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Civil War Chicago: Eyewitness to History

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Civil War Chicago: Eyewitness to History

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“Compilations of primary sources are always a welcome addition to the Civil War bookshelf. These editors have dug deep and have provided a wealth of detailed accounts about the Civil War era in one of the most important cities in the United States. The introductory essays are informing and provide a good introduction to the primary text.” —*Blue & Gray*
The American Civil War was a crucial event in the development of Chicago as the metropolis of the heartland. Not only did Chicagoans play an important role in the politics of the conflict, encouraging emancipation and promoting a “hard war” policy against Southern civilians, but they supported the troops materially through production of military supplies and foodstuffs as well as morally and spiritually through patriotic publications and songs.

The Civil War transformed Chicago from a mere commercial center to an industrial power as well as the nation’s railroad hub and busiest port. The war also divided Chicago, however, between Lincoln supporters and Copperheads, whites and blacks, workers and owners, natives and newcomers. The city played a key role in elevating Abraham Lincoln to the Republican presidential nomination in 1860, yet only four years later a Chicago politician’ s influence was key in declaring the war a failure and promoting a platform of peace with the Confederacy.

Using seldom seen or newly uncovered sources, this book tells the story of the Civil War through the eyes of those who lived that history. Photographs thoughout the book effectively convey the geography of events in this pivotal period of Chicago’s history, and the editors have provided a useful driving guide to Civil War sites in and around the city.

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