

Echoes of the Civil War
(In Twelve Textbooks)

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Rationale

I began this year's TAH Seminar knowing I would be teaching US History II during the subsequent school year. This led me to look carefully for reverberations of TAH content into the post-Civil War era. Two of the early units in US II involve Reconstruction and Industrial America. The words of two TAH presenters would echo into those units:

- “Reconstruction began when the first [Union] troops entered rebel territory.” - Paul Finkelman
- “The [Civil] war marked the beginning of corporate capitalism.” – John Stauffer

These statements spawned the topics of this paper:

- Reconstruction during the Civil War (and its importance for later events) and
- the impact of the war on the Industrial Age of the latter part of the century.

Method and Bibliography

The two topics were investigated initially by researching relevant sections from twelve high school textbooks, followed by *Battle Cry of Freedom*. Some of the benefits of this method are explained under “Applications” section at the end of this paper. To facilitate explication of the results of this inquiry, each of the twelve textbooks is listed here with the **simplified reference** used throughout this paper in boldface:

- Paul Boyer, *Todd & Curti's The American Nation* (Orlando, 1995): “**Todd & Curti**”
- Paul Boyer, Clifford E. Clark, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, Neal Salisbury, Harvard Sitkoff, and Nancy Woloch; *The Enduring Vision*, 6th ed. (Boston, 2008): “**Vision**”
- Mark Carnes and John A. Garraty, *The American Nation*, 13th ed. (New York, 2008): “**Carnes**”
- Gerard A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, and Nancy Woloch; *The Americans* (Evanston, 2007): “**Americans**”

- Robert A. Divine, T.H. Breen, George M. Frederickson, R. Hal Williams, Ariela J. Gross, and H.W. Brands; *America Past and Present*, 8th ed. (New York, 2007): “**Divine**”
- John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, and Susan H. Armitage; *Out of Many*, 5th ed. (Saddle River, 2007): “**Faragher**”
- James Henretta, David Brody, and Lynn Dumenil; *America’s History*, 6th ed. (Boston, 2008): “**Henretta**”
- David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey; *The American Pageant*, 13th ed. (Boston, 2006): “**Pageant**”
- Wayne E. King and John L. Napp, *AGS Publishing United States History* (Circle Pines, MN, 2005): “**AGS**”
- Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The American People* (New York, 2006): “**Nash**”
- Mary Beth Norton, Carol Sherif, David M. Katzman, David W. Blight, Howard P. Chudacoff, Frederick Logevall, and Beth Bailey; *A People & A Nation* (Boston 2008): “**Norton**”
- James L. Roark, Michael P. Johnson, Patricia Cline Cohen, Sarah Stage, Alan Lawson, and Susan M. Hartmann; *The American Promise*, 4th ed. (Boston, 2009): “**Roarke**”

Additional information and perspective were drawn from:

- James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Oxford, 1988): “**McPherson**”

Echoes during Reconstruction

AGS (American Guidance Service) Publishing produces texts in a variety of subjects for the special education market. Their US History textbook provides simplified syntax, controlled vocabulary, and highly condensed content for students with attention deficits, behavioral issues, or other learning disabilities. It provided no information about the genesis of Reconstruction beyond brief references to Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address and his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction (without actually naming either.) *Americans*, a text used by many North Shore communities, never mentions the Second Inaugural, but gives more detail to Lincoln’s “Ten-Percent Plan,” introduces the difference of opinion with Radical Republicans as starting during the war, and briefly considers the Wade-Davis Bill, mostly as an example of the process of the pocket veto. The Freedmen’s Bureau, which was actually passed late in the war, is only mentioned briefly in retrospect when President Johnson vetoes its renewal. The freeing of the slaves by Thirteenth Amendment warrants only a cursory afterthought to the Emancipation Proclamation, disconnected

from both the war and the reconstruction process. The last of the non-AP texts reviewed was **Todd & Curti**, actually a substantially rewritten (by Paul Boyer in 1995) version of the venerable best seller of the 70s and 80s, *Rise (later Triumph) of the American Nation*. Like a majority of the texts, it treats Reconstruction as a separate unit after the war, but provides somewhat more depth to each of the topics mentioned above. Moreover, unlike some of the AP texts, a large box insert on “South Carolina and the Sea Islands” alludes to the efforts of northern volunteers and to General Sherman’s Field Order No. 15 granting leases of land. The insert ends with a valuable insight not found elsewhere: “As late as 1890, however, 60% of the Sea Islands property was still in the hands of African Americans – standing as a testament to what Reconstruction might have been” (p.413).

Most of the nine texts marketed as suitable for AP classes treat Reconstruction as a chapter separate from the war and divide the topic into “Presidential Reconstruction,” and “Congressional Reconstruction,” lumping together Lincoln and Johnson’s plans under the Presidential category. *Vision* only refers to the Sea Islands (but not Sherman’s Order) in a map and picture insert with brief caption (p. 445). Like most texts, it mentions the Freedmen’s Bureau Act (five weeks before Lee’s surrender), describing its forty-acre stipulation as “the first and only time that Congress provided for the redistribution of Confederate property” (p.443). As noted in *Pageant*, despite this provision of the act, “little land actually made it into blacks’ hands,” which may explain most texts’ failure to associate this measure with later, unrequited African American hopes for “Forty Acres and a Mule.” Spike Lee chose this phrase for the name of his film company, an interesting connection for many high school students, especially those of color. The most recent echo of that phrase in the textbooks is heard from **Carnes** in a misrepresentation of Sherman’s military field order as a long term promise including animals:

In January 2007, congressman John Conyers of Michigan introduced a bill that would require the federal government to reimburse African Americans for the harm done them by slavery and its aftermath....He had assigned his bill the number 40 – a reference to General William Sherman’s promise to provide freed slaves with “forty acres and a mule” (p. 409).

Of the textbooks, **Norton** provides the most complete description of problems in the Sea Islands experiment, including those resulting from Yankee do-gooders with little understanding of the real needs and aspirations of the freedmen. Only a few of the texts mention the role of these wartime emissaries of private freedmen's aid societies who set the stage for the public Freedmen's Bureau and "were the forerunners of a larger invasion...after the war" (**McPherson**, 710).

Most of the advanced texts effectively describe the transition of the evolving status of the slave in occupied territory into quasi-free "contrabands," but fail to present this as a reconstruction of the social order. All but **Divine**, **Faragher**, **Nash**, and **Pageant** include the role of Congress in this process through the Confiscation Acts, though not assigning those laws as much significance as **McPherson**, who says they symbolized the transformation of the conflict into "a war to overturn the southern social order as a means of reconstructing the Union" (p. 500). Of the other five, **Henretta** does the best job of linking the contraband situation to the early Reconstruction ideas of the Radicals. On the other hand, no textbook (only **McPherson**) points out the pattern of friction followed by accommodation between President Lincoln and the Congress, which portended a different series of events had John Wilkes Booth failed. **McPherson** is also alone in showing that the competing constitutional theories that would play out in Reconstruction debates after the war (state suicide and conquered provinces versus indestructible states) had their origins early in the war itself.

Few texts look past Sherman and the Sea Islands in considering the wartime reconstruction of labor roles. **Nash** interestingly mentions that "farther inland, freed-people who received land were the former slaves of the Cherokee and Creek" (p. 525). **Faragher** describes the contract labor system established by the military in Louisiana which came to employ over 50,000 former slaves by 1864 and would become widespread after the war (p. 572). Only **McPherson** mentions that Congressional dissatisfaction with wartime reconstruction in Louisiana was a key factor in the

Radical break with Lincoln. **Roarke** adds that “[u]p and down the Mississippi valley, occupying federal troops announced a new labor code [resulting in] a hybrid system that one contemporary called ‘compulsory free labor’” (p.356). This was not the only model, however:

In Mississippi, thousands of former slaves worked 40-acre tracts on leased lands that ironically had been previously owned by Jefferson Davis. In this highly successful experiment, they made profits sufficient to repay the government for initial costs, then lost the land to Davis’s brother (**Nash**, p.525).

McPherson cites this as “the outstanding example of a self-governing black colony” (p.710).

As Professor Finklelman suggested, the economic and political reconstruction of the South occurred in stages behind the advancing United States army. This is far from clear in most texts which do not begin to seriously discuss Reconstruction efforts until after Lee’s surrender.

Geographical as well as chronological perspectives are lacking. A more accurate representation could begin with the following map from **Henretta** (p. 450):

This map can be used to describe the geographical progression of Reconstruction (as well as Union armies). The blue coloring indicates areas that were reconstructed first, which have already been

discussed: the Sea Islands and other coastal Atlantic areas, the New Orleans-Baton Rouge area of Louisiana, and the Mississippi Valley north of Vicksburg. Early control of these regions explains why Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee were the first states to be politically reconstructed with military governments, a process mentioned in most texts but disconnected from the war and out of chronological sequence. Andrew Johnson's role in wartime reconstruction during his tenure as military governor of Tennessee is also generally given short shrift. Refer back to the blue and green sections of Tennessee on the map when considering **Henretta** (p. 459):

When federal forces captured Nashville in 1862, Lincoln appointed Johnson Tennessee's military governor. Tennessee, one of the war's bloodiest battlefields, was bitterly divided along geographical lines: Unionist in the east and rebel in the west. [Refer back to blue-green sections of Tennessee on the map.] Johnson's assignment was to hold the state together, and he did so, with an iron hand. He was rewarded by being named Lincoln's running mate in 1864.

Clearly this series of events during wartime reconstruction spawned a major actor in the post-war Reconstruction drama.

Only three of the high school textbooks, **Divine**, **Norton**, and **Roarke** provide a separate section of their narrative titled "Wartime Reconstruction." In the case of **Divine**, the effect is merely organizational. The other two texts provide the most complete descriptions of the social, political, and economic aspects of Reconstruction before Lee's surrender. Both texts also insert an additional section between "Wartime Reconstruction" and the policies of Andrew Johnson. That section, in **Roarke** titled "The African American Quest for Autonomy" and in **Norton** called "The Meaning of Freedom," describes the role of African Americans themselves in the process of reconstructing their roles in society. The inclusion of Reconstruction "from the bottom up," provides a valuable perspective that flows logically from the hypothesis that the slaves freed themselves by flocking behind the conquering Union army. This helps imbed the concept of early Reconstruction into the emancipation process, which in turn was also largely a product of the war. Of these two best "Wartime Reconstruction" texts, **Roarke** provides the better description of economic experiments with a full section entitled "Land and Labor." On the other hand, the full political treatment of

Norton is superior. One particular point, found nowhere else, clearly demonstrates the connection between the war and Lincoln's lenient Reconstruction policies: "[Lincoln's] worst fear was that the war would collapse at the end into guerilla warfare across the South ... [so he] insisted that his generals give lenient terms to southern soldiers, once they surrendered" (**Norton**, p. 437).

Echoes in the Industrial Age

In each of the twelve textbooks the second chapter following Reconstruction deals with the subject that **Todd & Curti** titles "The Transformation of America." **Roarke** includes this topic under "Business and Politics in the Gilded Age." Six of the books specifically use the words "Industry" or "Industrial" in their titles; **Norton** refers to "The Machine Age" and Nash uses "The Rise of Smokestack America." Coming closer to Stauffer's phrase of "corporate capitalism" were **Henretta**, "Capital and Labor in the Age of Enterprise" and **Faragher**, "The Incorporation of America." Each of the twelve texts was searched for harbingers of the Industrial Age during the Civil War. References to this topic were also found in Chapter 14 of **McPherson**, "The Sinews of War," especially Section III, pp. 450-453.

All of the texts describe the business and industry that developed after the Civil War as quite different from that which had existed previously. Having taught for many years using earlier versions of **Todd & Curti**, this reviewer remembers those texts as attributing the dramatic growth and change in post-war industrialization to the war itself. However, this connection was neither to be found in the more recent **Todd & Curti**, nor in any of the other texts' chapters on the industrial age. The search for echoes therefore transformed into an investigation of economic developments during the war.

All texts except the simplistic **AGS** described the ramping up of northern production. The other two non-AP textbooks make the point simply. **Todd & Curti** states that "[I]ndustry had expanded to meet the needs of the military. The northern enterprises of steel, petroleum, food processing, manufacturing,

and finance continued to expand after the war” (p. 389). **Americans** mentions that cotton textiles declined while “woolen mills, steel foundries, coal mines, and many other industries” thrived (p. 353). Like many of the AP texts, **Faragher** also mentions iron and coal (p. 552). **Norton** generalizes essentially the same point: “Industrialization and economic enterprises grew exponentially in tandem with the war” (p. 431), while **Roarke** adds a nice flair of onomatopoeia: “The war set the countryside and cities humming with business activity” (p. 548).

Other AP texts tout the war’s industrializing effect while questioning its overall economic benefits. **Vision** states that the war spurred economic modernization, “provided a hospitable climate for industrial development” (p.460) and “gave a massive boost to the northern economy” (p. 463), yet it “retarded *American* growth” when the 39% decline in southern commodity output is included. **Carnes** states that the war speeded industrialization but its overall economic impact is unclear due to factors such as a concentration on light industry, slower growth, inflation, and labor unrest. Moreover:

The mechanization of production, the growth of large corporations, the creation of a better banking system, the emergence of business leaders attuned to these conditions would surely have occurred in any case, for industrialization was under way long before the South seceded (**Carnes**, p. 396).

The most dubious appraisal comes from **Nash**, citing statistics like those in **Vision** about higher growth in the decades before the 1860s and adding figures showing higher growth in the remaining decades of the century, as well. This text concludes the war only “selectively stimulated manufacturing [and] retarded overall economic growth” (p. 509).

Pageant reveals some of the historiographical roots of this debate. The core narrative probably reflects the older interpretation of the original author (Thomas A. Bailey), who describes the wartime economic boom as “little short of miraculous. The marvel is that a divided nation could fight a costly conflict for four long years and emerge more prosperous than ever before” (p. 450). More recently, the substantially rewritten **Pageant** (primarily by David M. Kennedy) includes a “Varying Viewpoints” box at the end of the Civil War chapter titled “What Were the Consequences of the Civil War?” This presents the more recent, more balanced view that “industrial growth

surged forward ... [but some scholars] have argued that the industrial growth of the post-Civil War era had its real roots in the Jackson era, and thus cannot be ascribed solely to the war” (p. 478).

All texts except **AGS** refer to laws that helped industrialization, but usually without making causal connections clear. “It was the war – or rather the absence of southerners from Congress – that made possible the passage of Hamiltonian-Whig-Republican measures” (**McPherson**, p. 450) in favor of business and industry. During the war the Congress sponsored a national bank, a protective tariff, and railroad construction in a “Whiggish program” (**Divine**, p. 446) of “Hamilton-Clay-Lincoln policies ... [that] promoted the development of a powerful industrial economy” (**Henretta**, p. 454). In addition the Republicans underwrote agricultural and technical colleges through land grants and authored the Homestead Act for free land in the West. [In all of the texts except **Pageant**, the chapter between Reconstruction and the Industrial Age deals with the West.] The needs of war also helped promote laws vastly expanding the government’s role in taxation, currency, and finance. “By its legislation to finance the war, emancipate the slaves, and invest public land in future growth, the 37th Congress [1861-1863] did more than any other in history to change the course of national life” (**McPherson**, p. 452) The indirect causal chain can be summarized as follows: The Civil War led to Republican dominance and interventionist government policies, which in turn helped promote the Industrial Age.

In fact, the theme of the Civil War bringing about bigness, in both government and business, deserves further elaboration. John Stauffer conveyed the change from the market economy of the Jacksonian era to the Industrial Age with the phrase “*corporate* capitalism.” **Roarke** describes “the rise of industrial capitalism,” a particularly apt phrase in which ‘industrial’ also connotes the transition of capitalism onto a bigger, more ‘industrial’ scale. **AGS** and **Carnes** use the term “Industrial Giant” in their chapter titles. Bigness in the growing organizations of labor may have helped promote bigger businesses: “Manufacturers, bitterly opposed to unions ... formed

organizations of their own ... [leading to] large scale organizations, fostered by wartime demand” (Faragher, p. 553) The onset of big government involved not only a huge military machine, but also the seeds of the welfare state: “[T]he Freedmen’s Bureau represented an unprecedented extension of the federal government into matters of social welfare and labor relations” (McPherson, p. 842) The theme of bigness could even be extended into private philanthropic efforts like the Sanitary and Christian Commissions and beyond:

The most pervasive effect of the war was to encourage an “organizational revolution” ... Both the men who served in the army and those men and women who supported them ... became accustomed to working in large, bureaucratic organizations of a kind that had scarcely existed before the war (Divine, p. 446)

The Civil War had decisive effects on the Industrial Age. It may not have been the only or even the primary factor behind industrialization, but it clearly expanded American institutions, including business, on an ‘industrial’ scale. **Henretta** cites the wartime meat-packing industry, especially the activities of Philip D. Armour (the first ‘robber baron’?) and notes that: “A similar concentration of capital took place in many industries...[where] massed financial power threatened...the future of democracy.” In 1865 General William Tecumseh Sherman, who had played a major role in winning the war, read the following lines in a letter from his brother, Senator John Sherman of Ohio, who was later to play a major role in dealing with bigness in the industrial ‘trusts’:

The truth is the close of the war with our resources unimpaired gives an elevation, a scope to the ideas of leading capitalists, far higher than anything ever undertaken before. They talk of millions as confidently as they talked formerly of thousands. (Cited by Mark Malvasi in *Economy, 1865-1900: the Rise of Corporate Capitalism*, found at www.bookrags.com/research/economy-18651900-the-rise-of-corpor-besc/sect3.html)

Application

Facts and perspectives on these two topics could be inserted into the US II curriculum in two different places. The course usually begins with a brief review unit on the war itself, which could highlight these topics in lecture, discussion, and/or individual study. Alternately, the topics could

be imbedded into the later units with the added benefit of providing some very beneficial Civil War review.

The selected method of multiple textbook reviews had benefits as well. As each textbook draws on its own unique and often extensive bibliography, the chosen approach provided a screened shortcut to a tremendous body of scholarship. Historiographical perspectives emerged from the sense of consensus (or lack thereof) among the several texts. In depth investigations into the two “echoes” provided not only a basic familiarity with the several texts, but a real sense of their scope, rigor, and style. This knowledge allows for assignment of different textbooks (or selections) to subgroups of the class, in preparation for a debate, “jigsaw,” or “Research Conference.”

In conclusion, both the topics and the method will provide rich sources of innovation for this year’s US History II classes.