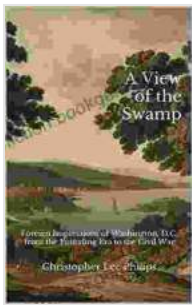


Foreign Impressions of Washington From the Founding Era to the Civil War

Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, has long fascinated and intrigued visitors from around the world. From its humble beginnings as a planned city in the early 19th century, Washington has undergone a remarkable transformation, becoming a bustling metropolis and a global center of diplomacy and politics.



A View of the Swamp: Foreign Impressions of Washington, D.C. from the Founding Era to the Civil War

by Christopher Lee Philips

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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Throughout its history, Washington has been visited by countless foreign travelers, each with their own unique perspective on the city. These visitors have left behind a wealth of written accounts and observations, providing us with valuable insights into the city's changing landscape, its social and cultural character, and its role in American history.

In this article, we will explore some of the most notable foreign impressions of Washington from the founding era to the Civil War. We will examine the ways in which the city was perceived by visitors from different countries and backgrounds, and how these perceptions evolved over time.

The Founding Era (1790-1815)

The early years of Washington were marked by a sense of excitement and optimism. The city was a symbol of the new nation's independence and a showcase for its architectural and cultural aspirations.

One of the most famous foreign visitors to Washington during this period was the French writer and diplomat François-Jean de Chastellux. In his book *Travels in North America* (1787), Chastellux described Washington as a "magnificent city" with "wide and straight streets" and "handsome buildings." However, he also noted that the city was still under construction and that many of the buildings were unfinished.

Another notable visitor during this period was the British writer and traveler William Strickland. In his book *Observations on the United States* (1800), Strickland praised Washington's "beautiful situation" and its "elegant and spacious streets." However, he also criticized the city's lack of commerce and industry.

The Antebellum Era (1815-1861)

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, Washington underwent significant growth and development. The city's population increased rapidly, and new buildings and public works projects were constructed.

During this period, Washington became a popular destination for foreign tourists. Many of these visitors were impressed by the city's architectural grandeur and its bustling social scene.

One of the most famous foreign visitors to Washington during the antebellum era was the British writer Charles Dickens. In his book *American Notes* (1842), Dickens described Washington as a "magnificent city" with "splendid public buildings" and "a vast and beautiful park." However, he also criticized the city's "unpaved streets" and its "dirty and ill-kept houses."

Another notable visitor during this period was the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville. In his book *Democracy in America* (1840), de Tocqueville described Washington as a "handsome city" with "spacious avenues" and "imposing public buildings." However, he also criticized the city's "lack of character" and its "excessive uniformity."

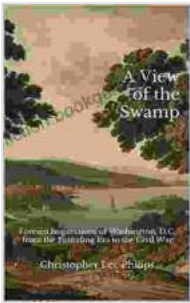
The Civil War Era (1861-1865)

The Civil War had a profound impact on Washington. The city became the center of military and political activity, and its population swelled as thousands of troops and government officials descended upon the city.

During this period, Washington was visited by a number of foreign journalists and diplomats. These visitors provided firsthand accounts of the war and its impact on the city.

One of the most famous foreign visitors to Washington during the Civil War was the British journalist William Howard Russell. In his book *My Diary*

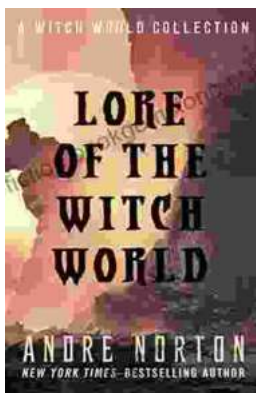
North and South (1863), Russell described Washington as a "great city" with "broad avenues" and "magnificent buildings"



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