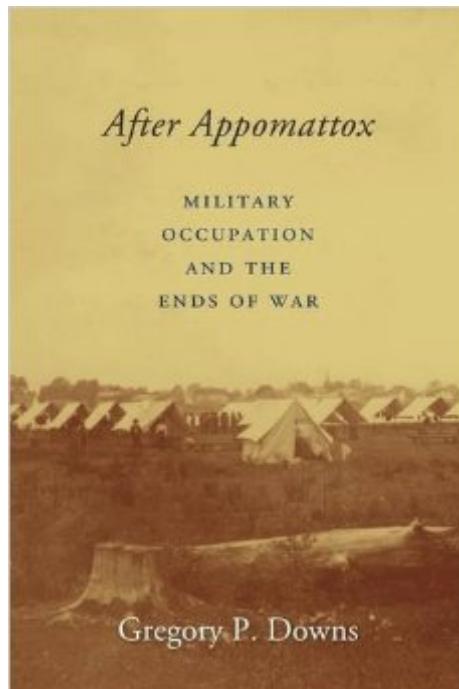


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After Appomattox: Military Occupation And The Ends Of War



Synopsis

On April 8, 1865, after four years of civil war, General Robert E. Lee wrote to General Ulysses S. Grant asking for peace. Peace was beyond his authority to negotiate, Grant replied, but surrender terms he would discuss. As Gregory Downs reveals in this gripping history of post-“Civil War America, Grant’s distinction proved prophetic, for peace would elude the South for years after Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. After Appomattox argues that the war did not end with Confederate capitulation in 1865. Instead, a second phase commenced which lasted until 1871—not the project euphemistically called Reconstruction but a state of genuine belligerency whose mission was to shape the terms of peace. Using its war powers, the U.S. Army oversaw an ambitious occupation, stationing tens of thousands of troops in hundreds of outposts across the defeated South. This groundbreaking study of the post-surrender occupation makes clear that its purpose was to crush slavery and to create meaningful civil and political rights for freed people in the face of rebels’ bold resistance. But reliance on military occupation posed its own dilemmas. In areas beyond Army control, the Ku Klux Klan and other violent insurrections created near-anarchy. Voters in the North also could not stomach an expensive and demoralizing occupation. Under those pressures, by 1871, the Civil War came to its legal end. The wartime after Appomattox disrupted planter power and established important rights, but the dawn of legal peacetime heralded the return of rebel power, not a sustainable peace.

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Customer Reviews

Marvelous in every way. Confirmed what I've known for a very long time; that is- the South was under military occupation for many decades after the war and that when the U.S. Army finally left, blacks were flushed down the toilet by their former semi-liberators. Really convincing argument that Negroes in this country were damned if they do, damned if they don't. Yanks didn't want them up there taking jobs or breading with enlightened whites and white southerners didn't want them because they had a huge axe to grind due to being so utterly defeated during the war. Real shame really. Explains why I felt that true advancement for Negroes in this country did not occur until the 1970s, and much of that led by the US military and its policy to do everything in its power to advance the careers of black officers over and above whites. I am not bitching about it; saw it first-hand and it was a good policy. The military my son now officers in had largely gotten over the issue of women and minorities. I applaud Downs for writing such a revealing, original piece of work- nothing quite like it in literature.

ADDRESSES THE INCOMPLETELY TOLD STORY OF RECONSTRUCTIONGregory DownsAfter Appomattox: Military occupation & the ends of warCambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015. 9 longitudinal maps on military post locations. 6 images. Notes. Index. 8 statistical appendices on the number of U.S. Army posts, soldiers, & soldiers / post; mostly longitudinally with some by region. TOPICS COVERED: gunpoint emancipation, reinstating civil gov't, an illusion of peace, enfranchisement through martial law, & attempting to govern without force. An excellent book interweaving military and presidential / Congressional political history to examine the attempts to control Southern resistance to social & cultural change amidst US political factionalism, the Northern desire to end the war so soldiers could return home & the fiscal burden of the war could begin to be addressed, the struggle to institute, protect & preserve the new rights for freedMEN; and how to readmit the seceded States to the Union without granting them even greater postwar national political power in Congressional representation and the Electoral College while black suffrage was being actively suppressed within those States. The actual attainment of Union war goals was sufficiently endangered that the South was within reach of being the de facto victor.

Everyone knows the story of Appomattox and the "end" of the Civil War. However, the events that followed are virtually unknown and essentially ignorered. We now have Gregory Downs to thank for bringing those events and their consequences to light: the extensive military occupation of the post-Appomattox South, the continued Southern insurgency and its use of violence against the Freedmen. The political in-fighting in Congress, while highly detailed by the author, is somewhat dry.

It does, though, provide a necessary context and gives a deeper picture of the highly complex process and purpose of Reconstruction. Most importantly, in our own Post 9-11 era, Downs challenges us to meditate on the uses and limitations of extra-constitutional powers, military occupation and nation building. Very worthwhile.

An interesting and not very well reported topic. The book disputes a number of generally accepted facts about the post Civil War South.

The clearest explanation of the Reconstruction Era I have ever read and I was a history major in college.

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