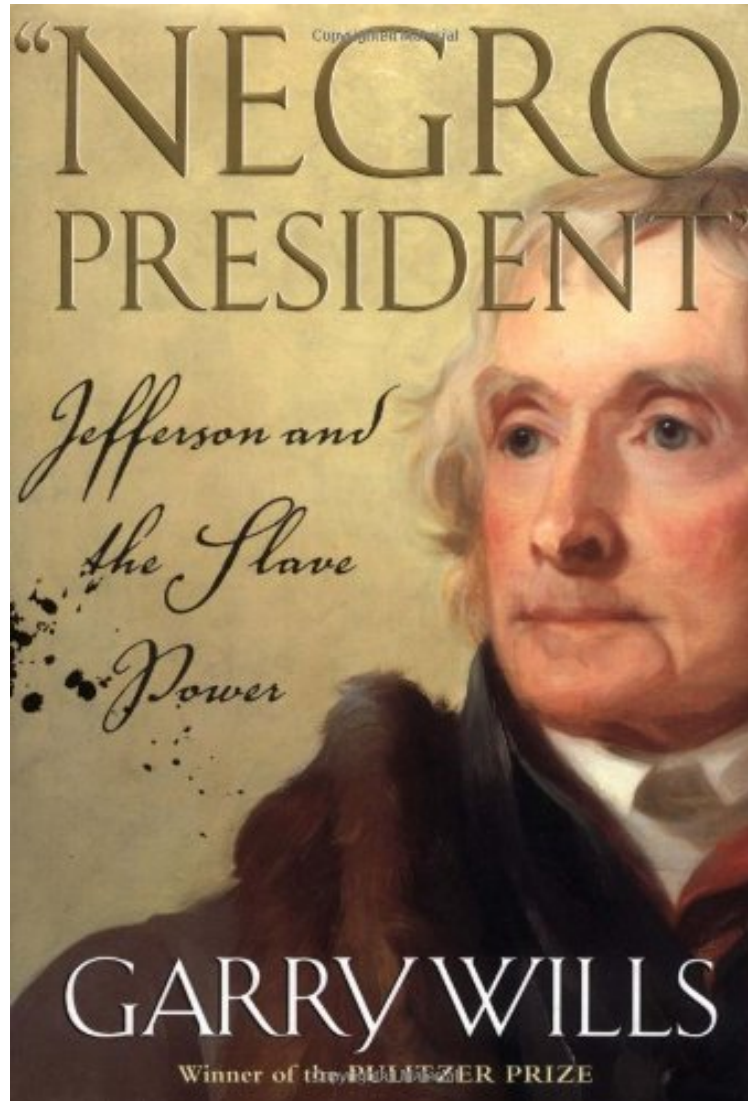


Negro President: Jefferson and the Slave Power

Garry Wills

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Garry Wills : Negro President: Jefferson and the Slave Power before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Negro President: Jefferson and the Slave Power:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Now I know why the capital is where it is. By Newton Ooi This very short book examines the relationship between President Thomas Jefferson, black slavery, and his political foes on the topic of slavery, namely Timothy Pickering from Massachusetts. Written both as a piece of history, and as a critique of other works on this same topic, this book flows quickly and smoothly as the text flows like dialogue with only a few references to break it up. Laid out in an almost chronological order, the book examines how slavery as manifested by

the 3/5 clause of the US Constitution, affected the growth and development of the US from its birth until the defeat of John Quincy Adams by Andrew Jackson. Heavy emphasis goes into showing the infighting, politicking and rivalries between individuals such as John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Jefferson, Washington, Madison, Benton, John Marshall, John Pickering, and Tim Pickering over slavery and tangential issues such as relations with England, the Louisiana Purchase, interstate trade and the concurrent developments in Haiti. Overall, a very interesting book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Negro President By Marc Negro President by Garry Wills is not an easy read but highly rewarding for those, similar to me whose education lacked the understanding of the ramifications of the U.S. Constitution's original 3/5 rule. Not to understand it is not to understand the primary cause of the Civil War and it should be understood by every American. An understanding of the slave power and its aftermath of Jim Crow and racism helps explain the roots of many of the political problems both historical and current. Wills book provides an interesting insight as to how and why the US established a Southern political power base. MSD0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great book if you want an text with deep By History guy A great book if you want an text with deep, but sometimes hash facts about American history. This book also shows that American politics has always been contentious, and that the north south divisions predate the constitution. The research and writing are quite good, so it's an engaging read as well.

In "Negro President," the best-selling historian Garry Wills explores a controversial and neglected aspect of Thomas Jefferson's presidency: it was achieved by virtue of slave "representation," and conducted to preserve that advantage. Wills goes far beyond the recent revisionist debate over Jefferson's own slaves and his relationship with Sally Heming to look at the political relationship between the president and slavery. Jefferson won the election of 1800 with Electoral College votes derived from the three-fifths representation of slaves, who could not vote but who were partially counted as citizens. That count was known as "the slave power" granted to southern states, and it made some Federalists call Jefferson the Negro President -- one elected only by the slave count's margin. Probing the heart of Jefferson's presidency, Wills reveals how the might of the slave states was a concern behind Jefferson's most important decisions and policies, including his strategy to expand the nation west. But the president met with resistance: Timothy Pickering, now largely forgotten, was elected to Congress to wage a fight against Jefferson and the institutions that supported him. Wills restores Pickering and his allies' dramatic struggle to our understanding of Jefferson and the creation of the new nation. In "Negro President," Wills offers a bold rethinking of one of American history's greatest icons.

.com Garry Wills' "Negro President": Jefferson and the Slave Power, despite its title, is not a profile of the Jefferson Presidency. Rather, the book offers a richly detailed study of the United States' tragic constitutional bargain with slavery, and meanders through the lives of several key figures in antebellum American history along the way. While Thomas Jefferson does play a significant role in Wills' book, the real heroes are the relatively unknown abolitionist Timothy Pickering and, to a lesser degree, John Quincy Adams. Pickering offered a consistent voice of opposition to Jefferson's often secret campaign against Federalist power. Though he could never match Jefferson's charismatic persona, Pickering succeeded in his battle to undo Jefferson's embargo of England--an embargo that Pickering recognized as Jefferson's attempt to undermine the economic prosperity and power of the North. Pickering's ill-fated attempt to secede from the Union, while misguided, would fuel the latter-day abolitionist John Quincy Adams to threaten a similar revolution as the Civil War loomed. Ultimately, "Negro President" is a book that recovers slavery as a context for understanding early American political life. At times Willis focuses too much on Jefferson, Pickering, or Adams, and the discussion is derailed by his fascination for the moral successes and failures of each personality. Nevertheless, the book addresses a long-neglected subject in American studies and will prove invaluable to readers interested in understanding America's early struggle to balance Northern versus slave-state power. --Patrick O'Kelley From Publishers Weekly While Pulitzer-winner Wills (Lincoln at Gettysburg, etc.) rarely writes a book without a distinctive take on its subject, in this shaggy work he's off his game. Originally a set of lectures, this book is only loosely stitched together. Its author is typically combative, but he doesn't stay on subject long, writing instead about what suddenly strikes him. Not that the work doesn't show Wills's characteristic keen intelligence. He bears down hard, for example, on the permeating consequences of the Constitution's three-fifths clause for pre-Civil War history and raises tough questions about conventional accounts of Jefferson's election in 1800 (which depended partly on the "slave vote") and the selection of a site for the capital in slave-holding country. But he never lingers long on what the book purports to be about Jefferson's determination to preserve slavery and the South's power in the U.S. nor does it add much to what we already know and think about Jefferson's agonizing, often hypocritical, struggle with race and slavery. Much of what Wills writes about the hold of slave power on the nation has been written before and more extensively by others. What's freshest is his effort to rehabilitate one of Jefferson's arch-opponents, Federalist Timothy Pickering, an attractive if flawed second-rank character of the early nation. Pickering hated slavery and helped lay the groundwork for later abolitionism. But Wills uses him tendentiously as a foil to Jefferson and never brings him fully to life. So what's the book about? About many fascinating issues surrounding the influence of slavery in the U.S. between

1790 and 1848. But don't look here for coherence and sustained history. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Bashing Thomas Jefferson threatens to become a national pastime. Many of the recent attacks on Jefferson, particularly those by Joseph Ellis, are unfair and mean spirited. However, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Wills is an unabashed admirer of Jefferson. So, his analyses of some of Jefferson's actions as secretary of state, president, and the "sage of Monticello" after his presidency cannot be easily dismissed. Wills begins with the premise that the "three-fifths compromise" at the Constitutional Convention ensured southern slave-state domination of the Federal government until the eve of the Civil War. With slave populations counted, southern states were granted "unfair" representation in the House of Representatives. They also had inflated power in the electoral college, which gave Jefferson victory in the extremely close election of 1800. Jefferson believed passionately in "agrarian virtues," and he feared the growing economic and political power of the northern states. Wills asserts that many of Jefferson's actions, including his hostility to the Haitian revolution and his opposition to the Missouri Compromise, were efforts to fight dilution of the political power of southern states. The result of his actions, of course, was to maintain the "slave power" of a relatively small number of plantation owners. Wills takes no joy in his criticism. Rather, he views Jefferson as well as many other southern politicians as trapped by an evil system they still felt obliged to defend. This is an important and disturbing book, which will undoubtedly intensify the ongoing controversy regarding Jefferson and slavery. Jay Freeman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved