

conomic opportunities needed to make a go of freedom" and they therefore "entered a downward spiral of idleness, squalor, and disease."

This is a well-written, thoroughly researched and valuable study. Copious footnotes, clear tables and a good bibliographical essay will all prove useful to scholars in this area. Most chapters do seem brief, however, and one finds oneself wishing for a more thorough explanation, more illustrative and descriptive material, more flesh on the bare bones; this could have been done without violating the author's wish to avoid extended analysis and comment. In any case, the work provides a good base from which to pursue further research. McManus' own *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*, published before the present volume, is an example of what can be done.

—Paul L. Silver
Johnson State College
Johnson, Vermont

The Trouble They Seen: Black People Tell the Story of Reconstruction, edited by Dorothy Sterling. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1976. pp. xvi, 491. Illustrations and index. \$7.95.

Some forty years ago, W. E. B. DuBois chided historians for their negative stereotyping of the freedman during Reconstruction—a fault which he attributed, in part, to their neglect of black source material. Taking her cue from DuBois, Dorothy Sterling has carefully chosen approximately 400 selections from the full range of black source materials, added a liberal and well-integrated set of illustrations, and produced, on most accounts, a commendable volume in which southern blacks relate their experiences during the turbulent postwar period. Most of the documents have been drawn from either black newspapers (particularly the *Washington New Era* and the *New Orleans Tribune*), the testimony of blacks before congressional committees investigating conditions in the South, or the personal letters and diaries of blacks in scattered manuscript collections. Short, unobtrusive introductions set the documents in context and provide smooth transitions from one selection to the next—giving each of the five chapters and the volume as a whole a unity and readability rarely found in documentary collections. The editor provides a citation for each selection, but the references for most are incomplete and the collection lacks a bibliography.

The volume offers a surprisingly thorough and often intimate glimpse into the wide variety of black experiences during Reconstruction. The selections capture the initial euphoria of freedom, the freedmen's high hopes for the future, and their hunger for education and their own land. A theme evident throughout the volume is the black man's plea for recognition as a full-fledged human being—perhaps best stated by a Charleston Colored People's Convention in 1865: "We ask for no special privileges or favors. We ask only for *even-handed* Justice. We simply ask that we shall be recognized as

men" (p. 66). Particularly pleasing is the inclusion of new material focusing on the lives of ordinary black people. Thus, in addition to the more familiar story of black political participation, the reader shares in such items as America Robinson's love letters to James Burrus, the constitution of a black farmers association, the ordeal of Cadet James Smith at West Point, black arguments for and against segregation in the army, and a black labor strike in the rice fields of South Carolina. While Ms. Sterling stresses the raw courage and dignity of the freedmen and suggests that the period witnessed "a remarkable flowering—a triumph of the human spirit" among black people, more apparent is the tragedy and pathos that marked the black experience—the dashed hopes and disillusionment, the false promises and hypocrisy of their white Republican colleagues, and the social, economic, and political intimidation practiced by southern white conservatives throughout the period.

A somewhat serious problem exists in Ms. Sterling's violation of the integrity of the original documents. She indicates that she has occasionally changed tenses or sequences for greater clarity, modernized spelling and punctuation, and "made extensive cuts without, however, altering the original meaning of the writer and speaker" (p. xiii). A relatively thorough check of the accuracy of selections from readily available sources and congressional testimony (a difficult task, given the incomplete citations) reveals that the editor has also frequently eliminated qualifying and modifying words, phrases, and clauses in the process of reproduction. Furthermore, she has often created new sentences by blending together fragments which are paragraphs apart in the original and she has generally shown little consistency in retaining the original paragraph structure or the question and answer format of the selections drawn from congressional testimony. More bothersome is the editor's frequent practice of reducing several pages of congressional testimony to a few paragraphs and making it read as though its structure had not been altered. All of this is done without the use of ellipses, interpolations, and other conventional (and essential) warnings to the reader that the editor has tampered with the original text. Ms. Sterling could have followed innumerable models of judicious editing and still satisfied her intention "to avoid a book twice the length of this one" (p. xiii).

The upshot is that the documents reproduced here are all too frequently not as they appear in the original. This serious problem mars what is otherwise an excellent and useful collection in terms of selection, coverage, and method of presentation.

—Terry Seip
 University of Southern California
 Los Angeles

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.