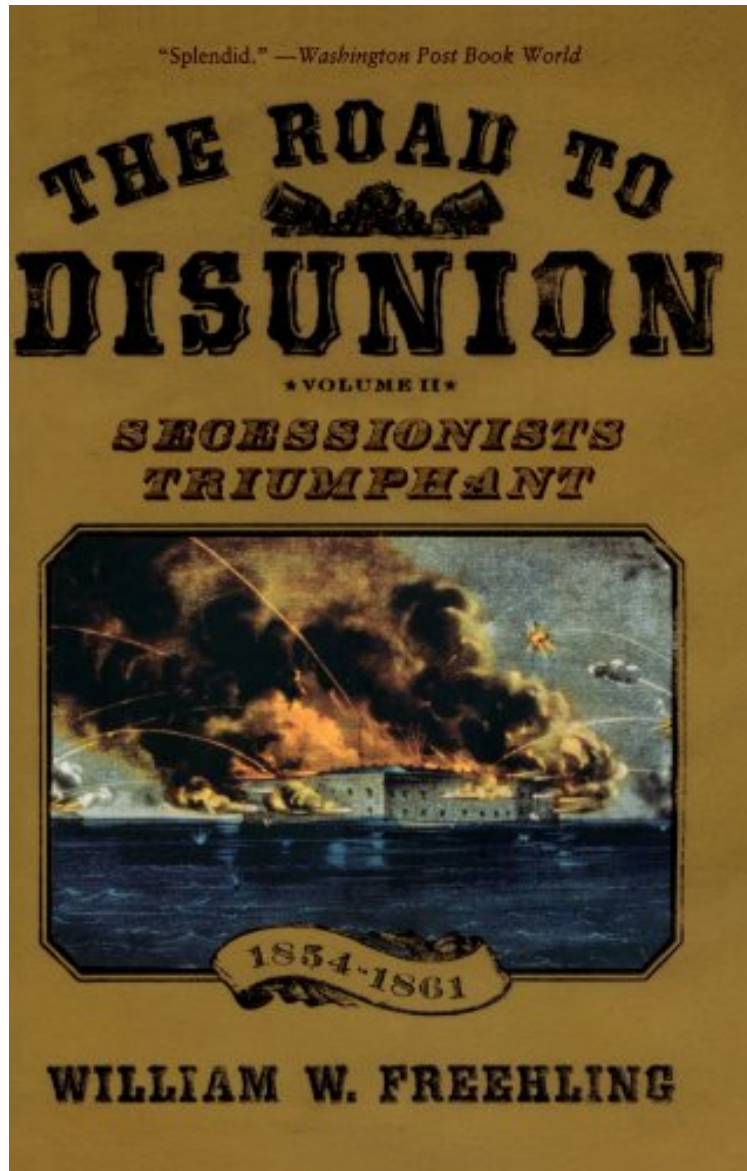


(Online library) The Road to Disunion: Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861

The Road to Disunion: Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861

William W. Freehling

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William W. Freehling : The Road to Disunion: Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Road to Disunion: Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellently Written, Stylistically WeakBy a NYC Guy"The Road to Disunion" is an excellent analysis of the immediate antebellum era. By focusing his attention upon the slave-holding states' political predicament the Civil War is clearly seen as a less the result of Northern aggression. Instead Freehling postulates that the gap between republican ideals and slavocracy's republican ideals proved too wide to forge. Eventually, the Southerners found themselves backed into a corner of their own making. As a result they felt that there were no choices left. Freehling's thesis is that the 1861-1865 Civil War had less to do with Northern Aggression and more to do with the intellectual (and sometimes real) civil war raging in slave-holding society during this time. Other structural weaknesses, such as the Constitution's bias towards slave owners and political capitulation by many Northerners are addressed in Freehling's other excellent book on the subject. Overall this is an excellent read that is only brought down by Freehling's annoying stylistic choices. As a few other reviewers have noted his stylistic choices don't jive well with the text and become somewhat distracting.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Scholarship - Read LearnBy David M. DoughertyThis book is not for everyone -- particularly not for those who want an entertaining story like what Shelby Foote turns out. Even worse is the pap fed to people from the likes of Ken Burns where it is thought that everything can be reduced to a sound bite. Well, it can't. I suppose that history can be made entertaining with a dumbed-down popular writing style, but the purpose of historical presentations and analysis like this one is to inform and provide analyses for consideration and discussion. On that basis this work should be given 10 stars. There are a number of points that author Freehling makes that will probably come as a surprise to readers who have not studied the run-up to the Civil War. First and foremost is that secession was not inevitable, although it certainly was likely. And the issue driving the sections apart was slavery. The clock was ticking against slavery, as the border states were seeing slavery disappear for various reasons (and they stayed in the Union), the Upper South was seeing a decline in slavery under an influx of northerners and immigrants who were either against slavery or competed against it, and only the cotton-belt states (the seven that initially seceded) contained sufficiently widespread political will to secede to retain slavery -- or more to the point, retain property rights and their investments in slaves. Even then, as the author points out at great length, the people in those states were hardly united. On the other hand, Southerners did not want to be told what to do, especially by Northerners. They had lost power on the national level (as depicted by the author), and politically they were being consigned to the dustbin. Whereas formerly they had been able to induce Northern Democrats to carry their political water, that was coming to an end. There was a very great fear of isolation, and the series of events that brought South Carolina to secede are extremely well covered by the author. Nonetheless, as the author points out, the pillars of secession were South Carolina and Mississippi, and without Alabama and particularly Georgia, their secessionist state was not viable. The story as to how these states muddled through and overcame "Cooperative" sentiment, reads like a not so comic comedy of errors and special circumstances. As always, people, minor events and circumstances make a very great impact. These people, events and circumstances are what this book is all about. I suppose one can argue about the author's stress on various people and events, and also his analyses. But that is after the fact -- without learning about these people and events, there can be no discussion or criticism. And there is a great deal to learn here. If one wishes to be entertained, watch sports on TV. If one wants to learn history, read Freehling. One way or another, slavery was going to come to an end in modern times, and except for slavery in the Muslim world that continues to the present day, in Christian countries it ended before the 20th century. The questions of why Southerners flocked to their armies and why they fought so well for so long is not addressed by this work. Read "Why They Fought" by McPherson. I have ancestors who fought on both sides -- on the Southern for their rights and because it was their duty; on the Northern because secession wasn't allowed and the Union had to be restored. None of their writings focused on slavery, but again, this was after secession was a reality, and anecdotal as well. This is a very fine work, chock full of information that is sure to excite and stimulate the historian and even the average person interested in the Civil War. It also contains the lesson that people do not go quietly in the night when they are marginalized. The Southern secessionists felt the Yankees were consigning them to ruin, and there was no percentage in going quietly. For many, secession was the only way to restore their honor. Today, this may seem misguided, but are the Tea Party people fighting against creeping (and not so creeping) socialism much different? The issues are different, but the stress on honor and private property are the same. As always there is much to learn from history that can be applied to the present day. Learn and apply. Highly recommended to all.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read for Civil War academics.By Donnie ShiflettFreeing provides a comprehensive, informative, and detailed analysis of the secession movement from the beginning of the country. A great supplement to another text or an actual text for anyone studying this period.

Here is history in the grand manner, a powerful narrative peopled with dozens of memorable portraits, telling this important story with skill and relish. Freehling highlights all the key moments on the road to war, including the violence in Bleeding Kansas, Preston Brooks's beating of Charles Sumner in the Senate chambers, the Dred Scott Decision, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, and much more. As Freehling shows, the election of Abraham Lincoln sparked a political crisis, but at first most Southerners took a cautious approach, willing to wait and see what Lincoln would do--especially, whether he would take any antagonistic measures against the South. But at this moment, the

extreme fringe in the South took charge, first in South Carolina and Mississippi, but then throughout the lower South, sounding the drum roll for secession. Indeed, *The Road to Disunion* is the first book to fully document how this decided minority of Southern hotspots took hold of the secessionist issue and, aided by a series of fortuitous events, drove the South out of the Union. Freehling provides compelling profiles of the leaders of this movement--many of them members of the South Carolina elite. Throughout the narrative, he evokes a world of fascinating characters and places as he captures the drama of one of America's most important--and least understood--stories. The long-awaited sequel to the award-winning *Secessionists at Bay*, which was hailed as "the most important history of the Old South ever published," this volume concludes a major contribution to our understanding of the Civil War. A compelling, vivid portrait of the final years of the antebellum South, *The Road to Disunion* will stand as an important history of its subject. "This sure-to-be-lasting work--studded with pen portraits and consistently astute in its appraisal of the subtle cultural and geographic variations in the region--adds crucial layers to scholarship on the origins of America's bloodiest conflict."--*The Atlantic Monthly*"Splendid, painstaking account...and so a work of history reaches into the past to illuminate the present. It is light we need, and we owe Freehling a debt for shedding it."--*Washington Post*"A masterful, dramatic, breathtakingly detailed narrative."--*The Baltimore Sun*

From Publishers WeeklyFreehling follows up his highly praised *Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* in this exhaustive, scholarly look at the collisions between the lofty American goals of freedom and democracy and the strong desire of Southern slave owners and their supporters to subvert those ideals by defending whites' enslavement of blacks. Beginning where the last volume left off, with the bloody aftermath of the pivotal 1854 passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the new work includes revealing analyses of the violence in "bleeding Kansas," the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision and John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, among many other incidents. A good deal of the book focuses on differences of opinion on secession throughout the South, and includes a sharp analysis of the generally underappreciated role of the pro-slavery, pro-secessionist "fire-eaters," such as William Lowndes Yancey and Preston Smith Brooks. Most, like Brooks, were South Carolinians. Like its predecessor, this volume is an important work that will appeal mainly to scholars and students of the Civil War. (Apr.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From BooklistAuthor of several histories about the politics of secession in the antebellum South, Freehling here follows their sinuous routes in the 1850s toward the final secession crisis of 1860-61. Concentrating on Southern politicians at the local more than at the national level, Freehling traces the evolution of opinion toward the extreme position of the so-called fire-eaters that secession was the solution to the South's grievances against the North. His emphasis results in detailed accounts of politics in particular areas, such as western Missouri, southern Maryland, New Orleans, and South Carolina. Though defending slavery was their common assumption, Southern politicians and propagandists reached in different directions for the means. Covering the activities and declamations of advocates for territorially expanding slavery, for enslaving free blacks, and for combating free-soilers and abolitionists as were already occurring in Missouri and Kansas, Freehling underscores the anger and fear felt by Southern spokesmen about Northern criticisms of slavery. Concluding with South Carolina's instigation of secession in 1860, Freehling underscores political complexities in the immediate prelude to the Civil War. Gilbert TaylorCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. "This book by one of the major names in southern history is an important study that anyone interested in the Civil War era must read and consider carefully....A major new interpretation of how this war came upon the country....Freehling makes it clear that he is in the business of providing analysis and retelling an epic."--Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *The North Carolina Historical "A hard-nosed and dramatic account of how the nation split in 1861."*--David Waldstreicher, *The Boston Globe*"*Secessionists Triumphant* is outstanding, history at its best, illuminating one of the most crucial moments in our national experience, and at the same time showing how sane men and women who thought they had their own best interests at heart, could willingly indeed for some gleefully race to their destruction."--William C. Davis, *History Book Club*"In richer detail than any previous study, William Freehling explains how a secessionist minority, even in the lower South before 1860, exploited sectional tensions to forge a majority for disunion. Fearful that slavery might erode and eventually crumble, they went on the offensive to force wavering moderates into the secessionist fold and then to provoke a showdown at Fort Sumter. Freehling makes clear that it was indeed a war of Southern aggression."--James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*"The adjective 'magisterial' has been badly overused and devalued of late, but if it properly describes anyone's work, it certainly does Freehling's. The completion of this project is a genuinely monumental achievement."--Bruce Levine, *Civil War Book*"William Freehling's long-awaited second volume of *The Road to Disunion* is a brilliant and indispensable reinterpretation of the causes of the Civil War. With much original insight, Freehling skillfully fuses impersonal economic and political forces with the crucial contingencies that help to explain what can still be seen as the central event in American history."--David Brion Davis, author of *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*