

THE FUGELMAN

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECOND
WISCONSIN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY
ASSOCIATION**

THE BLACK HAT BRIGADE---THE IRON BRIGADE

1861-1865

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FU-GEL-MAN: A well-drilled soldier placed in front of a military company as a model or guide for others.

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PASS IN REVIEW

From the quill of Lt. Colonel Pete Seielstad



Greeting to all and I hope jolly St. Nick has been kind to all. (*If not, there is always next year for you to change your ways.*) As we welcome a new year, let us reap the great rewards of our combined labor.

Winter so far has been gentle but the nights are long. The long nights allow me to read some of the books that are stacked up on and around my desk, as well as a few of my magazines. I now have committed my reading time to Shelby Foote's trilogy; Civil War a Narrative. Beware; in preparation for spring muster I am reviewing my drill manuals too. (Oh no!)

I often read diaries and other books to understand the mind-set of the men that we portray. Being a Northerner myself I am not always in tune to the Southern sympathies of our counterpart across the field of battle. When I portray the confederate soldier in a school presentation, I try to impress upon the students that as a southerner, I live in a slave-based society. The young student has a hard time understanding the real conditions of the antibellium south and the people that lived in that period of time...black and white. I try to impress that slavery may be the main cause of the war due to all of the implications that slavery embodies. Nevertheless, it is still just one part of the many causes of the American Civil War.

As an interpreter of a time period I must dig a little deeper than what the schools offer in their 'survey' of history and the American Civil War. After my fall reading, I believe I would have been an abolitionist. The following is a sum of my discoveries about the slave trade.

A while ago when I read the October 2012 Smithsonian article *MASTER OF MONTICELLO* by Henry Wiencek pg.40. I become most fascinated in the article about Thomas Jefferson and his continued ownership of slaves. What caught my attention was the discovery of one of his letters to George Washington. In it, Jefferson was calculating his agricultural profits and losses. When it occurred to him that he was making an annual profit of 4% on the birth of black children. When asked about emancipating the slaves, Jefferson fell silent. In short, the man who wrote, "All men are created equal" didn't connect that conviction to practice, since he held ownership of black men and women as slaves up to his death in 1826.

Fast-forward to November 2015 and another Smithsonian Magazine's article: *SLAVERY'S TRAIL OF TEARS* by Edward Ball pg. 58. This article opened my eyes to the forgotten migration and the journey of a million African-Americans from the tobacco south to the cotton south. For me, it was hard to imagine the coffles of men, women and children making the trek on foot from Richmond Virginia to New Orleans Louisiana. To realize that the enslaved black man was the most valuable capital asset in the US second only to that of land is to realize why the slave owner would fight a war to keep his investment. Another aspect of slavery is the type of support industry it took to keep this peculiar institution profitable. Plantation owners, slave traders, bank institutions, and local jails to house slaves at auction to name a few. The shipping industry as well benefited in the transport of slaves from the upper south to the Deep South along the Gulf Coast. At the local, state and national level of government the commerce of slavery was protected through legislation.

I then read the book *CARRY ME BACK (The Domestic Slave Trade In American Life)* by Steven Deyle. This book is a study of the domestic slave trade, the buying and selling of American-born slaves, both informally and as an organized business. Reading the book gives a greater understanding of the antebellum South and the society as a whole. Strong documented resources back the numbers that are used. The appendix, notes, bibliography complement the book.

It has been my thought that historical amnesia, as it is called, can be very harmful for a proper education of the American Civil War. To forget the beginning of this story will undermine the lessons learned at its conclusion. This is why we read, study and read some more. However immoral or cruel, virtuous or noble it may have been, we cannot disregard the past.

As winter passes into spring, enjoy your time with a good book.

Your obedient servant,

Lt. Col. Pete Seielstad

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The officers and newsletter extends to all our members our wishes for a Happy New Year to all our members and friends of the Second Wisconsin!

**CAMPAIGN SCHEDULES OF
THE COMPANIES AND
ASSOCIATION**

January

Jan. 30th Association annual meeting (9:00 a.m.) 206 College Ave. Fox Lake, WI

REGIMENTAL DISPATCHES

COME ONE, COME ALL!

**SECOND WISCONSIN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY
ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING!**

SECOND CALL: COME FOR THE COMRADERIE, STAY FOR THE MEETING! On January 30th, 2016, the Second Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Association will hold it annual meeting. As always, important business will be conducted. This organization operates on the direction of

its membership. Therefore your input into the decision making process is a valuable guide for our leaders.

One other aspect of this meeting is the opportunity to once more meet your comrades-in-arms and catch up on what has been going on since we last camped together on the old campground. It is enjoyable to see everyone and visit before the meeting. During the meeting there will be breaks and a lunch period to socialize. And then back to business!

The meeting will be held in a church that has been converted into a community museum. The Community Congregational Museum is located at 206 College Avenue, Fox Lake, Wisconsin. The meeting is set to begin at 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA FOR SECOND WISCONSIN ANNUAL MEETING

AGENDA

2ND WISCONSIN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY ASSOCIATION

30 JANUARY 2016

- I. Call to Order**
 - A. Invocation**
 - B. Pledge of Allegiance**
 - C. Moment of silence for those absent from our ranks**
 - D. New Members' Oath**
- II. Minutes**
- III. Treasurer's Report**
- IV. Board & military Officers Reports**
 - A. Board President-Kevin Hampton**
 - B. Secretary - Dave Sielski**
 - C. Lt. Col. - Pete Seielstad**
 - D. Major - Doug Rasmussen**
 - E. Company Officers and/or President Report**
 - 1. Co. A (Citizen's Guard) - Scott Frank**
 - 2. Co. B (La Crosse Light Guard) - Bill Bessler**
 - 3. Co. C (Grant County Grays) - Inactive**
 - 4. Co. D (Janesville Volunteers) - Unassigned**

- 5. **Co. E (Oshkosh Volunteers) - Dave Sielski**
- 6. **Co. F (Belle City Rifles) - Unassigned**
- 7. **Co. G (Portage City Guards) - Gary Klas**
- 8. **Co. H (Randall Guard) -**
- 9. **Co. I (Miner's Guard) - Unassigned**
- 10. **Co. K (Wisconsin Rifles) - Ryan Holbrook**
- F. Artillery Officers' Report**
 - 1. **Battery B, 4th US Artillery - Brandt Doty**
 - 2. **6th Wisconsin Light Artillery- Wally Hlaban**
- G. Competitive shooting - Gary Van Kauwenbergh**
- H. Keeper of the Colors - Tom Bass/Pete Seielstad**
- I. Fugelman - James Dumke**
- J. Website - James Johnson**
- V. Nomination & Election of Officers**
 - A. President**
 - 1. **Kevin Hampton (term expires Jan. 2018)**
 - B. Vice President**
 - 1. **Tom Bass (term expires Jan. 2017)**
 - C. Treasurer**
 - 1. **Scott Frank (term expires Jan. 2016)**
 - D. Corporate Secretary**
 - 1. **David Sielski (term expires Jan. 2018)**
 - E. Lt. Colonel**
 - 1. **Pete Seielstad (term expires Jan. 2017)**
 - F. Major of Infantry**
 - 1. **Doug Rasmussen (term expires Jan. 2016)**
 - G. Major of Artillery**
 - 1. **Brandt Doty (term expires Jan. 2016)**
 - H. Quartermaster**
 - 1. **Tom Klas (term expires Jan. 2017)**
- VI. Old Business**
 - A. Scholarship continuance**
 - B. Surplus funds disbursement**
 - C. Insurance assessment**
- VII. New Business**
 - A. Presentation of awards**
 - B. Event calendar**
 - 1. **Association**
 - 2. **National**
 - 3. **BHB**
 - 4. **Company event: Co. G (Portage City Guards)**
 - C. Spring Muster & Battalion Drill (Date/Location)**
 - D. Special events**
 - E. Motion to offer a \$100.00 donation to Community Congregational Museum- Fox Lake (Use of building and amenities)**

VIII. Announcements

**A. Annual meeting January 28, 2017 @ Community Congregational
Museum- Fox Lake**

B.

Close

CIVIL WAR MEDICAL DRAMA ON PBS

On January 17th there will begin a series based on a civil war general hospital in Virginia. The series is named "Mercy Street". The premiere will begin at 9:00 p.m. on your local PBS station. Most of you have probably already seen the trailer promoting the show. One of the editor's friends, George Wunderlich, former director at the civil war medicine museum in Frederick, Maryland, served as a consultant for the series and he assures me it is very historically accurate. Hopefully, it will educate and entertain!

ATTENTION TO ORDERS

**A SPECIAL ORDER FOR MEMBERS WHO PLAN
TO ATTEND THE NATIONAL EVENT IN 2016!**

Below you will find a special order from the Association secretary, Dave Sielski. Please note that company commanders are called upon to render an estimate of numbers for the National event so that prior to the annual meeting so a determination can be formed as to the numbers who may wish to take a bus to the national event, most likely Perryville in 2016.

All:

For those who were at the Association meeting at Wade House we discussed the possibility of a National event in Perryville Kentucky. As an Association we need to decide shortly if this is an event we are planning on attending as several other events are close to that same weekend and would need to be changed or cancelled due to a number of members attending the National event. We need to get a minimum of 27 people to charter a bus as most won't want to ride down on their own. Please email me back by Jan 15th on behalf of your group on how many members you feel you can make a solid commitment to ride the bus to the event, we need to have a decision on the National by the Association meeting January 30th and need to know if we have enough interest overall to make it happen. We don't need any money at this point other than finding out what interest we might have among the membership. As an association we attended this event about 10 years ago and it was well run, I have also listed below some basic info to help with your decision making. Please contact me with any questions you may have.

- **The event is the weekend of October 8th & 9th, we would leave Wisconsin on Thursday Oct 6th, staying overnight at a hotel that t Thursday evening and arriving at the site Friday afternoon, we would stay overnight on Sunday on the way back and arrive back in Wisconsin early Monday evening October 10th.**
- **We will have several pick up points to catch the bus.**
- **I'm estimating a cost of about \$250-\$275 a person if you're in a 4 person room, that would include round trip bus transportation, 2 nights hotel .**
- **Bus drops us off onsite Friday and picks us up on Sunday afternoon after the event ends.**

Also with the annual Association meeting just around the corner, if you have put together your company schedules for next year please forward them along to me so that I can put together the master schedule for the Association. I also need to get your company roster & dues by the meeting on January 30th.

Thanks & Happy Holidays

**HISTORICAL MARKER FOR THE THIRD
DIVISION 23RD CORPS**

The following dispatch comes from headquarters, direct from the Lt. Col. commanding. Our members are a generous group and our appreciation for the history of the Civil War suggests this is a worthy project that deserves our support. While the Iron Brigade did not fight in the West our unit did include the 24th Michigan, a unit formed about the same time as the 25th Michigan!

I recently received correspondence from Earl Zeckman. Earl was our brigade commander at Gettysburg 150th on the 2nd day after Dave Sackelford stepped down from command. He is a member of the SUV James McPherson Camp #1. They are asking for any size donation to complete the fundraiser for a plaque recognizing the Third Division 23rd Corps involvement at Utoy Creek on 6 August 1864 near Atlanta Georgia.

The marker is a double-sided plaque 42x38. It covers the 08:30 am attack and the 11:30 am attack where the 25th Michigan was involved and had its colors captured and recovered. The total cost of the marker is \$4,900.00. To date, they have raised over \$3000.00 and still need another \$1,800.

If there is anyone or any organization interested in supporting this project please let me know and I will forward the information to Earl.

Below is the copy of the text of the proposed marker. (I have eliminated the detail description of the marker and have made some spelling corrections. The marker will look very much like most historical markers found at battlefields around the United States.

(FRONT)

THIRD DIVISION 23RD CORPS ATTACK

At 0830AM August 6, 1864, the advanced elements of Cox's Division [USA]

Riley's and Byrd's Brigades advanced to the Sandtown Road (now Cascade) and deployed with skirmishers forward to get around the flank of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, Bates Division [CSA] attached to S. D. Lees Corps. Cox was drawn in by advanced elements of the 2 & 4th KY Infantry CSA on a ridge South East heavily wooded and fortified. The attack was unsuccessful with 850 total casualties US and the loss of the Colors of the US 8th Tennessee and 123rd Illinois Infantry to Tyler's Tennessee Brigade entrenched immediately south. US Forces were caught in a closed horseshoe valley.

Lt Col Perry Bennett, Army Historian, Aug 6, 2014

(BACK)

SECOND DIVISION 23RD CORPS ATTACK

At 1130AM August 6, 1864, the advanced elements of Hascall's Division [USA] GEN Strickland and COL Swaynes Brigades advanced across the Sandtown Road (now Cascade) and deployed with skirmishers facing south. They made a Combat Crossing of South Utoy Creek, to get around the flank of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, Bates Division [CSA] attached to S. D. Lees Corps. They encountered GEN Armstrong's Mississippi Brigade [CSA], well-entrenched and dismounted with Artillery. A spirited attack was made by the Division with the 25th Michigan Infantry in Advance as Skirmishers. The attack was unsuccessful with 150 total casualties US and the capture of the Colors of the 25 Michigan. Battery 1 4th Michigan Artillery was emplaced on this site, and focused its fire upon, Mebane's Confederate batteries, which had pinned down Cox's Third Division [USA] 1600 meters South East (In the Nature Preserve). The Attack was called off at 6:00 PM during a torrential rainstorm. Armstrong's brigade withdrew on 7 August to the Childress House and high ground along L. O. Kimberly Elementary. The Regimental color of the 25th Michigan was recovered on 7 August by PVT Van Raalte of the 25th MI Infantry, who was nominated for the MOH.

Lt Col Perry Bennett, Army Historian, Aug 6, 2014

REPORTS AND DUES ARE DUE!

LAST CALL: One final reminder to all our members, your 2016 dues must be submitted by the first of January. If you haven't seen to this please do so as soon as practicable.

To our company secretaries please submit your company rosters and scheduled event for 2016 as soon as possible to the Association secretary, Dave Sielski. This information needs to be completed by the annual meeting of the Association on January 30th, 2016.

**FROM THE CAMPS OF THE
COMPANIES OF THE SECOND
WISCONSIN**

INFANTRY



COMPANY E

OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2016

On December 5th, 2015, Company E held its annual meeting in Green Bay. They had 32 members present for the meeting which is an impressive turnout for a company's annual meeting! At this meeting the members of Company elected their corporate officers. Dave Sielski was elected president. The position of secretary found Charles Bagneski re-elected to fill that position. Marv Kostka was elected to serve as treasurer.

Field officers were also elected. Robert Schwandt was elected 1st sergeant. Scott Boesel was elected 2nd sergeant. Todd St. John, Dave Vargas, and Patrick Kroll were elected corporals for the unit. The positions of Captain and 2nd Lieutenant were not up for election and Charles Bagneski remains Captain of Company E and Marv Kostka remains 2nd Lieutenant.

On behalf of the Association members we extend our congratulations to these officers who will serve the men (and women) of Company E. Your peers have demonstrated their confidence in your leadership skills, an honor that you must now live up to in your official duties.

COMPANY K

COMPANY K ELECTS OFFICERS FOR 2016

Company K held its annual meeting on November 14th, 2015. During the meeting a number of elected officers were chosen and one position was filled by appointment.

The corporate positions of treasurer and secretary were elected. Patrick Lynch was re-elected treasurer and John Thielmann was re-elected to serve as secretary.

Field officers were also elected at the meeting. Re-elected to serve as Captain of Company K was Ryan Holbrook. Tom Bass was elected 1st Sergeant, Ryan Schwartz was voted in as Sergeant, and Alex Kvalheim and John Thielmann were elected to serve as corporals for the company. A new position was created for a person to act as a liason between the civilian reenactors attached to Company K and the military unit. The position was

made an appointive position and President Ryan Holbrook appointed Amy Zimmerman to serve in that role.

On behalf of the Association we congratulate these folks on their election to leadership positions in the Company. We look to you for strong leadership on and off the field. You have been selected by your comrades to guide the Company in its future endeavors. It expresses the confidence and respect of your colleagues in your skill and character, a fact that should instill both a feeling of pride and responsibility to bring your skills to benefit the company.

ARTILLERY



PHOTOS FROM WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA AT FOREST HILLS IN MADISON

Our intrepid artilleryman, Lyle Laufenberg, submitted the following photo array from the recent Wreaths Across America event held at Forest Hills Cemetery in Madison, Wisconsin, on December 12th, 2015.







SKIRMISHERS



CIVIL WAR MILESTONES

JANUARY

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Jan. 1, 1863 | Lincoln signs Emancipation Proclamation |
| Jan. 8, 1821 | Gen. James Longstreet, CSA, born |
| Jan. 9, 1861 | Mississippi secedes |
| Jan. 10, 1861 | Florida secedes |

Jan. 11, 1861	Alabama secedes
Jan. 14, 1836	Gen. Judson Kilpatrick, USA, born
Jan. 13, 1865	Adm. Porter, USA, attacks Fort Fisher
Jan. 16, 1815	Gen. Henry W. Halleck, USA, born
Jan. 18, 1862	Battle at Mill Springs
Jan. 19, 1807	Gen. Robert E. Lee, CSA, born
Jan. 19, 1861	Georgia secedes
Jan. 19, 1862	Battle at Mill Springs
Jan. 21, 1813	Gen. John C. Fremont, USA, born
Jan. 21, 1824	Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, CSA, born
Jan. 26, 1861	Louisiana secedes
Jan. 26, 1863	Gen Joe Hooker takes command of the Army of the Potomac
Jan. 28, 1825	Gen. George Pickett, CSA, born

Jan. 31, 1862

President Lincoln issues General War Order No. 1 calling for all United States naval and land forces to begin a general advance by February 22, George Washington's birthday.

THE STATES RIGHTS DEBATE

BY JAMES H. DUMKE

In any debate over the causes of the War of the Rebellion the issue of slavery is of primary concern. However, there are those who would argue that the cause of the war was the question of states' rights (or state's rights) and not slavery. One thing that always seems apparent in this discussion is a lack of perspective or understanding of the issue by contemporary pro-confederate advocates in the principles invoked by this discussion. The argument goes that the politically more powerful North was advocating anti-Southern policies that violated the Constitution and that the only alternative was to secede from the Union of states. In the following analysis it is necessary to look at the historical antecedents of the debate before reviewing its impact on the run-up to the "late unpleasantness".

The theoretical foundation of the argument for secession goes back to the "nullification" battle between John C. Calhoun and President Andrew Jackson in 1832.



Figure 1 John C. Calhoun

The context of this developing struggle over the meaning of federal power actually began shortly after the end of the War of 1812. After the war it became apparent to the political leaders in the North that tariff protections were necessary to protect developing American manufacturing from competition from other nations. England, in particular, was dumping cheap goods into the United States. This became a contentious issue because as the Northern states were rapidly becoming a manufacturing & commercial economy, in the South they saw their future as one dependent on providing raw materials, such as cotton, creating an agrarian economic system. These divergent interests also would eventually lead to a debate over two theories of labor, free or wage labor versus slave labor. More than a decade would pass before these two labor systems would collide in the debate over slavery's moral legitimacy. *[It must be said that from the outset Calhoun and other advocates recognized the relationship of nullification and secession might be necessary to protect the institution of slavery]* Since the South focused their energies in agricultural pursuits it was necessary for them to purchase finished goods from external sources.

Thus the question of a tariff to protect budding commercial interests in the North imposed an economic hardship on Southern citizens who had to pay higher prices for manufactured goods. On May 11, 1828, Congress adopted high tariffs of 28% on imported goods. Immediately Southerners saw this tariff as discriminatory in its impact on their section of the country. As Calhoun would expound in his "Exposition and Protest": "[S]o partial are the effects of the system, that its burdens are exclusively on one side and its benefits on the other." (<http://declaringamerica.com/calhoun-southern-exposition-and-protest-1828-excerpt/>) In the South the tariff act became known as the Tariff of Abominations. In response Calhoun, who was serving as Andrew Jackson's Vice-president, wrote a document entitled "Exposition and Protest" in December of 1832, in which he outlined his principles for opposition to the tariff.

Calhoun would develop an argument for a political theory referred to as nullification. The argument essentially focused of the formation of the Union under the Constitution:

Down to the 1850s, the South sought protection in a precise vision of the federal compact, which itself seemed to find incontrovertible textual and hermeneutical supports in the Constitution. From the 1820s onward, however, northeastern industrial majorities in Congress after Congress constituted an

insurmountable barrier seriously endangering the constitutional balance, so that the task of holding the federal government to constitutional limits was entirely concentrated in the fight against that power bloc. While the political debate of the generation before Calhoun had entrusted to constitutional interpretation nearly all the issues at the heart of later controversies, with Calhoun's advent as the key thinker of the age, analysis of political questions and their possible remedies became crystal clear. And the linchpin of Calhoun's analyses was always the power of the individual state as a contracting party to, and real "dominus" of, the federal pact.

<http://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/review/john-c-calhoun-nullification-secession-constitution/>

Calhoun would argue that the government created by the Constitution was based upon the contractual relationship with the states. This theory would develop with Calhoun's argument that the states were the authority that established the Constitution and were the primary source for the jurisdiction of the central government. The "we the people" in the preamble of the Constitution meant the people who were citizens of the various states. Since the states were superior to the central government they had the power to "nullify" unconstitutional acts by the central government. Calhoun wrote in "Exposition": "So, also, the peculiar and local powers reserved to the States are subject to their exclusive control; nor can the General Government interfere, in any manner, with them, without violating the Constitution." As a logical leap from this principle Calhoun would write: "To the States respectively each in its sovereign capacity is reserved the power, by its veto, or right of interposition, to arrest the encroachment."

<http://declaringamerica.com/calhoun-southern-exposition-and-protest-1828-excerpt/> Calhoun insisted that without this dual sovereignty or government one section could impose burdens on one section of the country in order to benefit another section just as the Tariff of Abominations proposed to do.

In his manifesto "Exposition and Protest" Calhoun would argue that while the Constitution provided for collection of tariffs, it did not authorize using a tariff to protect fledgling domestic industry. Thus the Tariff of 1828 was unconstitutional. "The violation," wrote Calhoun, "consists of using a power granted from one object to advance another." (Conant, p. 72) Calhoun argued that the Constitution delegated sovereignty to two institutions, what he called the general government but also to each of the several states. Both entities had concurrent powers under the Constitution.

“To Calhoun, and those who agreed with him, self-government did not mean rule by a national majority but rather rule by separate majorities within each of the several states.” (Conant, p. 74) What Calhoun appeared to fear was a tyranny imposed by a national majority. Thus if a state determined that a federal law violated its Constitutional rights, the state had a right to declare the law invalid and oppose the carrying out of the law within its jurisdiction.

The particular dispute that led to the development of the principle of nullification was the passage of a bill by the state of South Carolina calling for the nullification of the Tariff of 1828 and promoting interference with the collection of the tariff. In response President Jackson pushed a bill through Congress to authorize the use of militia to enforce the tariff and prevent interference by state officials with the collection of the tariff. Furthermore, the bill authorized Jackson to take personal command of these troops. (See appendix I) Gradually the dispute was scaled back when Congress reduced the tariffs imposed by the act of 1828, passed as a form of compromise with Southern representatives in Congress. Although Jackson would not lead troops into South Carolina to enforce the collection of the tariffs, the debate would rage on as proponents of Calhoun’s views on the formative authority of the states in the adoption of the federal Constitution took root, especially in the Southern states. “The linchpin of Calhoun’s political theory was the defense of the southern states and their position in the American Union. In the three decades preceding the Civil War, the South came to perceive itself as a minority oppressed and exploited by the federal government, rapidly becoming the powerful political lever of the North.” (<http://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/review/john-c-calhoun-nullification-secession-constitution/>) Under the theory propounded by Calhoun the states themselves, individually, determined what acts were constitutional and which were not.

This debate would become the focus of one of the great debates ever to take place in the United States Senate. The background of the debate wasn’t a dispute over tariffs or slavery, but the sale of Western lands. A bill had been introduced that provided for the sale of lands in the Western territories. A South Carolina Senator, Robert Y. Hayne, opposed this bill on the grounds that the revenue raised by the sale of the land would unduly enrich the coffers of the national government and that these funds could be used to advantage one section over another. It was, in its focus, a challenge to Henry Clay’s “American system”. Clay’s principles called for the federal government to spend money to establish internal improvements such as

building canals, railroads, and improving harbors; things that were seen as inappropriate by the agrarian South. Stepping into the fray was a Massachusetts Senator, Daniel Webster. In the ensuing debate, that occurred in January of 1830, the issues of states' rights and Union would be paramount. During the debate Hayne clearly expounded the political ideology of Calhoun, who was the presiding officer of the Senate during the debate. Hayne's tactic during the debate was to make the Western section of the country the allies of the South. Webster would try to drive a wedge between the two sections.



Figure 2 Robert Y. Hayne

Hayne charged that the North was seeking to destroy the South through its recent conversion to high protective tariffs and its increasingly vocal opposition to slavery. He attacked Webster's inconsistency on the tariff and reminded his listeners that the doctrine of nullification counted among its advocates Madison and Jefferson, as well as Webster and those in New England who supported the Hartford Convention during the War of 1812. Hayne argued that the South, which had "everything to lose and nothing to gain," fought the war for "the protection of Northern shipping and New England seamen," while Webster's allies, "the war party in peace, and the peace party in war," sought to escape the burdens of that conflict.

Hayne's political theory stressed the sovereignty of the individual states, which had voluntarily ceded limited power to the central government. He believed that when the government unconstitutionally encroached on a state's sovereignty, that state could legitimately oppose the action until three-quarters of the states ratified a clarifying amendment to the Constitution. Although the subsequent course of

American history has sustained Webster's nationalist arguments, the Hayne-Calhoun states' rights doctrine assumed great significance during the three decades that followed the Webster-Hayne exchange. ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Webster and Hayne%27s Celebrated Speeches/Mr. Hayne%27s Speech on Mr. Foot%27s Resolution](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Webster_and_Hayne%27s_Celebrated_Speeches/Mr._Hayne%27s_Speech_on_Mr._Foot%27s_Resolution))

Webster understood the underlying tension of the debate was really centered around the issue of slavery. Webster deliberately led Hayne into a defense of slavery as part of the debate and Hayne let himself be induced to take up that issue. Webster argued:

I spoke, Sir, of the Ordinance of 1787, which prohibits slavery, in all future times, northwest of the Ohio, as a measure of great wisdom and foresight, and one which had been attended with highly beneficial and permanent consequences. I supposed that, on this point, no two gentlemen in the Senate could entertain different opinions. But the simple expression of this sentiment has led the gentleman, not only into a labored defence of slavery, in the abstract, and on principle, but also into a warm accusation against me, as having attacked the system of domestic slavery now existing in the Southern States. For all this, there was not the slightest foundation, in anything said or intimated by me. I did not utter a single word which any ingenuity could torture into an attack on the slavery of the South. I said, only, that it was highly wise and useful, in legislating for the Northwestern country while it was yet a wilderness, to prohibit the introduction of slaves; and I added, that I presumed there was no reflecting and intelligent person, in the neighboring State of Kentucky, who would doubt that, if the same prohibition had been extended, at the same early period, over that commonwealth, her strength and population would, at this day, have been far greater than they are. If these opinions be thought doubtful, they are nevertheless, I trust, neither extraordinary nor disrespectful. They attack nobody and menace nobody. And yet, Sir, the gentleman's optics have discovered, even in the mere expression of this sentiment, what he calls the very spirit of the Missouri question! He represents me as making an onset on the whole South, and manifesting a spirit which would interfere with, and disturb, their domestic condition!

([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Webster and Hayne%27s Celebrated Speeches/Mr. Hayne%27s Speech on Mr. Foot%27s Resolution](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Webster_and_Hayne%27s_Celebrated_Speeches/Mr._Hayne%27s_Speech_on_Mr._Foot%27s_Resolution))

Webster wanted to provoke Hayne into a full throated defense of slavery. His reference to the Northwest Ordinance with its prohibition of slavery in the Western territories by Congress was proof the this was a nation and not a confederation of states, as argued by those who asserted the state's rights

principle. It was also a clarion call to debate the role of slavery in the United States.

Hayne responded in what was described as bitterness and rage to the remarks of Webster. As would be the case for the next 30 years the response by Southerners would be bellicose and threatening. Though professing love for the Union they had no qualms about calling for disunion in response to legislation or government policies they opposed.

The South comes in, and in the most earnest manner represents to you, that this measure, which we are told "is of no value to the East or the West," is "utterly destructive of our interests." We represent to you, that it has spread ruin and devastation through the land, and prostrated our hopes in the dust. We solemnly declare that we believe the system to be wholly unconstitutional, and a violation of the compact between the states and the Union, and our brethren turn a deaf ear to our complaints, and refuse to relieve us from a system, "which not enriches them, but makes us poor indeed." Good God! has it come to this? Do gentlemen hold the feelings and wishes of their brethren at so cheap a rate, that they refuse to gratify them at so small a price? Do gentlemen value so lightly the peace and harmony of the country, that they will not yield a measure of this description to the affectionate entreaties and earnest remonstrances of their friends? Do gentlemen estimate the value of the Union at so low a price, that they will not even make one effort to bind the states together with the cords of affection? And has it come to this? Is this the spirit in which this government is to be administered? If so, let me tell gentlemen the seeds of dissolution are already sown, and our children will reap the bitter fruit. "SOUTH CAROLINA REPROACHED BY MASSACHUSETTS!" The honorable gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. WEBSTER] while he exonerates me personally from the charge, intimates that there is a party in the country who are looking to disunion. Sir, if the gentleman had stopped there, the accusation would "have passed by me as the idle wind which I regard not." But, when he goes on to give to his accusation a local habitation and a name, by quoting the expression of a distinguished citizen of South Carolina, [Dr. Cooper] 12 "that it was time for the South to calculate the value of the Union," and, in the language of the bitterest sarcasm, adds, "surely then the Union cannot last longer than July, 1831," it is impossible to mistake either the allusion or the object of the gentleman. Now I call upon everyone who hears me to bear witness that this controversy is not of my seeking. The Senate will do me the justice to remember, that, at the time this unprovoked and uncalled for attack was made upon the South, not one word has been uttered by me in disparagement of New England, nor had I made the most

distant allusion, either to the senator from Massachusetts, or the state he represents. But, sir, that gentleman has thought proper, for purposes best known to himself, to strike the South through me, the most unworthy of her servants. He has crossed the border, he has invaded the state of South Carolina, is making war upon her citizens, and endeavoring to overthrow her principles and her institutions. Sir, when the gentleman provokes me to such a conflict, I meet him at the threshold. I will struggle while I have life, for our altars and our firesides, and if God gives me strength, I will drive back the invader discomfited. Nor shall I stop there. If the gentleman provokes the war, he shall have war. Sir, I will not stop at the border; I will carry the war into the enemy's territory, and not consent to lay down my arms, until I shall have obtained "indemnity for the 12 Thomas Cooper (1759-1839), president of South Carolina College. [17] past, and security for the future." It is with unfeigned reluctance that I enter upon the performance of this part of my duty. I shrink almost instinctively from a course, however necessary, which may have a tendency to excite sectional feelings, and sectional jealousies. But, sir, the task has been forced upon me, and I proceed right onward to the performance of my duty; be the consequences what they may, the responsibility is with those who have imposed upon me this necessity. The senator from Massachusetts has thought proper to cast the first stone, and if he shall find, according to a homely adage, "that he lives in a glass house/' on his head be the consequences. The gentleman has made a great flourish about his fidelity to Massachusetts. I shall make no professions of zeal for the interests and honor of South Carolina-of that my constituents shall judge. If there be one state in this Union (and I say it not in a boastful spirit) that may challenge comparison with any other for an uniform, zealous, ardent, and uncalculating devotion to the Union, that state is South Carolina. Sir, from the very commencement of the Revolution, up to this hour, there is no sacrifice, however great, she has not cheerfully made; no service she has ever hesitated to perform. She has adhered to you in your prosperity, but in your adversity she has clung to you with more than filial affection. No matter what was the condition of her domestic affairs, though deprived of her resources, divided by parties, or surrounded by difficulties, the call of the country has been to her as the voice of God. Domestic discord ceased at the sound--every man became at once reconciled to his brethren, and the sons of Carolina were all seen crowding together to the temple, bringing their gifts to the altar of their common country. What, sir, was the conduct of the South during the Revolution? Sir, I honor New England for her conduct in that glorious struggle. But great as is the praise which belongs to her, I think at least equal honor is due to the South.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Webster and Hayne%27s Celebrated Speeches/Mr. Hayne%27s Speech on Mr. Foot%27s Resolution](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Webster_and_Hayne%27s_Celebrated_Speeches/Mr._Hayne%27s_Speech_on_Mr._Foot%27s_Resolution)

Webster's speeches, as well as those of Hayne, are little remembered today. But the peroration on Union is remembered. The end of his second speech of this debate ended with Webster's demonstration for his love of the Union. It would serve as the rallying cry for nationalists in the debates over nullification and secession leading up to the beginning of the Civil War.

God grant that in my day, at least, that curtain may not rise! God grant that on my vision never may be opened what lies behind! When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original luster, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured, bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as "What is all this worth?" nor those other words of delusion and folly, "Liberty first and Union afterwards"; but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart—Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!
<http://www.usa-patriotism.com/speeches/dwebster1.htm>

John C. Calhoun didn't directly address secession other than as a natural, logical consequence of the use of nullification by the states.

Only two possibilities were widely believed in: that sovereignty rested with the entire population of the American Union, which made the Constitution the creation of a single, sovereign people—for which reason it would be absurd to speak of "States' Rights" or a "right" of nullification, much less secession—or that the Constitution arose from the will of the states, from which a series of logical consequences followed. The Constitution was obviously the work of the states, which approved it as distinct political entities, independently from each other, and the Union was a union of sovereign states. In terms of sovereignty, the Constitution changed nothing. The states had only transferred the exercise of some additional sovereign powers to the federal government. This was evident from the very structure of the

amending power conferred on a three-quarters majority of the states. All sovereignty thus resided in the individual states, while the exercise of sovereign power was shared through a pact delegating it partially to the federal government.

(<http://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/review/john-c-calhoun-nullification-secession-constitution/>)

The disciples of John Calhoun saw a need to go further than the supposed protections of nullification during the 1840's and 1850's. Antislavery agitation in the North was seen as a growing threat to the "peculiar institution" and the Southern aristocracy. As the Western territories organized to begin the process of forming states the issue of slavery in those territories became a focal point of debate. Secessionists would take the compact theory of Calhoun, that is that the Union was formed by the sovereign states who were co-equal to the Union, a compact if you will, and if the federal government violated the Constitutional rights of the states, as determined by the citizens of that state, then they would have the option of leaving the Union. In other words, if the central government violated the compact the states had the power to declare any such act as null and void and provide the aggrieved party the power to declare the compact broken and end that relationship that created the Union of states. This would give the separate states a virtual veto power over any federal legislation, a power not granted under the Constitution, either under a nullification theory or secession. From the mid-1840's until the War of the Rebellion the Southern states used the threat of secession to stymie anti-slavery legislation and coerce pro-slavery concessions from the free states.

It wasn't that the Southern states were adverse to federal legislation when it worked to their benefit. The Missouri Compromise in 1820 (allowing Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state), the Compromise of 1850 (and its strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law), the gag rule in Congress (this rule prohibited presenting anti-slavery petitions in Congress), and blocking the Wilmot Proviso (which would prohibit the introduction of slavery into territories acquired from Mexico in the Mexican War) could certainly be viewed as proscribing the state's rights of the Northern states.

The trigger to launch either the nullification doctrine or secession was a violation of the Constitutional rights of the states. Under the prevailing argument of Calhoun this was a precedent act that was necessary to spark a state's call to secede or nullify an action by the federal government.

What matters here, however, is the right of “constitutional” secession, where Calhoun departs markedly from other theories. He could not accept the Webster-Story claim that the federal pact could “naturally” evolve into something profoundly different, without the contracting parties in active, creative control of the process. Indeed, the political obligations arising from a constitutional pact, such as America’s, cease when its terms are violated. Only within this conceptual framework can one understand the trajectory from the usurpation of a state’s right, to nullification, to calling the other co-equal partners to revise the constitutional pact, finally, to possible withdrawal from the Union.

[\(http://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/review/john-c-calhoun-nullification-secession-constitution/\)](http://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/review/john-c-calhoun-nullification-secession-constitution/)

Calhoun’s views and the right of secession were widely accepted in the South. While West Point was a Northern school, it was nevertheless dominated by the Southern aristocracy. Benson Bobrick points out in his book *Master of War: The Life of General George H. Thomas* that a “subversive” textbook used at the Point entitled *A View of the Constitution of the United States of America* taught that secession was an option for any state in conflict with federal authority. The book was written by William Rawle who wrote:

The principle of representation, although certainly the wisest and best, is not essential to the being of a republic. . . . It depends on the state itself to retain or abolish the principle of representation because it depends on itself whether it will continue a member of the Union. To deny this right would be inconsistent with the principles on which all our political systems are founded, which is, that the people have in all cases, a right to determine how they will be governed The states may wholly withdraw from the Union The secession of a state from the Union depends on the will of the people of such state.

Robert E. Lee, J.E.B. Stuart, Sam Grant, William T. Sherman, and George Thomas, among others, would have studied this text during their days as students at West Point. America’s future leaders, North and South, were influenced by the line of reasoning found in Rawle’s textbook.

This brings one to the query: What constitutional violation sparked the resort of the Southern states to secession? This query brings one full circle to the issue which was the cause of the war, despite disclaimers by

those who hold fast to a pro-confederate viewpoint. That issue was slavery. What specific act by the Federal government gave rise to a violation of the Constitution that would justify secession? There really wasn't one. However, (and this would have been contrary to Calhoun's principles as he announced them) this was essentially a preemptive move by the Southern slave states to avoid some future violation. The South had watched as the North grew in population and political power. They also observed a growing anti-slavery attitude in the North, albeit still not oriented towards emancipation or as a majority viewpoint. There was a fear that eventually the North would move to end slavery. The final straw for Southerners was the election of Abraham Lincoln as President in 1860. First, it should be noted that Lincoln won the election without winning a single Southern state. Lincoln was, in southern eyes at least, a sectional candidate. Lincoln had run on a platform of restricting the spread of slavery, but had argued that he had no constitutional power to interfere with slavery where it already existed. The Southern states started seceding almost immediately, based on the principle that the election of Lincoln was a direct threat to the institution of slavery. Lincoln had not even been inaugurated as state after state seceded. There had been no overt act to violate any Constitutional rights of any Southern state. What Southerners saw was a bleak future where slavery would be attacked by government policies enacted by a hostile majority of Northern politicians.

The movement for secession had really begun in the mid-1850's led by men such as William Yancey, Robert Barnwell Rhett, Jr., and Robert W. Barnwell. These men would eventually become known as "Fire eaters" for their fervent efforts to promote secessionism in the South. Yancey would be a prime mover at the Democratic convention in Charleston, South Carolina, to divide the convention and deny Stephen Douglas the nomination of his party for the presidency. He was successful in this effort resulting in essentially constituting two Democratic candidates for the Presidency and ensuring Lincoln's election. The underlying motivation for Yancey's efforts may have included the idea that he would emerge as a leader of a new confederation of Southern states. But whatever was his primary objective Yancey was able to create the circumstances that would directly lead to secession.

The call for secession in the South was based on the issue of slavery as seen in this argument by one governor of a southern state promoting the concept of secession. The following comes from a letter written by Governor Joe Brown of Georgia. The important point of this section of his letter is to

describe the end result of emancipation. The real importance denoted in the portion of the letter is how he instilled a sense of fear in the poor non-slaveholding whites in the state. Despite this appeal to the prejudices of the poor whites, there doesn't appear to have been majoritarian support for secession in Georgia. This runs contrary to Calhoun's argument that a majority of the citizens in each state has the right to reject policies of the central government.

Again, the poor white man wishes to rent land from the wealthy landlord—this landlord asks him half the crop of common upland or two thirds or even three fourths, for the best bottom land. The poor man says this seems very hard. I cannot make a decent support for my family at these rates. The landlord replies, here are negroes all around me anxious to take it at these rates; I can let you have it for no less. The negro therefore, comes into competition with the poor white man, when he seeks to rent land on which to make his bread, or a shelter to protect his wife and his little ones, from the cold and from the rain; and when he seeks employment as a day laborer. In every such case if the negro will do the work the cheapest, he must be preferred. It is sickening to contemplate the miseries of our poor white people under these circumstances. They now get higher wages for their labor than the poor of any other country on the globe. Most of them are land owners, and they are now respected. They are in no sense placed down upon a level with the negro. They are a superior race, and they feel and know it.

[http://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/all/themes/gli/panels/civilwar/150/Civil%20War%20Reader%201%20\(single%20page%20version\).pdf](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/all/themes/gli/panels/civilwar/150/Civil%20War%20Reader%201%20(single%20page%20version).pdf)

However, it wasn't just the political leaders of the states promoting secession. Below is an article from the *Charleston Mercury*, a newspaper that promoted secession long before it would become a prominent principle in the South. This article was written just before the presidential election of 1860. It seems to be superfluous to point to the prominent role of slavery in their state's rights position.

CHARLESTON MERCURY, NOVEMBER 3, 1860

The issue before the country is the extinction of slavery. No man of common sense, who has observed the progress of events, and who is not prepared to surrender the institution, with the safety and independence of the South can doubt that the time for action has

come—now or never. The Southern States are now in the crisis of their fate; and, if we read aright the signs of the times, nothing is needed for our deliverance, but that the ball of revolution be set in motion. There is sufficient readiness among the people to make it entirely successful. Co-operation will follow the action of any State. The example of a forward movement only is requisite to unite Southern States in a common cause. Under these circumstances the Legislature of South Carolina is about to meet. It happens to assemble in advance of the Legislature of any other State. Being in session at this momentous juncture—the Legislature of that State which is most united in the policy of freeing the South from Black Republican domination—the eyes of the whole country, and most especially of the resistance party of the Southern States, is intently turned upon the conduct of this body. We have innumerable assurances that the men of action in each and all of the Southern States, earnestly desire South Carolina to exhibit promptitude and decision in this conjuncture. Other states are torn and divided, to a greater or less extent, by old party issues. South Carolina alone is not. Any practical move would enable the people of other States to rise above their past divisions, and lock shields on the broad ground of Southern security. The course of our Legislature will either greatly stimulate and strengthen, or unnerve the resistance elements of the whole South. A Convention is the point to which their attention will be chiefly directed. The question of calling a Convention by our Legislature does not necessarily involve the question of separate or co-operative action. That is a question for the Convention when it assembles, under the circumstances which shall exist when it assembles. All desire the action of as many Southern States as possible, for the formation of a Southern Confederacy. But each should not delay and wait on the other. As these States are separate sovereignties, each must act separately. What is really essential is this—that by the action of one or more States, there shall be the reasonable probability that a Southern Confederacy will be formed. (Escott, Paul D. and David R. Goldfield, eds. Major Problems in the History of the American South. Vol. 1. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990.)

It is not a reach to argue that John C. Calhoun was a leading intellectual light and political philosopher of influence in the early 19th century. His argument over the role of the states in the constitutional framework of the Union were astute and worthy of debate in philosophical discussions. And there can be little doubt that in the South the ideas expressed by Calhoun were persuasive. The reality is that eventually these arguments were resolved with lead bullets and iron cannon balls. Well over 600,000 lives would be sacrificed to determine the status of states in the Constitutional framework of the government and the legitimacy of the

concept of secession. The legacy of John C. Calhoun and his contemporary status may be best summed up in the following quotation:

Calhoun’s expulsion from the “American tradition” goes along with his depiction as the ultimate “symbol of the Lost Cause.” This started in the aftermath of the civil war – with the famous Yankee soldier who, according to Walt Whitman, said: “Calhoun’s monument ... is the desolated, ruined south; nearly the whole generation of young men between seventeen and thirty destroyed or maim’d; all the old families used up — the rich impoverish’d, the plantations cover’d with weeds, the slaves unloos’d and become the masters, and the name of southerner blacken’d with every shame – all that is Calhoun’s real monument.” Many years later, Vernon Parrington stated, in what was considered the classic work on American thought between the two world wars, “[w]hatever road one travels one comes at last upon the austere figure of Calhoun, commanding every highway of the southern mind.” (<http://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/review/john-c-calhoun-nullification-secession-constitution/>)

APPENDIX I

22ND UNITED STATES CONGRESS

An Act

further to provide for the collection of duties on imports.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,

That whenever, by reason of unlawful obstructions, combinations, or assemblages of persons, it shall become impracticable, in the judgment of the President, to execute the revenue laws, and collect the duties on imports in the ordinary way, in any collection district, it shall and may be lawful for the President to direct that the custom-house for such district be established and kept in any secure place within some port or harbour of such district, either upon land or on board any vessel; and, in that case, it shall be the duty of the collector to reside at such place, and there to detain all vessels and cargoes arriving within the said district until the duties imposed on said cargoes, by law, be paid in cash, deducting interest according to existing laws; and in such cases it shall be unlawful to take the vessel or cargo from the custody of the proper officer of the customs, unless by process from some court of the United States; and in case of any attempt otherwise to take such vessel or cargo by any force, or combination, or assemblage of persons too great to be overcome by the officers of the customs, it shall and may be lawful for the President of the

United States, or such person or persons as he shall have empowered for that purpose, to employ such part of the land or naval forces, or militia of the United States, as may be deemed necessary for the purpose of preventing the removal of such vessel or cargo, and protecting the officers of the customs in retaining the custody thereof.

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That the jurisdiction of the circuit courts of the United States shall extend to all cases, in law or equity, arising under the revenue laws of the United States, for which other provisions are not already made by law; and if any person shall receive any injury to his person or property for or on account of any act by him done, under any law of the United States, for the protection of the revenue or the collection of duties on imports, he shall be entitled to maintain suit for damage there for in the circuit court of the United States in the district wherein the party doing the injury may reside, or shall be found. And all property taken or detained by any officer or other person under authority of any revenue law of the United States, shall be irrepleviable, and shall be deemed to be in the custody of the law, and subject only to the orders and decrees of the courts of the United States having jurisdiction thereof. And if any person shall dispossess or rescue, or attempt to dispossess or rescue, any property so taken or detained as aforesaid, or shall aid or assist therein, such person shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour . . .

SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That whenever the President of the United States shall be officially informed, by the authorities of any state, or by a judge of any circuit or district court of the United States, in the state, that, within the limits of such state, any law or laws of the United States, or the execution thereof, or of any process from the courts of the United States, is obstructed by the employment of military force, or by any other unlawful means, too great to be overcome by the ordinary course of judicial proceeding, or by the powers vested in the marshal by existing laws, it shall be lawful for him, the President of the United States, forthwith to issue his proclamation, declaring such fact or information, and requiring all such military and other force forthwith to disperse; and if at any time after issuing such proclamation, any such opposition or obstruction shall be made, in the manner or by the means aforesaid, the President shall be, and hereby is, authorized, promptly to employ such means to suppress the same, and to cause the said laws or process to be duly executed . . .

SEC. 6. And be it further enacted, That in any state where the jails are not allowed to be used for the imprisonment of persons arrested or committed under the laws of the United States, or where houses are not allowed to be so used, it shall and may be lawful for any marshal, under the direction of the judge of the United States for the proper district, to use other convenient places, within the limits of said state, and to make such other provision as he may deem expedient and necessary for that purpose.

SEC. 8. And be it further enacted, That the several provisions contained in the first and fifth sections of this act, shall be in force until the end of the next session of Congress, and no longer.

APPROVED, March 2, 1833. (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Force_Bill)

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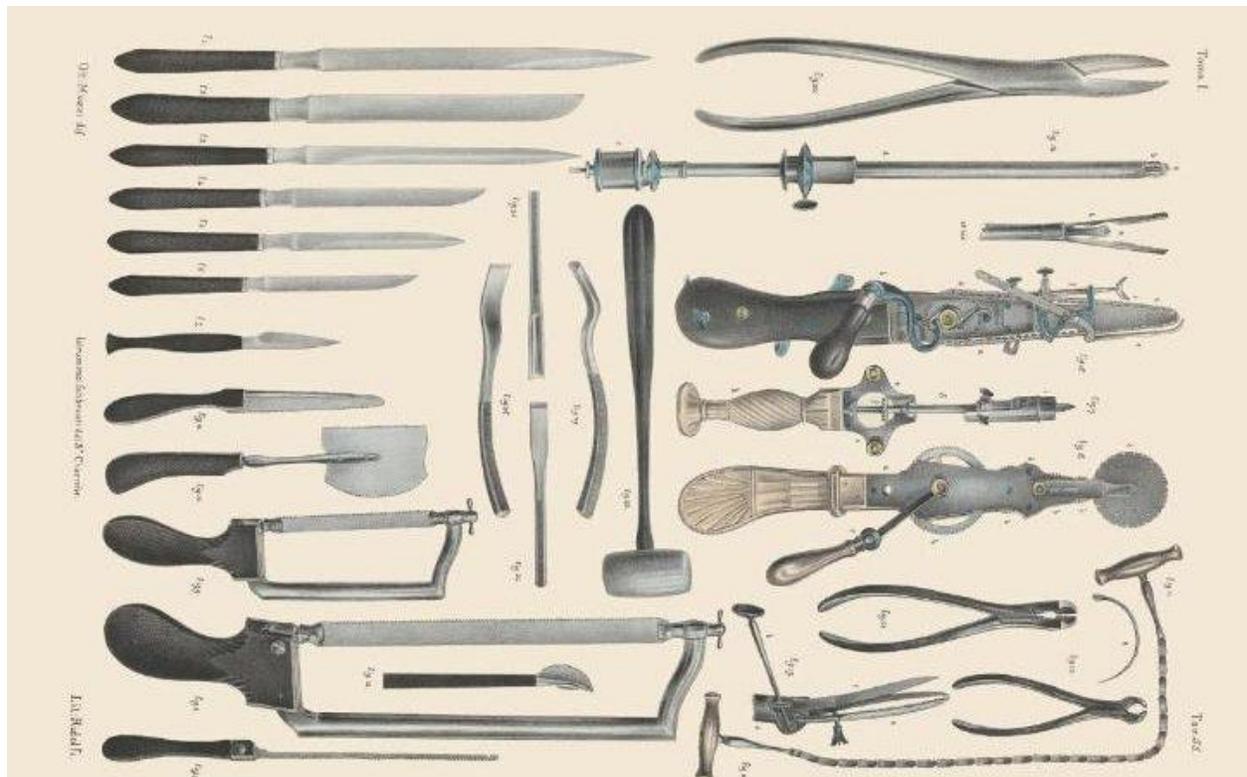
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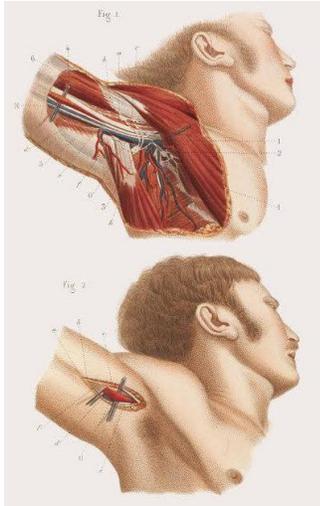
HOW TO AMPUTATE LIMBS WITHOUT FAINTING: THE TRIALS OF A VICTORIAN SURGEON

BY JOANNA BOURKE



Joseph Townend was born into an impoverished Methodist family in Yorkshire in 1806. When he was a young child, he attempted to lift a kettle from its “reekon” (the pot-hook) when his apron caught fire. He remembered “being laid upon the floor” and having his wounds “saturated with treacle, in order to extract the fire”. His burns were extensive and, when they healed, his right arm was fused to his side. Years later, when he was working in a cotton mill, he decided to go to the Manchester Infirmary to have his arm separated.

Once at the hospital, a male attendant wound a thick bandage over his eyes, then led him up an alley to the operating theatre, which was packed with medical students. A surgeon gruffly warned: “Now, young man, I tell you, if when you feel the knife you should jerk, or even stir – you will do it at the hazard of your life.” Anaesthetics such as chloroform would not be invented for another 23 years and no analgesic (such as whiskey or laudanum) was offered. All Townend could hope for was a well-sharpened knife and the surgeon’s experienced hands.

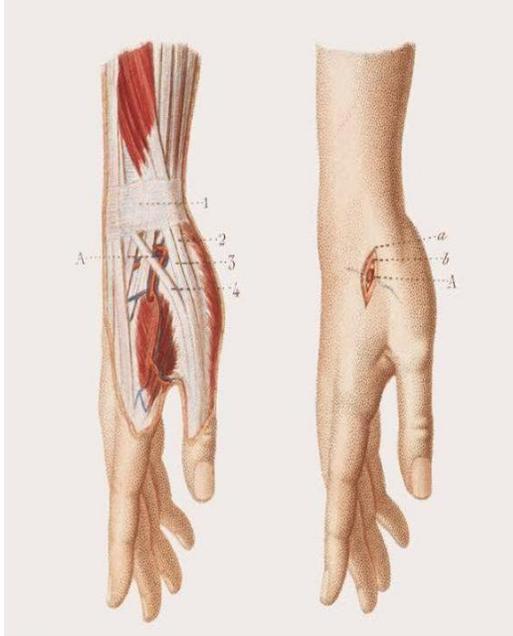


Anatomy of the armpit by Claude Bernard and Charles Huette,

1848CREDIT: WELLCOME COLLECTION

“All was still,” Townend recalled, when he felt the surgeon grasp his arm and “with a forcible thrust, through went the knife, as near the pit of the arm as possible... the progress of the instrument I distinctly heard.” The pain was “most exquisite”. As the “smoking wound” was being dressed and bound, Townend reflected on the purpose of pain in bringing him closer to God. He spent the following weeks in hospital “weeping”, singing hymns and reading the scriptures to other patients. After leaving hospital, he dedicated his life to Christ and became a Methodist missionary in Australia.

Townend’s experience of pain was not unusual. Richard Barnett’s new book, *Crucial Interventions*, brings this world of 19th-century surgery to life. He has structured his book according to bodily parts – head; eyes; ear, nose and throat; hands and arms; chest; abdomen; genitals; legs and feet. These themes are interspersed with short, elegant essays tracing the history of anaesthesia, antisepsis, asepsis, nursing, war surgery, medical education and organisation. At the end, Barnett speculates on the experience of patients like Townend.



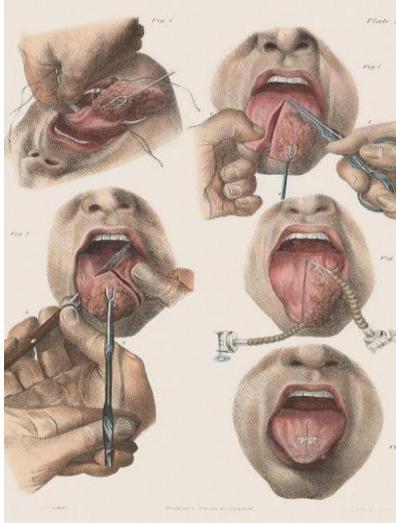
The musculature of the hand by Claude Bernard and

Charles Huette,

1848 CREDIT: WELLCOME COLLECTION

It is not a book for the faint-hearted. There are hundreds of beautifully drawn, but gruesome illustrations from the 19th century. Barnett reproduces intricate sketches on how to wield knives when cutting into human flesh. He shows us a vast range of surgical instruments – not only knives but also saws, scissors, probes, forceps, needles, clamps, ligatures and so on. I found myself refusing to imagine them entering the vulnerable bodies of desperately ill and wounded men and women.

If there is one theme that dominates Barnett’s evocative book it is the vast transformations that took place in surgical practices and technologies during the 19th century. Before 1846, surgeons conducted their work without the help of effective anaesthetics such as ether or chloroform. They were required to be “men of iron... and indomitable nerve” who could ignore the screams of their patients.

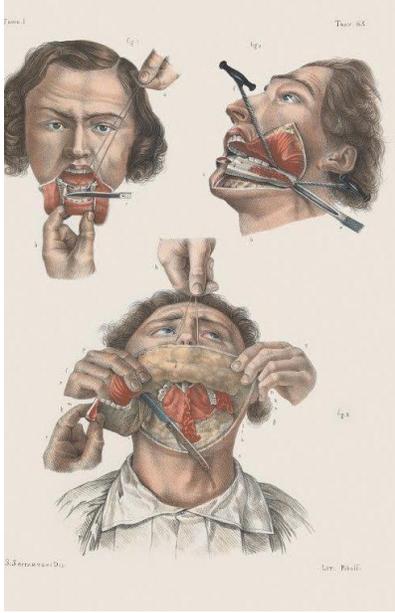


Surgery for cancer of the tongue by Pancoast,

1846CREDIT: WELLCOME COLLECTION

Many apprentice-surgeons found themselves incapable of maintaining the necessary emotional distance. For example, Silas Weir Mitchell went on to become one of the most influential American physicians of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As a young doctor, however, he had hoped to become a surgeon. Anaesthetics had not been invented when he started training, so he was forced to amputate limbs on patients who were fully conscious of every cut of his knife. When operating on one woman who was being held down by strong men, he remembered the “terribleness... the screams, the flying blood jets - and the struggle”. He couldn’t continue. Surgery was “horrible to me”, he later recalled, admitting that he “fainted so often at operations that I began to despair”. In the end, Mitchell was forced to concede that he “had neither the nerve nor the hand which was needed in those days for those operations”.

The best surgeons were those - like the great Sir Robert Liston - who could amputate a limb in minutes. Surgeons, as well as their patients, needed courage and determination. Was it any wonder that some critics accused them of sadism? A few years after the introduction of chloroform, one critic even claimed that some surgeons had acquired a “taste for screams and groans”: might they be unable to “proceed agreeably in their operations without such a musical accompaniment”, he sneered.



Resection of the lower jaw by Bougery & Jacob,

1841CREDIT: WELLCOME COLLECTION

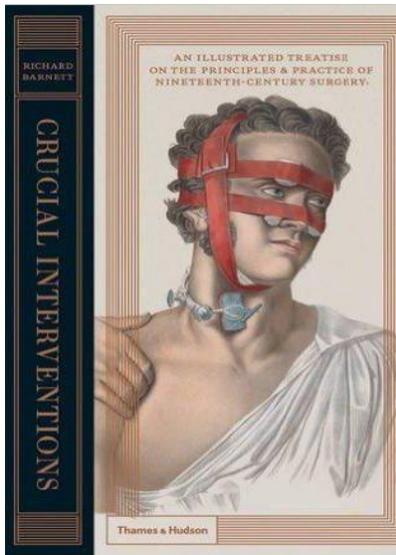
It would be a mistake to see chloroform as the only innovation of the 19th century. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the introduction of antiseptic and aseptic techniques saved many more lives. Barnett points out that in the early decades of the 19th century, even major operations often took place in private homes. Surgeons wore street clothes; the environment was noisy, dirty and bloody. Mortality was high.

By the end of the century, the transformation was remarkable. Barnett argues that surgeons increasingly saw themselves as elite scientists. Operations took place in aseptic environments, with physicians and nurses wearing sterile white gowns. The “theatre” element of operations was over: spectators were no longer allowed to crowd around the table. Instead, bodies were cut open and stitched back together in silence. Even pauper patients like Townend would be mercifully put to sleep before the knife-wielding surgeon appeared.

Joanna Bourke is the author of *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* (OUP)

Crucial Interventions by Richard Barnett

256pp, Thames & Hudson in association with The Wellcome Collection, £19.95, ebook £15.73. To order this book from the Telegraph for £16.95 plus £1.99 p&p, visit books.telegraph.co.uk



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