

the federal government. John Hope Franklin and Albert Moss make the compelling case that slavery finally divided the nation and brought civil war.

Other well-known scholars consider the Civil War and Reconstruction. Merton L. Dillon argues that slaves running to Union lines forced the North to confront the issue of slavery. James McPherson meditates on the revolutionary meaning and impact of the Emancipation Proclamation. Leon Litwack follows with an exploration of how former slaves adapted to freedom. As the most speculative section, the final portion of the book proves weakest. Jeffery Rogers Hummel asserts that the war caused a waste of lives, and that the North should have allowed the South to secede. He argues that slavery would have ended eventually. Robert Fogel, in a much more thoughtful essay, makes the case that allowing the South to secede would have strengthened slavery internationally and hurt the abolitionist cause.

This important source of articles and documents should find wide use in college classrooms. But like all collections, it has weaknesses. It would have benefitted from some of the newer scholarship on slavery. Although it contains essays on slave runaways, not much appears here about slaves' daily lives, resistance, work, religion, music, or family. Articles dealing with these matters would have given students another side of American slavery. Nevertheless, this edited work provides a perfect starting point for understanding slavery, especially from an economic and political perspective, and it puts some of our most esteemed scholars within easy reach of students.

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Steven G. Collins

H. W. Brands. *The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 2002. Pp. 375. Paper, \$17.00; ISBN 0-226-07116-1.

According to H. W. Brands, Americans in the 1890s, like their descendants a hundred years later, experienced a *fin-de-siècle* debate. On one side were people who expected the new century to bring a gloomy decline; on the other were those who foresaw a bright new future. Brands suggests their debates brought about a fusion of old and new ideas that set the stage for the twentieth century. Divided into eight chapters, Brands's sweeping and rather old-fashioned synthesis of the 1890s zeroes in on national and overseas expansion, economic and racial conflict, and politics.

Brands begins and ends with expansion. His first chapter contrasts one land seeker's opportunistic experience in the Oklahoma Land Rush with Turner's frontier thesis and, more tellingly, Henry and Brooks Adams's bleak forecast of the end of western civilization. Brands returns to the expansion theme in his last chapter, a conventional retelling of the debate over imperialism.

In between, inventors and industrialists battle each other over the shape of American capitalism, only to be trumped by corporate financiers like J. P. Morgan.

Reformers champion the cause of poor immigrants, workers shoot it out with Pinkertons, and farmers rally to the People's Party. Race enters the picture, and in an excellent chapter, Brands details both sides of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. He points out that the case arose in 1892, but Plessy's lawyers put it off, hoping to build public support against segregation. Their strategy collapsed when, in 1895, Booker T. Washington put his imprimatur on Jim Crow. Brands traces the origins of Washington's faith in self-improvement, and introduces his most noted critic, W. E. B. DuBois.

Many of Brands's debates swirl around politics. Local bosses, for example, vie over Chicago streetcars, while at the national level, politicians debate currency. After contrasting the work of William Harvey and William Allen White, Brand delves into the capstone 1896 election. He follows Democratic squabbles, the tepid Republican contest, and Populist indecision. In the fall campaign, Bryan barnstormed the country while McKinley stayed home, relying on Mark Hanna's fundraising to flood the country with political propaganda. When it was over, McKinley won the big prize, Bryan claimed a moral victory, and together they laid the political foundations for the next century.

McKinley and Bryan jostle with more obscure characters, almost all of them men: Fred Sutton, "Bathhouse John," and the "Great Unknown." Brands tells their stories well, effectively using them to contrast the opposing sides in the debates of the 1890s. The stories, filled with absorbing characters, discerning details, and vivid quotations, are the book's main strength. None of the sources are cited, although an extensive bibliography does include works from the 1890s to the 1990s. In a prefatory note, we are told that initially the book had pictures; unfortunately, they have been deleted in this edition.

Brands's suggestion that the 1890s resemble the 1990s carried little weight with me. Neither does his title, for Brands makes the decade's debates seem more resolute than reckless. Nevertheless, his book remains a reliable survey of a fascinating era. As far as its use as a teaching tool, the book seems too dense for lower-level undergrads, and its lack of citations would make me hesitate to use it with upper-level or graduate students.

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Mark Davis

Theresa M. Collins & Lisa Gitelman. *Thomas Edison and Modern America: A Brief History with Documents*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. xiv, 205. Cloth, \$39.95; ISBN 0-312-29476-X. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 0-312-24734-6.

Arguably, no individual personifies the emergence of modern America better than Thomas Edison. He received over 1000 patents between 1869 and 1931, a period marked by tremendous growth in immigration, urbanization, domestic and foreign expansion, and of course industrialization.