

Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War

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Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men is an exciting narrative history offering fresh insights into many aspects of the Civil War.

"This is a lucid, edifying account of the Civil War era. Mr. Hummel has an impressive command of the relevant contemporary literature. His interpretations are thoughtful, often provocative, always well worth considering. Civil War buffs will want this book on their shelves". -- Kenneth M. Stampp University of California, Berkeley

"Hummel presents some uncomfortable truths for both sides of the Civil War. For the South, Hummel builds a case that the war was indeed about slavery. For the North, he shows that a war to preserve the union was morally bankrupt and that freeing the slaves was the only justifiable reason for fighting. Yet Hummel demonstrates that even a war for such a noble cause was probably unnecessary, since slavery was politically doomed in an independent South. Hummel also illustrates some of the cost of the war, such as Lincoln's suppression of political opposition, the closing of dissenting newspapers, and the creation of big government under Republicans Lincoln, Johnson, and Grant". -- Library Journal

"In this insightful treatment of the Civil War (addressing the causes, the war itself and Reconstruction), Hummel's text argues against the thesis that armed confrontation was inevitable. With its insightful analysis (not to mention the extensive bibliographical essays that elaborate each chapter), Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men will supply both the academic and Civil War buff with an added perspective on the causes and consequences of the Civil War". -- Publishers Weekly

In this insightful treatment of the Civil War (addressing the causes, the war itself and Reconstruction), Hummel's text argues against the thesis that armed confrontation was inevitable. "As an excuse for civil war," he says, "maintaining the States territorial integrity is bankrupt and reprehensible. Slavery's elimination is the only morally worthy justification." But slavery, he suggests, was on its way out in any case. Not only was it a political liability, but the institution's many-faceted costs (social cost, enforcement, uprisings, mistreatment) outweighed any profits. If, after decades of unsuccessful compromise, the North had recognized the South's revolutionary right to self-determination and had let the Gulf states secede, slavery would have succumbed in the border states. Hummel goes on to argue, as have many others before, that after a devastating war and the disappointment of Reconstruction, a federal government that once interfered only a little in the affairs of individual states "had been transformed into an overbearing bureaucracy that intruded into daily life with taxes, drafts, surveillance, subsidies and regulations." Hummel, a professor of history and economics at Golden Gate University in San Francisco, quotes David H. Donald, saying, "Before the Civil War, many politicians and writers referred to the United States in the plural"--i.e., the United States are, a grammatical agreement no longer used after 1865. With its insightful analysis (not to mention the extensive bibliographical essays that elaborate each chapter), Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men will supply both the academic and Civil War buff with an added perspective on the causes and consequences of the Civil War.

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Other Books

Plain Folk's Fight. In an examination of the effects of the Civil War on the rural Southern home front, Mark V. Wetherington looks closely at the experiences of white "plain folk"--mostly yeoman farmers and craftspeople--in the wiregrass region of southern Georgia before, during, and after the war. Although previous scholars have argued that common people in the South fought the battles of the region's elites, Wetherington contends that the plain folk in this Georgia region fought for their own self-interest. Plain folk, whose communities were outside areas in which slaves were the majority of the population, feared black emancipation would allow former slaves to move from cotton plantations to subsistence areas like their piney woods communities. Thus, they favored secession, defended their way of life by fighting in the Confederate army, and kept the antebellum patriarchy intact in their home communities. Unable by late 1864 to sustain a two-front war in Virginia and at home, surviving veterans took their fight to the local political arena, where they used paramilitary tactics and ritual violence to defeat freedpeople and their white Republican allies, preserving a white patriarchy that relied on ex-Confederate officers for a new generation of leadership.

Wetherington, Mark V. "The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 6 (June 1922): 97-121. Harris, J. William. ... *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War* ."