OF THE PEOPLE

A History of the United States

WITH SOURCES | FIFTH EDITION

VOLUME II
Since 1865

MICHAEL McGERR
CAMILLA TOWNSEND
KAREN M. DUNAK
MARK SUMMERS
JAN ELLEN LEWIS

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About the Cover

A self-described propagandist for civil rights, photojournalist Matt Herron (1931–2020) moved south with his family in the early 1960s and assembled a team of photographers to document the freedom struggle. In 1965, he captured an iconic image of the voting rights protests in Selma, Alabama. Against a gray, cloudy sky, a mostly male, African American column of marchers carries two American flags—at once a proclamation of loyalty and a demand for full US citizenship.

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Jan Ellen Lewis
1949–2018
Historian, Teacher, Friend

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Preface

At Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln dedicated a memorial to the more than 3,000 Union soldiers who had died turning back a Confederate invasion in the first days of July. There were at least a few ways that the president could have justified the sad loss of life in the third year of a brutal war dividing North and South. He could have said it was necessary to destroy the Confederacy's cherished institution of slavery, to punish southerners for seceding from the United States, or to preserve the nation intact. Instead, at this crucial moment in American history, Lincoln gave a short, stunning speech about democracy. The president did not use the word, but he offered its essence. The term *democracy* came from the ancient Greek word *demos*—for "the people." To honor the dead of Gettysburg, Lincoln called on northerners to ensure "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

With these words, Lincoln put democracy at the center of the Civil War and at the center of American history. The authors of this book share his belief in the centrality of democracy; his words, "of the people," give our book its title and its main theme. We see American history as a story "of the people," of their struggles to shape their lives and their land.

Our choice of theme does not mean we believe that America has always been a democracy. Clearly, it has not. As Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address, most African Americans still lived in slavery. American women, North and South, lacked rights that many men enjoyed; for all their disagreements, white southerners and northerners viewed Native Americans as enemies. Neither do we believe that there is only a single definition of democracy, either in the narrow sense of a particular form of government or in the larger one of a society whose members participate equally in its creation. Although Lincoln defined the northern cause as a struggle for democracy, southerners believed it was anything but democratic to force them to remain in the Union at gunpoint. As bloody draft riots in New York City in July 1863 made clear, many northern men thought it was anything but democratic to force them to fight in Lincoln's armies. Such disagreements have been typical of American history. For more than 500 years, people have struggled over whose vision of life in the New World would prevail.

That reality has been especially clear as we completed revising the book for this new edition. The tumultuous presidential campaign of 2020, one of the most divisive in American history, took place in the midst of a deadly pandemic and culminated in the extraordinary storming of the federal Capitol building in Washington, DC in January 2021. With the nation arguably more divided than at any time since the Civil War, we have carried our coverage down to the events of January. Recent history is always a challenge and always subject to revision, but we have wanted to show how contemporary struggles over democracy are rooted in the past. As always, we feel that our balanced, inclusive approach makes it more possible for teachers and students to deal with the most controversial events.

It is precisely such struggles as those of the 2020s and the 1860s that offer the best angle of vision for seeing and understanding the most important developments in the nation's history. In particular, the democratic theme concentrates attention on the most fundamental concerns of history: people and power.

Lincoln's words serve as a reminder of the basic truth that history is about people. Across the 30 chapters of this book, we write extensively about complex events. But we also write in the awareness that these developments are only abstractions unless they are grounded in the lives of people. The test of a historical narrative, we believe, is whether its characters are fully rounded, believable human beings.

The choice of Lincoln's words also reflects our belief that history is about power. To ask whether America was democratic at some point in the past is to ask how much power various groups of people had to make their lives and their nation. Such questions of power necessarily take us to political processes, to the ways in which people work separately and collectively to enforce their will. We define politics quite broadly in this book. With the feminists of the 1960s, we believe that "the personal is the political," that power relations shape people's lives in private as well as in public. *Of the People* looks for democracy in the living room as well as the legislature, and in the bedroom as well as the business office.

Focusing on democracy, people, and power, we have necessarily written as wide-ranging a history as possible. In the features and in the main text, *Of the People* conveys both the unity and the great diversity of the American people across time and place. We chronicle the racial and ethnic groups who have shaped America, differences of religious and regional identity, the changing nature of social classes, and the different ways that gender identities have been constructed over the centuries.

While treating different groups in their distinctiveness, we have integrated them into the broader narrative as much as possible. A true history "of the people" means not only acknowledging their individuality and diversity but also showing their interrelationships and their roles in the larger narrative. More integrated coverage of Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and other minority groups appears throughout the fourth edition.

Of the People also offers comprehensive coverage of the different spheres of human life—cultural as well as governmental, social as well as economic, environmental as well as military. This commitment to comprehensiveness is a reflection of our belief that all aspects of human existence are the stuff of history. It is also an expression of the fundamental theme of the book: the focus on democracy leads naturally to the study of people's struggles for power in every dimension of their lives. Moreover, the democratic approach emphasizes the interconnections between the different aspects of Americans' lives; we cannot understand politics and government without tracing their connection to economics, religion, culture, art, sexuality, and so on.

The economic connection is especially important. *Of the People* devotes much attention to economic life, to the ways in which Americans have worked and saved and spent. Economic power, the authors believe, is basic to democracy. Americans' power to shape their lives and their country has been greatly affected by whether they were farmers or hunters, plantation owners or enslaved people, wage workers

or capitalists, domestic servants or bureaucrats. The authors do not see economics as an impersonal, all-conquering force; instead, we try to show how the values and actions of ordinary people, as well as the laws and regulations of government, have made economic life.

We have also tried especially to place America in a global context. The history of America, or any nation, cannot be adequately explained without understanding its relationship to transnational events and global developments. That is true for the first chapter of the book, which shows how America began to emerge from the collision of Native Americans, West Africans, and Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is just as true for the last chapters of the book, which demonstrate how globalization and the war on terror transformed the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century. In the chapters in between, we detail how the world has changed America and how America has changed the world. Reflecting the concerns of the rest of the book, we focus particularly on the movement of people, the evolution of power, and the attempt to spread democracy abroad.

Abraham Lincoln wanted to sell a war, of course. But he also truly believed that his audience would see democracy as quintessentially American. Whether he was right is the burden of this book.

HALLMARK FEATURES

- Each chapter opens with an **American Portrait** feature, a story of someone whose life in one way or another embodies the basic theme of the pages to follow.
- Select chapters include an **American Landscape** feature, a particular place in time where issues of power appeared in especially sharp relief. The new American Landscape features in the fifth edition more explicitly look at American places from an environmental perspective.
- To underscore the fundamental importance of global relationships, select chapters include a feature on **America in the World**. Formerly called "America and the World," the subtle change to the name of this feature reflects the greater attention it now gives to topics related to immigration.
- Each chapter includes a **Struggles for Democracy** feature, focusing on moments of debate and public conversation surrounding events that have contributed to the changing ideas of democracy, as well as the sometimes constricting but overall gradually widening opportunities that evolved for the American people as a result.
- **Common Threads**, located at the beginning of each chapter**,** offer focus questions that ask the student to consider the main problems examined in the discussions that follow.
- **Timelines** provide dates for all the key events discussed in the chapters.
- A list of chapter-ending key terms, **Who, What, Where**, helps students recall the important people, events, and places of that chapter.
- All chapters end with both **Review Questions**, which test students' memory and understanding of chapter content, and **Critical-Thinking Questions**, which ask students to analyze and interpret chapter content.

NEW TO THE FIFTH EDITION

We are grateful that the first four editions of *Of the People* have been welcomed by instructors and students as a useful instructional aid. In preparing the fifth edition, our primary goal has been to maintain the text's overarching focus on the evolution of American democracy, people, and power; its strong portrayal of political and social history; and its clear, compelling narrative voice. Throughout, we have continued to intensify the focus on the environment, diversity, and immigration and to offer coverage of events such as the devastation of Tenochtitlan in the face of smallpox in the sixteenth century, the influenza pandemic of 1918, and the Tulsa Race massacre of 1921 that speak to the contemporary challenges of the United States. Acknowledging the upheavals of recent history, we have reorganized and rewritten chapters 29 and 30 to give full coverage to the twenty-first century. One of the text's strengths is its critical-thinking pedagogy because the study of history entails careful analysis, not mere memorization of names and dates.

Strengthened Learning Aids

We have significantly revised the Who, What, Where glossary terms so that the most essential and fundamental ideas, people, and places are consistently highlighted, and the terms are now boldfaced in the text. Many chapters now include new "Common Thread" focus questions, and new maps have been added to Chapters 25 and 27.

New American Portrait, American Landscape, America in the World, and Struggles for Democracy Features

These popular features have been updated with three new American Portraits, seven new American Landscapes, five new America and in the World features, and three new Struggles for Democracy:

American Portrait

Chapter 12: Joe, an Enslaved Man at the Alamo
Chapter 29: David Rockefeller
Chapter 30: Maria "Bambi" Roaquin

Struggles for Democracy

Chapter 25: "SOS""—SMOG!
Chapter 27: The Pollster
Chapter 30: #BlackLivesMatter, "Black Twitter," and Smartphones

American Landscape

Chapter 1: Tenochtitlan
Chapter 9: American Indians Watch Home Slip Away
Chapter 16: Pioneers' Paradise Lost
Chapter 22: The 1937 Ohio River Flood
Chapter 25: West Texas
Chapter 28: Times Beach, Missouri
Chapter 30: The Winter Strawberry Capital of the World

America in the World

Chapter 2: Squanto Comes Back to America
Chapter 11: Harriet Forten Purvis Invites the World's Ideas Home
Chapter 13: The Nativist Attack on Immigration
Chapter 20: The 1918 Influenza Pandemic
Chapter 23: Martial Law in Hawaii

New Primary Sources

All versions of the text now include end-of-chapter primary source documents, both textual and visual, designed to reinforce students' understanding of the material by drawing connections among topics and thinking critically. Nearly all chapters in the fifth edition include at least one new source document:

Source 1.1 Aztec Songs
Source 2.3 A Smallpox Epidemic in Canada (1639–1640)
Source 4.1: The Dutch Lose Power in America: A Meeting with Indians on the Delaware (1670)
Source 5.4: George Whitefield, Account of a Visit to South Carolina (1740)
Source 6.1 Letters between Sir Jeffrey Amherst and Henry Bouquet (1763)
Source 7.5 The Federalists and the Anti-Federalists (1787–1788)
Source 8.4 Charles Brockden Brown's Defense of Education for Women (1798)
Source 9.2 Tecumseh's Speech to Governor Harrison, August 20, 1810
Source 10.3 Theodore Frelinghuysen's Argument Against the Removal Act (1830)
Source 11.3 William Apess, "An Indian-Looking Glass for the White Man" (1833)
Source 13.2 The Fugitive Slave Law Claims a Victim (1852)
Source 13.3 Letter from Edward Bridgman about Kansas Warfare (1856)
Source 14.3 Louisa May Alcott Nurses the Wounded (1863)
Source 15.2 A Black Tenant Farmer Describes Working Conditions (1904)
Source 16.1 Stephen Crane visits the "breaker" at a coal mine (1894)
Source 16.6 William A. Peffer Pleads the Farmer's Cause, 1891
Source 17.4 Jacob Riis, Visual Document "Nomads of the Street" (ca. 1890)
Source 18.4 Platform of the American Anti-lmperialist League (1899)
Source 19.1 Daniel Hudson Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago*. Commercial Club of Chicago (1909)
Source 20.1 Eugene V. Debs, Excerpts from Canton, Ohio, Speech (1918)
Source 21.2 Marie Prevost on "The Flapper" (1923)
Source 22.3 Ballad for Americans, Federal Theater Project, *Sing for Your Supper* (1939)
Source 23.4 "Italy to Chicago," *Yank: The Army Weekly* (March 1945)
Source 24.1 President Harry S. Truman (1947)
Source 25.3 Malvina Lindsay, "Science Alone No Answer to Sputnik" (1957)
Source 26.4 Diane Carlson Evans, Oral History Interview on Her Service as an Army Nurse in Vietnam (2012)
Source 27.5 Clyde Warrior, "Statement" (1967)
Source 28.3 The Debate Over the Defense Build-Up (1983)
Source 28.4 Equal Pay for Women (1982)
Source 30.5 Children and Immigration Policy (2018)

DIGITAL LEARNING RESOURCES FOR *OF THE PEOPLE*

Oxford University Press offers instructors and students digital learning resources that increase student engagement and optimize the classroom teaching experience

Oxford Insight

Developed with a foundation in learning science, Oxford Insight courseware enables instructors to deliver a personalized and engaging learning experience that empowers students by actively engaging them in course content. Oxford Insight delivers high quality content within powerful, data-driven courseware designed to optimize student success. To learn more, and to book a demo of Oxford Insight Courseware, go to https://pages.oup.com/he/us/oxfordinsight.

Oxford Learning Link (OLL) and Oxford Learning Link Direct (OLLD)

This online resource center https://learninglink.oup.com/ is available to adopters of *Of the People*, offers a wealth of teaching resources, including a test-item file, a computerized test bank, quizzes, PowerPoint slides, videos, and primary sources. Oxford Learning Link Direct (OLLD) makes OUP's digital learning resources for *Of the People* available to adopters within their institution's own LMS via a one-time course integration.

Sources for *Of the People*

Edited by Maxwell Johnson, this two-volume sourcebook includes five to six primary sources per chapter, both textual and visual. Chapter introductions, document headnotes, and study questions provide learning support. The sourcebooks are also available as eBooks.

Mapping and Coloring Book of US History

This two-volume workbook includes approximately 80 outline maps that provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of geography through quizzes, coloring exercises, and other activities. *The Mapping and Coloring Book of US History* is free when bundled with *Of the People*.

E-Books

Digital versions of *Of the People* are available at many popular distributors, including Chegg, RedShelf, and VitalSource.

Other Oxford Titles of Interest for the US History Classroom

Oxford University Press publishes a vast array of titles in American history. The following list is just a small selection of books that pair particularly well with *Of the People: A History of the United States*, Fourth Edition. Any of these books can be packaged with *Of the People* at a significant discount to students. Please contact

your Oxford University Press sales representative for specific pricing information or for additional packaging suggestions. Please visit www.oup.com/us for a full listing of Oxford titles.

***Writing History: A Guide for Students,* Sixth Edition, by William Kelleher Storey**
Bringing together practical methods from both history and composition, *Writing History* provides a wealth of tips and advice to help students research and write essays for history classes.

***The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*, Third Edition, by Jenny Presnell**
This is the only book specifically designed to teach today's history student how to most successfully select and use sources—primary, secondary, and electronic—to carry out and present their research. Written by a college librarian, *The Information-Literate Historian* is an indispensable reference for historians, students, and other readers doing history research.

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OF THE PEOPLE

15

Reconstructing a Nation
1865–1877

COMMON THREADS

In what ways did emancipation and wartime Reconstruction overlap?

When did Reconstruction begin?

How did Reconstruction change the South? What were the limits of that change, and why?

How did Reconstruction affect the West?

What brought Reconstruction to an end?

< White supremacists fire upon Black men, women, and children, Choctaw County, Alabama, 1874

OUTLINE

AMERICAN PORTRAIT

John Dennett Visits a Freedmen's Bureau Court

John Richard Dennett arrived in Liberty, Virginia, on August 17, 1865, on a tour of the South reporting for the magazine *The Nation*. The editors wanted accurate weekly accounts of conditions in the recently defeated Confederate states, and Dennett was the kind of man they could trust: a Harvard graduate, a firm believer in the sanctity of the Union, and a member of the class of elite Yankees who thought of themselves as the "best men" the country had to offer.

At Liberty, Dennett was accompanied by a Freedmen's Bureau agent. The **Freedmen's Bureau** was a branch of the US Army established by Congress to assist the freedpeople, as the formerly enslaved were known. Dennett and the agent went to the courthouse because one of the Freedmen's Bureau's functions was to adjudicate disputes between the freedpeople and southern whites.

The first case was that of an old white farmer who complained that two Black people who worked on his farm were "roamin' about and refusin' to work." He wanted the agent to help find the men and bring them back. Both men had wives and children living on his farm and eating his corn, the old man complained. "Have you been paying any wages?" the Freedmen's Bureau agent asked. "Well, they get what the other niggers get," the farmer answered. "I a'n't payin' great wages this year." There was not much the agent could do, but one of his soldiers volunteered to go and tell the men that "they ought to be at home supporting their wives and children."

A well-to-do planter came in to see if he could fire the Black people who had been working on his plantation since the beginning of the year. Warned not to beat his workers the way he would enslaved people, the planter complained that they were unmanageable without what he considered proper punishment. Under the circumstances, the planter wondered, "Will the Government take them off our hands?" The agent suspected that the planter was looking for a way to dismiss his workforce unpaid at the end of the growing season. "If they've worked on your crops all the year so far," the agent told the planter, "I guess they've got a claim on you to keep them a while longer."

Next came a "good-looking mulatto man" representing a number of African Americans worried that they would be forced into five-year contracts with their employers. "No, it a'n't true," the agent said. Could they rent or buy land to work themselves? "Yes, rent or buy," the agent said. But with no horses, mules, or plows, the formerly enslaved people wanted to see "if the Government would help us out after we get the land." All that the agent could offer was a note from the bureau authorizing them to acquire farms of their own.

The last case involved a field hand whose master had beaten him with a stick. The agent sent the field hand back to work. "Don't be sassy, don't be lazy when you've got work to do; and I guess he won't trouble you." A minute later, the worker returned to procure a letter to his master "enjoining him to keep the peace, as he feared the man would shoot him, he having on two or three occasions threatened to do so."

Most of the cases Dennett witnessed centered on labor relations, which often spilled over into other matters, including the family lives of the formerly enslaved, their civil rights, and their ability to buy land. The freedpeople preferred to work their own land but lacked the resources to rent or buy farms. Black workers and white owners who negotiated wage contracts had trouble figuring out each other's rights and responsibilities. The former masters clung to all their old authority that they could. Freedpeople wanted as free a hand as possible.

The Freedmen's Bureau was in the middle of these conflicts. Generally, agents tried to see to it that freedpeople had written contracts guaranteeing their essential right to work as free laborers, uncoerced by whip, club, or gun. Southern whites resented any intrusion with people they still saw as essentially property, and they let civil authorities know it. The Freedmen's Bureau became a lightning rod for the political conflicts of the Reconstruction period.

Conditions in the South elicited sharply different responses from lawmakers in Washington. At one extreme was President Andrew Johnson, who believed in small government and a speedy readmission of the southern states and looked on the Freedmen's Bureau with suspicion. At the other extreme were radical Republicans calling on the federal government to redistribute confiscated land to former enslaved people, give African American men the vote, and take it away from whites who were not loyal to the United States during the war. In between, there were moderate Republicans who at first tried to work with the president and were content simply to guarantee African Americans' basic civil rights. But as reports of violence and the abusive treatment of the freedpeople reached Washington, Republicans shifted in more radical directions.

Back and forth it went: events in the South triggered policy decisions in Washington, which in turn shaped events in the South. What John Dennett saw in Liberty, Virginia, was a good example of this. Policies set in Washington shaped what the Freedmen's Bureau agent could do for former masters and enslaved people. However, those policies shifted when the Bureau's reports and those of journalists, like Dennett, exposed just how troubled southern conditions were. From this interaction the politics of Reconstruction, and with it a "New South," slowly emerged.

WARTIME RECONSTRUCTION

Even as emancipation began, the US government began experimenting with reconstructing the Union. The two goals merged: by creating new, loyal southern states and making their abolition of slavery a condition for reunion, Lincoln could enact emancipation there without court challenge. Through a generous policy of pardons, he could encourage Confederates to make their peace with the Union, speeding the war's end.

Despite the chorus of cries for hanging Jefferson Davis from a sour-apple tree, few northerners wanted to pursue bloody punishments for the million Confederate soldiers who were technically guilty of treason. In the end, Confederate generals went home unharmed to become lawyers, businessmen, and planters; General Robert E. Lee became a college president. No civil leader was hanged for treason, not even Jefferson Davis. Two years after his arrest, he walked out of prison, thanks to bail put up by northerners like editor Horace Greeley. In later years, former Confederates became senators, governors, and federal judges. Months before the war ended, northerners were raising money to rebuild the southern economy and feed its destitute people. What the North wanted was not vengeance, but guarantees of lasting loyalty and a meaningful freedom. Questions arose with no easy answers: What did it take to reunite America? Should it be restored, or reconstructed, and if the latter, how drastically? How far could yesterday's enemies be trusted? What did freedom mean, and what rights should the "freedpeople" enjoy? In reconstructing society, how far did the government's power go?

Lincoln's Ten Percent Plan Versus the Wade-Davis Bill

Lincoln moved to shape a postwar South based on free labor and to replace military control, Banks's included, with new civil governments. However, wartime Reconstruction had to take Confederate resistance into account. Any terms the president set would need to draw as much white southern support as it could and hold out an inducement to those at war with the United States to return to their old loyalties. In December 1863, Lincoln issued a Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, offering a full pardon and the restoration of civil rights to all those who swore loyalty to the Union, excluding only a few high-ranking Confederate military and political leaders. When the number of loyal whites in a former Confederate state reached 10 percent of the 1860 voting population, they could organize a new state constitution and government. But Lincoln's "**Ten Per Cent Plan**" also required that the state abolish slavery, just as Congress had demanded before admitting West Virginia earlier that year. Attempts to coax Confederate states back to loyalty foundered, but circumstances in Union-occupied bits of Louisiana proved more promising. Under General Nathaniel Banks's guidance, Free State whites met in New Orleans in 1864 and produced a new state constitution abolishing slavery.

By that time, however, radical Unionists were expecting more. Propertied and well educated, the free Black community in New Orleans pleaded that without equal rights to education and the vote, mere freedom would not be enough. Impressed by their argument, Lincoln hinted to Louisiana authorities that he would welcome steps opening the vote for at least some Blacks. The hints were ignored.

Black spokesmen found a friendlier audience among radical Republicans in Congress, among them Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania and Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Believing that justice required lowering the color bar for suffrage and setting a more rigorous standard of loyalty for white southerners than Lincoln's plan offered, they shared a much wider concern that any new government must rest on statutory law, not presidential proclamations and military commanders' decrees. They agreed that secession had thrown the political character of the states so far out of kilter that they could not reconstruct themselves unaided—that the federal government must decide what it would take to restore them to proper functioning (a judgment that the Supreme Court would confirm in *Texas v. White* later). But they were not at all prepared to treat Lincoln's "loyal" states as fit to return to Congress—not when so much of Louisiana and Arkansas remained in Confederate hands and was barred from the new constitution-making—not when a speckling of enclaves pretended to speak for the state of Virginia.

As doubts grew about Louisiana's Reconstruction, Congress edged away from Lincoln's program. In mid-1864, Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio and Congressman Henry Winter Davis of Maryland advanced a different plan, requiring a majority of a state's white voters to swear allegiance to the Union before Reconstruction could begin. Slavery must also be abolished and African Americans given full equality before the law. Lincoln pocket-vetoed the Wade-Davis bill to protect the governments that were already under way toward reform. However, he could not make Congress admit a single one of his newly reconstructed states.

The Meaning of Freedom

"We was glad to be set free," a former enslaved person remembered years afterward. "I didn't know what it would be like. It was just like opening the door and lettin' the bird fly out. He might starve, or freeze, or be killed pretty soon but he just felt good because he was free." Blacks' departure came as a terrible shock to masters lulled into believing that their "servants" appreciated their treatment. Some former slave owners persuaded themselves that they were the real gainers of slavery's abolition. "I was glad and thankful—on my own account—when slavery ended and I ceased to belong, body and soul, to my negroes," a Virginia woman later insisted. Forced to do their own cooking or washing, other mistresses fumed at Blacks' ingratitude. In fact, many African Americans left, not out of unkindness, but simply to prove that they could get along on their own. White fears that Blacks, once free, would murder their masters proved groundless.

Leaving the plantation was the first step in a long journey for African Americans. Many took to the roads, some of them returning to their old homes near the coasts, from which masters had evacuated as Union armies approached. Others went searching for family members, parted from them during slavery. For 20 years, Black newspapers carried advertisements, begging for news of a husband or wife long since lost. Those who had not been separated went out of their way to have their marriages secured by law. That way, their children could be made legitimate and their vows made permanent. Once married, men sought work contracts that allowed their families to live with them on plantations. Because Black women across the South had become what the law called "domestic dependents," husbands could

refuse employers their wives' services and keep them home. In fact, freedwomen were likelier to work outside the home than white women. They tended the family garden, raised children, hired out as domestics, and, as cotton prices fell, shared the work of hoeing and picking in the fields just so the family could make ends meet.

The end of slavery meant many things to freedpeople. It meant that they could move about their neighborhoods without passes, and that they did not have to step aside to let whites pass them on the street. They could own dogs or carry canes, both among the master's exclusive privileges. They could dress as they pleased or choose their own names, including, for the first time, a surname.

Freedom liberated African Americans from the white minister's take on Christianity. No longer were large portions of the Bible closed off to them. Most southern Blacks withdrew from white churches and established their own congregations, particularly in the Methodist and Baptist faith. In time, the church emerged as a central institution in the southern Black community, the meeting place, social center, and source of comfort that larger society denied them. A dozen years after the war, South Carolina had a thousand ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church alone.

To read the Gospel, however, freedpeople needed schooling. One former enslaved man remembered his master's parting words on this matter: "Charles, you is a free man they say, but Ah tells you now, you is still a slave and if you lives to be a hundred you'll STILL be a slave, 'cause you got no education, and education is what makes a man free!" Even before the war ended, northern teachers poured into the South to set up schools. When the fighting stopped, the US Army helped recruit and organize thousands of northern women as teachers, but they could never send enough. Old and young spared what time they had from work, paying teachers in eggs or produce when coin was scarce. Black classes met wherever they could: in mule stables and cotton houses, even the slave pen in New Orleans, where the old auction block became a globe stand. Due to a lack of schoolbooks, they read dictionaries and almanacs. On meager resources, hundreds of thousands of southern Blacks learned to read and write over the next generation. The first Black colleges would be founded in the postwar years, including Hampton Institute in Virginia and Howard University in Washington, DC. The American Missionary Association established seven, Atlanta and Fisk Universities among them.

Finally, freedom allowed freedpeople to congregate, to celebrate the Fourth of July or Emancipation Day, or to petition for equal rights before the law. Memorial Day may have begun with Blacks gathering to honor the Union dead whose sacrifices had helped make them free.

Experiments with Free Labor

Many whites insisted that Blacks would never work in freedom and foresaw a South ruined forever. Freedpeople proved just the opposite. When Union troops landed on the Sea Islands off South Carolina in November 1861, the landlords fled, leaving behind between 5,000 and 10,000 enslaved people. Within months the abandoned plantations of the Sea Islands were being reorganized. Eventually Black families were given small plots of their own to till. In return for their labor they received a "share" of the year's crop. When the masters returned after the war to reclaim their lands, the labor system had already proven itself. Much modified, it would form the basis for the arrangement known as **sharecropping**.