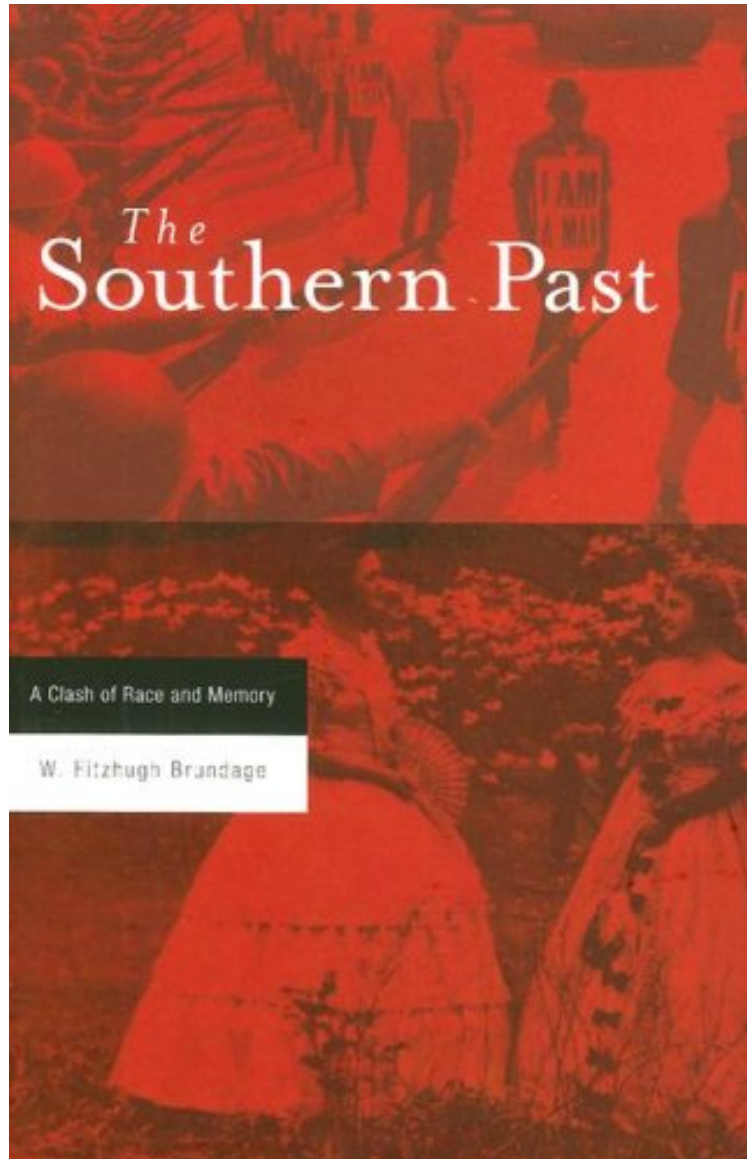


(Free read ebook) The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory

The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory

W. Fitzhugh Brundage

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Since the Civil War whites and blacks have struggled over the meanings and uses of the Southern past. Indeed, today's controversies over flying the Confederate flag, renaming schools and streets, and commemorating the Civil War and the civil rights movement are only the latest examples of this ongoing divisive contest over issues of regional identity and heritage. The Southern Past argues that these battles are ultimately about who has the power to determine what we remember of the past, and whether that remembrance will honor all Southerners or only select groups. For more than a century after the Civil War, elite white Southerners systematically refined a version of the past that sanctioned their racial privilege and power. In the process, they filled public spaces with museums and monuments that made their version of the past sacrosanct. Yet, even as segregation and racial discrimination worsened, blacks contested the white version of Southern history and demanded inclusion. Streets became sites for elaborate commemorations of emancipation and schools became centers for the study of black history. This counter-memory surged forth, and became a potent inspiration for the civil rights movement and the black struggle to share a common Southern past rather than a divided one. W. Fitzhugh Brundage's searing exploration of how those who have the political power to represent the past simultaneously shape the present and determine the future is a valuable lesson as we confront our national past to meet the challenge of current realities.

From BooklistFocusing on the social meaning of what southerners choose to remember and how, Brundage, a history professor, looks at "how representations of history have been used as instruments of power." He examines historical memory in the South from 1864 to the present, marking the movement from commemorating Confederate icons to civil-rights activism. Brundage explores the presumption that southern heritage is the exclusive property and perspective of whites, a presumption that has been resisted by blacks since slavery. Following developments since emancipation, Brundage compares the competing views on history and heritage of southern blacks and whites as they struggled to tell the story of the South. What developed was a kind of parallel perspective, with whites controlling public space with commemoration of a proud antebellum South and defeat in the Civil War and with blacks maintaining more private recollections of the horror of slavery and the redemption offered by freedom. Since the 1960s, these competing views have been more public and contentious, resulting in a profound change in the perspective on southern history in all its complexities. Vanessa BushCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Fitzhugh Brundage's *The Southern Past* is an extraordinarily ambitious and important book, a true achievement by an immensely talented historian. This book should reach a wide audience with its story of how the past has been shaped and reshaped in the South through usable narratives, commodities, curriculums, parades, books, sacred sites, vacant lots, real politics, and heroic icons on both sides of a tragic racial divide. In scope, research, and writerly execution, no one has ever captured the scars and the possibilities of Southern memory quite like this. (David W. Blight, author of *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*)History is a powerful weapon. In this stunningly imaginative and finely crafted study of the struggle for the control of the memory of the Southern past, W. Fitzhugh Brundage has provided a critical lens through which we can view some of the most volatile issues of our time. In stark detail, he explains how Southern white memories of gentility and the heroic Confederacy co-existed with, and were finally challenged by, Southern black memories of human bondage and heroic slave resistance. In a most sophisticated analysis Brundage explains how shifting political power has constructed and reconstructed the remembered history of a changing Southern cultural landscape. This is history at its best in service of our society's efforts to come to terms with notions of Southern heritage, one of the most complex, controversial, and significant issues of our time. (James Oliver Horton, co-author of *Slavery and the Making of America*)Brundage compares the competing views on history and heritage of southern blacks and whites as they struggled to tell the story of the South. What developed was a kind of parallel perspective, with whites controlling public space with commemoration of a proud antebellum South and defeat in the Civil War and with blacks maintaining more private recollections of the horror of slavery and the redemption offered by freedom. Since the 1960s, these competing views have been more public and contentious, resulting in a profound change in the perspective on southern history in all its complexities. (Vanessa Bush Booklist 2005-09-01)As *The Southern Past* painfully affirms, the definition of just who and what a Southerner is remains cloudy even today...Brundage's research attests to the enormous extent to which Southern whites reshaped antebellum history to suit their own, reshaped memories of the Old South. In the eyes of white hagiographers, blacks were little more than bit players on the larger stage of Southern history. Slavery became an incidental cause of the Civil War. (Terry Shulman *Richmond Times-Dispatch* 2005-10-23)[Brundage's] close analysis brilliantly reveals how Southerners defined themselves--and who did the defining...In perhaps his most rewarding section, Brundage shows how Southern whites built the scaffolding upon which their memories rested. Of particular importance was the creation of state-sponsored archives, the establishment of privately funded museums, the professionalization of the study of history, the growth of heritage tourism and the creation of a variety of historic sites

from roadside markers to plantation complexes. Again, white Southerners--acting from positions of power--saw the sites of their memories lovingly restored; black Southerners saw theirs demolished. But with the end of segregation, whites and blacks confronted one another on far more equal ground in battles over the placement of the Confederate battle flag and the singing of 'Dixie.' (Ira Berlin Washington Post Book World 2006-02-12) In this fascinating book, W. Fitzhugh Brundage chronicles the evolution of historical memories in the South between 1864 and the present... The Southern Past enriches our understanding of southern historical memory, shedding new light on how whites used their interpretation of the past to perpetuate political, economic, and social inequalities. Using a wide array of primary documents, Brundage has written a thought-provoking study that should prove useful and accessible to public and academic historians. (Bruce E. Stewart North Carolina Historical) Brundage has written a compelling and vital work of southern history that both synthesizes and moves the discussion of memory forward. All students of southern history will find it valuable. (W. Scott Poole Civil War Book) Even in such a vital and increasingly crowded field, The Southern Past stands out as a rare accomplishment... in his detailed account of the various interrelated responses to the "relevance of history" from the Civil War to the recent past, Brundage offers detailed guidance for new negotiations over and with history. In the process, he has told a story that represents scholarship at its most rigorous and hopeful best. (John Ernest CLIO) Historians of the U.S. South have long debated why and whether the region stands apart from the rest of the country. Differing from scholars who identify poverty or the legacy of Confederate defeat as the source of Southern distinctiveness, W. Fitzhugh Brundage persuasively argues that the South's central theme consists of the enduring presence of white memory in the South's public spaces and black resistance to it. By viewing Southern history through the lens of memory, Brundage demonstrates how Southern distinctiveness still matters... This important and lucidly written book will be required reading for all serious students of the U.S. South. (John W. Quist The Historian) Fitzhugh Brundage's The Southern Past is an extraordinarily ambitious and important book, a true achievement by an immensely talented historian. This book should reach a wide audience with its story of how the past has been shaped and reshaped in the South through usable narratives, commodities, curriculums, parades, books, sacred sites, vacant lots, real politics, and heroic icons on both sides of a tragic racial divide. In scope, research, and writerly execution, no one has ever captured the scars and the possibilities of Southern memory quite like this. (David W. Blight, author of Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory)