and wanted to control the government in order to destroy capital.

Southern blacks seemed to be the worst of all these types. They appeared to want to increase the government's power solely in order to be given what others had earned, and to do so, they were corrupting government by keeping scheming Republican politicos in office.

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?

Critical Thinking and Reflection

1. What were the key factors that contributed to the Colfax massacre?
2. In what way does an economic interpretation play a significant role in the essays by both Keith and Richardson?
3. In what ways does a racial interpretation play a significant role in the essays by both Keith and Richardson?

Is There Common Ground?

The question posed in this issue assumes that Reconstruction policy ended in failure. Certainly, many of the goals formulated by the Radical Republicans in Congress remained unfulfilled by the time the Compromise of 1877 removed federal troops from the South. If the goal of Reconstruction was to bring the former Confederate states back into the Union, however, that task was accomplished despite the fact that relations between the North and South remained uneasy. If the goal was to rebuild the South economically, positive steps were taken in that direction, as well. And coinciding with the end of Reconstruction were the efforts by some white southerners to demonstrate their willingness at reconciliation with the hated Yankees by attracting industrial and manufacturing interests to the "New" South as a means of diversifying the region's economy. In addition, state constitutions were democratized, and public education was made available on a large scale for the first time.

For those few forward-thinking Radicals who envisioned a multiracial society in the South that extended full rights of citizenship to African Americans, many of whom had lived their entire lives in slavery until the end of the Civil War, failure was likely foreordained given the strength of the doctrine of white supremacy, not only in the South but also nationally. Absent a firm economic foundation that could guarantee self-sufficiency, sustained access to the ballot box, and a broad-based commitment to equality of the races, African Americans in the South possessed little protection from poverty, political powerlessness, and the privilege of whiteness. Quiet, small victories would have to be crafted from within segregated black communities while African Americans held out hope for future enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

Additional Resources

The study of the Reconstruction period benefits from an extensive bibliography. Traditional accounts of Reconstruction include William Archibald Dunning's *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865–1877* (Harper & Brothers, 1907); Claude Bowers' *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (Riverside Press, 1929); and E. Merton Coulter's, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865–1877* (Louisiana State University Press, 1947), the last major work written from the Dunning (or traditional) point of view. Some of the earliest revisionist views appeared in the scholarly works of African American historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (Harcourt, Brace, 1935), a Marxist analysis, and John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction: After the Civil War* (University of Chicago Press, 1961). Briefer overviews are available in Forrest G. Wood, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1863–1877* (Harlan Davidson, 1975) and Michael Perman, *Emancipation and Reconstruction, 1862–1879* (Harlan Davidson, 1987).

One of the best-written studies of a specific episode during the Reconstruction years is Willie Lee Rose's *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), which describes the failed effort at land reform in the sea islands of South Carolina. Richard Nelson Current's *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1988) is a superb challenge to the traditional view of these much-maligned Reconstruction participants. Finally, for collections of interpretive essays on various aspects of the Reconstruction experience, see Staughton Lynd, ed., *Reconstruction* (Harper & Row, 1967); Seth M. Scheiner, ed., *Reconstruction: A Tragic Era?* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968); and Edwin C. Rozwenc, ed., *Reconstruction in the South* (2d ed., Heath, 1972).

Contributors to This Volume

EDITORS

LARRY MADARAS is professor of history Emeritus at Howard Community College in Columbia, Maryland. He received a B.A. from the College of Holy Cross in 1959 and an M.A. and Ph.D. from New York University in 1961 and 1964, respectively. He has also taught at Spring Hill College, the University of South Alabama, and the University of Maryland at College Park. He has been a Fulbright Fellow and has held two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is the author of dozens of journal articles and book reviews and has edited *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in United States History Since 1945*.

JAMES M. SORELLE is a professor of history and former chair of the Department of History at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He received a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Houston in 1972 and 1974, respectively, and a Ph.D. from Kent State University in 1980. In addition to introductory courses in United States and world history, he teaches advanced undergraduate classes in African American history, the American civil rights movement, and the 1960s, as well as a graduate seminar on the civil rights movement. His scholarly articles have appeared in *Houston Review*, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, and *Black Dixie: Essays in Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston* (Texas A & M University Press, 1992), edited by Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz. He also has contributed entries to *The New Handbook of Texas*, *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History*, the *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, and the *Encyclopedia of African American History*.

AUTHORS

JOYCE APPLEBY is Professor emerita of History at UCLA where she taught for 20 years. Her book *Ideology and Economic Thought in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1978) won the Berkshire Prize. Other works include *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (NYU, 1984), *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Harvard, 1992), and *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (W. W. Norton, 2010). She is also the past president of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, and, in 2009, she won the Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Award for distinguished writing in American History.

MELVIN E. BRADFORD (1934–1993) was a professor of literature at the University of Dallas from 1967 until his death. His publications include *Against the Barbarians and Other Reflections on Familiar Themes* (University of Missouri Press, 1992) and *Original Intentions: On the Making and Ratification of the United States Constitution* (University of Georgia Press, 1993).

T. H. BREEN is the William Smith Mason Professor of American History at Northwestern University, where he specializes in early American history. Among his many honors and awards, Breen has been a Guggenheim fellow and held distinguished professorships at both Cambridge and Oxford. Among his several award-winning monographs are *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1985) and Imagining the Past: East Hampton Histories (Addison-Wesley, 1989).

JON BUTLER is the Howard R. Lamar Professor of American History and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Yale University. He is the author of *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society* (Harvard University Press, Harvard University Press, 1983); *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Harvard University Press, 1990); and coauthor of *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (Oxford University Press, 2002). He coedited *Religion in American History: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, 1997) and is currently writing a book on religion in modern New York City.

LAURIE WINN CARLSON is assistant professor of history at Western Oregon University. She is the author of several scholarly historical studies, including *Cattle: An Informal Social History* (Ivan R. Dee, 2002); *Seduced by the West: Jefferson's America and the Lure of the Land Beyond the Mississippi* (Ivan R. Dee, 2003); and *William J. Spillman and the Birth Of Agricultural Economics* (University Press, 2005).

ALFRED A. CAVE is professor emeritus of history at the University of Toledo, where he served as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1973–1990. The recipient of grants from the Danforth Foundation and National Endowment for the Humanities, his books include *Jacksonian Democracy and the Historians* (University of Florida Press, 1964); *An American Conservative in* *the Age of Jackson: The Political and Social Thought of Calvin Colton* (Texas Christian University Press, 1969); *The Pequot War* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); and *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

NANCY F. COTT is the Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History at Harvard University and Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. A specialist in nineteenth- and twentieth-century social and cultural history, her other books include *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (Yale University Press, 1987); *A Woman Making History: Mary Ritter Beard through Her Letters* (Yale University Press, 1991); and *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2000).

CARL N. DEGLER is the Margaret Byrne Professor emeritus of American History at Stanford University and during his distinguished academic career served as president of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the Southern Historical Association. His book *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (University of Wisconsin, 1971) won the Pulitzer Prize for history. He also is the author of *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (Oxford University Press, 1992) and *At Odds: Women and Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

CHARLES B. DEW is the Ephraim Williams Professor of American History at Williams College. Two of his books, *Apostles of Disunion* (University of Virginia Press, 2002) and *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works* (Yale University Press, 1966), received the Fletcher Pratt Award presented by the Civil War Round Table of New York for the best nonfiction book on the American Civil War. He is also the author of *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge* (W. W. Norton, 1994), which received the Elliott Rudwick Prize from the Organization of American Historians.

MARC EGNAL is a professor of history at York University, Toronto, Canada. A specialist on the American Revolution and Civil War, he is the author of *A Mighty Empire: The Origins of the American Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 1988); *Divergent Paths: How Culture and Institutions Have Shaped North American Growth* (Oxford University Press, 1996); *New World Economies: The Growth of the Thirteen Colonies and Early Canada* (Oxford University Press, 1998); and, most recently, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Hill & Wang, 2009).

ROBERT FINLAY is a professor of history at the University of Arkansas, where he has taught since 1987. A specialist in Renaissance and world history, he is the author of *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (Rutgers University Press, 1980), which won the Howard R. Marraro Prize for the best book on Italian or Italian-American history from the American Historical Association; *The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History* (University of California

Press, 2009); and numerous scholarly articles, including several on the voyages of the Ming dynasty admiral Zheng He.

JAMES N. GILBERT is a professor and former chair of the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska–Kearney, where he has taught since 1988. Specializing in criminal investigative theory, he is the author of *Criminal Investigation* (Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009), now in its eighth edition, as well as numerous journal articles.

JOHN STEELE GORDON is a specialist in business and financial history whose articles have appeared in numerous prominent magazines and newspapers for the past 20 years. He is a contributing editor to *American Heritage* and since 1989 has written the “Business of America” column. His other books include *Hamilton’s Blessing: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Our National Debt* (Walker, 1997), *The Great Game: The Emergence of Wall Street as a World Power: 1653–2000* (1999), and *A Thread across the Ocean: the Heroic Story of the Transatlantic Cable* (Walker, 2002).

NORMAN A. GRAEBNER is the Randolph P. Compton Professor emeritus of History at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. He has held a number of other academic appointments and has received distinguished teacher awards at every campus at which he has taught. He has edited and written numerous books, articles, and texts on American history, including *Foundations of American Foreign Policy: A Realist Appraisal From Franklin to McKinley* (Scholarly Resources Press, 1985) and *Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion,* 2d ed. (Regina Books, 1983).

SCOTT JOHN HAMMOND is a professor of political science at James Madison University, where he specializes in political philosophy. He is the author of *Political Theory: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary and Classic Terms* (Greenwood, 2008) and coauthor of *Encyclopedia of Presidential Campaigns, Slogans, Issues, and Platforms* (Greenwood, 2008).

LEEANNA KEITH earned her Ph.D. at the University of Connecticut and currently teaches history at Collegiate School, a boys day school in New York City, which is the oldest independent school in the United States.

KEVIN KENNY is a professor of history at Boston College. A specialist in American immigration and labor history, he is the author of *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (Oxford University Press, 1998), *The American Irish: A History* (Longman, 2000), and *New Directions in Irish-American History* (University of Wisconsin, 2003).

THOMAS S. KIDD is an associate professor of history at Baylor University, where he also serves as codirector of the Program on Historical Studies of Religion for the Institute for Studies in Religion. His other books include *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (Yale University Press, 2004) and *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton University Press, 2008).

LYLE KOEHLER was an instructor of history at the University of Cincinnati where he held several other administrative positions. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles in the fields of colonial American history and ethnic studies.

KAREN ORDAHL KUPPERMAN is the Silver Professor of History at New York University. Her other books include *Settling With the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580–1640* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), *Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), which won the Albert Beveridge Prize from the American Historical Association, and *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Cornell University Press, 2000), winner of the AHA Prize in Atlantic History.

GERDA LERNER is Robinson-Edwards Professor of History Emerita at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. One of the foremost historians of women in America, she is the author of numerous books, including *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967) and *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford University Press, 1986).

JAMES M. MCPHERSON is the George Henry Davis ’86 Professor emeritus of United States History at Princeton University. The author of 17 books, his major works include *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton University Press, 1964), *The Negro’s Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* (Pantheon Books, 1965), *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (3rd ed.; McGraw-Hill, 2001), and *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford University Press, 1988), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize.

GAVIN MENZIES is a retired British submarine commander and amateur historian. His most recent book is *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance* (William Morrow, 2008).

EDMOND S. MORGAN is the Sterling Professor emeritus of History at Yale University and the author of 16 books on the American colonial period. These works include *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Harper & Row, 1966), *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (2nd ed.; Longman, 1998), and *Benjamin Franklin* (Yale University Press, 2002). His most recent book, *The Genuine Article: A Historian Looks at Early America* (W. W. Norton, 2004), is a collection of his review essays that appeared in *The New York Review of Books*. In 2000, he received the National Humanities Medal.

MARK E. NEELY is currently the McCabe Greer Professor of Civil War History at Penn State University. A specialist on Abraham Lincoln and the American Civil War, he is the author of *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (Oxford University Press, 1991), which won the Pulitzer and Bell I. Wiley prizes; *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* (Harvard University Press, 1993); *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction* (Harvard University Press, 2007); and, most recently, *Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation: Constitutional Conflict in the American Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011). From

1972 to 1992, he served as Director of The Lincoln Museum in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

PHILIP SHAW PALUDAN (1938–2007) was a professor of history at the University of Kansas for over 30 years before accepting the Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois, Springfield. In addition to his study of Lincoln's presidency, which won the Lincoln Prize, he is the author of *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (University of Tennessee Press, 1981) and *A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861–1865* (Harper & Row, 1988).

ROBERT REMINI is a professor of history Emeritus and research professor of humanities Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The author of biographies of John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Martin Van Buren, he is best known as one of the nation's preeminent specialists on Andrew Jackson. His three-volume biography of Jackson stands as the definitive account of "Old Hickory," and the third volume, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Democracy, 1833–1845* (Harper & Row, 1984), received the National Book Award.

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON is a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her other books include *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 1997) and *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (Yale University Press, 2007).

W. J. RORABAUGH is a professor of history at the University of Washington. His current published research focuses on the 1960s and includes *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (Oxford University Press, 1989), *Kennedy and the Promise of the 1960s* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), and *The Real Making of the President: Kennedy, Nixon, and the 1960 Election* (University Press of Kansas, 2009).

RAMÓN EDUARDO RUIZ (1921–2010) was professor emeritus of Latin American History at the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of 15 books on Mexico and Latin America including *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (W. W. Norton, 1970), *Triumphs and Tragedy: A History of the Mexican People* (W. W. Norton, 1993), and *Mexico: Why a Few Are Rich and the People Are Poor* (University of California Press, 2010). In 1998, he received the National Humanities Medal.

JOHN J. RUMBARGER (1938–1996) taught American political history at Rutgers University. A former editor of *Prologue*, he later served as chief historian of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

CYNTHIA J. VAN ZANDT earned her doctorate from the University of Connecticut in 1998 and is associate professor of history at the University of New Hampshire.

GORDON S. WOOD is the Alva O. Way University Professor and Professor of History Emeritus at Brown University. *His book The Creation of the American*

Republic, 1776–1787 (North Carolina, 1969) won the Bancroft Prize, and he received the Pulitzer Prize for History for *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Knopf, 1992). Most recently, he has published *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815 (Oxford, 2009)* in the Oxford History of the United States series. In 2010, he was awarded the National Humanities Medal.

HOWARD ZINN (1922–2010) was professor emeritus of political science at Boston University where he taught for 24 years. Well known as a political and social activist in the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s, he is also the author of *The Southern Mystique* (1962; South End Press Edition, 2002), *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Beacon Press, 1964), *The Politics of History* (Beacon Press, 1970; 1990)), and his memoir *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times* (Beacon Press, 1994).

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