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PENNSYLVANIA AND  
THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR:  
RECENT TRENDS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The last twenty-five years have been a volatile and exciting time in American life. Social innovations have resulted in the acceptance of different values and perspectives. Heretofore oppressed minority groups have struggled for and, in most instances, gained their equal rights. Intellectually the last quarter century has been a blessed time with more people obtaining a better education and, in turn, advancing research and knowledge. Every academic discipline has felt the effects of this social and intellectual ferment. History, for example, has changed as a result of new perspectives, methodologies, and sources. The new historical research has exposed the flaws and irrevelancies in the old interpretations and syntheses. The contemporary scene has affected especially the study of the American Civil War. Our perspective on that critical period is vastly different in scholarship and the classroom from our approach twenty-five years ago. A new synthesis of the Civil War more acceptable and revelant to this generation now exists.¹

One might, therefore, ask how the writing on Pennsylvania and the American Civil War has changed in the last twenty-five years. Has the intellectual ferment been noticeable in the study of Pennsylvania history? Are there new perspectives or interpretations of the state’s history? What new understandings do we have about Pennsylvania during the critical years 1850–1870? These were the questions I asked as I surveyed the literature on the state’s history. I think that the examination shows that Pennsylvania historians have been affected by the intellectual and social changes and they have offered valuable new insights into the Commonwealth’s past.¹
PENNSYLVANIA AND THE ANTISLAVERY CRUSADE

As the civil rights battles and the growing appreciation for black consciousness have spurred historians nationally to reassess the black experience in American life, so has the civil rights movement of the 1960's stimulated the Pennsylvania historian to examine more carefully the black communities in the antebellum period.

Several useful articles reflect the celebratory tone of the liberalism of the 1960's by applauding gains that blacks made in antebellum Pennsylvania. Stanley Kutler, for example, in 1963, meticulously followed the court decisions from the 1780's to the 1830's that tested the 1780 and 1788 abolition acts in Pennsylvania. While these laws abolished slavery gradually, masters, in order to retain their slaves, had to register them by name, sex, and age. As many blacks learned that the owners had registered them improperly, they sued for and gained their freedom. Through various decisions rendered by the state supreme court blacks in Pennsylvania gained a legal equality that served as a buffer for them in an age of growing discrimination. Kutler, in the optimism of the 1960's, saw the court system in the antebellum age and in the 1960's as the institution especially vital in paving the way for racial equality.

Other useful works in Pennsylvania celebrated the blacks achievements. Chief among these books was Ira Brown's *The Negro in Pennsylvania History*. Focusing primarily on the nineteenth century Brown offered a comprehensive survey of black history that updated the standard work by Edward R. Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*. While Turner's work is strong on the colonial and revolutionary periods, Brown built on his career as an abolitionist historian to write a fuller review of the nineteenth century black experience. Harry C. Silcox's two articles on education for blacks in antebellum Philadelphia give us an insight into the black community groping against the hardening resistance to integration. Joseph Walker, in his study of labor in the charcoal industry of southeastern Pennsylvania, cites the contribution of blacks as slaves and freemen to that industry. Walker argues that the economic harmony there contributed to a calm racial atmosphere bordering on convivial integration. While the area and industry harbored abolitionist sentiments, he cautioned against the acceptance of the tale that ironmasters allowed fugitive slaves to hide among the free blacks. Some fragmentary evidence exists to suggest transient labor but no proof can be found, he concluded, to uphold the notion of iron furnaces being a depot on an "underground railroad." It

Militant abolitionism in the antebellum era spurred black activism
against slavery and racial discrimination. Recent essays noted the work of Octavis V. Cato, William Still, Lewis Woodson and Martin Delany as representatives of the Pennsylvania black community who fought for equal rights. Martin Delany, as an early spokesman of black nationalism, has attracted considerable attention. Carl Oblinger and Cyril Griffith edited a special edition in 1977 of *Pennsylvania Heritage* on black history and culture. The articles run the gamut of time but are especially notable on black activity in the underground railroad and abolitionism in Harrisburg. Ann Wilmoth wrote a good study on Pittsburgh blacks, 1800–1870, in this issue.\(^5\)

More recent literature reflects the contemporary fatalism among civil rights activists. In lieu of the optimism of the 1960's a more lugubrious tenor characterizes the historical research of the 1970's and 1980's. Instead of essays that celebrate the progress in racial relations, the research uncovers a deep-seated racism and discrimination that persisted throughout Pennsylvania's history.

Edward Price's essay on the history of black suffrage details how blacks lost the right to vote in the so-called "Age of Democracy" and faced persisting discrimination after the enactment of the fifteenth amendment. Pursuing a different subject but offering a similar interpretation are Philip Foner's essays on the segregation of Philadelphia's streetcar system, 1858-1868. Foner shows that the "City of Brotherly Love" presented a hostile environment for blacks during the Civil War. Local streetcar operators denied use of the transit system to blacks throughout the war. Only federal legislation with the fourteenth amendment compelled a reassessment of the city's discriminatory practices. While the General Assembly enacted corrective legislation, Foner concluded that discrimination persisted into the twentieth century.\(^6\)

John Runcie's excellent analysis of the Philadelphia race riot in 1834 probed the undercurrents of the city's social temper and revealed a deep racial antagonism that permeated the city. He concluded that a variety of motives stirred the latent racism, notably, the competition between Irish immigrants and blacks who vied for a slice of the American Dream. Runcie argued that crowding and unemployment certainly contributed to the unhappiness of the working class, but when they sought a target for their discontent they eagerly chose the black community. While she did not entirely dispute Runcie's explanations, Emma Jones Lapsansky provided another explanation for the riots against the blacks. She argued that the targets of the riots were black elites and symbols of black success. She contended, therefore, that whites were venting their frustration against social immobility by attacking blacks who had gained middle-class respectability.\(^7\)
Theodore Hershburg's massive social analysis of Philadelphia is spawning new insights into American social and urban history. His "Free Blacks in Antebellum Philadelphia" is a worthy example of this work. In that essay, Hershburg corroborates other historians by noting the intense discrimination which blacks faced. All social and economic indicators, Hershburg claims, point to a deteriorating condition for blacks in Philadelphia. Black artisans lost their jobs, Irish replaced blacks in the expanding factory system, and personal wealth of blacks declined. Surprisingly, blacks who had escaped from slavery seemed to cope better with the harsh racial climate than freeborn blacks. Hershburg concluded that the urban experience was as devastating for many as was slavery.

These more recent articles reveal two striking tempers. First, they demonstrate the harsh resistance to racial equality which the Pennsylvania white community presented to blacks. Secondly, and equally revealing, is the tone of contemporary scholarship. There is a strong sense of pessimism and resignation in the 1970's and 1980's. The scholarly optimism of an earlier decade has given way to a realization that racial harmony is not easily or quickly achieved.

Still, in the 1840's and 1850's blacks did have their champions. The Pennsylvania abolitionists played a major role in the antislavery crusade. Though they were somewhat slow to organize, the Pennsylvania abolitionists had a state agency, fulltime director, and a newspaper, the Pennsylvania Freeman, by 1837. Millier McKim, a Carlise Presbyterian minister, resigned his pastorship to assume the full-time duties of executive-secretary of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. McKim at age 25 was a state delegate to the organizing convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society. As the executive-secretary of the Pennsylvania society, he edited the newspaper and tried to raise funds. When the national organization split in 1838–39, McKim followed the lead of the Garrisonian wing. In later years he assisted fugitive slaves and after the war was active in efforts to assist the sea island blacks make the transition from slavery to freedom.

Pennsylvania abolitionism also served as the "cradle of feminism." Lucretta Mott, Mary Grew, Jane Forten and others organized a Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. They boycotted cotton and rice products because these were "slave items," raised money for antislavery activities, and encouraged female preaching against slavery. Their open acceptance of blacks antagonized racists and the female abolitionists became entrapped in the rioting around Pennsylvania Hall in 1838. The abolitionists celebrated the opening of their newly-constructed meeting house on May 15, 1838 with a series of speakers
and meetings. But, for two days antagonists gathered to taunt the abolitionists and stone the building. Finally on the evening of May 17 a mob burned the building. Abolitionism, female preaching, and interracial associations were too much for the Philadelphia community to tolerate. Ira Brown argued that these trials and associations served as the training grounds for future feminist activities by Philadelphia and American women.\(^{10}\)

Joining the white female abolitionists in defining new roles for women in nineteenth century America was a notable black family, the Forten-Purvis women. As wives and daughters of prominent blacks in Philadelphia, Charlotte Forten and her daughters, Harriet, Sarah, and Margaret, played an active role as abolitionists, aides to fugitive slaves, and post-Civil War civil rights activists.\(^{11}\)

Despite the hostile climate Pennsylvania abolitionists persisted in their work. While lecturing and writing to sway the minds of whites against slavery, they struck directly at the evil by assisting fugitive slaves to escape. Robert Purvis, a wealthy Charleston-born mulatto who had moved to Philadelphia, organized the first committee in 1837 to protect runaways. For four years this “vigilance committee” shepherded fugitive slaves who had reached Philadelphia. But the 1842 race riots personally drove Purvis from the city and crippled the committee’s work for years. William Still, a black associate to McKim, assumed the leadership of the “vigilance committee” in 1852 and began a career of assisting fugitive slaves who arrived in Pennsylvania. He found them temporary lodging and funds for railway fare to Canada. To the delight of historians in the twentieth century, Still kept records on his activities. These became the basis of his immensely popular memoirs and the history of the fugitive slave activity in the mid-Atlantic region. While the underground railroad may have been a myth for most areas, Still’s work demonstrated its successful operation in Pennsylvania.\(^{12}\)

Blacks in Pittsburgh, while less organized and less recognized by historians, also played a role in assisting slaves to escape. They especially were active as slavemasters sought to regain ownership of runaways with the enactment of a stricter Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. Several incidents occurred in Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania when freed blacks recaptured runaways from the hands of slave agents and allowed the blacks to escape to New York and Canada.\(^{13}\)

The fugitive slave issue, of course, placed Pennsylvania in the midst of the sectional controversy. Borderstate slaveholders condemned the activity by militant abolitionists to encourage and harbor fugitive slaves. They also claimed that Pennsylvania laws and courts hindered the recapture of runaways.
The 1826 anti-kidnapping laws enacted by the Pennsylvania legislature complicated the work of slave-catchers. That law required slave-catchers to present better proof of identification of runaways and forebade local officials from cooperating with the capture of the fugitive slaves. As one of the early “personal liberty” laws the 1826 law needs more attention. Given the harsh racial climate in Pennsylvania, one might ask why the General Assembly passed such a law? It was this law that was at the heart of the 1842 *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* case. The Supreme Court declared the Pennsylvania law unconstitutional but spurred northern states to enact new “personal liberty” laws that conformed to the *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* decision.\(^4\)

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 further exacerbated relations between free-staters and slaveholders. Considerable resistance arose against the stiffer fugitive slave law and violence frequently erupted. The Christiana riot in 1851 is Pennsylvania’s best known confrontation between slave captors and free blacks. Jonathan Katz presented a full examination of that story including excerpts from documentary accounts.\(^5\) Another notable example of resistance to the fugitive slave law is that of Passmore Williamson, who served one hundred days in jail for kidnapping slaves. The incident occurred as the American minister to Nicaragua traveled through Philadelphia with his slaves. Upon learning that one of the slaves was anxious to escape, Passmore Williamson and others planned a way to assist the slave to escape. The slave escaped but Williamson was arrested and convicted of kidnapping. The ironic complexities of the antislavery crusade are evident here as one notes that the state’s “personal liberty” laws dealt with fugitive slaves but not slaves legally brought into the state. Occurring in 1855 the Williamson case served to stir up fervor between abolitionists and slaveholders.\(^6\)

II PENNSYLVANIA AND THE SECTIONAL CRISIS

The political whirlwind of the 1850’s, as we know, destroyed the Jacksonian Party System and bred a new one. The sectional controversy and the slavery issue ripped apart political allegiances and organizations. The controversies affected national party leadership more directly than state politicians. But as national coalitions collapsed state partisans were compelled to scramble for new constituencies.

Pennsylvania politics in the sectional crises and political reorganization of the 1850’s is well-covered by recent monographs. John F. Coleman’s *The Disruption of the Pennsylvania Democracy, 1848–1860* and Erwin Stanley Bradley’s *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism*
provide excellent surveys of the changing political scene at the state level in the 1850's. These studies are complemented by excellent interpretative examinations of Philadelphia by William Dusinberre and of Pittsburgh by Michael Holt.17

In retrospect, the most significant political theme in Pennsylvania history from 1850 to 1860 was the emergence of a Republican Party that would dominate the state for many decades afterward. This phenomenon, of course, corresponded with the national trend. The Democratic Party was strong especially in Pennsylvania in 1850 with no apparent threat to its supremacy. If anything, the Democrats could take encouragement from the growing antagonisms among their adversaries, the Whigs. The sectional tensions of the early 1850's destroyed the Whig Party and left the dominance of the Democrats unchallenged.

Two parties appeared to present the challenge. Initially, an aspiring politician probably would have placed his bets on the Know Nothing Party as the party of the future. Combining a strong prejudice against immigrants and Catholics with patriotism, the Know Nothings appealed to a large segment of American society. The Know Nothings polled well enough in Pennsylvania in 1854 and 1855 to dominate the General Assembly. A more vigorous party, the Republican, emerged in 1856 to combine former Whigs, Freesoilers, abolitionists, anti-Nebraska Democrats, and immigrants. Though the Republicans failed in Pennsylvania and the nation in 1856, it was evident that they were the new coalition to contest the Democrats.

A second apparent theme as one analyzes the politics of Pennsylvania in the 1850's is that local issues, ethnicity, and personal rivalry contributed as much to political disarray and reorganization as national issues. This theme is especially evident in Holt's examination of Pittsburgh. Ethnicity played a major role in state politics. The Democratic Party drew heavily from the immigrant and Catholic wards of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. In contrast, Protestant and native-born voters in all economic groups voted Whig and later Republican. Ethnic tensions frequently transformed into economic tensions during recessions and hard times. Native Americans resented the immigrants who worked for lower wages and replaced Americans in the job market.18 These ethno-cultural patterns in Pennsylvania politics further illustrate that economic interests alone do not determine political allegiances.

A third theme which Pennsylvania historians have formulated is that Pennsylvania Republicans in the growing sectional controversy were free-soiler, anti-South, anti-slavery, and anti-Negro. John Coleman analyzed this theme best when he wrote:
a major theme in the nonextension argument was that as slavery secured a foothold in an area, that area’s spokesmen in national political councils joined the advocates of southern slaveholding interests at the expense of interests of northerners. To characterize such appeals as anti-slavery is, in fact, misleading, for, in reality, they asserted the interest of northern whites in preference to those of southern whites.19

Dusinberre and Holt concurred as they showed how Pennsylvania Republicans tried to moderate the abolitionist rhetoric to counter Democratic charges that Republicans were Negro sympathizers. The Republicans shied away from racial issues and emphasized the pro-tariff proclivities of the party to solicit voters in Pennsylvania.20 The intense racial prejudice found within the Commonwealth could not be ignored by politicians. When, therefore, the sectional controversies ripped apart national allegiances and organizations, Pennsylvania’s defense of the Union was not premised on abolitionist sentiments. To Pennsylvanians the sectional debate concerned simply the white man’s future in the Republic.

Aware of the anti-black, anti-abolitionist prejudices, Pennsylvania Republicans campaigned as the Peoples Party in the East. Only in Pittsburgh and the northwestern counties was free-soil sentiment sufficiently strong to allow an undisguised Republican ticket. Besides the problem of the party’s image, the political rivalry between Andrew Curtin and Simon Cameron complicated the Republican campaign in 1860. Though a compromise was reached whereby Curtin ran for the governorship and Cameron sought the presidential nomination, neither faction trusted or fully cooperated with the other. The rivalry intensified when Cameron lost the nomination to Lincoln and each faction then tried to identify itself as the premier voice of Republicanism in Pennsylvania. During the campaign Lincoln sent emissaries to the state to calm the rivalry and work for a united front.21

Two significant elections faced the parties in 1860 as a gubernatorial campaign coincided with the presidential campaign. Andrew Curtin, the Republican, contended with the Democrats’ Henry Foster in a much-publicized and energetic campaign. Knowing that the state elections in October would influence the presidential election in November, the national parties sent money and speakers to Pennsylvania. The Republicans won a major victory in October with Curtin polling a 32,000-vote majority, the party gaining eighteen of the twenty-five congressional seats, and winning a majority in both houses of the
General Assembly. When Stephen Douglas, the Democrats' presidential nominee, heard of the Republican victory in Pennsylvania, he allegedly conceded that Lincoln was to be the next president. Lincoln's victory a month later in Pennsylvania astonished the most optimistic Republicans. Although 16,000 fewer votes were cast, Lincoln surpassed Curtin's majority by 5640 votes, carried 53 counties (Curtin won 37), and won in traditionally-Democratic Philadelphia.

With Lincoln's victory, of course, came the secession of the Deep South and the American constitutional crisis of the nineteenth century. It was also the ordeal of Pennsylvania's James Buchanan. Looking forward to retirement after a long public career that included positions as congressman, senator, secretary of state, and diplomat, Buchanan suddenly faced the darkest threat to the Union since its creation. Unlike Washington in the Whiskey Rebellion, Jackson in the Nullification Crisis, or Kennedy in the University of Mississippi Crisis, Buchanan reacted passively to the challenge to constitutional government. History, of course, has not judged Buchanan well. Buchanan was a staunch supporter of the South and slavery, and believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution. Additionally, he was a lame-duck president and did not want to commit the incoming Republican administration to a course of action. While historians have acknowledged these facts, they have not deemed his leadership meritorious. Philip S. Klein, who has written a definitive biography of Buchanan, gave the most charitable interpretation of the president by arguing that he was the most rational moderate in a time of unreason and extremism. However, Elbert B. Smith, with his study of the Buchanan presidency, charges that Buchanan with "his profound emotional attachment to the South" lacked a true understanding of the free-soil sentiment in the North. Smith concluded that Buchanan was a divisive president who simply lacked the wisdom and ability to lead the republic.

Jeremiah Sullivan Black, another Pennsylvania, who served as Buchanan's Attorney-General and then Secretary of State, proved to be the president's ablest adviser. Though his constitutional opinions were the premise for Buchanan's weak response to secession, Black fervently defended the Union and urged coercion if South Carolina attacked Ft. Sumter.

The Commonwealth understandably was divided over the secession crisis. Buchanan and Black had considerable support from Pennsylvania. Democrats in the Commonwealth in many rallies passed resolutions accepting the peaceful secession of the South. In Philadelphia, a city with considerable economic ties to the South, the compromising tone pre-
vailed and some citizens boldly suggested that the Keystone State join the Confederacy. Republicans, on the other hand, urged a strong response to southern extremists. But, Pennsylvania clearly distinguished between secession and aggression. When South Carolina fired upon Ft. Sumter, public opinion shifted dramatically from compromise to coercion. Pennsylvanians recognized that the integrity of democratic government was at stake and they quickly “rallied around the flag.”

III THE PENNSYLVANIA SOLDIER AND THE WAR

The Pennsylvania soldier awaits the attention of some historian. No historian has attempted to prepare a comprehensive review of the 360,000 Pennsylvanians who defended the republic. Samuel Bates in his classic five-volume documentary record offers a beginning examination of the soldiers from the Keystone State. Bates wrote a brief survey of each regiment and its campaigns, and a list of each soldier and his status at the time of the regiment’s final muster. Unfortunately for the quantitatively-oriented contemporary historian Bates collected no information on ages, place of residence, occupation or economic status. Regimental histories from the nineteenth century abound but few modern studies of Pennsylvania units exist. The Pennsylvania soldier conceivably offers some imaginative historian a field in which to toil.

Nonetheless some modern studies of units that are worth noting were published in the last decades. Edward G. Everett’s essay on the initial enthusiasm and the volunteering in 1861 is a good place to begin. Everett noted that Pennsylvanians from across the commonwealth collected in the major cities as individuals or organized units. He estimated that 362,284 Pennsylvanians fought in the war. Only New York surpassed Pennsylvania in providing troops throughout the war.

A few Pennsylvania regiments have commanded the attention of historians. Among the more notable modern histories is John W. Rowell’s Yankee Cavalrymen: Through the Civil War with the Ninth Pennsylvania Cavalry. The 9th Pennsylvania was one of the few eastern regiments to fight in western campaigns and was the only eastern cavalry to march through Georgia and the Carolinas with Sherman. They fought at Perryville and Chickamauga, encountered rebel cavalry forces under Forrest and Morgan, and became one of the most respected units in the Army of the Cumberland. Drawing heavily on two diaries, Rowell was able to get a day-to-day account of the regiment and write a graceful history of which the cavalrymen would be proud.
Unquestionably, the most famous Pennsylvania unit of the Civil War was the "Bucktail" regiment. Organized under the leadership of Thomas Leiper Kane in the lumbering counties of the northwest, this regiment acquired its name from the tuft of deer hair which the enlistees sported in their caps. The Bucktails mustered into service as the 13th Pennsylvania Reserves and later officially became the 42nd Pennsylvania Volunteers. They were excellent sharpshooters and became an integral part of the Army of the Potomac. 29

Allen Guelzo wrote an interesting and useful essay on a brigade that merited attention. This was the Philadelphia Brigade that met the brunt of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. The unit originated from the ambitious schemes of Edwin D. Baker, Lincoln's close friend, who wanted his own unit and military glory. But since he was in California and could not feasibly raise troops there he looked to eastern cities. Backed by the purse of Senator James McDougall and connections in Philadelphia, Baker was able to raise troops in the saloons and working wards of Philadelphia. Though having no single Californian save Baker the unit was labeled the 1st California. With Baker's death at the engagement at Ball's Bluff, Pennsylvania retrieved the Philadelphia volunteers to help meet the state's quota of regiments. They were reorganized as the 69th, 71st, 72nd and 106th Pennsylvania regiments, though popularly called the Philadelphia Brigade. They became part of the Army of the Potomac and campaigned on the Peninsula, at Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. On the third day's battle at Gettysburg they were part of the line that met Pickett's massive assault. That engagement for all practical purposes destroyed the brigade. The 69th, 71st, and 72nd regiments lost nearly all their field officers and from twenty-five to fifty percent of their men. Left to straggle as unfilled units they were finally merged in March 1864 into a New York regiment and lost their identity as the Philadelphia Brigade. 30

Harrison C. Williams' study of the 79th Pennsylvania regiment which was recruited principally from Lancaster County is a modern model study that other historians should emulate. Other modern histories include Edward N. McConnell's history of Company A, 139th Pennsylvania from Mercer County and Bruce Sutherland's story of the Pittsburgh volunteers with the regiment commanded by the flamboyant Daniel Sickles. Traces of other Pennsylvania units can be found in Stephen Z. Starr's The Union Cavalry in the Civil War and Bruce Catton's many volumes about the Army of the Potomac. 31

Pennsylvania black soldiers have justly attracted the attention of historians in recent years. Frederick Binder's essay is the best survey.
Pennsylvania blacks were eager to fight in the war but the state would not accept their enlistments. Consequently some enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts regiment which attracted blacks from several northern states. When the War Department began to recruit blacks in 1863 Pennsylvanians quickly organized into state regiments. Altogether eleven Pennsylvania black regiments were formed. They served as garrison troops on the coast and with the Army of the Potomac in the Petersburg campaign. One, the 43rd Pennsylvania, participated in the assault after the explosion of the “crater” at Petersburg. Camp William Penn, north of Philadelphia on Lucretta Mott’s property (now LaMott, Pennsylvania) was the training post for the 11,000 black troops that came from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Usually they trained for two months before joining the Union Army. The camp officially closed on May 21, 1865 when the last black regiment marched out.  

While most Pennsylvania units served admirably in defense of the republic, the state must bear the burden of sponsoring what Edward Longacre has labelled “the most inept regiment in the Civil War.” This unit was the 5th Pennsylvania Cavalry which was recruited in the Irish and German neighborhoods of Philadelphia. From the outset, misfortune plagued the unit as the ethnic groups failed to mesh and brawled among themselves. Their first assignment in 1861 was a scouting mission that resulted in disaster as they mistook friendly troops for rebels and killed several. At other times they were routed by rebel forces one-half their number, they disobeyed orders prohibiting foraging and were nearly captured, and finally were accused of looting communion silverware from a church in Petersburg. The unit’s reputation was so bad that at the end of the war when several units were to be merged into the 5th Pennsylvania the incoming units threatened to mutiny if the assignation was not changed.  

If Pennsylvania had the worst, it also surely had the best. Ranking with later wartime individual heroes like Sergeant York and Audie Murphy, is Pennsylvania’s Galusha Pennypacker. Born in 1844 in Valley Forge, Pennypacker enlisted in 1861 as an eager seventeen-year-old as a three-month volunteer. At the end of that short term, he reenlisted for three years in the 97th Pennsylvania Regiment and was given a captaincy. He served in coastal duty until 1864 when his unit joined Ben Butler’s advance up the James River to attack Richmond. Pennypacker was wounded thrice in this campaign and enjoyed his twentieth birthday convalescing. He returned to active duty and joined his unit in the attack on Ft. Fisher, N.C. He bravely carried the unit’s flag over the fort’s defenses but was wounded again. He was recuperat-
ing in February 1865 when he was made a brevet general several months before he was old enough to vote. After the war he served with Reconstruction forces in Mississippi and Tennessee. He later was promoted to the permanent rank of general, retired in 1883 and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1891.\textsuperscript{34}

Another young Pennsylvanian who was commissioned at age sixteen and gained fame for himself was Lieutenant Edward R. Geary. As the son of John W. Geary, post-war governor of Pennsylvania, the young Geary enlisted in Knap's Pennsylvania Light Artillery and served admirably through several eastern campaigns. Unfortunately, young Geary was killed when the unit moved to the West to support Grant.

Another notable Pennsylvania soldier was General John F. Reynolds. Born in Lancaster and graduated from West Point, Reynolds achieved such a reputation as a top-flight soldier that his biographers contend that Lincoln preferred him to Meade as the commanding general of the Union Army as the Gettysburg campaign ensued.\textsuperscript{35}

Certainly Pennsylvania history also must contain one of the more tragic-comic stories of the war. This one concerned General Alexander Schimmelfenning, a Prussian army officer who fled Germany during the 1848–49 revolutions. He worked as an engineer in Washington, D.C., until the Civil War when he enlisted and was offered command of a Pittsburgh regiment which eventually became the 74th Pennsylvania Regiment. Unfortunately, the regiment was overrun by Stonewall Jackson's brilliant flanking movement at Chancellorsville. Though Schimmelfenning had reported rebel activity on his flank, his reports went unheeded and he bore some of the blame for the disaster. Later at Gettysburg, he was wounded on the first day of the battle and crawled into a pigsty. He remained there during one of the greatest battles of the war. His star-crossed fate continued to plague him as ill-health forced his retirement at the end of the war. He pleaded to remain in the military because he knew that his family would receive a pension only if he died while on active duty. But the army ignored his appeal and retired him. He died two weeks later as a civilian.\textsuperscript{36}

Another avenue to pursue to understand the experiences of the Pennsylvania soldier is to wade through scores of published memoirs, diaries and letters. Among the best of this genre published in the last few decades is Daniel Woodward's highly-readable edition of the letters of Sergeant Joseph A. Griner, 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry, which detail life in the Peninsula and Petersburg campaigns, winter quarters and army hospitals. Mark Reinsberg's discovery of the letters of a Bucktail soldier
in the Civil War pension papers was a real find for history. These letters offer history a day-to-day view of life in the Army of the Potomac. Florence McLaughlin has published two insightful and well-edited collections in recent years. Her edition of James Eberhart's prison diary offers a poignant and perceptive insight into the deterioration of one's personality and physical well-being in captivity. Another collection of letters which McLaughlin edited is the correspondence between a soldier and his sister. These letters give us a combined view of life in the army and at home. A similar type of diary recently-published and receiving excellent reviews is James C. Mohr's *The Cormany Diaries*. This is a combined diary of an engaged couple, the male in the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment and the female at home in Franklin County.37

IV GETTYSBURG AND PENNSYLVANIA

Literature on the battle of Gettysburg is so voluminous that it nearly smothers historians. Probably more history is published continuously on this engagement than any other battle in history. The Pennsylvania historian can approach the battle in two ways. He can see it as an event in a larger scheme such as Fairfax Downey's *Death of a Nation* or Glenn Tucker's *High Tide at Gettysburg*. Or the historian can consider the relationship between the Gettysburg campaign and the rest of Pennsylvania.

One would think that the final word had been written on the battle of Gettysburg. Yet, in the last two decades important studies have appeared. Foremost among these is Edwin B. Coddington's *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*. Coddington himself acknowledged that his work might be considered "superfluous and presumptuous." Nonetheless, he delivered an exhaustive military study that is unlikely to be eclipsed.38

Another popular book in recent years is William A. Frassanitio's *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time*. This is actually a history of photography and photographers during the Civil War. Frassanitio argued that no other battle was so well photographed and he proceeded like a good historian to bring some order to the photographic record of the battle. Journalists swarmed the battlefield, J. Cutler Andrews wrote, and the engagement can be seen as a pivotal point in the history of reporting. Novices joined experienced reporters from the North, South, and England to write about this encounter from every vantage point.
Similarly, artists joined the noncombatants' parade to the field. Among them was Edwin Forbes who sketched for Frank Leslie's magazine and later wrote a brief memoir.39

Novelists have found those three days in July as a dramatic scenario in which to stage their stories. The most recent one, Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*, won a Pulitzer Prize. Robert Bloom assessed the novel in a useful essay, "The Battle of Gettysburg in Fiction." Significantly he demonstrated how poor the history is that novelists have written.40

Recently-published memoirs and letters have vividly shown that the agony of the battle went on for several days after the fighting stopped. The memoir of John Foster who volunteered to care for the wounded in the aftermath is especially chilling and should be read by those who regard the war as romantic. Another insightful memoir is that of a Pennsylvania physician who attended the wounded at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. Similarly Robert D. Hoffsummer's essay "This Was The Aftermath of Gettysburg" broadens one perspective on the battlefield scenes.41

Pennsylvania historians in recent years have examined the impact that the rebel invasion had on the rest of the state. Initially, as Edwin Coddington wrote, Pennsylvanians were indifferent to the rumors of impending invasion. Calls for volunteers from Governor Andrew Curtin were disregarded. But as the rebels moved across the Mason-Dixon line Pennsylvanians' indifference turned to alarm. Volunteers rushed to rallying points in such numbers that the state government could not equip or feed them. In rural counties citizens packed up their families, livestock and household goods and fled towards Harrisburg. Experience showed that the citizens had much to fear. Though Robert E. Lee discouraged his troops from indiscriminate plundering, the rebels found the temptations of the rich Pennsylvania countryside to be stronger than their commander's wishes. The Gettysburg campaign turned into a war against the American people as well as the Constitution. Corroborating Coddington's story of the effects of the campaign on Pennsylvania is Wilbur Sturtevant Nye's *Here Come The Rebels*. This is a study of Ewell's cavalry corps march into the North to initiate the Gettysburg campaign. While it is devoted primarily to the rebel cavalry, it describes the engagements in Chambersburg, Harrisburg, Carlisle and other towns.42

Robert G. Crist wrote an essay on the engagements around Harrisburg on June 29–30, 1863 which he justifiably calls the "highwater point." It is especially useful for noting the panic that swept through
Pennsylvania. Fear of rebel troops gripped many communities including faraway Pittsburgh, Altoona, and Philadelphia. Unfortunately it was tiny Chambersburg that had reason to be afraid. The war returned to that town again in July, 1864. In retaliation for Union destruction in the Shenandoah, Jubal Early sent a contingent to Chambersburg. He chose that town he later explained “because it was the only one of any consequence accessible to my troops and for no other reason.” The rebel troops rode into town and demanded money from the citizens. Quickly the troops began to plunder and burn the town. This experience, like the advance of Lee’s rebel army a year earlier, demonstrated that the civil war touched the citizenry as well as the soldiers.

V THE HOME FRONT

As the Lincoln administration looked to Pennsylvania for manpower, so it looked to the Commonwealth for political and economic support. Politically, the Civil War meant for Pennsylvania what Erwin Stanley Bradley has called “the triumph of militant Republicanism.” The sectional crises caused in Pennsylvania, as in many northern states, disarray among the Democrats. The newly-organized Republican Party eagerly rushed to provide the leadership. Pennsylvania’s political history during the war quickly becomes very complex. Not only were there the tensions between rival parties, Democrat and Republican, but there was an intraparty war between Republican factions. The intraparty strife pitted Simon Cameron, Lincoln’s first Secretary of War, against Andrew Gregg Curtin, the newly-elected governor. Their rivalry stemmed from their competition for a U.S. Senate seat in 1855 and persisted until 1872. Though supportive of Lincoln and the war effort, each vied for the advantage over the other. Finally, in the 1872 fight for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate, Cameron emerged triumphant. Their political warfare is well told by Bradley in his study of the Republican party and his biography of Cameron. More specific essays from Cameron’s perspective include Brooks Kelley’s study of the senatorial battle and John D. Stewart II’s examination of the longstanding rivalry. Curtin’s side has not been neglected. Two useful, if sympathetic, pieces are Rebecca Gifford Albright’s comprehensive study and Paul Beers’ more popularly-written biographical sketch.

These studies of the Republican Party have focused on personalities and organization. They have not sufficiently determined why an individual chose to become a Republican. Eric Foner wrote that the
free-soil ideology of the Republican Party appealed to rural and small town voters. One suspects that Pennsylvania fits the mold perfectly but no grass-roots examination of the electorate has tested the thesis.

Joel Silbey, in a study of the Democratic Party at a national level during the Civil War, claimed that Pennsylvania was the most politically competitive state in the Union. Unfortunately the Republican victory in Pennsylvania was so powerful that it has intimidated scholars from the Pennsylvania Democrats during the war. Arnold Shankman in a series of articles and a recent book, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, to some degree addresses the Republican opposition. But Shankman confuses Democratic partisanship and Copperhead pro-South sympathies. His impressionistic estimate is that at least twenty-five percent of Pennsylvania were Copperheads. But the Democratic Party polled over forty-five percent of the vote in a series of wartime elections. Admittedly, in many instances a Democrat and a Copperhead were one and the same person, but that does not clearly delineate the character of the Democratic voter and party.

Political opposition to Lincoln and the war often translated into draft resistance. Arnold Shankman argued that Pennsylvania rivaled any other state in its protest against the conscription laws of the Civil War. While most serious in the coal-mining regions, nearly every county experienced some resistance. Draft enrollers suffered personal and property attacks. In Clearfield County in 1863, twenty of twenty-eight draft enrollers resigned; in McKean County, eight of thirteen resigned. The state rarely met its quotas and Governor Curtin on several occasions postponed the deadline.

Philadelphia harbored considerable anti-black and pro-South sentiment. Consequently, that city was a Democratic stronghold. Nicholas Wainwright argued that sympathy for the South could be found among the city's elite who had economic ties with the South and the Irish who feared that emancipation might unleash black migration north and competition for jobs. Irwin Greenberg, in a look at one particular Philadelphia aristocrat, Charles Ingersoll, argued that the Democratic Party represented the party of stability and continuity. To Ingersoll, the Republican triumph augured racial amalgamation, petty party professionalism, and the challenge of industrialists to traditional elite rule. Joseph George, Jr., by focusing on the *Catholic Herald*, gives us an insight into the conservative Catholic community in Philadelphia. Offended by the nativist elements in the Republican Party, the Philadelphia Catholics clung to the Democratic Party. But during the war they
represented the moderates who also supported the battle for the Union.\textsuperscript{51}

Wartime Philadelphia has attracted considerable interest from historians. Most recently Russell F. Weigley edited an exquisite history of the city written by several historians. Weigley’s chapter focuses on the city during the Civil War. It is an up-to-date survey of Philadelphia showing the diversity of population and opinion, the war enthusiasm of volunteer regiments and the anti-war sentiment among many groups. It is also a good survey of the economic and cultural life of the city during that turbulent period. More politically-oriented, but still a vital study of Philadelphia in this period, is William Dusinberre’s \textit{Civil War Issues in Philadelphia, 1856–1865}. Two other sources for insights into Philadelphia are diaries. Nicholas Wainwright edited what one reviewer called “one of the three or four most significant diaries for the period it covers.” This was the diary of Sidney George Fisher which offers us an insight into the wealthy, conservative Philadelphia families. Less extensive, but still useful on the Civil War, is the recent publication of a diary of an upper-class Philadelphia matron.\textsuperscript{52}

Historians have not explored the economic ramifications of the Civil War for Pennsylvania as thoroughly as they have examined the political impact. Nevertheless, some excellent recent studies demonstrate that the war did affect certain aspects of the state’s industry. Norman B. Wilkinson and Harold Hancock, for example, considered the involvement of the DuPont powder mills in the war effort. DuPont, as the nation’s principal supplier of black powder, became integrally involved in the war. Black powder was the explosive most commonly used before the invention of dynamite, and DuPont manufactured about forty percent of the black powder that the construction industry, railroads, mining companies, and ordinary citizens used. When the Civil War erupted large supplies of DuPont’s inventory were scattered around the country on consignment to various agents. Immediately the Southern rebels confiscated supplies found in their states. Additional difficulties arose for DuPont when the English temporarily prohibited the sale of saltpeter in retaliation for the “Trent Affair.” As the war progressed DuPont met the demand of a warring nation and saw its sales jump 197\% over the flourishing peacetime years. With the end of the war, a temporary glut reduced sales but by 1872 DuPont had returned to full production.\textsuperscript{53}

Russell Weigley’s excellent chapter on Philadelphia shows that the economy there was also tied to the war effort. The city had munitions
factories, shipyards and hospital facilities that served the Union government. A more general and broader discussion of Pennsylvania’s economy during the war is Bernard Levin’s “Pennsylvania and the Civil War.” James Hazlett’s technical piece on the development of the three-inch field artillery credits the Phoenix Iron Company north of Philadelphia with making a major contribution to Civil War armaments.54

Striking off in new directions to determine how extensively the Civil War may have caused social dissray is an excellent essay by Robert Hampel and Charles W. Ormsby, Jr. These authors studied the pattern of crime and punishment in Lancaster County during the war years. Their analysis is based on the origins and disposition of 1300 “true bill” indictments. While the first year showed an increase in crime from the previous peacetime years, Hampel and Ormsby found that as the war progressed the patterns of crime and punishment did not indicate a breakdown in law and order. In fact, the months after the war were the more difficult as crimes by returning veterans swelled the courts’ dockets. They also concluded that crimes cannot be traced necessarily to those disadvantaged by illiteracy, lack of skills, color, or foreign birth. Considering the resistance to the draft, these authors concluded that “homefront mobs and riots were exceptions to a rule of less, not more wartime woes in the detection, prosecution and punishment of crime.”55

VI PENNSYLVANIA AND RECONSTRUCTION

It is with the Reconstruction Era (1865–1877) that historiographically we come full circle in considering recent trends in Pennsylvania history. The thrust of scholarship in recent antebellum history has focused on race relations; so it is with Reconstruction history. This is understandable for a main theme of that generation’s history and ours is racial accommodation.

It is interesting to note how evident the changing historical questions and perspectives of recent decades are reflected in the study of Pennsylvania. Two excellent political studies of Pennsylvania, for example, bridged the gap in historiographical schools while offering a readable guide to the state’s post-bellum political structure. The first of these books, Bradley’s The Triumph of Militant Republicanism, as noted previously, is a study of the rise of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania during the Civil War. Nearly one-half of the book deals with the political battles from 1866 to 1872. A chronological sequel to Bradley’s
book is Frank B. Evans, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1872–1877: A Study in Political Leadership*. Together these books offer a useful synthesis of state politics from the end of the Civil War through Reconstruction. However, each represents an older view of Reconstruction history. The books approach politics in a mechanistic fashion by emphasizing factions, campaigns, party identity, and election results. When they concern themselves with issues the authors characterized Republicanism as being conservative, pro-business, and anti-labor. This interpretation ignored the racial concerns of the 1860’s and 1870’s and accorded with the accepted version of Reconstruction of the 1940’s and 1950’s.

David Montgomery challenged the stereotype of “Radical Republicanism” in Pennsylvania and pointed to new directions. Montgomery claimed that the Radical Republicans, who included Thaddeus Stevens, William “Pig Iron” Kelley, John White Geary and Simon Cameron, favored civil rights for Blacks, universal education, currency inflation, and high tariffs. The radical credo, Montgomery argued, “placed its faith in political democracy based on universal suffrage and was led by a party closely allied with the independent entrepreneurs of the nation.” But, he concluded, the emerging corporations “eroded the social realities upon which the Radical outlook was founded.” Montgomery’s version of “Radical Republicanism” differed with accepted interpretations in that he saw the “Radicals” as being more egalitarian and optimistic that everyone could become a successful capitalist.

Similarly striking off in new directions was Ira Brown. Consistent with his interest in abolitionism and emancipation, Brown in 1961 suggested that economic issues were not the sole concern of Reconstruction Pennsylvania. Instead he called attention to the issue of racial accommodation as a significant post-Civil War problem. Brown offered a new perspective on Congressman William “Pig Iron” Kelley. This congressman, who represented the state for thirty years, earned the reputation as a high tariff and business advocate. Brown argued, on the other hand, that Kelley was a typical Radical Republican who championed Black suffrage and later turned to the tariff issue to protect American labor.

That same year Brown published another ground-breaking essay. That essay surveyed the struggle of blacks for their civil rights in post-bellum Pennsylvania. On every racial question, Brown argued, Pennsylvania lagged behind the federal government. From his essay one can see readily that Pennsylvania politicians accepted broader civil rights for blacks only when prodded by federal legislation.

More recent essays like Philip S. Foner’s exhaustive study of the
campaign against racial discrimination on Philadelphia's streetcars reinforced Brown's thesis. Edward Price in a survey of black voting rights concurred blacks still met considerable resistance after the enactment of the fifteenth amendment. "The franchise," he concluded, "was a useful tool . . . not a panacea."

Racial issues, of course, affected politics. Charles D. Cashdollar reinforced the historical view of intense racial prejudice in Philadelphia with an examination of President Andrew Johnson's 1866 campaign trip to the city. Johnson's pleas for reunion and calm seemed irrelevant, Cashdollar concluded. Instead Philadelphia voters were torn between a "fear of the Negro" and "a fear of the South." Those were the concerns which were to influence Philadelphia and the nation for several years.

Nonetheless, the nation grew weary of the sectional issues. J. Kent Folmar detected a corresponding change in attitudes of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation as it deliberated over federal policy. Using a scalogram analysis, Folmar noted that the flagging interest in the "southern question" was evident in 1872. For Pennsylvanians the Reconstruction Era was over; they now looked to the future.

Within the context of Reconstruction it is appropriate to consider Pennsylvania's most radical Republican, Thaddeus Stevens. Historians traditionally portrayed him as the villain who orchestrated vengeful reconstruction politics. But Fawn M. Brodie's highly-readable biography published in 1959 paved the way for a new interpretation. Subsequent studies of the Radical Republicans have reiterated or reinforced Brodie's interpretation. While no historian can overlook Stevens's vindictive, uncompromising, and irascible nature, still today most see him as a hero not a villain. We correctly see Stevens as a civil rights activist who envisioned a society based upon free education, universal suffrage, and equal rights for all. His problem is that he was too liberal for his time.

As is evident, the Reconstruction story has not attracted much interest from Pennsylvania historians. Nonetheless it does offer fertile ground for exploration. Certainly we need more local studies of attitudes toward racial policies and federal legislation. Analyses of voting patterns would deepen our understanding of political coalitions and significant issues. And, finally, biographies of William "Pig Iron" Kelley, Galusha Grow, John White Geary, and others would offer a more personal understanding of this difficult period of national readjustment.

VII A FINAL ASSESSMENT

It is evident once again, as we survey the recent literature on Pennsylvania's history, that the past and the present are necessarily
intertwined. We look to history for some understanding of our contemporary society. Attitudes, trends, and patterns in the past have formed the mold of the present. Yet, contemporary intellectual and social changes raise new questions and alter our perspectives on the past. Pennsylvania history has changed considerably in the last twenty-five years. For the Civil War period, it has been a bountiful time. Let us hope that future historians will provide as rich a tapestry of state history as those working in the last quarter century.

NOTES


2. John B. B. Trussell, Jr. *Pennsylvania Historical Bibliography* (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission 1979) work is invaluable to the historian delving into any area of the state’s history.


19. Coleman, 147.


42. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, includes two chapters on the travail of the Pennsylvania citizenry. These chapters were also published in *Pennsylvania History*, 30 (1963), 123–157; 31 (1964), 157–175; Wilbur Sturtevant Nye, *Here Come the Rebels!* (Baton Rouge, 1965).


45. Bradley, *op. cit.*


60. Philip S. Foner, *op. cit.*; Price, *op. cit.*

