

INTRODUCTION

THE THIRD VOLUME OF *The Booker T. Washington Papers* traces Washington's career from the end of May 1889 until September 18, 1895, when Washington delivered what is often called the Atlanta Compromise address at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. The volume reveals Washington's gradual rise to prominence as an educator, race leader, and shrewd political broker. All of the characteristics of Washington's racial leadership after 1895 are foreshadowed in his years of relative obscurity before 1895.

Much of the volume relates to Washington's role as principal of Tuskegee Institute. In building his institution, he was also building a powerful base of operations for his growing influence with white philanthropists in the North. At the same time, Washington furthered his involvement with white southern politicians and community leaders in the interest of his school. He also inaugurated the Tuskegee Negro Conferences to extend his influence with black citizens of Macon County and other Black Belt counties of Alabama. Washington found outlet for his protean energy in overseeing all aspects of his school.

This volume also shows Washington's development as a racial spokesman. The Atlanta Compromise address influenced American race relations for decades. Yet the policies of gradualism, economic striving, and accommodation to existing social and political conditions that launched Washington into national prominence were present much earlier as thoughts in Washington's mind. For better or probably worse in American race relations, in 1895 Washington's accommodationism was an idea whose time had come. Whether it anticipated or arose out of conditions is a fine point. The great Reconstruction leader and civil rights advocate Frederick Douglass was dead. Washington, the Negro