

Hollywood History



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Hollywood History

ARTICLE

By MARK C. CARNES

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I'D LONG SUSPECTED that colleagues in the profession shared my illicit interest in historical movies; their detailed contempt, like mine, betokened intimate familiarity. My recent experiences as editor of *Past Imperfect*, a collection of essays on Hollywood's interpretation of history, have confirmed my suspicions. The indictment—and it is a broad one—can now be unsealed: Historians love movies about the past.

Here's the evidence: The historians I approached to write the essays were busy folk, and even before I could explain the project, many of them recited, mantralike, a litany of crushing professional obligations or publication deadlines. But as the idea began to seep through the protective verbiage, they conceded its appeal. A few did decline at this stage, but always reluctantly; nearly everyone else, with salacious alacrity, agreed to do an essay.

Carolly Erickson, who grew up in Hollywood, said that she loved movies; Stephen Jay Gould confessed that he, like most historians, “adored” them. The women's historian Gerda Lerner said that she watched several movies a day. William Manchester, currently working on Richard Attenborough's *The Last Lion* (with Anthony Hopkins as Churchill), instantly chose to review Attenborough's *Young Winston* (1972). Tom Wicker took *Paths of Glory* (1957) and several other films on the Great War, “having been fascinated by the subject ever since reading the Tietjens trilogy, and always by the movies.”

This general enthusiasm for movies translated into a reluctance to take on bad ones. Thus Jonathan Spence skipped the blockbuster movies about China to write about his lesser-known favorite, *Shanghai Express* (1932). Gore Vidal, who I thought would pounce upon one of the delectably awful films on ancient Rome, chose instead Preston Sturges's classic of the Great Depression, *Sullivan's Travels* (1941). Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., picked *The Front Page* (1931), “because it is one of the first talkies to combine speed and bite of dialogue with a certain reckless fluency in camera movement, because it is such a vivid period piece, because of Adolphe Menjou's wickedly witty performance—and because it is such fun to see.” James Axtell, a scholar of Native Americans, declined to review a famous film about a famous Indian because it was “such a bad movie. But,” he said, “I'd love to write about *Black Robe*, the wonderful Canadian-made film on Jesuits and Hurons in the 1600s.”

Some movies that were dismissed when they were made have gained credibility with time: *PT 109* seems truer today than it did in 1963.

Some authors chose to revisit films that had drawn them to history early on. Princeton's Scan Wilentz, a scholar of the early

national period, had been attracted to the subject, at age seven, by *The Buccaneer* (1958), while the *New York Times* columnist and legal historian Anthony Lewis had drawn inspiration from Laurence Olivier's

Henry V (1944), which attracted a cult following while he was in college; he saw it twenty times. I did not know why Paul Fussell, Professor of English literature emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania, requested *Patton* (1970) until I read his essay. Junior officer Fussell had endured a vainglorious harangue by the real Gen. George Patton (“What an asshole,” Fussell then muttered).

So recruiting the sixty authors for the project was easy and, indeed, reassuring; it was good to know that others openly shared my vice. After the historians had completed their essays, moreover, most invoked the same noun to describe the experience: fun, not always the first word to surface in discussions of the history profession or its practitioners.

What makes Hollywood history so attractive to historians? Envy, I suspect. Professional historians toil in dim archives, where they pluck the most solid bits of evidence from the muck of the historical record, carefully mold them into meanings, and serve them up as footnote-encrusted books. Reviewers in professional journals, like inspectors along a coal chute, relentlessly poke around for imperfections of evidence and softness of argument, all the while heaving up black clouds of skepticism. It is a dirty business.

But Hollywood History dazzles. Confronted by gaps in the historical record, Hollywood fills them with paste; when dulling ambiguities and complexities mar the story, Hollywood polishes them smooth. The final product gleams, and often it sears the imagination. Who can forget Marlene Dietrich as Catherine the Great, George C. Scott as Patton, or Ben Kingsley as Gandhi? Even Malcolm X, whose meteoric career blazed through our own times, is hard to fix in memory after we have seen Denzel Washington's electrifying portrayal of him.

For historians part of the glow of Hollywood History is its visual authenticity. Hollywood studios have often painstakingly reproduced the material culture of the past: clothing, furniture, architecture. Thus Walter Plunkett, a costume designer, searched through Atlanta's museums, found swatches of clothing, and



Grauman's Chinese Theater in
Hollywood, California

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commissioned textile mills to reproduce them for the dresses in *Gone With the Wind* (1939); the women's costumes alone cost nearly a hundred thousand dollars. John Ford's reconstruction of Fort Apache for his 1948 movie by that name was consistent, Dee Brown observed, with "surviving glass-plate photographs of period and place." John Wayne's reconstruction of the Alamo for his 1960 movie stands to this day as a very satisfactory museum; many tourists presume it to be the original. While making *All the President's Men* (1976), Warner Brothers built an almost exact duplicate of the *Washington Post* newsroom upon two sound stages at Burbank. The studio ordered two hundred desks from the firm that had supplied the *Post* and painted the room the identical colors of the original: 6½ PA Blue and 22 PE Green. Warner Brothers even shipped trash from the *Post* newsroom to fill wastebaskets on the set.

Apart from the visual details, movies sometimes succeed better than prose at replicating the pacing and intensity of historical events. Frances FitzGerald was stunned by the opening of *Apocalypse Now* (1979): palm trees rising out of the ocean, a helicopter moving through the top of the frame—like a "malevolent insect"—and the jungle erupting in a wall of flame. "When I first saw these breathtaking pyrotechnics I thought: [Francis Ford] Coppola has seen the war in Vietnam and filmed what the TV cameras could only approximate." J. Anthony Lukas was similarly struck by the wordless beginning of *The Molly Maguires* (1970), which takes viewers into the depths of a coal mine: A match flares, and an explosion rips through the deep tunnels. "No audience of today can comprehend the Mollies without feeling that damp, drear, dangerous world.... Those twelve minutes of chop, drip, and hack evoke that world with precision and empathy." Geoffrey C. Ward was moved by Richard Attenborough's re-creation of the Amritsar massacre in *Gandhi* (1982); and Kenneth T. Jackson, by the final scene in *Gallipoli* (1981), where soldiers of the Australian 10th Light Horse Regiment, having witnessed their mates being shredded by Turkish machinegun fire, push letters, rings, and watches into the wall of the trench, where they will be found and sent home after their owners have also gone to confront certain death. James McPherson regarded the depiction in *Glory* (1989) of the assault upon Fort Wagner by the black troops of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, a unit that suffered nearly 50

percent casualties in the battle, as "the most realistic combat footage in any Civil War movie."

Sometimes the visual power of the movies transcends inaccuracies of chronology and character. Stephen Minta, author of a book on Lope de Aguirre, a soldier of fortune who murdered the commander of a 1560 expedition down the Amazon and initiated an exotically mad reign of terror, applauded Werner Herzog's film on the subject, Aguirre, *Wrath of God* (1972), despite the fact that Herzog folded into Aguirre's story characters and details from Gonzalo Pizarro's El Dorado expedition of 1541. What redeemed the movie for Minta was its evocation of that awesome river, especially the final scene showing Aguirre aboard his sinking raft. "The distorted features of Klaus Kinski (Aguirre) bring us as close to an understanding of Aguirre's psychology as we are likely to get," Minta wrote.

Sometimes filmmakers happen upon truths that have eluded historians. Scan Wilentz, for instance, argued that because it insisted on the significance of the Battle of New Orleans, *The Buccaneer* was "more trustworthy than many standard history textbooks," which proclaim the battle irrelevant because it was fought after the Treaty of Ghent had been signed. Wilentz maintained that had the British won at New

Orleans, they were prepared, treaty or no, "to seize the advantage, declare the Louisiana Purchase a dead letter, and redraw the political map of North America."

During the first half of the twentieth century, similarly, historians generally assumed that the plantation mistress resembled the stereotypical Southern belle, passive and submissive, a fragile ornament to Southern gentility. But Vivien Leigh's gritty performance as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* (1939) challenged the stereotype, and in recent years Catherine Clinton, author of *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend*, has studied the letters and diaries of plantation mistresses and found that Scarlett was closer to the actual history than the mythic Southern belle.

In several instances movies that were dismissed when they were made have gained credibility with the passage of time. An outstanding example is *PT 109*, a film made "out of time in 1963," Richard Reeves noted, because the boat's twenty-six-year-old commander, Lt. John F. Kennedy, had become President of the United States. The movie, released just months before the



Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* (1939).

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presidential campaign (and JFK's assassination), received harsh treatment from critics. Time complained that Kennedy's exploits had been blown up "out of proportion in deference to the man who is now the Great Big Skipper." The movie had become "a widescreen campaign poster," filmed with "a reverence usually reserved for a *New Testament* spectacle." Yet Reeves found that despite the movie's modifications of words, facts, and events, the filmmakers "did all right. As corny as Cliff Robertson's dialogue may sound to some, it gets to the truth of John F. Kennedy: The man had an iron will. No matter how you rearrange the facts of his life—including the fact that his health was such that he never should have been in the navy, particularly the PT service—JFK was not an easy man to discourage."

Critics of Hollywood History often seize on the howling anachronism: the Roman senator with a Timex on his wrist. We found few of these, but errors of context were fairly common: Michael Grant noticed busts that looked "suspiciously like Hadrian" (A.D. 76–138) in the 1953 film *Julius Caesar* (Caesar, of course, lived from 100 B.C. to 44 B.C.); Carolly Erickson that in *The Scarlett Empress* (1934) the music of Wagner thunders over scenes of the eighteenth-century Russian court; Paul Fussell that the "American" tanks in Patton were German and had been rented from the Spanish Army; Akira Iriye that in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) the Japanese refer in their own language to the great attack of December 8, a date that is mistranslated into English, for understandable reasons, as December 7; David Carradine that in *Murder by Decree* (1979) the Tower Bridge, not yet complete, is shown intact at the time of the Ripper murders; Marshall de Bruhl that in *The Alamo* (1960), Richard Boone's Sam Houston orders the defenders of the Alamo to stop Santa Anna "right here on the Rio Grande," which doesn't flow within a hundred miles of the place; Anthony F. C. Wallace that in *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939) Henry Fonda helps break the siege of Fort Stanwix (which occurred in 1777) and announces that Cornwallis has surrendered, thus shortening the war by four years.

We did find many more serious mistakes of historical presentation and interpretation, and error, as Hawthorne demonstrated in *The Scarlet Letter*, is more interesting than virtue. But let me concede from the outset that a movie script is (mercifully) not a dissertation; a feature film is not a documentary. We do not mean to censure film-makers, much less censor them, for making feature films. Shakespeare, by omitting the fact that Henry V slaughtered hundreds of French

prisoners at Agincourt, perhaps failed as a historian, yet we do not propose that some committee of earnest historians undertake the revision of Henry V. But sometimes filmmakers become so smitten with their creations they proclaim them to be "accurate" or "truthful," and many viewers presume them to be so.

Partly that's because the elaborate costumes, sets, and furniture and the powerful presence of the actors give the illusion of authenticity. That a film carefully replicates the material culture of a period, however, is no guarantee that it conforms even vaguely to the historical record. In making *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936), for example, Warner Brothers simulated a "sense of authenticity" among the crew by printing replicas of Victorian postage stamps and using them on interoffice correspondence—though none would ever appear on-screen. Yet as Richard Slotkin observed, this "authenticity" did not extend to the plot, which proposes that several years before the charge a "Suristani" potentate named Surat Khan butchered a British garrison on the frontier of India, killing Errol Flynn's friends and family. Somehow Surat Khan,

who has become allied to the Russians, ends up on Balaklava Heights in the Crimea. There he is spotted by Errol Flynn, who, eyes brimming with vengeance, charges straight for him, leading the Light Brigade to its doom. British India did exist, and so did the Light Brigade and Balaklava Heights; the rest of the story was fantasy.

Along a continuum ranging from "dead wrong" to "close to the verifiable history," *The Charge of the Light Brigade* sits near one edge, though every movie in the vicinity is in danger of being swallowed up by that black hole of deceit, Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991). The movie amplifies the discredited thesis of the New Orleans prosecutor Jim Garrison that Vice President Lyndon Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, among countless others, conspired in the President's assassination, fearing that Kennedy was planning to pull the United States out of Vietnam. Stanley Karnow's essay showed that Stone was wrong about Kennedy's intentions toward Vietnam. Even worse, Stone twisted the evidence—including Karnow's own book—beyond recognition.

Just as preposterous, if less poisonous, was *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941), the story of George Custer and his wife, Libbie. The director Raoul Walsh's Custer, Errol Flynn, despondent that the Civil War has ended, becomes a drunkard. Eventually Libbie (Olivia de Havilland) turns him around and saves his career. He heads out West, befriends the Sioux, promises to preserve their sacred burial grounds in the Black Hills, and writes Libbie a letter



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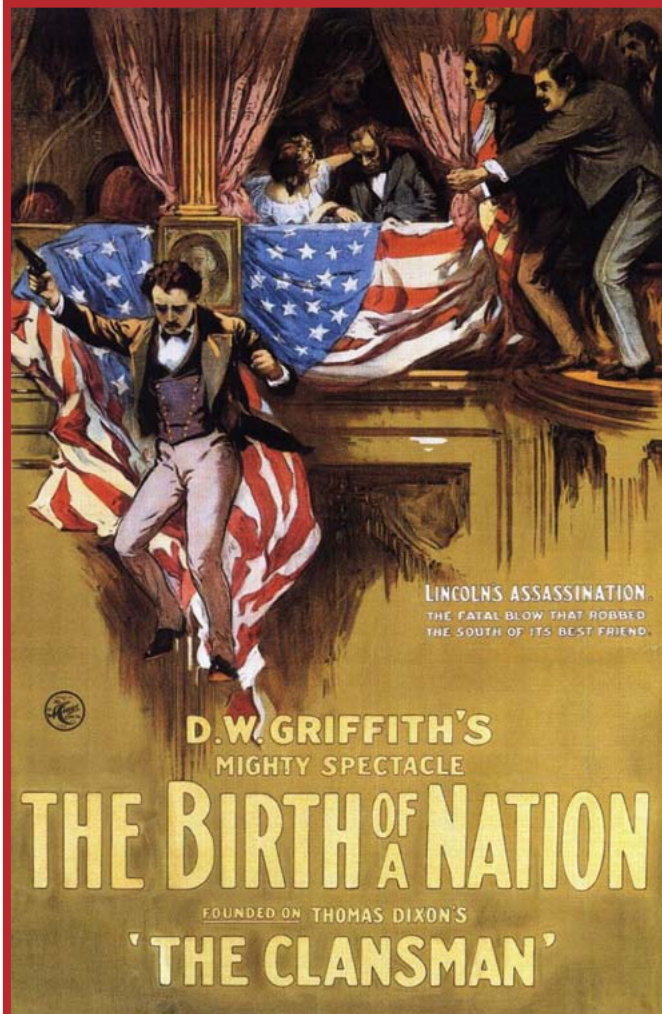
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in which he asserts that the Indians must “be protected in their right to an existence in their own country.” In the final scene, after Flynn’s heroic death at the Little Bighorn, Libbie shows her husband’s letter to General Sheridan, who promises that President Grant will carry out Custer’s request and treat the Indians well. “Come, my dear,” Sheridan tells Custer’s teary widow, “your soldier won his last fight after all.” Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., found these scenes offensively fraudulent. The real Custer, Josephy noted, never took a drink after he had humiliated himself on the streets of Monroe, Michigan, in 1862; and Custer himself started the gold rush that caused developers to scramble onto Sioux territory in the Black Hills. Whether the real General Sheridan did in fact say the phrase widely attributed to him about the only good Indian being a dead one, he was no friend to them, nor was his boss, President Grant, who avenged Custer’s death by waging a harsh and punitive military campaign against the Sioux.

Bonnie and Clyde and *Anne of the Thousand Days*, made just two years apart, reveal the generational fracture of the 1960s.

Hollywood has depicted historical women less egregiously, partly because it has depicted them less or not at all. Yet even when the movie is about a famous woman, she is often squeezed into the tight constraints of twentieth-century expectations. Carolly Erickson found that *The Scarlet Empress* (1934) transformed Catherine the Great, “a dynamic and boisterous intellectual,” into “a sex goddess.” Lady Antonia Fraser was similarly disappointed that Hal B. Wallis’s *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1969) depicted young Anne Boleyn as hopelessly smitten by Henry VIII; the movie thus missed the more interesting story of an ambitious woman who longed to be part of the king’s world and to use her influence to affect the course of Protestantism.

Fortunately Hollywood has sometimes put aside the iron of conventional domesticity with which it flattens historical women.



A poster for D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

One atypical representation appeared in Arthur Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), in which Faye Dunaway’s Bonnie calls the shots (literally), taunting Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty) to go off on crime sprees. But Yale’s Nancy Cott noted that the real Bonnie Parker was very different. A tiny person, only four feet ten inches and less than ninety pounds, with curly blonde hair and blue eyes, Parker, a waitress, was charmed by Clyde Barrow the first time she met him, and he was already a confirmed criminal who expected, and received, deference from his girl friend.

Thus, while Bonnie and Clyde transformed a fairly conventional 1930s girl friend into a precursor of Thelma and Louise, *Anne of the Thousand Days* took an ambitious and independent-minded Anne Boleyn and filmed her as a conventional love-stricken girl. These movies, made within two years of each other, reveal the emerging generational fracture of the late 1960s. As

Antonia Fraser put it, *Anne of the Thousand Days* offered “more of the same” to its audience of mature viewers, while *Bonnie and Clyde* enshrined for the young a new type of feminist style. “Bonnie’s multivalent character—simultaneously punk and moll—suggested both the threat and the promise of changing the gender order,” Cott wrote.

Because viewers prefer movies that confirm their beliefs, Hollywood History usually reflects prevailing attitudes, especially in politics. The list of such films stretches back to the origins of cinema, certainly to D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915). “Few if any films in the history of the cinema,” Berkeley’s Leon Litwack wrote, “had such tragic and far-reaching consequences,” for “more than any historian or textbook, the movie molded and reinforced racial stereotypes by its vividly demeaning portrayal of African Americans.” Abel Gance’s *Napoleon* (1927), like *The Birth of a Nation*,

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was hailed as another masterpiece of cinematic innovation. But Columbia's Simon Schama was struck by the film's resonance to the tragic political movements of the era in which it was made: "Napoleon seems to me now, as it did when I first saw it, a proto-fascist film that fetishizes the charismatic leader. I love its visual inventiveness and despise the cause it serves."

Richard Slotkin noted that by the mid-1930s, with fascism and communism on the rise in Europe, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) constituted a thinly veiled plea for the rearmament of the West against the forces of totalitarianism. The threat remained after the Second World War, though now it had been narrowed down to Soviet inspired communism. Even a subject so remote as the Bible could provide a parable for the present peril. In the prologue to *The Ten Commandments* (1956), Cecil B. DeMille walks onstage and lays it on the line: "The theme of this picture is whether men are to be ruled by God's laws, or by a dictator... This same battle continues throughout the world today." The metaphor, Barnard's Alan Segal observed, was oddly inconsistent, for while ancient Egypt stood for Soviet communism, the glamour and splendor of the pharaoh's palace seemingly indicted American prosperity and materialism. The movie, made when McCarthyism still hung over the political landscape, suggested that the true enemy was within.

By the 1960s the enemies of the West had been identified as the restive peoples of the Third World. David Levering Lewis saw *Khartoum* (1966) in this light. Its message was encapsulated in the final scene: Charles George Gordon (Charlton Heston), standing alone at the top of the stairs to his palace, resplendent in a dark blue uniform, saber unsheathed, watching impassively as an angry sea of darkskinned peoples surges upward. For a moment Heston's stare stops the dervishes in their tracks; then they regain their wits, spear him, and lop off his head. The sun sets, the screen darkens, and a sepulchral voice warns, "A world without Gordons would return to the sands." Here, Lewis wrote, was "an occidental cinematic cliché in splendid culmination."

Khartoum was filmed during the great buildup of American ground forces in Vietnam; several years—and tens of thousands of American lives—later, when the costs of policing the world had become far

more evident than its wisdom, attitudes toward foreign military interventions had changed. And so did the movies, giving rise to a new genre of vividly violent films about the Vietnam War. The most influential was, of course, *Apocalypse Now*. But for all its visual brilliance and jolting special effects, the movie never seemed to light on Vietnamese soil. Frances FitzGerald was unsettled by references to Montagnards in panflat Cambodia, by rivers that scale mountains, by Marlon Brando's role as mere symbol, "Colonel Thanatos." "Life is missing, and so is an attention to landscape, to detail," FitzGerald wrote. It was a failing shared by the movie's successors. In *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), Hue during the Tet offensive resembles "a bombed-out suburb of Miami." *Casualties of War* (1989) features huge railway bridges and trains, though the only railroad in Vietnam had been built early in the century and was unused during the war. In *The Deer Hunter* (1978) the Vietnamese speak Thai and play Russian roulette. These films are much like the war itself, FitzGerald concluded, for "to most Americans, including those in positions of authority, Vietnam was an abstraction or a symbol."

By the 1980s the political debate had shifted from Vietnam to the escalating nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. The director Roland Joffe's contribution to the debate was *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989), which argues that the frenzied expansion of nuclear weaponry was from the outset driven by pigheaded militarists (like Gen. Leslie Groves, military commander of the Manhattan Project), who intimidate morally sensitive people (like the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, who

headed the bomb design team at Los Alamos) into doing what they know is wrong. Joffe claimed that his film was "more truthful to what actually happened than any documentary will ever be," but the movie's central dramatic figure—Michael Merriman (John Cusack), who accidentally absorbs a lethal dose of radiation—is fictitious. He pleads that the bomb not be dropped on Japan, then dies just minutes before the Trinity explosion, neatly underscoring Joffe's point: that Los Alamos represented the monitory triumph of death over life. "Merriman" was based on Louis Slotin, a thirty-four year old Canadian physicist who died almost exactly as depicted in the



A scene from *The Ten Commandments* (1956).

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movie. There is no evidence, however, that Slotin opposed using the bomb; in any case his death provided no cautionary warning to Oppenheimer since it occurred on May 30, 1946, nearly a year after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and nearly six months after Oppenheimer had quit the project.

Hollywood, naturally, is more effective at depicting vigorous activity than the role of ideas, and this can matter. Stanford's Clayborne Carson, for example, faulted Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* (1992) for neglecting Malcolm's evolving political thought. The movie thus portrays Malcolm's break with Elijah Muhammad as an emotional response rather than an intellectual one, a son's disillusionment with his surrogate father. But even before Malcolm had learned of the Prophet's marital infidelities, he had grown dissatisfied with Muhammad's refusal to allow the Nation of Islam to vote or to participate in civil rights protests. After he had separated from Muhammad, the real Malcolm X moved forcefully toward broader political involvement with other black groups. Carson lamented that young viewers, unaware of Malcolm's growing recognition of the need for political engagement, would "emulate the self-destructive rebelliousness of Malcolm's youth or the racist demagoguery of his years in the Nation of Islam rather than his mature statesmanship."

Of the nearly one hundred movies discussed in the book, the one I liked best was *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), and it did succeed at depicting complex ideas: religious and political thought in sixteenth-century England. The movie culminates in the trial and execution of Thomas More, the lord chancellor who steadfastly adhered to his religious beliefs, refused to endorse Henry VIII's divorce of Catherine of Aragon, and was beheaded in 1535 for high treason. Paul Scofield is brilliant as More and plays him as a gentle man of exquisite conscience, radiant wit, and burning integrity. Then I received the essay by Richard Marius, More's biographer. Thomas More, it turns out, was no Paul Scofield. Page after page of More's voluminous writings were stained with deadly vitriol. "The burning of heretics," he repeatedly insisted, "is lawful, necessary, and well done." "The film gives us a More who died heroically for the sake of his conscience," Marius observed. "It does not give us a hint of the More willing to kill others for their conscience."

I was dismayed. *A Man for All Seasons* was plainly Hollywood History at its best, a powerful drama that illuminated a remote and tangled patch of the past. And the movie voiced an incontrovertible truth: that suppression of thought and conscience and speech is wrong. Yet the ostensible hero of the

story did not believe in the message he was to have embodied. I wondered: If the story conveyed a truth "for all seasons," did the identity of that particular man make a difference? Did the movie's larger meaning transcend its historical errors? Yale's John Mack Faragher apparently chewed on this question while watching a cluster of movies on Wyatt Earp; and Faragher came down in favor of meaning (see box on page 88)-delete? story, Faragher reminds us, is not just a gathering up of clues but the assembling of them so as to make sense of the past. If a filmmaker succeeds at the latter, should one fuss about the former?

One evening, while mulling over this question, I was reading a book with Stephanie, our eleven-year-old. It was *Don't Call Me Angelica*, by Scott O'Dell, about a slave rebellion in 1733 on the island of St. John. In the final pages the half-starved runaway slaves are confronted by a formidable contingent of French soldiers. Rather than risk capture, terrible punishment, and return to captivity, the slaves toss down their weapons and leap from a cliff to their death.

"Did that really happen?"

Stephanie asked.

"I don't know."

An idea: I asked, "If it's a good story, does it have to be true?" She didn't answer.

I tried again. "I mean, does it really matter to you whether the story was true?"

She remained silent for a time and then stared at me. "Dad, is this some sort of psychology question?"

Only a professor could ask a question of such ponderous silliness. Of course we want stories to be true. We want to identify with real heroes and heroines. Youngsters and perhaps the downtrodden of all ages may prefer fantasies of transcendent potency—of Superman bounding buildings, of Power Rangers zapping evildoers, of divine powers intervening in human affairs—but most of us crave to learn from real people who have endured what we fear and done what we dream, whose experiences offer guidance as we seek to understand our place upon this planet.

The movie studios know what Stephanie intuited. John Sayles, director of *Matewan* and *Eight Men Out*, reported that producers have "many, many times" told him that "the only way a movie is going to work is if the ad says 'based on a true story.'" And historians are often dismayed to learn that they have been hired as consultants to film projects chiefly to attest to their accuracy. The Columbia historian Eric Foner, who wrote a supportive, if qualified, endorsement of *Glory*, heard back from the studio that his statement was "of no use" to them. "Well, what do you want?" Foner asked.

I ASKED, "IF IT'S A GOOD STORY, DOES IT HAVE TO BE TRUE?" SHE DIDN'T ANSWER

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“We want a statement that says the film is accurate from a historian’s point of view.”

“I couldn’t do that,” said Foner. “What I mean by accurate is not exactly what they meant.”

The very existence of a book such as *Past Imperfect* unsettled executives at Warner Brothers, who denied us historians permission to use for payment the stills the studio makes freely available to tabloids and popular magazines. They refused to say why.

When historians call for “historical accuracy” in this context, what they want, more than precision of detail, is an acknowledgment of the ambiguity and complexity of the past. “In my thirty years of research,” Carolly Erickson wrote, “I have found little drama but long stretches of bleakness and uneventful unfolding, many petty personalities and stunted lives, very little pure evil or unmitigated good. Historical research is, or ought to be, the unearthing of the quotidian, and not the stuff of mythic conflict.” Movies, however, Richard Marius warned, have conditioned us to “cast our political and social world in categories of saints and devils.” The former governor Mario Cuomo, who had complained in print of Marius’s rendering of Thomas More, explained somewhat abashedly to the author: “I want all of my heroes to be like the Lone Ranger.”

Or like Lincoln, if one is to judge from the movies made about him as the world was slipping from the Great Depression into war. Both *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) sought to present him in ways that set him apart from the politicians of the 1930s. In *Young Mr. Lincoln* Henry Fonda depicts a lawyer who is successful because he is decent. (“I may not know so much of law, Mr. Felder,” he tells a prosecutor, “but I know what’s right and wrong.”) And in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, Raymond Massey plays Lincoln as a rube wholly innocent of the sordid doings of politics. (“I don’t want to be no politician.”) Neither portrait, wrote Lincoln’s biographer Mark E. Neely, Jr., resembled the real young Lincoln, a wily lawyer who exhibited “vast electioneering skills.”

Of course Lincoln has been enshrined in movies from the dawn of the medium, but often films propound simplistic stereotypes in far more subtle—and thus effective—ways. On his first viewing of *All the President’s Men*, William E. Leuchtenburg was “so captivated with it I wanted it to go on for hours more.” But after repeated viewings he realized that the movie “deified the media” and “denigrated the political process.” The *Post* newsroom was

always “bathed in light,” while official Washington appeared “in disagreeable and menacing darkness.” The film suggests that Woodward and Bernstein brought down the Nixon Presidency, thereby neglecting the essential roles of the prosecutors, Judge Sirica, the Supreme Court, and both houses of Congress. “One is given to understand from the movie that government is not to be trusted, that its officials are creatures of the night, and that all—all the president’s men—are complicit in evildoings.” From *All the President’s Men* it was perhaps not so long a descent into the vast conspiracy depicted in Oliver Stone’s *JFK*.

Historians listen for echoes of the past. But the echoes are often faint, and our hearing aids primitive. By imperfect means we try to translate these muffled sounds so that they speak to the present. What historical filmmakers do is analogous; but they choose simple languages that will be accessible to the most viewers. Filmmakers often translate the past into a handful of reiterated “story lines” and themes: X is a hero, and Y a villain. Evil lurks beyond our borders, and sometimes even within. Leaders must be strong, and the people vigilant. Pride is punished, and humility rewarded. And on and on.

In addition to these obligatory dramatic formulae, filmmakers resort to simplified explanations of historical processes. When John Hammond expresses his exuberance at having brought the dinosaurs back to life in *Jurassic Park*, Ian Malcolm, the mathematician, voices doubts: “Dinosaurs had their shot, and nature selected them for extinction.” Stephen Jay Gould disagreed with this type of thinking: A variety of historical forces and accidents did in the dinosaurs; they were not doomed. “The chief error of the movie is the denial of historical contingency: the assumption that species (and history more generally) evolve according to deterministic laws.” Life is too messy, too chancy, too contingent, too irrepressible; it bubbles through whatever analytical coating we apply to it.

“We cannot hope for even a vaguely accurate portrayal of the nub of history in film so long as movies must obey the literary conventions of ordinary plotting. But must film be so unimaginative?” Gould asked. “Why couldn’t a movie about genuine historical characters treat contingency as seriously as science fiction always has?” Let me broaden Gould’s question: Why can’t movies about the past confront our stereotypes and defy our expectations and thus deepen our understanding?

The answer is that some can—and do. James Axtell noted



Hollywood History

—CONTINUED—

that *Black Robe* convincingly depicted not an event but a cultural process: the complex interaction of Jesuit missionaries and Hurons in seventeenth-century Ontario. “Neither culture,” Axtell wrote of the movie, “is morally privileged; each is presented in its undiluted strangeness to the viewer, as it was to the other in 1634.” Brandeis’s Joyce Antler found that *Hester Street* (1975) challenges the much-heralded rock-solid Jewish family by showing how the stresses of assimilation in the early twentieth century caused many Jewish men to desert their families (the *Jewish Daily Forward* even ran a regular feature, “Gallery of Missing Men”). In *Matewan* (1987), the director, John Sayles, refuses to leaven his gritty story of labor strife in the coalfields with romantic subplots. *Tea and Sympathy* (1956) managed (barely) to slip by the censors and offer a subtle indictment of homophobia, noted George Chauncey, author of *Gay New York*. *Gallipoli* (1981) set up all the usual last-minute rescue clichés, including a footrace to call off a hopeless attack, but the race is lost—and the men, too, as often happened

in the Great War. *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978) showed the elements of human contingency missing from so many Vietnam movies. And *The Long Walk Home* (1990), in which Whoopi Goldberg plays a maid during the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, offered striking proof that filmmakers who journey into the past need not cling to kings and queens, generals and presidents. “Hooray for Hollywood,” the Brandeis historian Jacqueline Jones wrote, for *The Long Walk Home* constituted “a testament to individual courage and a hymn to the power of community, with women front and center.”

Filmmakers have said much about the past. They have spoken both eloquently and foolishly. Sometimes their fabrications have gone unnoticed, sometimes their truths unappreciated. But they have spoken, nearly always, in ways historians find fascinating. This article—and indeed our book—are meant not as a rebuttal but as a reply, a modest contribution to the ongoing conversation between the past and present. ★



Hollywood History

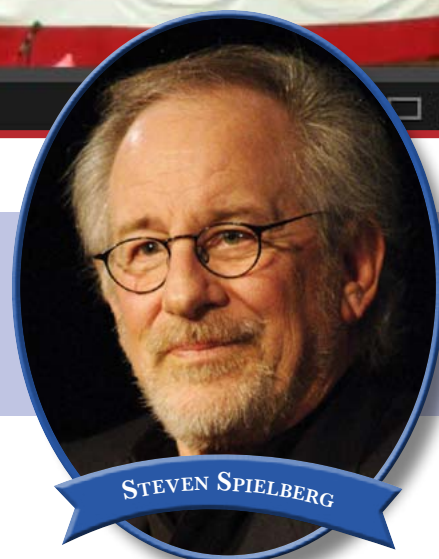
GETTYSBURG DEDICATION DAY CEREMONY A NATURALIZATION
CEREMONY & REMARKS FROM **STEVE SPIELBERG** 

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8IOXOYIMb8>

You Tube



Steven Spielberg is film producer, director and screen writer. He is credited for creating box-record achieving films including *E.T.*, *Jaws*, and *Jerassic Park*. Two of his historical films, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Schindler's List* won him best director awards at the Academy Awards. Forbes puts his net wealth at \$3.2 billion.



Hollywood History

HISTORIAN DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN ON *LINCOLN*, THE MOVIE AND MAN (EXCERPT)

BY JOSEPH P. KAHN

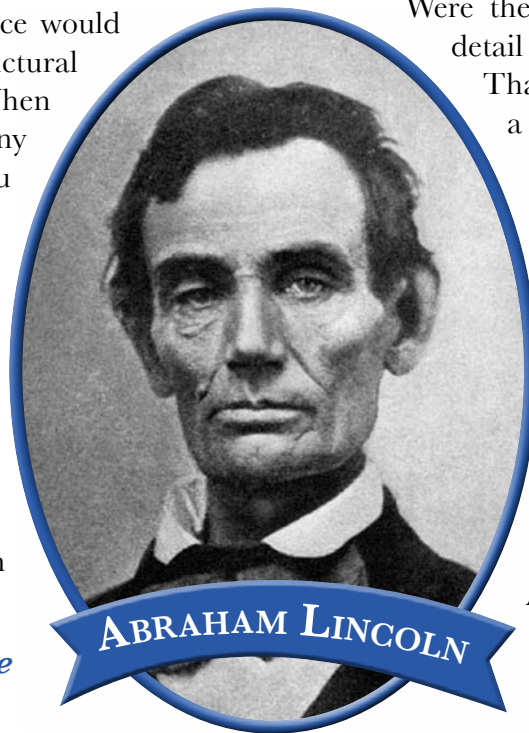
<http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/2012/11/08/historian-doris-kearns-goodwin-lincoln-movie-and-man/gRKujjuSTnmxJMw3ULAuqN/story.html>

Your reaction to the finished film?

The parts I love most are when Lincoln tells one of his stories. Not only because he did that all the time, but because his whole face would change. Lincoln's face had a structural sadness to it, as does Daniel's. When you watch his eyes become shiny and a smile light up his face, you feel he's really alive. I've often been asked, "If you could sit with Lincoln for dinner, what would you ask him?" As a Lincoln scholar, I know you're supposed to say, "What would you have done differently about Reconstruction?" I'd just want him to tell stories for an hour, though, because then I'd truly see him come alive.

What might young people learn from this film?

They're going to come away knowing something deep about Lincoln, which was Steven and Tony's decision: Either go deep or go broad. Their way allows Lincoln to come across in much more complex fashion, in a story most people don't know.



Most people think the Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery. Lincoln knew differently, though, that [emancipation] could go away once the war ended.

Were there any compressions of historical detail that bothered or puzzled you? Thaddeus Stevens, for instance, is not a huge character in your book.

You're right. What he is, though, is a symbol of the abolitionist radicals Lincoln had to deal with. I miss Seward not having an even bigger role, too, but I completely understand. All the way through the war, Lincoln wrestles with the fact that although he couldn't stand the sight of blood or kill a single animal as a child, he's responsible for all these deaths. And [those deaths] must be made worthwhile by the war being won and the Union being saved and slavery ending. When he actually delays the peace talks in order to get the 13th Amendment passed, then he really feels the loss of every life afterward. That's also compressed into a story within a story, but I felt it's all there [in the movie]. ★

Hollywood History

REPRESENTATION OF SLAVERY IN RECENT FILM (EXCERPT)

BY PATRICK RAE

<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-slavery&month=1301&week=a&msg=IcErysudzvOAANxS31H0LA&user=&pw>

ALL ABOUT LINCOLN

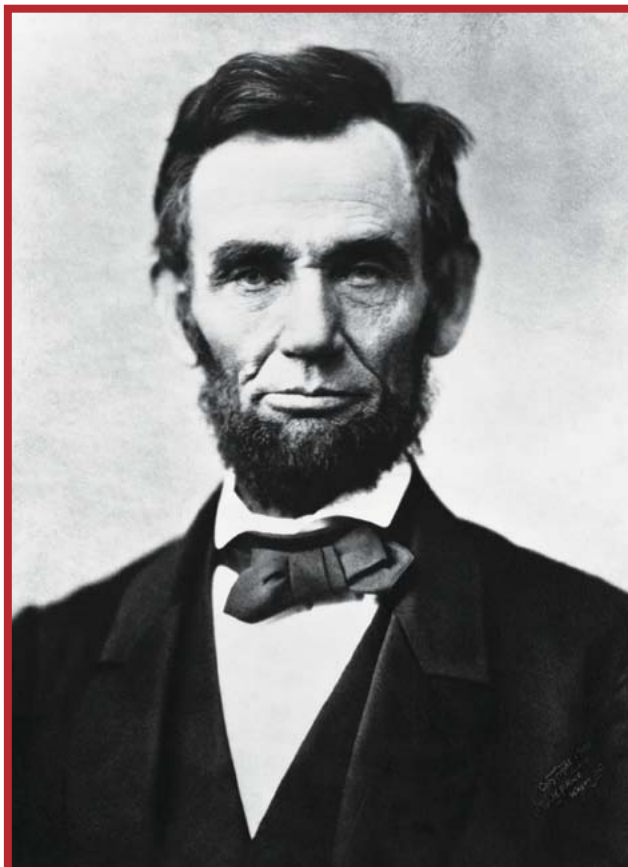
Congress' approval ratings may be low, but those of us in the ivory tower may have them beat. At least, the comments sections on websites posting scholarly takes on Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* would suggest as much. Spielberg fans take umbrage with smug academic critics; moviegoers once again see historians incapable of simply enjoying a popular film about American history.

Personally, I enjoyed *Lincoln*. Between its impeccable performances, convincing dialogue, and smoky period detail, the film represents Spielberg at that top of his game. At the same time, I share many of my colleagues' frustrations.

Yet rather than pile on, I would consider the movie an opportunity to think about the ways popular history works, at least in feature film. Of course, movies such as *Lincoln*, or any of a dozen others set in the American past, do not first purport to offer academic lessons in history. It is well they should not, lest Americans find their past even more stultifying than history professors can make it.

But historical feature films, like other aspects of popular culture, are not without their messages. They have critical points of view on the past, which audiences often rely on to understand American history. As savvy cultural consumers, don't we owe it to ourselves to think about how these films work to shape our understandings of the past?

When I think of a movie such as *Lincoln*, I am concerned not so much with how it departs from the past so much as why. For, I would suggest, as a general rule, where historical feature films most get the history wrong, they are most likely to expose their central messages. Their cultural politics tend to appear most vividly in their



Abraham Lincoln

most glaring historical "errors."

I'm not talking about such trivialities as zippers on Roman togas, or confusing Springfield rifles for Enfields, but the moral universes these films create around their protagonists. Consider matters such as *The Patriot's* utterly implausible portrayal of its hero as a South Carolina planter who has freed his slaves and pays them wages, or *Gangs of New York's* complete neglect of the fact that its Irish heroes actually instigated the Draft Riots depicted in the film's climax. Such howlers do not result from a lack of scholarly knowledge (often, these films shamelessly tout their academic consultants), nor are they random (auteurs of Spielberg's accomplishments don't make mistakes). Rather, they offer telling clues as to the core politics behind their depictions. In *The Patriot's* case, Benjamin Martin can hardly fight for American liberty if he's also seen to countenance black slavery; in *Gangs, Amsterdam* can hardly

champion a new multicultural New York if he hates blacks.

Lincoln also reveals its cultural politics through error, though it does so cleverly. As I've argued elsewhere, its central motifs are its reverence for its high-stakes subject (it gets no more sanctified than Lincoln and slavery), offset by its remarkably narrow focus on a very brief slice of emancipation's history (a month's worth of vote-wrangling around the House of Representative's passage of the Thirteenth Amendment). By taking on such a narrow slice of story, the film evades many criticisms about its omissions. Consider Kate Masur's charge that Lincoln underplays the agency

Hollywood History

REPRESENTATION OF SLAVERY IN RECENT FILM

— CONTINUED —

of African-American characters, who were vociferous proponents of the measure, and quite active in 1865 Washington, D.C. The film's defenders quickly responded that Spielberg never purported to tell such a story — that because the film concerned itself solely with the passage of a measure through halls of power dominated by white men, its concentration on white characters faithfully articulates the past.

It may justly be claimed that what a film chooses to elide is as significant as what it chooses to include. The point is all the more salient when a film occupies a tradition characterized by its unwillingness to explore aspects of the Civil War era that most historians have long embraced, such as the post-war failure to deliver on promises of a meaningful freedom for former slaves.

Let's concede this for the present. Sure, *Lincoln* may neglect to give black people their due in the emancipation process, or consider the fate of the nominal freedom its title character worked so hard to secure. But what of the stories the film does choose to tell?

Does the film get its history right? If not, what are the consequences of these disjunctures?

The most salient feature of *Lincoln*, I would suggest, is its surprising degree of suspense. For a film about vote-scrourging, this is no mean feat, and, if only for its commercial success, it surely is an important one.

First, the film suggests the enormous stakes involved in Lincoln's desire to achieve passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. This is nothing less than the permanent liberation of four million formerly enslaved African Americans, and the complete abolishment of the scourge of slavery from American soil. The earliest dialogue of the film cautions Lincoln against spending his precious political capital on such idealistic goals — in movie terms, a sure sign of how pressing, yet difficult, will be his task.

Spielberg and the screenwriters then set clocks ticking against this imperative. For one, we of course know that Lincoln is soon to die; will his bill pass before he does? Additionally, the war cannot end too soon, lest the amendment's rationale — that it is



Mary Todd Lincoln

a war measure necessary to defeat the Confederacy — fall away. Perversely, the prospect of a rapid peace poses Lincoln his greatest challenge.

His next is to create the fragile political alliance necessary for passage. The conservative Republican faction of his coalition offers its votes only in exchange for permission to secretly treat with high Confederate officials. But because the Radicals support the vigorous conquest of the Confederacy, leaked word of these dealings threatens to sink the entire enterprise. Even the few critical Democrats induced to break ranks in support of the resolution would lose their cover.

Not even Lincoln's personal life is spared from contributing to these pressures. When Lincoln's son Robert defies his mother's grief-stricken dictate that he not risk his life in war, Lincoln must conclude the conflict quickly lest he suffer the wrath of his unstable wife. These plotlines do well to invest the audience in the outcome and its agent, but generally fail as history. In truth, the countdown was neither so loud nor so pressing as the film makes it appear.

Lincoln himself told legislators that “the next Congress will pass the measure if this does not.”

Even the amendment itself was but one of many momentous steps toward complete abolition. By 1865, the Confiscation Acts and Emancipation Proclamation had convinced many that slavery could not survive the war. Amending the Constitution to abolish slavery would indeed forestall court challenges to the Emancipation Proclamation and secure for sure the loyalty of the slaveholding border states still in the Union. But Maryland had made slavery illegal in November of 1864, while Missouri's abolishment on January 11 of 1865 — in the midst of the action Lincoln covers, but unmentioned — was fresh in the minds of all.

The film's depiction of the peace process also veers from what is known. While word of Confederate officials heading to Washington did inject late-moment tension into the vote, the film argues that Lincoln appeased Preston Blair with a peace process in exchange for the votes of his conservative Republicans. As Philip Zelikow has noted, this interpretation appears in no prominent Lincoln

Hollywood History

REPRESENTATION OF SLAVERY IN RECENT FILM

— CONTINUED —

historiography, much less Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*, which inspired the film. According to historian Michael Vorenberg, though, Blair eagerly anticipated passage of the amendment, if only because it would help his faction gain ground against the Radicals.

Finally, the personal. Having lost her beloved Willie to typhoid in 1862, Mary Todd Lincoln did indeed resist risking another son in war ("I cannot bear to have Robert exposed to danger"). But on her insistence in the film that Lincoln pass the bill to end the war before Robert is killed, the historical record is silent.

The film, then, tends to depart most from history in building this sense of suspense. Of course, suspense has its own value, particularly for a two and a half hour-long movie about the abstruse machinations of the legislative process, a subject few movie-goers outside the beltway would consider interesting in its own right. More importantly, though, the suspense is critical to setting forth the film's central theme, which is that Abraham Lincoln was a political genius who alone could have achieved emancipation.

The drama in *Lincoln* derives from whether or not Lincoln will be able to pull off the nearly impossible task of political juggling that lay before him. The process, if left to its own, would surely fail, and emancipation perhaps never happen. Only



L to R: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

Lincoln possesses the skills to pull it off. He must keep his factions in line, mollify his wife and son, endure the brickbats of political enemies, and even sacrifice some of his integrity to obtain the necessary votes.

Somehow, by refracting his ideals through his instincts, his humility, and his wit, he succeeds in achieving his goal. In this, his moderation in all things is critical. Lincoln must never slide too far to one political extreme or the other; neither may he move too rashly nor too languidly. Perfection is required for a vote this important, and this close. The contrivance of great suspense thus places a premium on Lincoln's unique ability to navigate these troubled waters.

In focusing on this, the film argues that Lincoln was the prime mover in the story of emancipation. No other contender comes close. The conservatives want peace over emancipation, while the Radicals, in their zeal, would alienate all potential allies.

This is a portrayal that sacrifices historical accuracy for plot momentum. To view the film, one might easily conclude that Lincoln proposed the Thirteenth Amendment himself. Yet because the film begins in media res, and fails to offer a flashback, we never learn that the measure's life began in Congress in December of 1863, at the behest of the Women's National Loyal League, a group spearheaded by abolitionists and pioneering feminists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. ... ★

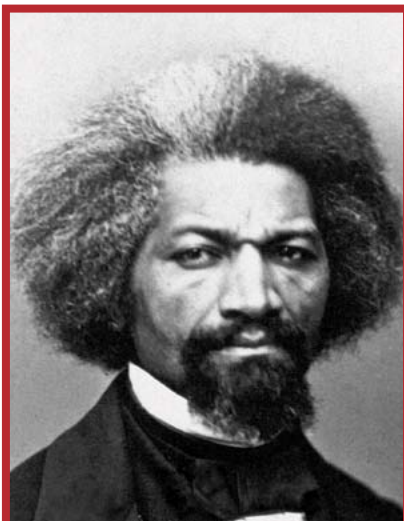
Hollywood History

LINCOLN, HOLLYWOOD, AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HISTORIANS (EXCERPT)

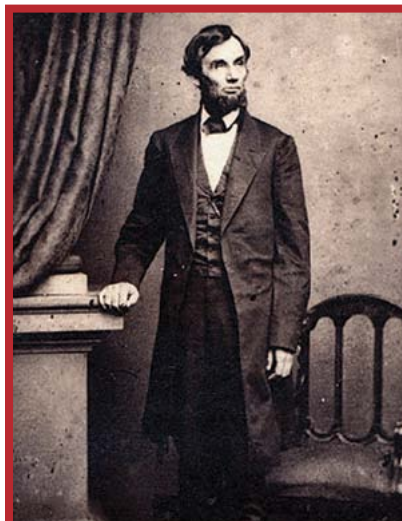
BY JAMES GROSSMAN

<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2012/1211/Lincoln-Hollywood-and-an-Opportunity-for-Historians.cfm>

Historians will disagree over whether this was Lincoln indeed. My friend and colleague Lerone Bennett will wonder what happened to the evidence that Lincoln never believed in racial equality. David Blight will no doubt scratch his head over the absence of Frederick Douglass. Others will question the accuracy of this Lincoln's approach to the presidency and presidential power, or the portrayal of family dynamics in the White House; or the implications of a film about emancipation that elides the agency of slaves and ex-slaves (except for the role of black soldiers). Others will note that Spielberg seems to get the importance of manhood, but doesn't really know how to use gender as a category of political analysis. This is what a film



Frederick Douglass



Abraham Lincoln

like this should do: stimulate discussion about history. I encourage colleagues to engage the film in the public realm—in newspapers and blogs and on the radio—in language that is accessible, and in a voice that speaks especially to people who might not readily accept concepts and perspectives taken for granted within the academy.

Schuyler Colfax, then the speaker of the House of Representatives, reminds us that emancipation was not just another issue for legislation and debate: “This isn’t usual. This is history.” Well, we’re historians. Let’s get out there and talk about history. Steven Spielberg, who is a lot better than we are at introducing big issues into public discussion, has started the debate. Let us continue the conversation. ★

Hollywood History

AHEAD OF OSCARS, COURTNEY ASKS SPIELBERG, DREAMWORKS TO CORRECT *LINCOLN* INACCURACY THAT PLACES CONNECTICUT ON WRONG SIDE OF SLAVERY DEBATE

BY JOE COURTNEY

http://courtney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6786&Itemid=300127



Dear Mr. Spielberg,

After finally sitting down to watch your Academy Award-nominated film, *Lincoln*, I can say unequivocally that the rave reviews are justified: Daniel Day-Lewis is tremendous, the story is compelling and consuming, and the cinematography is beautiful.

The historical accuracy of the film's moving conclusion, however? Well, that is a different story.

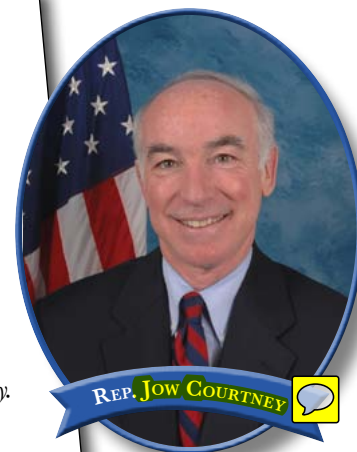
As a Member of Congress from Connecticut, I was on the edge of my seat during the roll call vote on the ratification of the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery. But when two of three members of the Nutmeg State's House delegation voted to uphold slavery, I could not believe my own eyes and ears. How could Congressmen from Connecticut—a state that supported President Lincoln and lost thousands of her sons fighting against slavery on the Union side of the Civil War—have been on the wrong side of history?

After some digging and a check of the Congressional Record from January 31, 1865, I learned that in fact, Connecticut's entire Congressional delegation, including four members of the House of Representatives—Augustus Brandegee of New London, James English of New Haven, Henry Deming of Colchester and John Henry Hubbard of Salisbury—all voted to abolish slavery. Even in a delegation that included both Democrats and Republicans, Connecticut provided a unified front against slavery.

In many movies, including your own *E.T.* and *Gremlins*, for example, suspending disbelief is part of the cinematic experience and is critical to enjoying the film. But in a movie based on significant real-life events—particularly a movie about a seminal moment in American history so closely associated with Doris Kearns Goodwin and her book, *Team of Rivals*—accuracy is paramount.

I understand that artistic license will be taken and that some facts may be blurred to make a story more compelling on the big screen, but placing the State of Connecticut on the wrong side of the historic and divisive fight over slavery is a distortion of easily verifiable facts and an inaccuracy that should be acknowledged, and if possible, corrected before *Lincoln* is released on DVD.

Sincerely,
Rep. Joe Courtney



Hollywood History

JOINT RESOLUTION PROPOSING A 13TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION BY JAMES BUCHANAN

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/civil-war/preview/two-13th-amendments/>

THIRTY-SIXTH CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES AT THE SECOND SESSION

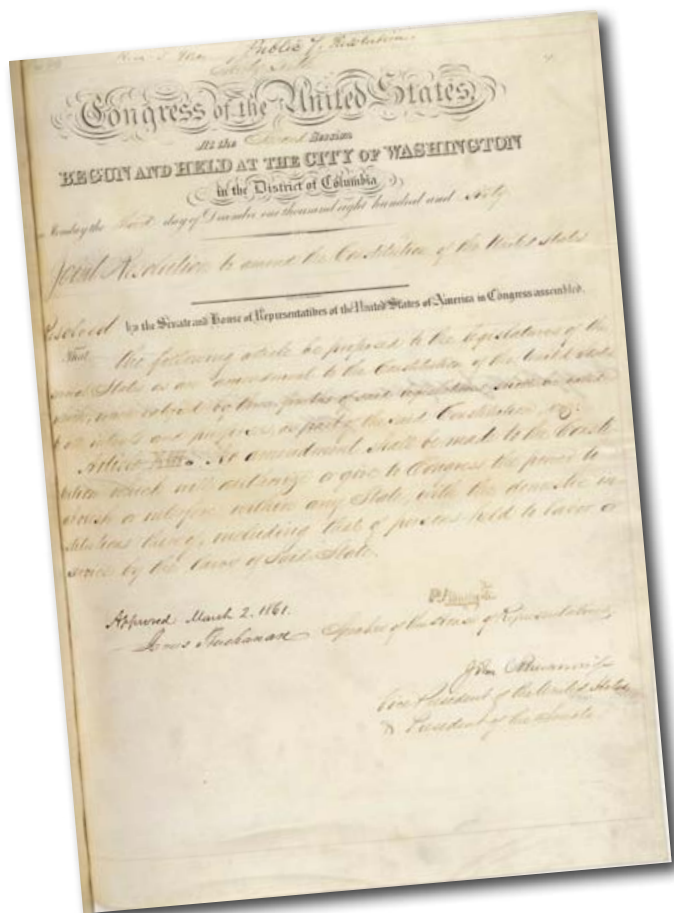
Begun and held at the City of Washington
In the District of Columbia

On Monday the third day of December one thousand eight hundred and sixty.

Joint Resolution to amend the Constitution of the United States

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled that The following Article be proposed to the legislatures of the several States as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which, when ratified by three-fourths of said legislatures, shall be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution, viz:

Article XII. No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State.



Approved March 2, 1861
James Buchanan (signature)
Wm. Pennington (signature)
Speaker of the House of Representatives

John C. Breckenridge (signature)
Vice President of the United States,
& President of the Senate

Hollywood History

A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR SUBMITTING TO THE SEVERAL STATES A PROPOSITION TO AMEND THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION PROHIBITING SLAVERY OR INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE IN ALL THE STATES, AND IN THE TERRITORIES NOW OWNED, OR WHICH MAY HEREAFTER BE ACQUIRED, BY THE UNITED STATES

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=038/llhb038.db&recNum=68>

38TH CONGRESS,
1ST SESSION.

H. R. 14.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DECEMBER 14, 1863.

Read twice, referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. ASHLEY, on leave, introduced the following bill:

A BILL

To provide for submitting to the several States a proposition to amend the National Constitution prohibiting slavery or involuntary servitude in all the States, and in the Territories now owned, or which may hereafter be acquired, by the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 *(two-thirds of both houses concurring,) That the following*
4 *article be submitted by Congress to the legislatures of the*
5 *several States as an amendment to the Constitution of the*
6 *United States, which amendment, when approved by three-*
7 *fourths of said legislatures, shall become a part of said Con-*
8 *stitution.*

1 **ARTICLE** . Slavery or involuntary servitude, except
2 in punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been
3 duly convicted, is hereby forever prohibited in all the States
4 of this Union, and in all Territories now owned, or which
5 may hereafter be acquired, by the United States.

Hollywood History

A BILL TO AMEND SLAVERY THROUGHOUT ALL THE STATES AND TERRITORIES OF THE UNITED STATES

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsb&fileName=038/llsb038.db&recNum=725>

38TH CONGRESS,
1ST SESSION.

S. 123.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 17, 1864.

Mr. BROWN asked, and by unanimous consent obtained, leave to bring in the following bill; which was read twice, referred to the select Committee on Slavery and Freedmen, and ordered to be printed.

A BILL

To abolish slavery throughout all the States and Territories of the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That from and after the passage of this act slavery shall not
4 exist in any State or Territory of the United States, any law,
5 usage, claim, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding;
6 nor shall involuntary servitude be permitted otherwise than
7 in punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been
8 duly convicted.

Hollywood History

SCENE IN THE HOUSE ON THE PASSAGE OF THE PROPOSITION TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, JANUARY 31, 1865

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652833/>

HARPER'S WEEKLY.

A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

Vol. IX.—No. 425.]

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1865.

[SINGLE COPIES TEN CENTS.
EACH PER YEAR IN ADVANCE.]

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1865, by Harper & Brothers, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.



SCENE IN THE HOUSE ON THE PASSAGE OF THE PROPOSITION TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, JANUARY 31, 1865.

Hollywood History

JOINT RESOLUTION SUBMITTING 13TH AMENDMENT TO THE STATES; SIGNED BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND CONGRESS CONGRESS, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 01, 1865

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal3/436/4361100/malpage.db&recNum=0>

CONGRESS, JOINT RESOLUTION 1 FEBRUARY 1, 1865 THIRTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

A Resolution; Submitting to the Legislatures of the several States a proposition to amend the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, (two-thirds of both Houses concurring,) That the following article be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States as an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which, when ratified by three-fourths of said Legislatures, shall be valid, to all intents and purposes, as a part of the said Constitution, namely;

ARTICLE XIII.

Section 1. Neither Slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime; whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Schuyler Colfax Speaker of the House of Representatives

H. Hamlin Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate
Approved, February 1. 1865.

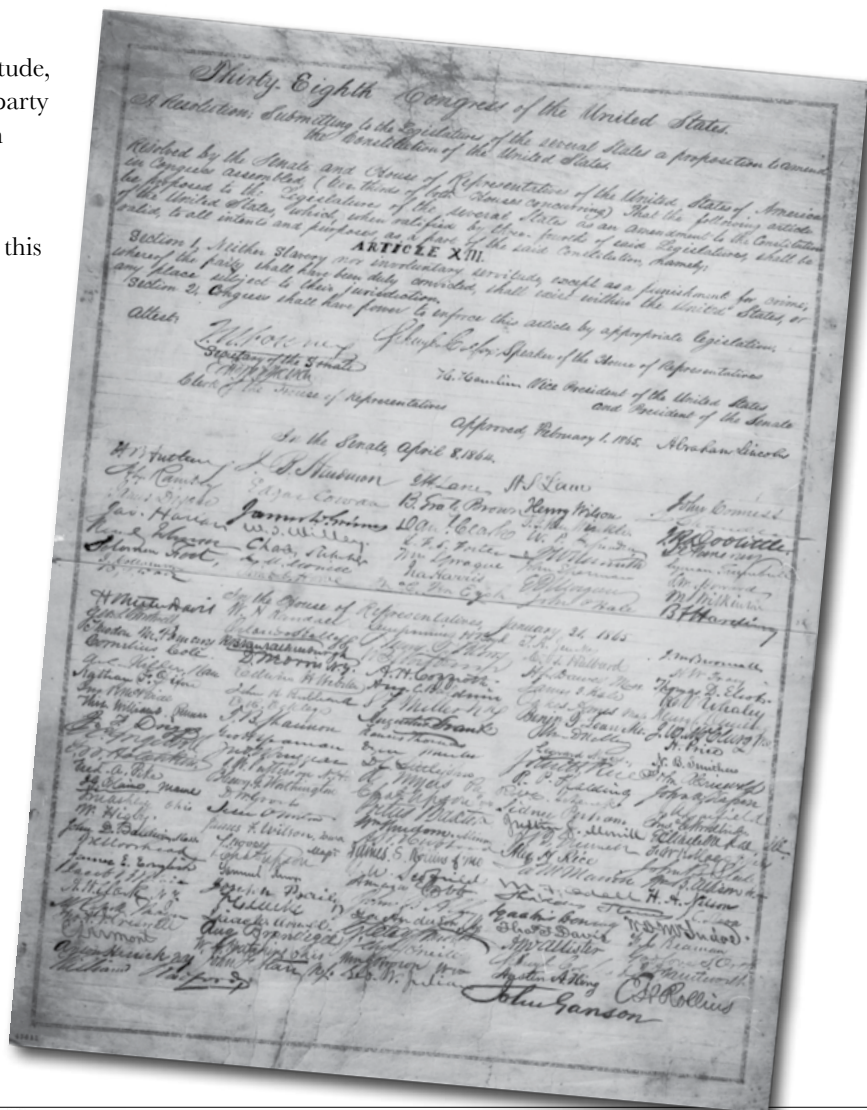
[Signed by Lincoln]
Abraham Lincoln

Attest: J. W. Forney
Secretary of the Senate

Edwd McPherson
Clerk of the House of Representatives

In the Senate, April 8, 1864.
[Followed by 58 Signatures]

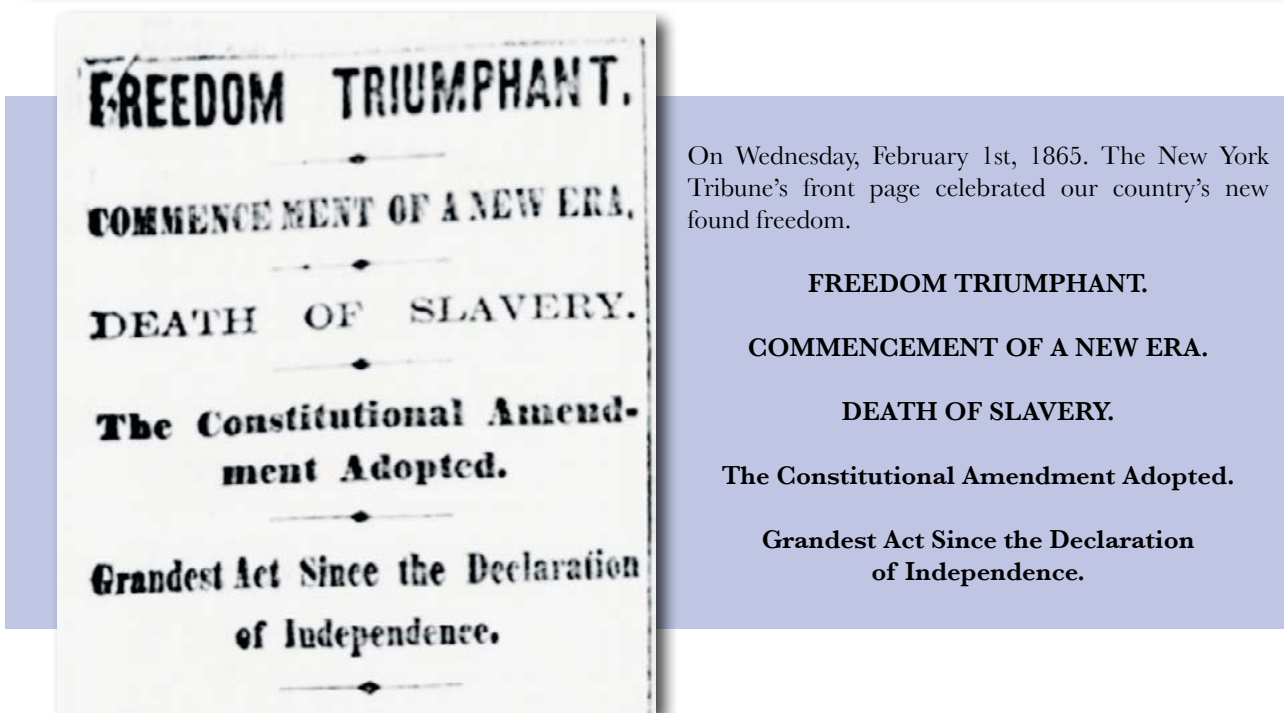
In the House of Representatives,
January 31, 1865
[Followed by 120 Signatures]



Hollywood History

NEW YORK DAILY TRIBUNE, "FREEDOM TRIUMPHANT"

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1865-02-01/ed-1/seq-1/>



On Wednesday, February 1st, 1865. The New York Tribune's front page celebrated our country's new found freedom.

FREEDOM TRIUMPHANT.

COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW ERA.

DEATH OF SLAVERY.

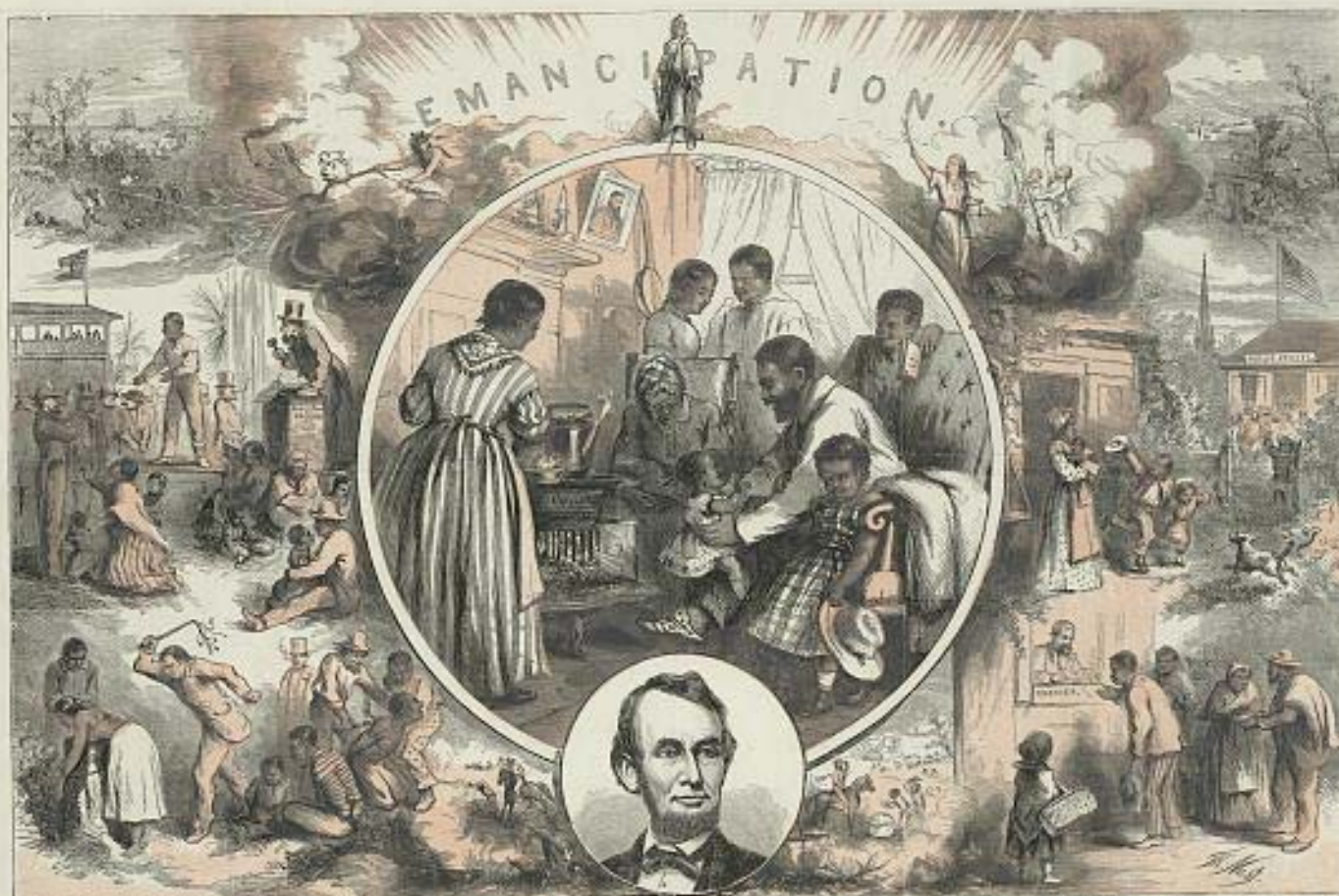
The Constitutional Amendment Adopted.

Grandest Act Since the Declaration of Independence.

Hollywood History

EMANCIPATION
BY THOMAS NAST

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004665360/>



Summary

Thomas Nast's celebration of the emancipation of Southern slaves with the end of the Civil War. Nast envisions a somewhat optimistic picture of the future of free blacks in the United States. The central scene shows the interior of a freedman's home with the family gathered around a "Union" wood stove. The father bounces his small child on his knee while his wife and others look on. On the wall near the mantel hang a picture of Abraham Lincoln and a banjo. Below this scene is an oval portrait of Lincoln and above it, Thomas Crawford's statue of "Freedom." On either side of the central picture are scenes contrasting black life in the South under the Confederacy (left) with visions of the freedman's life after the war (right). At top left fugitive slaves are hunted down in a coastal swamp. Below, a black man is sold, apart from his wife and children, on a public auction block. At bottom a black woman is flogged and a male slave branded. Above, two hags, one holding the three-headed hellhound Cerberus, preside over these scenes, and flee from the gleaming apparition of Freedom. In contrast, on the right, a woman with an olive branch and scales of justice stands triumphant. Here, a freedman's cottage can be seen in a peaceful landscape. Below, a black mother sends her children off to "Public School." At bottom a free Negro receives his pay from a cashier. Two smaller scenes flank Lincoln's portrait. In one a mounted overseer flogs a black field slave (left); in the other a foreman politely greets Negro cotton-field workers.

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