The Right to Vote
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The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment.

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The largest and most valuable source I tapped was 172 newspapers from 36 states. No other source conveyed the importance and the tone of the issues growing out of the Fifteenth Amendment. In particular, the editorials of the New York Times, which reflected the moderate Republican position, were invaluable, as were those of the New York World, which vigorously expressed the peculiar opposition of the Democrats. The most persistent fighter, with many of the most radical editorials, was the veteran reformist Anti-Slavery Standard, also of New York. In many respects the most interesting confrontation between the moderate and more radical Republican press occurred in California. Newspapers, however, were not only important for opinion but indispensable for news. The major newspaper collection I used was at the Library of Congress. My experience convinces me that libraries everywhere should take greater care of their priceless newspaper collections.

My greatest disappointment was the relative lack of important material to be gleaned from manuscripts, especially concerning passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Research in manuscripts was undertaken in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Oregon, California, Louisiana, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia at 26 libraries. I consulted fruitlessly 165 collections, took notes from an additional 87. I received photo and hand-copied material from other libraries, and received reports from archivists, librarians, and historians in 40 states. The papers of Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada, before 1875 for example, went up in flames in the Virginia City fire of 1875. The papers of critically important members of Congress, such as George S. Boutwell, John A. Bingham, James G. Blaine, Roscoe Conkling, John A. Logan, Oliver P. Morton, Samuel J. Randall, and Henry Wilson, are infinitesimal in size for the period of the passage and ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. The large manuscript collection of Benjamin F. Butler proved by examination to be as unrewarding as were the voluminous letters of Charles Sumner. The letters of Presidents Johnson and Grant also proved of little value. Access to the papers of William D. Kelley was not granted. In general, letters did not refer to the framing of the Amendment because congressmen had been preoccupied with the new Grant administration which was shortly to take
office, and the related matters of appointments, programs, and congressional organization.

The most significant collections I examined were the letters of Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase of Ohio (Library of Congress and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania), the manuscripts of Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio (Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio), the Hamilton Fish manuscripts (Library of Congress), the papers of Senator Waitman T. Willey of West Virginia (West Virginia University Library), those of Representative Thomas A. Jenckes of Rhode Island (Library of Congress), the correspondence in the William E. Chandler collection (Library of Congress), and minutes of the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League (part of the Leon Gardiner Collection on Negro History at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

Federal and state documents were indispensable; generally, copies existed at the Library of Congress. On the whole, archival materials were disappointing. Indispensable aids to research on voting were the almanacs and federal documents, especially the published census reports. Except for the voluminous *Congressional Globe*, a scanty record of debate in the Louisiana House of Representatives, the excellent and extensive Pennsylvania *Legislative Record*, and the Indiana *Brevier Legislative Reports*, there were no official state records of legislative debate, though the various official journals give meager voting records. However, various newspapers in the state capitals were extremely helpful in recording or summarizing debate of individual legislators.

There are few references to the Fifteenth Amendment in published recollections, and fewer that are valuable. The retrospective remarks by James G. Blaine of Maine, George S. Boutwell of Massachusetts, and William M. Stewart of Nevada are useful.

The secondary sources were rather uneven for my purpose. I did not find the general histories of Rhodes and Oberholtzer very rewarding. There are the interesting but extremely brief accounts of the passage of the Amendment by John M. Mathews and by A. C. Braxton. There were more helpful accounts in the story of state ratification: an interesting, almost contemporaneous, but brief account on Georgia by I. W. Avery; more recent but uneven dissertations by John W. Huston on Pennsylvania, and by Sylvia Cohn on New York and Ohio, and an older legalistic but interesting article on Indiana by William C. Gerichs. James McPherson and Everette Swinney have each detailed the stories of abolitionist advocacy during the 1860's and enforcement efforts during the 1870's. Leslie H. Fishel has studied northern Negroes and politics between 1865 and 1900 in his Harvard dissertation and in two articles. Also valuable were William Hanchett's perceptive short article on Nevada Negroes, John A. Munroe's fine but brief account of Delaware Negroes, and a thorough history on Indiana Negroes by Emma L. Thornbrough. A general monograph, which
sheds some light on the importance of the northern Negro vote, is an older Princeton politics dissertation by Robert A. Horn. Political monographs and articles on states outside the South during the period of Reconstruction generally were sparse, but one outstanding exception was a Columbia dissertation on Connecticut politics by William J. Niven, Jr. An excellent general bibliography concerning Reconstruction America can be found in J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (2nd ed.). Finally, I have been influenced by the re-thinking on Reconstruction by such scholars as David Donald, C. Vann Woodward, and Eric McKitrick.

**COLLECTIONS OF LETTERS AND MANUSCRIPTS**

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William P. Fessenden MSS, Library of Congress.
Hamilton Fish MSS, Library of Congress.
James A. Garfield MSS, Library of Congress.
Jesod R. Grant MSS, New York Historical Society.
Ulysses S. Grant MSS, Library of Congress.
Rutherford B. Hayes MSS, The Rutherford B. Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio.
Robert G. Ingersoll MSS, Library of Congress.
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Andrew Johnson MSS, Library of Congress.
George W. Julian MSS, Library of Congress.
John Sherman MSS, Library of Congress.
Thaddeus Stevens MSS, Library of Congress.
Charles Sumner MSS, Houghton Library, Harvard College.
Samuel J. Tilden MSS, New York Public Library, Main Branch.
Benjamin F. Wade MSS, Library of Congress.
Gideon Welles MSS, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Waitman T. Willey MSS, West Virginia University Library.
Carter G. Woodson Collection of Negro Papers, Library of Congress.

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