

**NEW VIEWPOINTS  
IN AMERICAN  
HISTORY**

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New Viewpoints in American History by Arthur Meier Schlesinger

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# NEW VIEWPOINTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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*A comprehension of the United States of to-day, an understanding of the rise and progress of the forces which have made it what it is, demands that we should rework our history from the new points of view afforded by the present.*

FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER:  
Presidential Address

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O. S. S.  
K. B. S.  
B. S.  
H. N. S.

**In Memoriam**

## FOREWORD

Most adult Americans of today gained their knowledge of American history before the present generation of historians had made perceptible progress in their epoch-making work of reconstructing the story of our past in the light of their new studies and investigations. Signs of a renaissance of American historical writing began to be evident as early as the decade of the eighties of the last century. The new interest in historical and social phenomena was shown, for instance, in the founding of the American Historical Association, the American Economic Association, the American Statistical Association and the American Academy of Political and Social Science during that decade, followed shortly after by the formation of the American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Society and the American Society of International Law. American history, which had formerly been envisaged as a record of arid political and constitutional development, began to be enriched by the new conceptions and fresh points of view afforded by the scientific study of economics, sociology and politics. Influences from abroad also played their part, particularly the notable work of John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People* (1874), with its revisions and enlargements. Quickened by these new impulses, historians began to view the past of America with broadened vision and to attain the power of seeing familiar facts in new relationships.

The change did not take place overnight. Historical students in the nineties made important contributions toward

the new history; but it was not until the opening years of the present century that the real transformation occurred. All historical study and writing since then have been strongly colored by the new interests, viewpoints and sympathies.

Unfortunately, the product of the new school of American historians has, in very large part, been buried in the files of historical society journals, in the learned publications of the universities and in monographs privately printed at the expense of the authors. The new history was being written by historians for historians rather than for laymen; and the public generally has remained oblivious of the great revolution in our knowledge of American history wrought by the research specialists. Even the school textbooks have not until a comparatively recent time been affected by the discoveries of the specialists; and too often the newer type of textbook has suffered at the hands of teachers who, though familiar with the new facts and emphases as set forth in the textbook, have no acquaintance with the general point of view which gives to these new facts their tremendous significance.

The object of the present work is to bring together and summarize, in non-technical language, some of the results of the researches of the present era of historical study and to show their importance to a proper understanding of American history. It seems unnecessary to say that the interest aroused by the World War in Americanization work makes it important that all citizens of the republic should learn what the historians have to say about the past of their country: Americanization must begin at home. History teachers in the public schools may also find in this volume a short cut to a rather extensive literature inaccessible to most of them. It is the further hope of the author that graduate students venturing forth into the field of American history for the first time may find this volume useful in suggesting