

Repairing the Union

This month marks the 150th anniversary of the end of the American Civil War which began on April 12, 1861 at the Battle of Fort Sumter and ended shortly after General Lee surrendered to Grant on April 9, 1865. Over 600,000 Union and Confederate soldiers died, making the Civil War the bloodiest military conflict ever fought on US soil. In honor of this important anniversary in American History, let's explore some of the Civil War political cartoons we've found while working on the Historic Images, New Technologies (HINT) project [1].

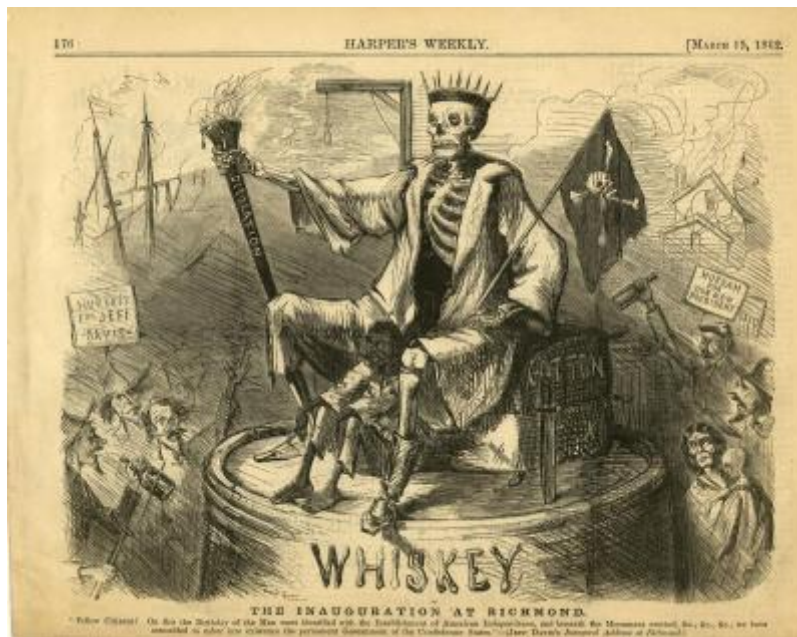
In the cartoon below, President Lincoln and Vice President Andrew Johnson are hard at work repairing the Union. Johnson uses a needle and thread to stitch the country back together while Lincoln uses a split rail to reposition the globe.



[2]

The Rail Splitter at Work Repairing the Union, 1865, Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection (#3133) [3]

Some of my favorite Civil War political cartoons poke fun at Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. In the cartoon below, Jefferson, the newly inaugurated President of the Confederacy, is depicted as a power hungry King reigning atop a whiskey and cotton throne. He holds a staff of desolation, a skull and crossbones flag, and sits with a slave at his feet. Jefferson's inauguration took place on February 18, 1861, four days before the anniversary of George Washington's Birthday.



[4]

The Inauguration at Richmond, 1862, Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection (#3133) [3]

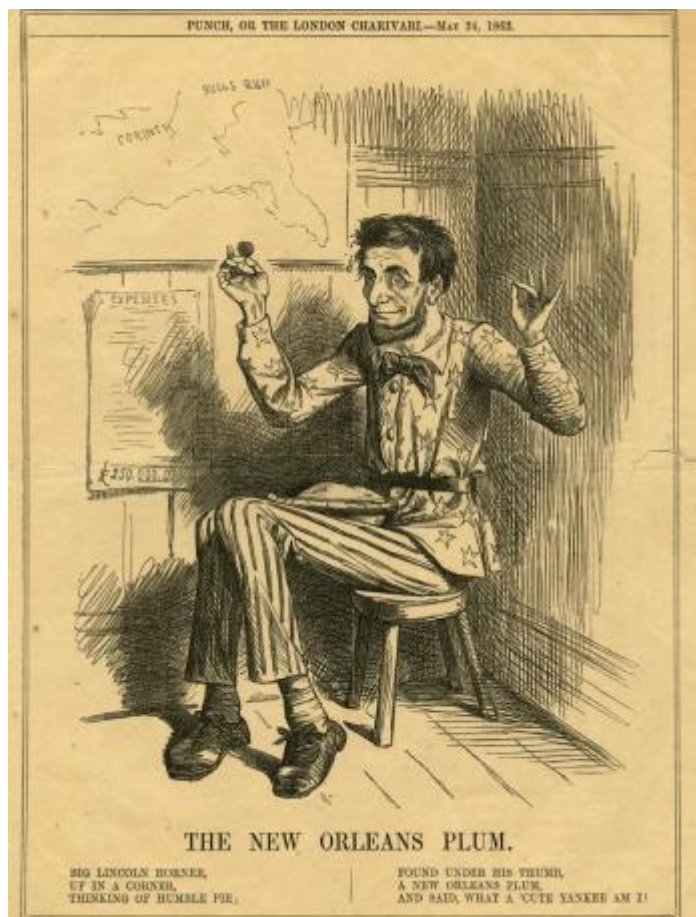
In a similar vein, the artist of the following 1864 *Punch* cartoon portrays Lincoln as a phoenix, reborn from the ashes of the US Constitution, free press, state rights, habeas corpus, and commerce. The cartoon accuses Lincoln of abandoning the principles of democracy and was published shortly after his 1864 re-election.



[5]

The Federal Phoenix, 1864, Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection (#3133) [3]

In May 1862 Union forces won a major victory by capturing the port city of New Orleans. The political cartoon below depicts Lincoln celebrating this victory and pokes fun at him by turning him into Little Jack Horner. In the original British nursery rhyme, Jack Horner pulls a plum from his “Christmas pie.” In the political cartoon, Lincoln pulls a “New Orleans plum” from his “humble pie.”



[6]

The New Orleans Plum, 1862, Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection (#3133) [3]

In the “Black Draft” Lincoln and Davis force two slaves to drink from “Conscription” mugs. However, the message of the *Punch* cartoon below is quite inaccurate because there was never a Black draft. At the end of the War, in March 1865, the Confederate Congress passed legislation which would allow slaves to enlist in the military, but only with the permission of their owners. Furthermore, all 180,000 men of color who enlisted in the Union Army were volunteers, and approximately 40,000 of them lost their lives during the War. They were paid less than their white counterparts and if captured by Confederate forces, could be sold into slavery or executed. One of the most infamous of these cases occurred at Fort Pillow in Tennessee in April 1864 when Confederate forces massacred a garrison of African American Union soldiers after they had surrendered. Furthermore, women of color volunteered as Union nurses and scouts. The most well-known of these volunteers was Harriet Tubman who served as a Union spy.



[7]

The Black Draft, 1864, *Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection* (#3133) [3]

... And finally, my favorite of all the HINT Civil War political cartoons is this creepy cartoon published in the June 7, 1862 edition of *Harper's Weekly* I particularly love the head wreath! Which one is your favorite?



[8]

Some Specimens of Secesh Industry, 1862, *Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection* (#3133) [3]

We hope you've enjoyed exploring our Civil War political cartoons. Be sure to check out the rest of our newly digitized cartoons when the exhibit becomes available later this year.

Links

- [1] <http://hsp.org/history-online/historic-images-new-technologies>
- [2] <http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/idno/12331>
- [3] <http://discover.hsp.org/Record/hsp.ead.at01-3133>
- [4] <http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/idno/11418>
- [5] <http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/idno/13046>
- [6] <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/11510>
- [7] <http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/idno/13044>
- [8] <http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/idno/11419>