

ILLINOIS:
THE CIVIL WAR AT HOME

How was Illinois affected by the Civil War? Was it unified? This lesson explores Illinois politics and the influence of the media on the public during the Civil War.

Grades 8-12

State Goals covered: 1B, 1.C, 3B, 16A, 16B, 16C, 16D, 14F

Vocabulary words: Manifest Destiny, industrialize, partisan, seceded, fervor, conscription, rhetoric, unbiased, tumultuous, appeasement, insurrection, extant, reunification, tyranny, dissenters, petitions, subversive, armistice, beneficiaries



Fig.1: Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
Bodies of dead on right of Federal
line
Library of Congress

Section 1: A call to arms: Illinois enters the fight to preserve the Union

Important concepts to consider:

- Patriotism and motives for fighting the Civil War
- While the South had slavery, the North was not exactly welcoming to blacks either.
- News media and its influence in politics

For the decades leading up to the start of the Civil War in 1861, the United States was in the midst of its great expansion westward. As this “Manifest Destiny” (a term meaning westward expansion was clearly America’s destiny, as some people believed) unfolded and as it became necessary to incorporate new territories under the same American Constitution, an old issue

continued to be an unresolved problem in national politics. Southern Democrats were pro-slavery since it was in their best interest to keep the institution alive; after all, the South was a slave-based economy focused largely on agriculture. Northern Democrats were generally satisfied with maintaining slavery as well, arguing that constitutionally the federal government could not interfere with what was a state-level issue. As the slavery debate intensified, the Republican Party was formed in 1854, largely aimed at stemming the legalization of slavery in the growing western United States. The North didn't need slavery because its economy was rapidly industrializing and centered on cheap labor.

As those debates raged on the national scene, state politics throughout the nation were also affected. Partisan newspapers brought the debate to a fever pitch through heated and critical language, silencing any chance at compromise by making enemies out of the opposition. All of these tensions exploded once the first Southern states seceded and the federal government, under President Lincoln, began its mission to preserve the Union at whatever cost.

Such was the case in Illinois, a geographically long state that belonged to the Northern United States but also extended well southward. Wealthy, rich in resources and manufacturing capabilities as well as manpower, Illinois became a major player in preserving the Union, something that changed the state (especially Chicago) profoundly after the war. But first, Illinois had to keep from tearing itself apart during the conflict. While Illinois avoided direct military conflict within its borders, it still faced many challenges.

The federal call for troops inspired patriotic fervor throughout most of Illinois. In large part a draft was unnecessary as the state managed to fill its quotas through enlistments alone. By the end of the war Illinois had provided 244,496 men for the Union cause, 15% of its population, losing 34,834 of them in the process. The following is a newspaper update on the status of conscription in the Chicago area.

Fig.2: The Progress of Recruiting

THE PROGRESS OF RECRUITING.
The progress of recruiting in this city and county during the present week has been most encouraging. The prospect of the draft has had most beneficial effect, and, in conjunction with the offer of bounties, has operated favorably in bringing men forward. At the present writing, not less than 2,000 men have volunteered in this county alone since the recent call for 300,000 volunteers. At this rate we shall avoid the contingency of a draft for filling up the quota of the first 300,000. A telegram was received yesterday by Gov. Yates from the Adjutant General containing most encouraging news with regard to the progress of enlistments all over the State. The news from all sections is that there is a universal rush to the camps, everybody is enlisting, and the quota of our State for the first 300,000 will certainly be full by the 15th inst., if not before that date.

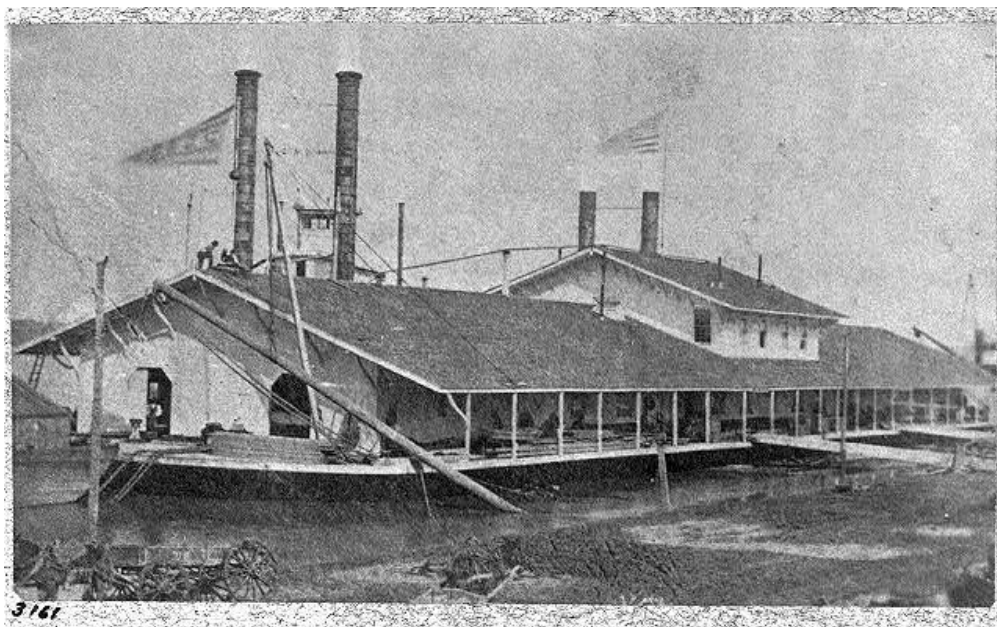


Fig.3: Wharf Boat at Cairo, Illinois, 1864. Cairo, Illinois, situated at the southern tip of the state by the Ohio River, served as a major supply base, training location, and launching pad for Union military operations throughout the war.

Library of Congress



Fig.4: Map of Illinois showing where Cairo, Illinois, is located. The town's location where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers meet proved to be strategically advantageous.

nationalatlas.gov

While Illinois, like the rest of the North, contributed a significant amount in manpower and manufacturing towards the Civil War, the state population was by no means wholly abolitionist and anti-slavery. Most agreed that paid labor was superior to a slave system in terms of profitability. Most were also very prejudiced and supported the institution of slavery so long as it remained contained in the South. But above all, most believed in preserving the Union at all costs and destroying the Confederacy, a sentiment that would become important in sustaining the war effort, and in Lincoln's later justification for emancipation... a hotly debated and contested decision.

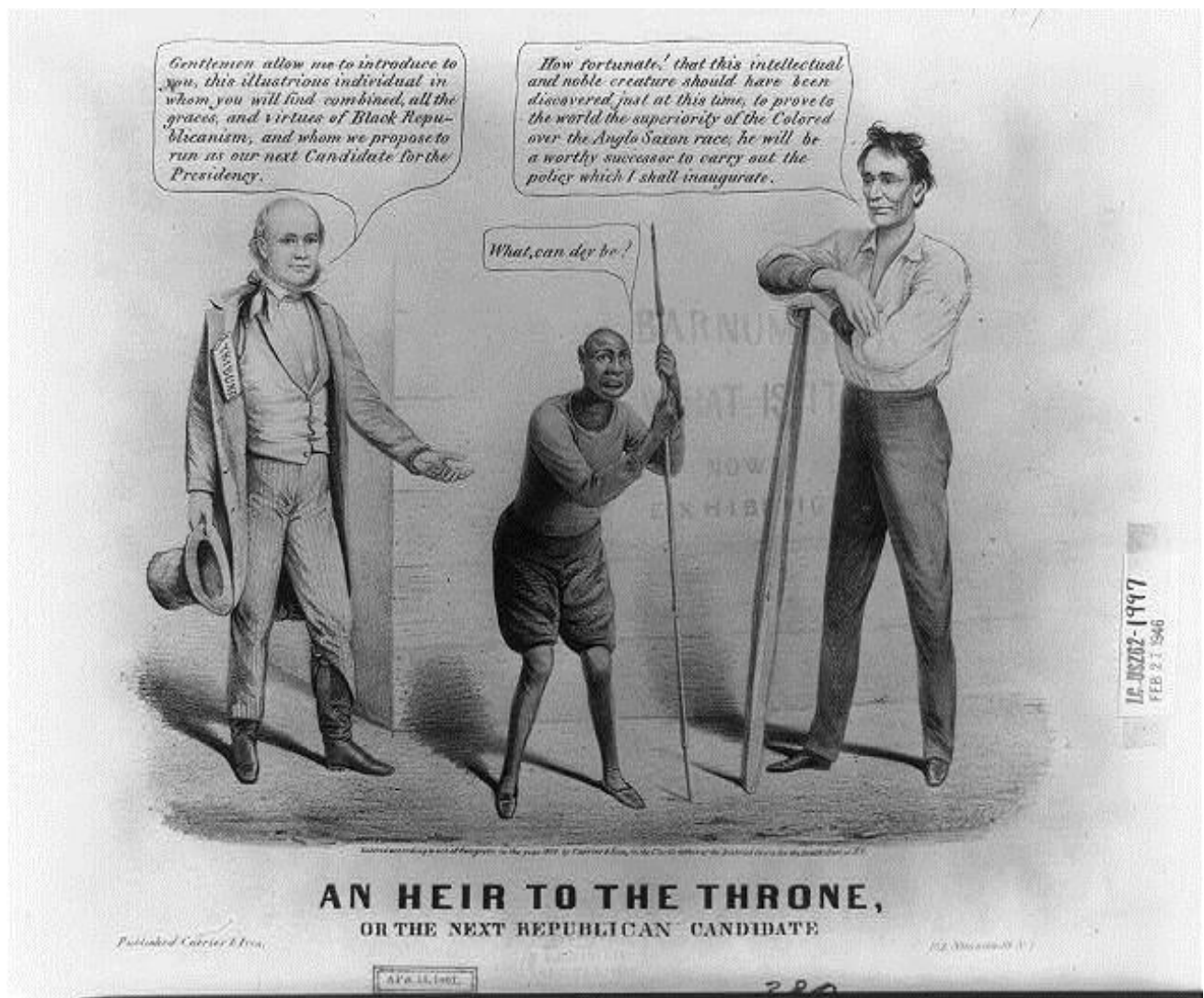


Fig.5: An Heir to the Throne, or the Next Republican Candidate, c.1860. Anti-Republican, anti-abolitionist propaganda like this could be commonly found in newspapers throughout the North, highlighting prevalent racism and opposition in the North.

Library of Congress

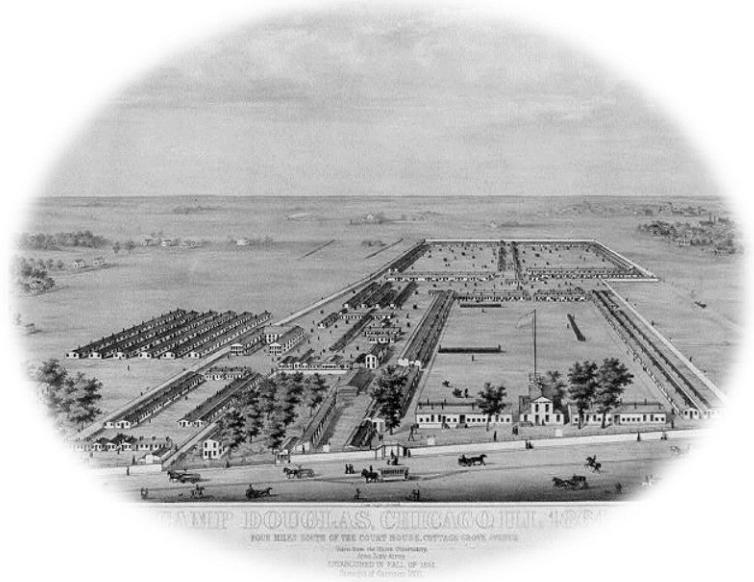
Instructions: Read and discuss the questions below. If necessary use a separate sheet of paper to organize your thoughts and answers to the questions before discussing them as a whole.

1. Enlistment in Illinois was very strong, and patriotism contributed a large part to that. After all, the state had strongly supported the Republican Lincoln. Published in early 1862, “The Progress of Recruiting” makes this exact point. Based on that news report, how do you think such large enlistment amounts affected the home front?
2. In a war where a nation was fighting against itself, how do you think patriotism changed? What would have been the difference between Northern patriotism and Southern patriotism?
3. One would assume that Figure 4 was a Southern creation, yet it was actually created and circulated in New York (the site of one of the most gruesome race riots during the Civil War) during Abraham Lincoln’s campaign for the presidency. Analyze the cartoon closely, read the captions, and notice how the three people in the image are drawn. What is the commentary on the Republican Party, on Abraham Lincoln? What attack is being made, likely by whom/what party, and for what reason? What else might the cartoon say about popular opinions on race in America?

Making Connections

1. Patriotism is a powerful force that has led many men and women to fight in American wars. Define patriotism in your own terms and describe how it applies to you. What other motivations can you think of that drive people to risk their life in times of national crisis? What contributing factors can you think of?
2. Political campaigns in the Civil War era often used offensive and insulting rhetoric to sway voters’ opinions on a particular candidate. The newspapers of the day often took sides with a political party and slanted their opinions and coverage in favor of the party platform they supported. Figure 4 provides us with an example of that. Thinking about politics today, how can the news media affect how people view politics and candidates? Do you feel that the news should be unbiased or does it not matter? In the case of the Civil War how could you imagine such divisive news reporting contributing to the lack of compromise between the North and the South?

Fig.6: Camp Douglas, Chicago, Ill.
Due to conditions, it is estimated that
between 5,000 and 6,000 Confederate
prisoners died in this South Side
prisoner of war camp.
Library of Congress



Section 2: Politics and war

Important concepts to consider:

- Politics on the home front often interact with and affect the battle front; similarly developments in battle can often dictate political strategy. The Civil War occurred on U.S. soil and as a consequence both fronts of the war were inseparable. This is something worth thinking about when you explore this historical period.
- Free speech in times of national emergency

While slavery was an important part of the Civil War, much of what people argued in the North revolved around the issue of states' rights: big government versus little government, a strong federal government versus a looser confederation of states. The United States was still in the process of figuring out how the nation should be defined and structured. The result of the war was an important factor in deciding which path America would take. In Illinois these debates and growing pains were no different.

As a Republican, President Lincoln entered his presidency as well as the war with the idea of preserving the Union. The decade before the war was tumultuous in national politics and as a consequence divisions in culture and point of view increasingly separated the North from the slave-holding South. The 1850's saw constant threats by Southern Democrat leaders to secede if they did not get their way, and as a consequence they received various efforts at appeasement from the Northern politicians (Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854). Here the media and political figures on each side were vocal and played a prominent role in further separating the North from the South. Northerners saw threats and appeasement as a sign of a sinister "Slave Power" working against their interests as a free-labor capitalist economy. By contrast Southerners began worrying about the Northern abolitionist movement, fearing that it was the goal of the North to incite a bloody insurrection, or race war, among the black slave population.

Later, as war raged on, vast divisions of hostility and tension arose within the Northern states. Deemed ‘Copperheads’, northern Peace Democrats were anti-war and largely pro-slavery, aiming for an immediate end of the Civil War through more appeasement and compromise. Once war began, these divisions became the cause of violence and an atmosphere of suspicion between political parties in the North. Illinois felt this firsthand, sandwiched in the middle of the nation, aligned with the North, but also politically divided within. Illinois also contained Chicago, a city emerging as a national force on the political, cultural, and economic scene.

When Abraham Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1862 and the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, in the midst of mixed Union Army results on the battlefield, it was not a widely accepted or popular policy. Practically and militarily, Lincoln aimed at undercutting the Southern labor force by releasing the slaves. However, given the already extant tensions and racial prejudice in the nation, this was viewed as turning a war of reunification into a war against slavery, something many Northerners couldn’t stomach. Consequently, from 1863 until the Union won the war, the anti-war Peace Democrat movement was prominent in Illinois and throughout the North. While it never became a major movement and its success was largely dictated by how well (or poorly) the war was going for the Union, the rise in anti-war sentiment caused serious concerns for the sustenance of the war effort in the North.

Illinois was home to Camp Douglas in south Chicago, a military POW camp meant to hold captured Confederate soldiers. Peace Democrats strongly criticized it, at times protested it, and there was even an attempted but failed jailbreak planned at one point. As a cause of these tensions, Republican and federal officials kept a close vigil on the camp. The following is a passage describing one committee charged with investigating ‘disloyalty’ relating to Camp Douglas. As the war dragged on and Peace Democrats voiced their criticisms louder, distrust, violence, arrests (40 in Illinois), and charges of disloyalty would become more and more visible throughout the North.

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Report of the Committee on "Evidences of Disloyalty."

A Vigilance Committee to be Appointed by the Board.

Additional Subscriptions to the War Fund.

The members of the Board of Trade were called to order on Saturday, at half-past 12 o'clock, for the purpose of hearing the report of the committee of three, appointed to visit Camp Douglas, and ascertain, if possible, the persons who were alleged to be prominent in sympathizing with, and giving aid to the rebel cause.

"EVIDENCES OF DISLOYALTY" FOUND WANTING.
The committee reported through their chairman, J. S. Rumsey, as follows:

Your committee, appointed to visit Camp Douglas and ask Colonel Tucker for the names of citizens supposed to be rebels, or sympathize with rebels (which information it was understood he could give), have attended to that duty, and beg leave to report that, after a long interview with Colonel Tucker, we have not been able to obtain any information that is tangible enough to act upon. Colonel Tucker informs us that he has no information criminating individuals, but has no doubt that there are citizens of our city, who are hovering around Camp Douglas with a view of assisting the prisoners to escape, or otherwise aid them. Still he (in his opinion) had not evidence enough to take the responsibility of causing, or of furnishing their names to your committee.

(Signed) JULIAN S. RUMSEY,
I. Y. MUNN,
M. C. STEARNS.

The report was accepted and the committee were directed to continue their investigations.

The President stated that, at a meeting of the War Committee, held on Friday, the following resolution was offered for the consideration of the Board:

Resolved, That we sustain the Visiting Committee in reporting the answers made to them by the parties to whom applications are made for contributions to the war fund.

The resolution was adopted unanimously.

VIGILANCE COMMITTEE, ETC.

Charles Randolph thought it was time that the committee were discharged and a Vigilance Committee appointed, who should root the thing to the bottom. He moved that the War Committee be requested to appoint a Vigilance Committee of five discreet, careful men, who should receive all communications, and have authority to investigate and report to the War Committee, and if necessary through them to the public.

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MR. RUMSEY SAID THAT, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE, he had drawn up a report which had been considerably modified before being submitted to them. The report was true, but it did not tell all the truth. He did not expect that Colonel Tucker would give any information. "It was a fact that could not be gained, that there were people in Chicago who were just as bitter rebels as any in South Carolina, and he was ready to sail right in and drive them right out, or they should drive him out. He then spoke of his efforts, when Mayor, to get all loyal citizens to take the oath of allegiance. He paid a compliment to the Union Defence Committee, but said that there were perhaps too many judges in it to get things done quickly. They were universally noted for a tendency to have everything carried out according to strict legal formula, this and was no time for waiting. We wanted action. He loved the Union so well that he would sacrifice his dearest friend, if necessary, if he should not tread right up to the music of the Union. He wanted "to sail right in and go to work. It was no disgrace to be whipped, if we only fought as

Lizzie M. Rickcords,
Kate Lonergan.

hard as we could. The disgrace lay in being beaten through our own inaction and sloth."

Mr. Randolph's motion was now put and decided carried unanimously. Upon the question of discharging the previous committee, Mr. Hancock said that the action of the two committees was incompatible, and that it would be better to discharge the first. "The second committee," he said, "would be composed of such men as would ferret out things from the depths of hell."

The committee of three were then discharged. Some discussion ensued as to the functions and duties of the Vigilance Committee, principally as to whether they should report the names of such persons suspected of treason. [The names of the members of the committee will probably not be given to the public.]

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE WAR FUND.
The following additional subscriptions to the War Fund were then reported:
E Brownlow, \$20; D B Winton, \$10; A R & G H Mills, \$10; Barker & Daley, \$5; S Newhall & Bros, \$25; Wm E Johnson & Co, \$15; E G Avery, \$25; J B Chambers, \$10; W C Goudy, \$20; J M Marshall, \$5; King & Scott, \$25; Joseph E Garry, \$10; George E Bates, \$25; Andrew & Otis, \$10; Downer, Dennis & Co, \$25; George Smith, \$1,000; P Geddes, \$25; Davenport, Ullman & Co, \$50; O L Clark, \$25; J C Woodman, \$10. Amount previously subscribed, \$43,959; total, \$45,319.

The Board then adjourned.
Agnes M. Manning, *Ass't Principal*,
Lucy A. Kendall,
Mary L. Hull.

CURTIS STREET BRANCH OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL.
Corner of Curtis and Third Streets.
Mary J. Coin,
Julia A. Nelson.

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Fig.7: The Board of Trade
Chicago History Museum

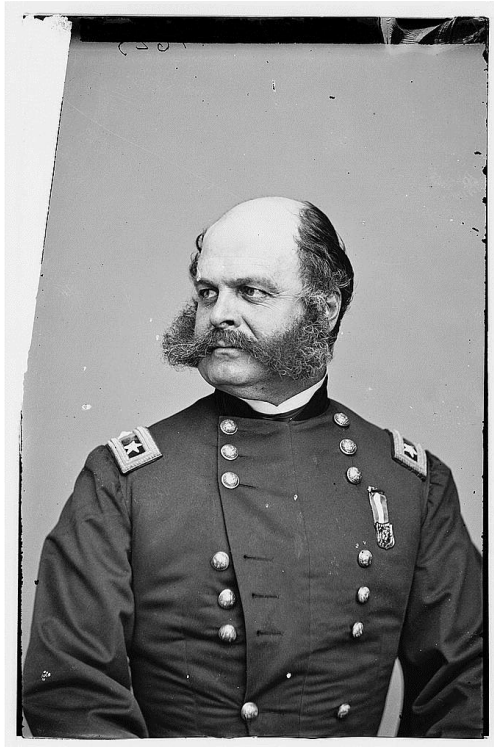


Fig.8: Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside. General in the Union army, Burnside ordered the silencing of *The Chicago Times*, attempting to quiet the intense criticism of Lincoln, the War, and emancipation.

Library of Congress

Some of the main arguments that came from the Peace Democrats in the North were that the war was an example of a big and dangerously growing federal government – tyranny, in short. On the other side, Republicans and government officials looked for dissenters who actively damaged the Union cause. This included those people who were encouraging men not to enlist or in some way affecting the efficiency of the Northern war movement. Once the Emancipation Proclamation was made, Northern dissent peaked. It was seen as a major intrusion upon states' rights, an unconstitutional move. In Chicago, Wilbur Fisk Storey was the owner of *The Chicago Times* and harshest critic of the Union movement. He was pro-Union, but also Democratic, pro-slavery, and anti-Lincoln. He had sympathy for the South and a hatred of abolitionists, viciously attacking Lincoln's administration and its intrusion on states' rights. In 1863, responding to the Emancipation Proclamation, Storey's paper attacked the move and warned of the dangers involved in it. In response, on June 1, 1863, General Burnside issued Order No. 83 to suppress *The Chicago Times*. On June 3rd, the paper was shut down and taken into possession by the military, a move that inspired jubilation from "loyal" citizens and reaffirmed the biggest fears of those critical of the federal government's tyranny. Some Democratic protests arose, and petitions sent to Abraham Lincoln finally caused him to lift the order. The President cited the newspaper's right to free speech.

Discussion and Analysis: Section 2

As the Civil War era shows us, the news media can be one-sided and unbalanced, yet it also has the ability to inform and clarify issues which are in the best interest of the public to know. Debates continue to this day over what the news media can and can't say as well as how opinionated it should be. Ultimately the debate boils down to freedom of speech. In times of national crisis, these concerns can become more visible, as we see with the Civil War.

Read and answer the following questions. Discuss your answers in class.

1. When General Ambrose E. Burnside decided to shut down a vocal opponent of the Union war efforts, *The Chicago Times*, many would argue that it was an intrusion on civil liberties and out of line. It is precisely this issue which Wilbur F. Storey was criticizing when he attacked Lincoln and the federal government for going beyond their constitutional limits. What is your opinion on this issue? Do you feel that Gen. Burnside was justified in his actions? Was Wilbur Storey, by attacking the Union policies and war effort, being subversive and dangerous to the nation in a time of crisis? Or was it his right to do so?
2. "The Board of Trade" article is particularly interesting because it gives us some insight into the developing fears and anxiety felt by Northern government officials as the war dragged on. Read over and analyze the document, citing what they are really concerned about. Who are they concerned will endanger the Union war effort? And what are they planning to do about it? Thinking more broadly, try to make connections between this report and *The Chicago Times* issue that occurred later when the Republican Party began losing some public support.

Independent Research Activity

In groups or individually, pick an American conflict or current events situation in which the news media played an important/controversial role. Find the answers to these questions and discuss the findings in class.

- Describe the issue
- Give reasons why the issue came up
- Tell how was it resolved, or not
- Discuss how it relates similarly to the Civil War fears of subversive newspapers and Southern sympathizers
- Give your own opinions on whether there are limits to free speech

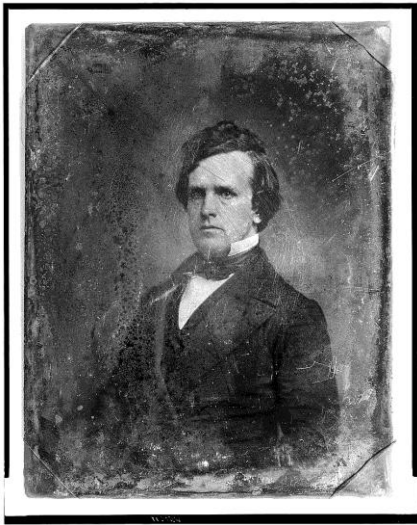


Fig.9: Richard Yates
Library of Congress

Section 3: Government and economy: a new Illinois

Important concept to consider:

- War affects economics just as much as it affects politics. Think about how the Illinois economy was impacted during and after the war period.

Behind popular support for Abraham Lincoln in the 1860 presidential election, the state of Illinois went predominantly Republican in that same election. Yet despite a support base in Illinois that included Governor Richard Yates and Senator Lyman Trumbull, the realities of supporting a massive war movement would shake the Republicans' hold over the state. In the 1862 state midterm elections, the backlash against the Republican Party in Illinois resulted in a Democratic sweep. Immediately the Democrats rejected the Union war policy as well as its legal actions and investigations against those who voiced critical opinions of the Union. They demanded an immediate armistice and reunification with the South, denouncing emancipation and once again accepting slavery in the South. Gov. Yates suspended the Democrat-controlled State Senate for the first time in its history that same year. These tensions over loyalty, rights, and the size and limits of the federal government would continue to rise in Illinois as secret societies began forming on either side. With Unionist groups trying to sniff out dissenters and Confederate spies, and with opponents voicing their discontent at the Union cause, it was a period of paranoia and hostility. It wasn't until late 1864 when the Union armies captured Atlanta and began their campaigns in the East that Republicans were able to regain public confidence and again have control of Illinois. That same year President Lincoln was re-elected for a second term. For Illinois economically, the Civil War would mark a new era in the state's position on the national map. With Southern economic ties and trade options effectively cut off, Chicago's connection to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River (see fig.4) made it invaluable for not only the war effort but also for the support of commerce in the North. Given massive government contracts for the war effort, Chicago became a major manufacturer of war materials and equipment. The flow of capital allowed for companies to grow and invest in advanced

manufacturing equipment, and the government promotion of railroad tracks that cut through Chicago paved the way for the city to become a major manufacture and trade center in the century that followed. The heavy steel manufacturing industry, meatpacking (Union Stock Yard opened in 1865), and the growth in wheat trade through Chicago were all byproducts of these shifts that occurred as a consequence of the war. Chicago, and Illinois by extension, were beneficiaries of these changes and would only continue to grow thereafter - all of this despite the troubles faced during the war.

Discussion and Analysis: Section 3

The Civil War had significant consequences for America's development as a nation. Given what you've learned in this lesson, it's your turn to evaluate these consequences for Illinois and the nation as a whole.

1. Focusing on what impacts the war had on the politics at home, what differences can you see between when war goes well and when war goes poorly on the battle fields?
2. Think about how the Civil War impacted the nation's economic development and analyze why emancipation was necessary for the North to not only win the war militarily but also for the North and South to coexist again.
3. With emancipation, 4 million black slaves were suddenly free, many migrating northward to states like Illinois and growing cities like Chicago. Given what you've learned about the society in the North, hostile political divisions, and economic changes, explain what challenges and advantages would be faced by the freed slaves and by the cities in the North that would be their new home.

Bibliography

Images

Figure 1: “Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Bodies of dead on right of Federal line.” Photograph. 1863. From Library of Congress, Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.00859> (accessed December 1, 2010.)

Figure 2: “The Progress of Recruiting.” *Chicago in 1862: clippings from The Chicago Times collected by Elias Colbert.* Accessed November 17, 2010, in the archives of the Chicago History Museum.

Figure 3: “[Wharf Boat at Cairo, Illinois]” Photographic print. [1864] From Library of Congress, Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b10013> (accessed December 1, 2010)

Figure 4: Map of Illinois from www.nationalatlas.gov. http://www.nationalatlas.gov/printable/printableViewer.htm?imgF=images/preview/reference/pagegen_il.gif&imgW=588&imgH=450 (accessed August 10, 2011).

Figure 5: “An Heir to the Throne, or the Next Republican Candidate.” Cartoon print. New York: Currier & Ives, c1860. From Library of Congress, *American Cartoon Prints*. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b50438> (accessed December 1, 2010).

Figure 6: “Camp Douglas, Chicago, Ill. 1864.” Photograph. From Library of Congress, *Popular Graphic Arts*. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a17854> (accessed December 1, 2010).

Figure 7: “The Board of Trade.” Colbert, Elias. *Chicago in 1862, clippings from The Chicago Times collected by Elias Colbert.* Accessed November 17, 2010, in the archives of the Chicago History Museum.

Figure 8: “[Portrait of Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, Officer of the Federal Army.]” Photograph. Brady National Photographic Art Gallery. [between 1860 and 1865] From Library of Congress, *Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints*. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.05368> (accessed December 1, 2010).

Figure 9: “[Richard Yates, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing slightly left.]” Photograph. between 1844 and 1860] From Library of Congress, *Daguerreotypes*. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c10155> (accessed December 1, 2010).

“The Progress of Recruiting” and the “Board of Trade” articles are newspaper clippings from *The Chicago Times*, found at the Chicago History Museum.

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