

# Columbia College and the Civil War: The Impact of the Civil War on Columbia's Administration, Finances, and Affiliates

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New York in 1863 was an eventful place. The Draft Riots had shaken the city and its politics. The Civil War was raging, and anxieties were at an all-time high, as the war was going on longer than many had expected. Richard McCulloh, a professor of Physics at Columbia College, originally from Maryland, surely felt these anxieties. McCulloh had been a professor for many years at Columbia. But, on September 25th, 1863, he defected to the Confederacy to join arms with those who he grew up with.[1] Defection among Southerners who lived in the North was not uncommon, but this decision surprised many at Columbia. A letter only a page long sent to Columbia's Board of Trustees outlined his decision to leave and join the Confederacy. McCulloh then joined the Confederacy's war effort, developing chemical weapons for the army. Professor McCulloh's defection to the Confederacy is part of a larger story of turmoil, anxiety, material and immaterial impact, and of race and emancipation. This larger story is that of Columbia College and the Civil War.

There are no simple answers to the many historical questions that can be posed about Columbia College and the Civil War, but McCulloh's story is a representation of the chaos that the Civil War caused throughout both the Union and Confederacy. The

Columbia College Board of Trustees swiftly acted on the notice that he resigned, and Columbia affiliates, like George Templeton Strong, commented on his departure. Their comments reveal what they thought of fleeing to the Confederacy and the anxieties that they had about the Civil War. Ironically, McCulloh was the only Columbia faculty member to leave his position for the Civil War. Even Francis Lieber, the man that Columbia celebrates for his contributions to the Civil War, stayed on as a faculty member.[2] It is unsurprising that there is less fanfare about McCulloh's participation in the war because he actively worked for the side that supported slavery. But it is essential to examine McCulloh's departure, because it can illustrate the atmosphere and feelings that were present at Columbia during the Civil War. McCulloh's story also grounds analysis of the College's status during the Civil War, showing that abstract feelings associated with the Civil War had a real impact on communities and lives. The fact that McCulloh was the only professor to leave the faculty because of the Civil War also shows how inescapable the questions of slavery and racism were, as well as the racist sentiments and support for slavery that existed across the Union and Confederacy.

Columbia College's experience during the Civil War was unique to its situation. The Civil War had a massive impact on the state of many colleges across the Union and Confederacy. Enrollments dropped, finances became tight, and the campuses themselves could be co-opted for the war effort. These changes were not only at the frontlines of the war, but were also felt in colleges that were even further north than Columbia. But Columbia College was in a unique position during the Civil War. It did not experience the same drop in enrollment that other colleges did, nor did it experience any financial hardship because of the war. But to say that the Civil War had no impact on Columbia would be untrue. The impact that the Civil War had on Columbia can be characterized as one that did not significantly materially affect the school, although it could have very easily done so, as seen by the New York City Draft Riots in 1863. But, the Civil War had a significant impact on the anxieties and perspectives of Columbia affiliates and trustees. Although anxieties and perspectives may seem to be fairly abstract terms of analysis, it is important to understand that the change in anxieties and perspectives due to the Civil War did have a direct impact on individuals affiliated with

Columbia College. Richard McCulloh is a perfect example of this change. There are several other examples. George Templeton Strong, a Columbia alumnus, is also an example of this change, as seen through his extensive journal that he continued to write throughout the Civil War. The change is also evidenced by the Columbia College Board of Trustees meeting minutes and personal correspondence between faculty members and trustees. Through using these documents from the period, it is clear that the Civil War did have a significant impact on Columbia College, but it was manifested in quite a different way when compared to other colleges during the Civil War.

To fully understand the Civil War's impact on Columbia College, it is essential to contextualize its place geographically and temporally in higher education, New York City, and the College's history. Three secondary sources play the role of contextualizing Columbia. Edward Span's 2002 book, *Gotham at War: New York City 1860-1865*, contextualizes Columbia's place in New York. . For contextualization in the wider field of higher education, Michael David Cohen's 2012 book, *Reconstructing the Campus: Higher Education and the American Civil War*, is especially helpful. Finally, Robert McCaughey's 2003 book, *Stand, Columbia* is essential in understanding the Civil War and Columbia's history. These three books allow the primary sources used throughout this research project to hold more significance because they position Columbia's experience in the larger United States, highlighting that Columbia was not completely insulated from the massive shifts going on around it.

There are several important primary research components engaged in this project to fully contextualize and understand how the Civil War affected Columbia College and its affiliates. The first component is understanding Columbia's place in New York City through the examination of correspondences. It is also important to look at the events that Columbia held shortly after the Civil War started, for example, a flag-raising ceremony held at Columbia in 1861. Financial reports during the year-end Trustees meetings help to understand how the Civil War did not have a large material impact on Columbia. One of the most important efforts at Columbia during the Civil War was to introduce military instruction. These efforts help to understand the anxieties that the Civil War produced and whether or not Columbia was unique in its proposals of military

instruction. The story of and reactions to Richard McCulloh's defection is essential in understanding how the Civil War impacted individuals related to Columbia. George Templeton Strong's diary, like McCulloh's story, also represents the ways that the Civil War impacted the Columbia Affiliates. Strong's diary also shows how the Civil War shifted opinions about emancipation and the institution of slavery. The people that Columbia awarded degrees to also shows Columbia's position in higher education at the time, and what its aims were, namely its effort to cement its status as an elite institution. These components together contextualize Columbia's place during the Civil War, while also illuminating the Civil War's effects on Columbia College, students, faculty, and alumni.

Columbia's relationship with New York City at the time was one of elitist distance. It was in the city but did not take part in the overall life of the city. It is also important to note Columbia's positionality in higher education at the time. Unlike other elite universities, it was a non-resident college. A non-resident college is a school that does not provide housing for any students. Instead, they have to commute to school or find their own housing around Columbia. Consequently, there were very few students who went to Columbia outside New York and even less so from the South.[3] The fact that Columbia was a non-resident college is important in understanding why they were impacted by the Civil War in a particular way. For example, it can be used to understand why Columbia did not adopt military instruction like many other schools.[4] Robert McCaughey's book, *Stand, Columbia*, discusses the number of students who participated in the Civil War: "Columbia College alumni casualties...number fewer than a dozen, none of whom was from any of the five wartime classes, which in all likelihood failed to produce fifty enlistments...At Harvard, with an enrollment of 2,400 students in 1861...500 volunteered for service..."[5] Columbia College had a comparatively very low enrollment rate of students in the Civil War, highlighting the fact that Columbia was a non-resident college made up of local residents and the distance Columbia, and its students had to the war.[6] Some Harvard students were from the South, and others were from North-South border states.[7] Columbia, however, was made up of students from New York.

Although very few students did participate directly in the Civil War, there was engagement with the war on a very real level from the time it started. To see this engagement, we can look to the evidence presented in Stand, Columbia, and to the words and actions of the President of Columbia from 1849 to 1864, Charles King.[8] Eleven days after the start of the Civil War on April 23rd in 1861, King held a flag-raising ceremony in honor of Major Robert Anderson.[9] The flag-raising ceremony highlights that although the Civil War did not have as much of an impact on Columbia as it did on other universities, its President and many students, at the very least, supported the Union. King explicitly supported the Union and emancipation efforts in his personal life. In 1864, King gave a speech to black soldiers who were being deployed for the war. In this speech, he explicitly describes the soldiers as having the same status as other New Yorkers and becoming “emancipated.”[10] Through examining the efforts of Charles King, it becomes clear that the Civil War did have an immediate impact on Columbia Affiliates and Administrators. It instilled a sense of patriotism in these individuals and underlined their abolitionist views.

An examination of the financial reports of Columbia reveals the slight material impact that the Civil War had on Columbia College during the Civil War. During the year-end Columbia College Board of Trustees meetings, the year-end financial values of the property of Columbia College are stated. In 1861, the estimated value of this property was 1,650,665.94 US Dollars.[11] A year later, in 1862, his value had decreased by forty thousand dollars to 1,610,898.74 US Dollars.[12] The value of this property dropped significantly in 1863, with it being estimated at 1,545,381.80 US Dollars.[13] However, in 1864, the value of this property significantly increased and was valued at 1,737,581.80.[14] This number did not notably change in 1865, with it being valued at 1,725,381.60.[15] By looking at the trend of property value holdings of Columbia College, it becomes clear that the Civil War did somewhat affect their holdings due to the larger economic impact of the Civil War. The significant increase seen in 1864 is most likely due to a combination of real estate value recovery and the establishment of the School of the Mines.[16]

By comparing Columbia's financial reports with larger trends of higher education during the time, it becomes clear that Columbia was not as economically affected by the Civil War when compared to other colleges. By using Michael David Cohen's book, *Reconstructing the Campus: Higher Education and the American Civil War*, it becomes possible to compare Columbia to other higher education institutions of the time. An extreme example is the University of Missouri's experience during the Civil War.[17] The university's enrollment took a sharp dive, and Union soldiers occupied the campus from 1861-62.[18] During this occupation, everything from buildings to equipment and books were damaged.[19] The damage of the occupation was compounded by the lack of tax money that Missouri had allotted for the university.[20] Columbia, in comparison to the University of Missouri, experienced the Civil War with relatively no mortal wounds. The property values of Columbia were not significantly harmed, and enrollment never dipped like other colleges. Also, it did not depend on state money, and because of its location, it was not occupied during the Civil War.[21] While Columbia comparatively did not face as much financial impact, there were still complaints about the economic damage that the Civil War caused. The increase in costs of commodities and rent across New York City throughout the war angered Columbia College faculty in 1864, complaining that "their real income had reduced by ten percent." [22] The complaint of faculty reveals that there was, in fact, some, albeit comparatively minor, impact on the finances of Columbia College and its affiliates.

Although Columbia largely escaped the financial impact of the Civil War, the anxieties of the war could not be evaded. One of the ways that these anxieties manifested was through the establishment of military instruction by faculty and students. The effort to establish military instruction started less than a month after the start of the Civil War, as seen in the Columbia College Board of Trustees meeting minutes of May 6th, 1861. In this meeting, a petition was presented to establish "an armory and drill-room, with a competent Drill-Master, for the purpose of forming a voluntary military organization to be permanently attached to the college." [23] This petition was denied, but this was not the last time that the establishment of military instruction would be proposed at Columbia College.

Less than a year later, on March 3rd, 1862, a similar request was made to the Board of Trustees. The March 3rd request, however, was much more detailed because it requested “a military drill and manual of arms, together with the practice and theory of military engineering...[and] actual camp life for at least a few weeks in the year.”[24] This plan, instead of developing a connected but not integral military instruction, would integrate military training into the core of Columbia College teaching. Although this was a more detailed request, it was strongly criticized by the Board of Trustees on the basis of three points. The three points of criticism were time, congruity with existing educational programs, and military science.[25] For the point of time, it was stated that there needed to be “at least two years residence in a regular military academy to learn the skills of the military.”[26] It was also argued that there was a severe incongruity between military instruction and arts and sciences education because they were inherently at odds.[27] Finally, the science that underpins military instruction was already taught at Columbia.[28] But, it was noted that the physical education aspect of military instruction was a positive element and would allow students to be “ready and anxious for their country’s call.”[29] Because of this positive element, it was suggested that a gymnasium be built to teach the “noble sciences of defense,” and a committee was created to explore the feasibility of building the gymnasium.[30] A month later, in April 1862, the committee found that the gymnasium would be too hard to build due to two factors.[31] The first factor was that the land that would be used would be subject to taxes.[32] The second factor was because Columbia was a non-residential college, the gymnasium would not be used as much as it was at a place like Harvard or Yale.[33]

The proposed introduction of military instruction at Columbia College and the responses to it highlight that the Columbia College community was actively thinking about the Civil War. The war accentuated anxieties regarding military preparedness. On the part of students, they quickly signed and presented a petition about creating a military unit in connection with Columbia. The first petition shows that students deeply felt these anxieties and wanted to be prepared for war and to create a sphere of protection around Columbia in the form of a military unit. The second effort to introduce military instruction is quite interesting because it explicitly reveals what the Board of Trustees thought of military training in higher education. The trustees were skeptical of the place of military

instruction at an Arts and Sciences college, and although they were eager to assure that Columbia students would be in shape for military service, they did not want to take away from their studies.[34] Although the second effort ultimately failed, it again highlights that the Columbia Board of Trustees was impacted by the Civil War through the creation of anxieties regarding war, military preparedness, and the function of Columbia College. By looking at these two efforts to introduce military instruction, it becomes clear that the Civil War did have a significant impact on how Columbia affiliates thought of Columbia College, war, and the responsibility of higher education in preparing young people for war.

These anxieties about military preparedness were not unique to Columbia and were part of a larger trend in higher education, as demonstrated by Michael David Cohen's research. In the chapter, "The Curriculum: Teaching the Arts of Peace and War," in his book, *Reconstructing the Campus: Higher Education and the American Civil War*, Cohen argues that there was a widespread expansion of military instruction in Higher Education due to anxieties regarding military preparedness.[35] Not only was the expansion of military instruction due to this anxiety, but it was also a result of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862.[36] He writes, "Of course a war...persuaded many that military preparation was important and perhaps might have shortened the conflict. The Morrill Act codified that belief and offered colleges a financial incentive to act on it." [37] The expansion of military instruction was rooted in the anxieties about military preparedness, and could be fully realized through the establishment of The Morrill Act. From Cohen's description of military instruction, it becomes clear that the two pushes to introduce military instruction at Columbia were not unique, and instead were a part of a larger trend in higher education. The effort to establish a gymnasium at Columbia is also a reflection of Columbia's place in this broader higher education trend. Michael David Cohen notes, "Colleges and Congress partnered to develop an intelligent and physically capable male citizenry who would...when necessary, defend its interests on the battlefield." [38] This same urge to physically train students was present at Columbia and was manifested through the proposal to build a gymnasium, but of course, as discussed, this effort failed at Columbia during the Civil War.



Returning to Richard McCulloh, whose departure from Columbia was discussed at the beginning of this essay, it is clear that in the wider context, there are few individuals who were part of the Columbia community whose lives were so deeply changed by the Civil War. He left Columbia to join the Confederacy, but McCulloh's letter to the Columbia Board of Trustees sent from Richmond, Virginia, on September 25th, 1863, was surprisingly cordial: "Permit me to thank you for all the generosity & consideration you have for nine years extended to me...I shall ever cherish the kindest remembrances of the Trustees, Faculty & students of Columbia College, & wish it prosperity & usefulness."<sup>[39]</sup> When thinking about a Professor defecting to the Confederacy and leaving his post, it is hard to think that he would be cordial about his exit. However, McCulloh was cordial and sent his best wishes to Columbia, highlighting that he did not necessarily think that Columbia was representative of the Union. Instead, Columbia was the place where McCulloh had worked for many years and likely had fostered friendships with administrators, faculty, and students. It is also interesting to note McCulloh's reasoning for leaving Columbia and defecting to the Confederacy: "It should excite no surprise that one, born and reared a Southerner, refers to cast his lot with that of the South."<sup>[40]</sup> Rather than presenting a starkly ideological statement, McCulloh simply says that because he was raised in the South, he is going to fight for the Confederacy. McCulloh's letter reveals that his decision to go to the South was not because of any hatred for Columbia. Instead, it was due to his allegiance to the South as his birthplace. It also likely could have been due to the length of the Civil War. The Civil War did not have an end in sight and was dragging on longer than people expected in 1863. The war's length could instill anxiety into individuals, and propel people like McCulloh to join the war effort.

The defection of McCulloh was not taken lightly by the Columbia College Board of Trustees, thereby showing the optics of their choices, and their view of the Civil War. At the meeting in which McCulloh's defection was discussed, the Columbia College Board of Trustees immediately responded by making the resolution to release this news to area newspapers of the time. In the same Columbia College Board of Trustees meeting of October 14th, 1863, a few interesting points were made about McCulloh.

"RESOLVED that the said Richard S. McCulloh be, and he is hereby expelled from the

Professorship aforesaid of Mechanics and Physics... RESOLVED that a copy of the foregoing proceedings in this case be published in the daily papers in this City..."[41] This is a particularly interesting response to McCulloh's departure, because the Board of Trustees seem to be trying to do some semblance of damage control. The Board of Trustees labeled him as expelled, rather than leaving of his own accord. They also chose to publish this news in the daily newspapers, which highlights the fact that they wanted to get ahead of any public news of McCulloh's defection. Publishing this news and labeling him as expelled reveal that the Columbia College Board of Trustees wanted to distance themselves from McCulloh and disavow his actions. Columbia's Board of Trustees also highlights how they thought of Columbia. Due to Columbia's location, it was a Unionist college. The positioning of Columbia as a Unionist college is reinforced by the Columbia Board of Trustees saying that Richard McCulloh had allied himself "to those now in rebellion against the Government of the United States." [42] This is not surprising because of Columbia's geographical location in the North. However, it is important to make a distinction between Columbia's disavowal of the Confederacy versus a criticism of slavery.

Although McCulloh does not explicitly talk about emancipation, slavery, or race in his letter, it is essential to discuss McCulloh's decision in this context. Not only did his direct support for the Confederacy show his support of slavery, but his actions during the 1863 Draft Riots also reveal his racism. On October 6th, 1863, John Torrey, a Columbia trustee, sent a letter to Hamilton Fish, who was at the time the former New York governor and senator, and a Columbia alumnus.[43] In this letter, a revelatory fact is revealed. Just two months earlier, on July 14th, 1863, McCulloh, according to Torrey, "took sides with the rioters." [44] McCulloh's siding with the rioters is a startling fact, that when put alongside his joining the Confederacy, reveals that his decision to leave was not entirely spur of the moment. Instead, his anger with the Union had grown, at the very least, over the course of months. The letter also highlights how McCulloh was racist because although the Draft Riots started out in opposition to the draft, it soon became a mob of white rioters targeting black New Yorkers.[45] Rioters were angered that they were fighting to free enslaved people, the primary objective of the Civil War that became clear in 1863.[46] Due to the nature of the Draft Riots, McCulloh's act of

supporting the rioters signified his racism and was a precursor to his leaving Columbia for the Confederacy. McCulloh agreed with the rioters, and most likely did not want to stay on the side that aimed to emancipate enslaved people.[47] After defecting to the Confederacy, Richard McCulloh worked with the Confederate Nitrate and Mining Bureau while also directly participating in the Confederate war effort.[48] McCulloh's participation went as far as devising a bomb plot and being authorized by the Confederate Secretary of War, James Seddon, to carry out this bomb plot throughout Northern territories.[49] McCulloh's direct involvement in the war effort reveals a nexus of beliefs about the South, race, slavery, and emancipation in his story. Since the Civil War was explicitly about emancipation, McCulloh's late support of the Confederacy underlines his support of both Southern racism and slavery.

The reaction to McCulloh's resignation can be seen through a few of the newspapers that publicized the event shortly after it occurred. The news of McCulloh's defection traveled quite far, including to the place to which he intended to defect. The Alexandria Gazette in Alexandria, Virginia, published a short description of this event on the 19th of October in 1863.[50] "The board of trustees of Columbia College, New York, have expelled Richard S. McCulloh...[he] has gone to Richmond and attached himself to the Confederacy." [51] What is interesting about this note is that it places the responsibility on Columbia College, because instead of him resigning, the news item states that it is the administration that "expelled" him.[52] The choice of words in this article does follow what Columbia's administrators wanted, because they immediately chose to expel him, to try and highlight their complete disapproval of his leaving and joining the Confederacy. Two other newspapers that reported on McCulloh's defection were the Times Union in Brooklyn, New York, and the Buffalo Morning Express in Buffalo, New York. The Times Union took a different approach than the Alexandria Gazette and reported on October 9th, 1863, that Professor McCulloh had "resigned his post" to go to the Confederacy.[53] The Buffalo Morning Express, on October 12th, 1863, quoted the Times Post and stated that McCulloh had resigned and that it was not a surprise that he wanted to leave "an atmosphere thoroughly loyal as that of Columbia College." [54] There is a particularly interesting divergence between the two New York newspapers and the Virginia newspaper. While the New York newspapers state that professor

McCulloh resigned, the Virginia newspaper says he was expelled. This difference could be due to the fact that the New York newspapers were published earlier and, therefore, were less influenced by Columbia's public statement. Nevertheless, these three news articles show that McCulloh's defection was newsworthy and that the news traveled quite far, including to Virginia, where McCulloh intended to go.

The end of McCulloh's story is quite interesting. During the trial of Lincoln's assassins, a document came to light that detailed the Confederate Secretary of War authorizing McCulloh's bomb plot.[55] After this document came to light, Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, put out a warrant for McCulloh's arrest.[56] He was then captured and imprisoned on May 29th, 1865. However, a year later, on March 25th, 1866, General A.H. Terry, who led the Department of Virginia, freed McCulloh.[57] After being freed, he taught at what is now Washington and Lee University, after being hired by the University President and Confederate General, Robert E. Lee.[58] McCulloh finally moved to Louisiana State University in 1877, and died on September 15th, 1894.[59] McCulloh's life after Columbia was one of extreme support for the Confederacy, as evidenced by his bomb plot at the tail end of the Civil War. This support for the Confederacy was most likely noticed by Robert E. Lee, and was a likely factor in McCulloh's hiring at Washington and Lee University. McCulloh never returned to a New York institution and instead, stayed in the South for the rest of his career. McCulloh's fairly successful life after the Civil War highlights how the United States tried to foster some semblance of a nation after a war that had killed countless Unionists and Confederates. Confederates and slave owners were not prosecuted. Instead, many, like McCulloh and Lee, were able to have a long-lasting career in academia even with their explicit support of slavery and racism.

Richard McCulloh was not the only Columbia affiliate through whom the impact of the Civil War can be seen. George Templeton Strong, a Columbia alumnus, created an expansive diary over the course of his life, including during the Civil War. Strong's diary reveals the personal impacts of the Civil war, as well as thoughts on slavery, the war, and emancipation. During the Civil War, Strong directly discusses slavery and emancipation. In his diary entry for July 25th, 1863, Strong comments on the institution

of slavery: “It is amazing the amount of detriment done to our moral sense by the slavery system that has been legally and constitutionally forced upon us for so many years.”[60] Here, Strong makes strongly condemns slavery and connects it to the degradation of morality in the United States. This moment highlights that the Civil War did have a direct impact on Columbia affiliates like Strong, especially when it became clear that the Civil War was about emancipation. However, Strong did not always have such a strong moral criticism of slavery, as seen in his diary entry of March 4th, 1861: “We Northerners object to slavery on grounds of political economy, not on ethics...”[61] Only a month before the official start of the Civil War, Strong had a different opinion of the institution of slavery. Although he did criticize it, he explicitly stated that it is not on ethical grounds. His opinion changed as the Civil War raged on, and he started to lodge criticisms of slavery based on moral and ethical grounds.[62] The change in Strong’s criticisms of slavery highlights how the Civil War impacted people’s opinions of the South, emancipation, and the institution of slavery. Throughout his diary, Strong reveals his disdain for the South and the Confederacy. Strong’s hatred of the Confederacy is evidenced when he writes about Abraham Lincoln’s assassination: “I have been expecting this...But the ferocious malignity of Southerners is infinite and inexhaustible.”[63] This quotation highlights Strong’s dislike of Southerners and the evilness of the Confederacy. Rather than painting them in a rehabilitative image, Strong presents a scathing characterization of Southerners using the word, malignant.

Strong even commented on Richard McCulloh’s defection to the Confederacy, again highlighting how it became a major source of news within the Columbia community. On October 12th, 1863, Strong wrote about the news that Richard McCulloh had resigned and left for the South, “He has gone over to the dragons’ and we are well rid of him...What a pity this sneak did not desert six months sooner...”[64] Strong offers a decidedly harsh but warranted judgment on McCulloh. This characterization of McCulloh, at this moment, demonstrates that people like Strong did not see McCulloh’s resignation as amicable. Instead, it was seen as desertion and defection. McCulloh’s resignation embarrassed Columbia. This embarrassment is evidenced by Strong making fun of McCulloh. While Strong’s diary shows his thoughts on McCulloh, this

moment also reinforces Strong's support of the Union and his hatred of the Confederacy, noting that they are "dragons."<sup>[65]</sup>

Looking at the long-durée of Columbia's history, Columbia College is, and was, in the business of trying to maintain and expand its political, economic, and social power. This can be seen through a few different points of evidence, including who was awarded honorary degrees. One of the most significant awards of an honorary degree was to Abraham Lincoln shortly after the beginning of the Civil War in July, 1861.<sup>[66]</sup> While this may signify Columbia's endorsement of emancipation and what the Civil War meant, a degree that was awarded just a few years later shows otherwise. On July 11th, 1865, Columbia awarded Andrew Johnson an honorary LL.D degree.<sup>[67]</sup> Andrew Johnson was known as a racist president who largely limited the freedoms and advancement of recently freed black people in the American South.<sup>[68]</sup> Columbia awarding Johnson a degree signifies that the very act of awarding a degree does not necessarily mean an endorsement of the individual's ideas or even actions. Instead, the contradictory nature of awarding Lincoln and then Johnson degrees in a short amount of time reveal a different role of honorary degrees. Honorary degrees signify power. By awarding degrees to Presidents, Columbia seems to have been trying to cement their position as an elite institution of higher education, where even a standing President of the United States would be honored to accept a degree.

However, it is important to note that there was a change of Columbia Presidents between the awarding of these two degrees, from Charles King to Frederick A.P. Barnard. Charles King was heavily involved in supporting the Union war effort and emancipation. On the other hand, Barnard was a slave-owner who had previously taught in the South.<sup>[69]</sup> Although this change of leadership could be used to explain the contradiction that arises when examining these two honorary degrees, this is not the only answer. A President's decisions are not insular. Instead the Columbia Board of Trustees had a large amount of power and would have had to have a majority approval vote to award a degree.<sup>[70]</sup> Therefore, the Columbia Board of Trustees, to some extent, did not see a problem with awarding a degree to Andrew Johnson. This dynamic supports the point that Columbia was simply trying to assert its place among elite higher

education institutions, while also being part of the overall attempt to unify the nation after the Civil War. .

Looking through the documents of the Columbia administration during the Civil War, it becomes easy to downplay the importance of racism and slavery in connection to Columbia. Although discussions about race and slavery are not immediately present in the Columbia College Board of Trustees meetings during the Civil War, it is important to understand that these topics were inescapable during the period. To illuminate how the Civil War impacted Columbia community, through the lenses of the questions of perspectives on emancipation and slavery, it is necessary to use a variety of sources. It is especially important to look at the private correspondence of individuals like Hamilton Fish and George Templeton Strong, because through these correspondences, it becomes apparent that these topics were always present.

The Civil War had direct effects on these and other Columbia affiliates. Richard McCulloh chose to leave the North and work for the Confederacy until the very end of the war. His life highlights how the war changed the course of individual lives. George Templeton Strong's opinions on slavery were directly changed by the Civil War, causing him to change his mind about the morality of slavery. However, the war had a much less pronounced effect on the school itself. Although the school did have a flag-raising ceremony, the financial standing of the school was not devastated by the war. This is not to say that they were completely unscathed. Instead, the property value of Columbia decreased during the early years of the Civil War, and faculty complained about the relative decrease of their wages when faced with a high inflation rate.[71] Columbia continued to expand during the Civil War and never fully felt the effects when compared to other higher education institutions. Another point of comparison is the enrollment numbers of Columbia, which were unaffected by the war, compared to other schools that had massive decreases in enrollment. The school was also affected by the Civil War through the production of anxieties regarding military preparedness, anxieties that propelled proposals to introduce military instruction at Columbia. These different factors reveal that the Civil War did have a substantial impact on Columbia students, faculty, and administrators to a point where it changed many of their lives and ideologies.

## Endnotes

- [1] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, October 14th, 1863, Volume 10. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 797.
- [2] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, December 21st, 1863, Volume 10. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 810-820.
- [3] Robert McCaughey, Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University, New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 105.
- [4] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, March 3rd, 1862, Volume 10. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 689.
- [5] Robert McCaughey, Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University, New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 141.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] Ibid., 141-142.
- [8] Ibid., 93.
- [9] Ibid., 142.
- [10] George Templeton Strong. Diary of George Templeton Strong: Part 3, Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas eds., New York, New York: Macmillan, 1952, 411.
- [11] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, December 1861, Volume 10. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, December 1861, 673.



[12] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, December 8th, 1862, Volume 10. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 729-731.

[13] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, December 21st, 1863, Volume 10. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 820.

[14] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, December 19th, 1864, Volume 11. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 74.

[15] Columbia College Trustees Meeting Minutes, December 18th, 1865, Volume 11. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-2019, Columbia University Archives, New York: New York, 202.

[16] Robert McCaughey, Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University, New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, 153.

[17] Michael David Cohen, Reconstructing the Campus : Higher Education and the American Civil War. Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2012, 85.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Robert McCaughey, Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University, 140.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 690.

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- [51] Ibid.
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- [53] *Times Union*, "General News Summary" October 9th, 1863, New York, New York 2.
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