

Slavery and Secession in Arkansas: A Documentary History (The Civil War in the West)

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The absorbing documents collected in *Slavery and Secession in Arkansas* trace Arkansas's tortuous road to secession and war. Drawn from contemporary pamphlets, broadsides, legislative debates, public addresses, newspapers, and private correspondence, these accounts show the intricate twists and turns of the political drama in Arkansas between early 1859 and the summer of 1861. From an early warning of what Republican political dominance would mean for the South, through the initial rejection of secession, to Arkansas's final abandonment of the Union, readers, even while knowing the eventual outcome, will find the journey both suspenseful and informative.

Revealing both the unique features of the secession story in Arkansas and the issues that Arkansas shared with much of the rest of the South, this collection illustrates how Arkansans debated their place in the nation and, specifically, how the defense of slavery—as both an assurance of continued economic progress and a means of social control—remained central to the decision to leave the Union and fight alongside much of the South for four bloody years of civil war.

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Editorial Review

Review

"With renewed public interest in the causes of Southern secession, this illuminating book will certainly find an audience among those interested in an honest accounting of the past, and in letting long-departed voices speak as to their own motivations.

Highly recommended. Undergraduates through faculty/researchers; professionals/practitioners; general readers."

—*Choice*

"Every student of Arkansas history — and anyone interested in sectional conflict and the Civil War more generally — will welcome *Slavery and Secession in Arkansas: A Documentary History*… This superb anthology doesn't cherry-pick but instead offers readers the entire tree, with generous excerpts of speeches, debates, newspaper commentary, and private correspondence bearing on Arkansas's decision to secede. The collection begins with a speech Rep. Thomas Hindman delivered in Little Rock in February 1859 and ends with a Searcy County delegate's account of the secession convention taking the state our of the union on May 6, 1861. All sides are heard from as Arkansas debates, hesitates, and then takes the plunge. It will shock few readers of this journal that slavery—and not something more abstract or less momentous—was at the center of the discussion. But many might be surprised to find Arkansas secessionists adamantly opposing states' rights. What seemed to concern a lot of them was defending their federally guaranteed right to the return of fugitive slaves against 'nullification' by northern states' personal liberty laws. The volume's source material is accompanied by an introduction, commentary, and expert annotations by Gigantino…"

—*Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Summer 2016

About the Author

James J. Gigantino teaches in the history department at the University of Arkansas.

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