

INTRODUCTION

THE FOURTH VOLUME OF *The Booker T. Washington Papers* begins with the aftermath of the Atlanta Exposition address on September 18, 1895, which thrust Washington into public prominence as the black spokesman whom whites were willing to listen to. It ends in December 1898, when President William McKinley's visit to Tuskegee symbolized Washington's growing fame and public acceptance.

The Atlanta address was followed by a flood of comment that made clear that Washington's compromise formula struck a responsive chord in the national mood. Northern and southern whites united in their endorsement, many of them in the belief that he had conceded to white supremacy more than he had. Blacks, on the other hand, in many cases believed that he had conceded more than he should. Washington gained the support, however, of a surprising number of black spokesmen who would later be more critical.

Washington's reputation as an orator soared dramatically as a result of the publicity, and while he continued to speak to small audiences in behalf of Tuskegee Institute, he also took to the general lecture circuit. All over the country he spoke to overflow audiences of both races, using a conversational tone, conventional ideas, and humor, amusing his listeners with Negro, chicken, and mule stories that often offended other blacks. Among his oratorical triumphs were his speech on receiving an honorary master's degree at Harvard in 1896, the dedication of the Robert Gould Shaw monument in Boston in 1897, and the Peace Jubilee in Chicago in 1898, at the end of the Spanish-American War. The speech at the Peace Jubilee was an effort to go beyond the Atlanta address formula for race relations by calling on the South to bury racial and sectional prejudice in the trenches of San Juan Hill,