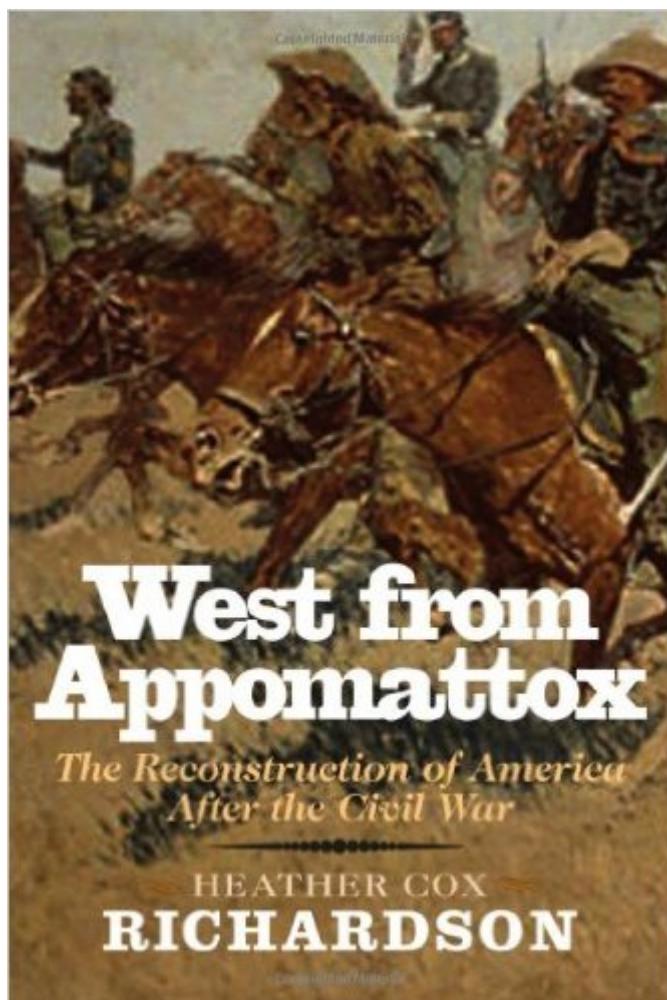


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West From Appomattox: The Reconstruction Of America After The Civil War



Synopsis

The story of Reconstruction is not simply about the rebuilding of the South after the Civil War. Instead, the late nineteenth century defined modern America, as Southerners, Northerners, and Westerners gradually hammered out a national identity that united three regions into a country that could become a world power. Ultimately, the story of Reconstruction is about how a middle class formed in America and how its members defined what the nation would stand for, both at home and abroad, for the next century and beyond. A sweeping history of the United States from the era of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, this engaging book stretches the boundaries of our understanding of Reconstruction. Historian Heather Cox Richardson ties the North and West into the post-Civil War story that usually focuses narrowly on the South, encompassing the significant people and events of this profoundly important era. By weaving together the experiences of real individuals—from a plantation mistress, a Native American warrior, and a labor organizer to Andrew Carnegie, Julia Ward Howe, Booker T. Washington, and Sitting Bull—who lived during the decades following the Civil War and who left records in their own words, Richardson tells a story about the creation of modern America.

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Customer Reviews

In "West from Appomattox", Professor Heather Cox Richardson focuses on the role of the American West in defining the American experience and the American character in the decades following the Civil War to the present. Richardson is Associate Professor of History at the University of

Massachusetts, Amherst. The story of Reconstruction is usually viewed as involving the victorious North and the defeated South. In the opening chapters of her book, Richardson gives a good brief summary of the Reconstruction era. But she does not stop there. She goes on to show how the West became emblematic during Reconstruction, for both Northerners and Southerners, of the promise of America. The idealized image of the American West came to symbolize "individualism, economic opportunity, and political freedom." (p. 221) In many ways, Richardson's view of the importance of the West is similar to that of the great early historian of this period, Frederick Jackson Turner. Richardson indeed briefly discusses (pp 281-283) Turner's famous thesis of the end of the American frontier and its significance. The West became attractive to Northerners as a place for independence and opportunity, where the corruptions of large businesses and the agitation of the labor unions could be put aside. For Southerners, the West became a place to escape from the poverty that followed the Civil War and from the difficulties of Reconstruction. With the idealizing of the West, for Richardson, came a view that all Americans shared the same interests and the same ways of achieving success -- that they were "working their way up together." (p.

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