

**Volume 3**

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**The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson - III**

**Lead: A single vote saved Andrew Johnson from disgrace.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In 1865 President Johnson wanted to quickly ease the South back into the national mainstream, but his stubbornness and irascible disposition complicated his ability in facing an array of opponents, the most formidable of which were the Radical Republicans. Led by Benjamin Wade and Charles Sumner in the Senate and Thaddeus Stevens in the House, the**

**radicals were determined to treat the South as if it were conquered territory. In addition, they wished to force full citizenship for blacks on a South filled with whites who up to then considered African Americans to be hardly human beings, much less persons worthy of civil rights. Also, the radicals knew that Southerners, many of whom had advocated secession and brought about the war, would probably help elect a Democratic majority in Congress, which would defeat the radical program.**

**For two years the radicals and the President were at loggerheads, neither seemed able to prevail. Then, strengthened by the 1866 congressional elections, the radicals**

**passed, over the President's veto, tough Reconstruction Acts and the Tenure of Office law which forbade the President to remove civil officers without the Senate's consent. Later repealed and declared unconstitutional, the Tenure of Office Act was designed to prevent the President from removing radical allies from the executive branch.**

**That summer Johnson defied Congress and fired Secretary of War, Edwin McMasters Stanton, thus setting the stage for his impeachment. On February 24, 1868 the House overwhelmingly voted 11 articles of impeachment for "high crimes and misdemeanors." The case was weak however, and after a Senate trial in**

**May, seven non-radical Republicans voted with Johnson's supporters. The tally was a single vote short of the required two-thirds majority. Johnson was saved, but politically he was damaged goods. The radicals then controlled Congress and inflicted another decade of reconstruction on the deep South, extending the bitterness of the war for many generations to come.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

**Benedict, Michael Les. *The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson*. New York, NY: Norton and Company, 1973.**

**Kennedy, John F. *Profiles in Courage*. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1964.**

**Riddleberger, Patrick W. *1866: The Critical Year Revisited*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1979.**

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