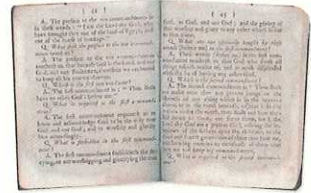


16



RECONSTRUCTION 1865-1877



WHY DID Southerners remember the Civil War as a Lost Cause?



WHAT WERE African-American aspirations in 1865?



HOW DID Presidential Reconstruction differ from Congressional Reconstruction?

WHAT ROLE did the Ku Klux Klan play in Counter-Reconstruction?



WHAT WERE the effects of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 and the Compromise of 1877?

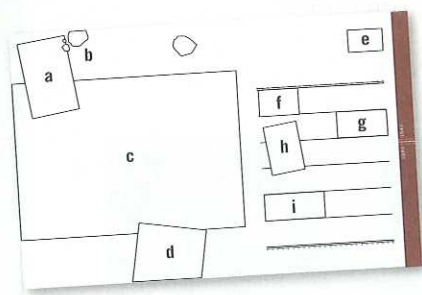
WHY AND HOW did Reconstruction end, and what were its failed promises?

1865
1871
1877



IMAGE KEY

for pages 414–415



- a. A young African American boy with new clothes and a book provided by the Freedman Bureau.
- b. Rocks and stones like those used to hurl at former slaves.
- c. Noon at the primary school for Freedmen at Vicksburg, Mississippi: colored engraving, 1866.
- d. Two members of the Ku Klux Klan holding guns and wearing hoods and long robes, pictured in Harper's Weekly.
- e. Pages from the New England Primers; primers such as this one were used to educate former slaves.
- f. A dead Confederate soldier lies prostrate beneath his rifle in an earthen trench on the battlefield at Petersburg, Virginia during the Civil War, April 3, 1865.
- g. Freedmen (freed black slaves) vote in 1867.
- h. Three white men decry the Reconstruction Acts of Congress as "usurpations and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void" while clapping hands above the fallen body of a black man.
- i. African American worshippers during a tumultuous church service on New Years Eve. Sketch by Joseph Becker.

Marianna, Florida 1866

The white academy opened about the same time the church opened the school for the Negro children. As the colored children had to pass the academy to reach the church it was easy for the white children to annoy them with taunts and jeers. The war passed from words to stones which the white children began to hurl at the colored. Several colored children were hurt and, as they had not resented the rock-throwing in kind because they were timid about going that far, the white children became more aggressive and abusive.

One morning the colored children armed themselves with stones and determined to fight their way past the academy to their school. [They] approached the academy in formation whereas in the past they had been going in pairs or small groups. When they reached hailing distance, a half dozen white boys rushed out and hurled their missiles. Instead of scampering away, the colored children not only stood their ground and hurled their missiles but maintained a solemn silence. The white children, seeing there was no backing down as they expected, came rushing out of the academy and charged the colored children.

During some fifteen minutes it was a real tug of war. In the close fighting the colored children got the advantage gradually and began to shove the white children back. As they pressed the advantage the white children broke away and ran for the academy. The colored fighters did not follow them but made it hot for the laggards until they also took to their heels. There were many bruises on both sides, but it taught the white youngsters to leave the colored ones alone thereafter.

—T. Thomas Fortune,
Norfolk Journal and Guide

T. Thomas Fortune, "Norfolk Journal and Guide," August 20, 1927, reprinted in Dorothy Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen: Black People Tell the Story of Reconstruction* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1976): 22–24.

T. THOMAS FORTUNE, a New York newspaper editor, recalled this battle between black and white schoolchildren sixty years earlier, at the beginning of the Reconstruction era. In the scheme of things, it did not amount to much. However, for ten-year-old Thomas, born a slave in Marianna, the incident encapsulated the dilemma of Reconstruction. In the journey from slavery to freedom, education was an important element of full citizenship for African Americans. The eagerness with which black children (and adults) flooded schools was matched by the hostility of the white community who resented any pretense of equality that education implied.

Reconstruction was not merely a series of white aggressions against African-American aspirations, followed by black retreats. The violence and disorder that punctuated Southern society after the Civil War was due in part to the refusal of black people to relinquish their dreams of equal citizenship, including the right to a decent education.



Young Thomas did not back down, though by 1878 he felt that the journey from slavery to freedom would always be incomplete in the South. Together with his young bride, Carrie Smiley of Jacksonville, Florida, Thomas left for New York City, where he obtained a job as a printer for the *New York Sun*. He died there in 1928. New York's gain was the South's loss, a process repeated many times over after the Civil War as talented young black men and women left the region of their birth and their ancestors. It was a double tragedy for the South: losing people who could have rebuilt a shattered region, and missing the opportunity to create a society based on racial equality.

The position of African Americans in American society and how to reform the Former Confederate states were the two great issues of the Reconstruction era. Americans disagreed about both of them. The formation of a national consensus on freedom and reunification began with the demands and hopes of three broad groups: the Republican party, the more than 4 million former slaves, and white Southerners.

Between 1865 and 1867, under President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction plan, white Southerners pretty much had their way with the former slaves and with their own state governments. Congressional action between 1867 and 1870 attempted to balance black rights and home rule, with mixed results. After 1870, white Southerners regained control, denying black Southerners their political gains while Republicans in Washington lost interest in policing their former enemies.

WHITE SOUTHERNERS AND THE GHOSTS OF THE CONFEDERACY, 1865

Confederate soldiers—generals and troops alike—returned to devastated homes they could scarcely recognize. Their cause lost and their society reviled, white Southerners lived through the summer and fall of 1865 surrounded by ghosts—the ghosts of lost loved ones, joyful times, bountiful harvests, self-assurance, and slavery. Defeat shook the basic tenets of their religious beliefs. But many other white Southerners refused to accept their defeat as a divine judgment. Instead, they insisted, God had spared the South for a greater purpose. Robert E. Lee became the patron saint of this cause, his poignant nobility a contrast to the crassness of the Yankee warlords. Some white Southerners would not allow the memory of the bloody struggle to die, transforming it into the **Lost Cause**, a symbol of courage against great odds. The Old South was transformed into a stainless civilization, worth fighting and dying for, and the Civil War became not a savage conflict, but a romantic and chivalrous contest.

Fifteen years after the war, Mark Twain traveled the length of the East Coast. After visiting a gentlemen's club in Boston, he recalled that the conversation had covered a variety of topics, none of which included the Civil War. Northerners had relegated that conflict to history books and moved on. In the South, on the other hand, defeat and destruction demanded rationalization and remembrance.

Most white Southerners approached the great issues of freedom and reunification with unyielding views. They saw African Americans as adversaries whose attempts at self-improvement were a direct challenge to white people's beliefs in their own racial superiority. They also saw outside assistance to black Southerners as another invasion.

WHY DID Southerners

remember the Civil War as a Lost Cause?

Lost Cause The phrase many white Southerners applied to their Civil War defeat. They viewed the war as a noble cause but only a temporary setback in the South's ultimate vindication.



MORE THAN FREEDOM: AFRICAN-AMERICAN ASPIRATIONS IN 1865

WHAT WERE African
American aspirations in 1865?

If black people could have peered into the minds of white Southerners, they would have been stunned. The former slaves did not initially even dream of social equality; far less did they plot the kind of vengeful murder and mayhem white people feared. They did harbor two potentially contradictory aspirations. The first was to be left alone, free of white supervision. The second was land, voting and civil rights, and education. To secure these, they needed the intervention and support of the white power structure.

The first step Congress took beyond emancipation was to establish the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in March 1865. Congress envisioned the **Freedmen's Bureau**, as it came to be called, as a multipurpose agency to provide social, educational, and economic services, advice, and protection to former slaves and destitute whites. The Bureau marked the federal government's first foray into social welfare legislation. Congress also authorized the bureau to rent confiscated and abandoned farmland to freedmen in 40-acre plots with an option to buy. This auspicious beginning to realizing African-American aspirations belied the great disappointments that lay ahead.



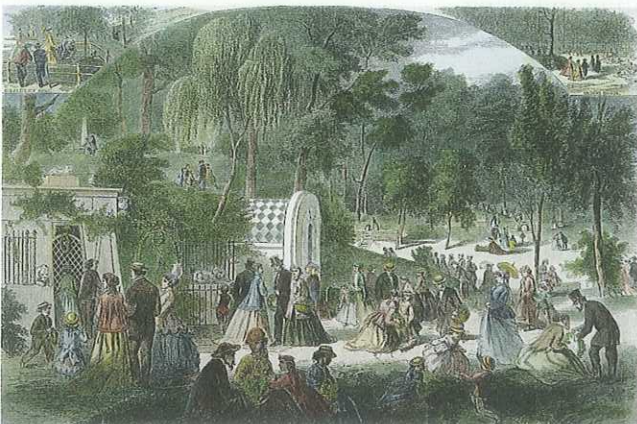
WHERE TO LEARN MORE

★ Penn Center Historic District,
St. Helena Island, South Carolina
www.penncenter.com

Freedmen's Bureau Agency established by Congress in March 1865 to provide social, educational, and economic services, advice, and protection to former slaves and destitute whites; lasted seven years.

The engraving shows Southerners decorating the graves of rebel soldiers at Hollywood Memorial Cemetery in Virginia, 1867. Northerners and Southerners alike honored their war dead. But in the South, the practice of commemorating fallen soldiers became an important element in maintaining the myth of the Lost Cause that colored white Southerners' view of the war.

The Granger Collection, New York



EDUCATION

The greatest success of the Freedmen's Bureau was in education. The bureau coordinated more than fifty northern philanthropic and religious groups, which in turn established three thousand freedmen's schools in the South serving 150,000 men, women, and children.

Initially, single young women from the Northeast comprised much of the teaching force. One of them, a 26-year-old Quaker named Martha Schofield, came to Aiken, South Carolina, from rural Pennsylvania in 1865. The school she founded has been part of Aiken's public school system since 1953.

By the time Schofield opened her own school in 1871, black teachers outnumbered white teachers in the "colored" schools. Support for them came from black churches, especially the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The former slaves crowded into basements, shacks, and churches to attend school. At the end of the Civil War, only about 10 percent of black Southerners were literate, compared with more than 70 percent of the white Southerners. Within a decade, the freedmen's schools had reduced illiteracy among the former slaves to below 70 percent.

Some black Southerners went on to one of the thirteen colleges established by the American Missionary Association and black and white churches. Between 1860 and 1880 more than one thousand black Southerners earned college degrees at institutions still serving students today such as Howard University in Washington, D.C., Fisk University in Nashville, and Biddle Institute (now Johnson C. Smith University) in Charlotte.

Pursuing freedom of the mind involved challenges beyond those of learning to read and write. Many white Southerners condemned efforts at "Negro improvement." They viewed the time spent on education as wasted, forcing the former slaves to catch their lessons in bits and pieces between work, often by candlelight or on Sundays. After the Freedmen's Bureau folded in 1872, education for black Southerners became more haphazard.

“FORTY ACRES AND A MULE”

Although education was important to the freed slaves in their quest for civic equality, land ownership offered them the promise of economic independence.

Even before the war's end, rumors circulated through black communities in the South that the government would provide each black family with 40 acres and a mule. These rumors were fueled by General William T. Sherman's **Field Order No. 15** in January 1865, which set aside a vast swath of abandoned land along the South Atlantic coast from the Charleston area to northern Florida for grants of up to 40 acres. The Freedmen's Bureau likewise raised expectations when it was initially authorized to rent 40-acre plots of confiscated or abandoned land to freedmen.

By June 1865, about forty thousand former slaves had settled on “Sherman land” along the southeastern coast. In 1866, Congress passed the **Southern Homestead Act**, giving black people preferential access to public lands in five southern states. By the late 1870s, more than fourteen thousand African-American families had taken advantage of a program to finance land purchases with state-funded, long-term, low-interest loans.

Land ownership did not ensure financial success. Most black-owned farms were small and on marginal land. Black farmers also had trouble obtaining credit to purchase or expand their holdings. A lifetime of field work left some freedmen without the managerial skills to operate a farm.

The vast majority of former slaves, especially those in the Lower South, never fulfilled their dreams of land ownership. Rumors to the contrary, the federal government never intended to implement a land redistribution program in the South. General Sherman viewed his field order as a temporary measure to support freedmen for the remainder of the war. President Andrew Johnson nullified the order in September 1865, returning confiscated lands to their former owners. Even Republican supporters of black land ownership questioned the constitutionality of seizing privately owned real estate. They envisioned former slaves assuming the status of free laborers, not necessarily of independent landowners.

For most officials of the Freedmen's Bureau, who shared these views, reviving the southern economy was a higher priority than helping former slaves acquire farms. They wanted both to get the crop in the field and start the South on the road to a free labor system. They thus encouraged freedmen to work for their former masters under contract and postpone their quest for land.

At first, agents of the Freedmen's Bureau supervised labor contracts between former slaves and masters. But after 1867, bureau surveillance declined. Agents assumed that both black laborers and white landowners had become accustomed to the mutual obligations of contracts. The bureau, however, underestimated the power of white landowners to coerce favorable terms or to ignore those they did not like.

MIGRATION TO CITIES

While some black Southerners asserted their rights as workers on southern farms, others affirmed their freedom by moving to towns and cities. Even before the war, the city had offered slaves and free black people a measure of freedom unknown in the rural South. After the war, African Americans moved to cities to find families, seek work, escape the tedium and supervision of farm life, or simply test their right to move about. Between 1860 and 1870, the official African American population in every major Southern city rose significantly.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



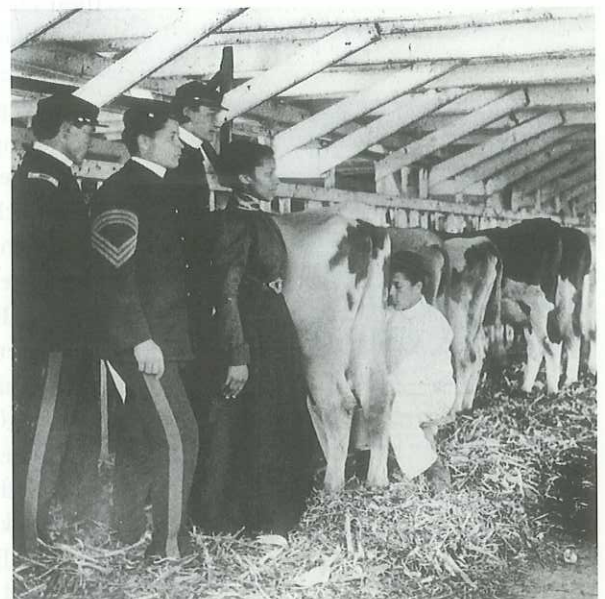
Hampton University Museum,
Hampton, Virginia
www.hamptonu.edu/museum

Field Order No. 15 Order by General William T. Sherman in January 1865 to set aside abandoned land along the southern Atlantic coast for forty-acre grants to freedmen, rescinded by President Andrew Johnson later that year.

Southern Homestead Act Largely unsuccessful law passed in 1866 that gave black people preferential access to public lands in five southern states.

Milk sampling at Hampton Institute. Hampton, which opened in Virginia in 1868, was one of the first of several schools established with the help of Northern philanthropic and missionary societies to allow freedmen to pursue a college education. Hampton stressed agricultural and vocational training. The military uniforms were typical for male students, black and white, at agricultural and mechanical schools.

Courtesy of Hampton University Archives





Once in the city, freedmen had to find a home and a job. They usually settled for the cheapest accommodations in low-lying areas or on the outskirts of town where building codes did not apply. Rather than developing one large ghetto, as in many Northern cities, black Southerners lived in several concentrations in and around cities.

Sometimes armed with a letter of reference from their former masters, black people went door to door to seek employment. Many found work serving white families—as guards, laundresses, maids—for very low wages. Both skilled and unskilled laborers found work rebuilding war-torn cities like Atlanta. Most rural black Southerners, however, arrived in cities untrained in the kinds of skills sought in an urban work force and so worked as unskilled laborers. In both Atlanta and Nashville, black people comprised more than 75 percent of the unskilled work force in 1870.

FAITH AND FREEDOM

Religious faith framed and inspired the efforts of African Americans to test their freedom on the farm and in the city. White Southerners used religion to transform the Lost Cause from a shattering defeat to a premonition of a greater destiny. Black Southerners, in contrast, saw emancipation in biblical terms as the beginning of an exodus from bondage to the Promised Land.

Some black churches in the postwar South originated in the slavery era, but most split from white-dominated congregations after the war. The church became a primary focus of African-American life. It gave black people the opportunity to hone skills in self-government and administration that white-dominated society denied them. Within the supportive confines of the congregation, they could assume leadership positions, render important decisions, deal with financial matters, and engage in politics. The church also operated as an educational institution.

The church spawned other organizations that served the black community over the next century. Burial societies, Masonic lodges, temperance groups, trade unions, and drama clubs originated in churches. By the 1870s, African Americans in Memphis had more than two hundred such organizations.

African Americans took great pride in their churches, which became visible measures of their progress. In Charleston, the first building erected after the war was a black church. Black people donated a greater proportion of their earnings to their churches than white people did. The church and the congregation were a cohesive force in black communities. They supported families under stress from discrimination and poverty. Most black churches looked inward to strengthen their members against the harsh realities of postbellum Southern society. Few ministers dared to engage in or even support protest activities. Some, especially those in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, counseled congregants to abide by the rules of second-class citizenship and to trust in God's will to right the wrongs of racism.

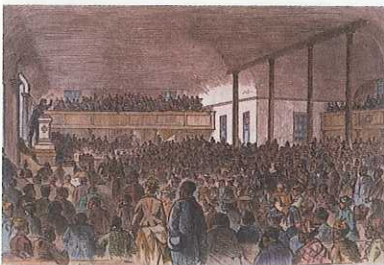
Northern-based denominations, however, notably the AME Church, were more aggressive advocates of black rights. AME ministers stressed the responsibility of individual black people to realize God's will of racial equality. Henry McNeal Turner, probably the most influential AME minister of his day, helped expand the denomination into the South from its small primarily northern base at the end of the Civil War. His church elevated him to bishop in 1880.

Turner's career and the efforts of former slaves in the classroom, on the farm, in cities, and in the churches reflect the enthusiasm and expectations with which black Southerners greeted freedom. But the majority of white Southerners were unwilling to see those expectations fulfilled. For this reason, African Americans could not secure the fruits of their emancipation without the support and

QUICK REVIEW

Black Churches

- ◆ Many African Americans found inspiration and courage in their religious faith.
- ◆ Most black churches split from white-dominated congregations after the war.
- ◆ Black churches created a variety of organizations that served the black community.



The black church was the center of African American life in the postwar urban South. Most black churches formed after the Civil War, but some, such as the first African Baptist Church in Richmond, shown here in an 1874 engraving, traced their origins to before 1861.

The Granger Collection, New York



CHRONOLOGY

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1863 Lincoln proposes his Ten Percent Plan.</p> <p>1864 Congress proposes the Wade Davis Bill.</p> <p>1865 Sherman issues Field Order No. 15. Freedmen's Bureau is established. Andrew Johnson succeeds to the presidency, unveils his Reconstruction plan. Massachusetts desegregates all public facilities. Black people in several Southern cities organize Union Leagues. Former Confederate states begin to pass black codes.</p> <p>1866 Congress passes Southern Homestead Act, Civil Rights Act of 1866. Ku Klux Klan is founded. Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is passed (ratified in 1868). President Johnson goes on a speaking tour.</p> <p>1867 Congress passes Military Reconstruction Acts, Tenure of Office Act.</p> <p>1868 President Johnson is impeached and tried in the Senate for defying the Tenure of Office Act. Republican Ulysses S. Grant is elected president.</p> <p>1869 Fifteenth Amendment passed (ratified 1870).</p> <p>1870 Congress passes Enforcement Act. Republican regimes topple in North Carolina and Georgia.</p> | <p>1871 Congress passes Ku Klux Klan Act.</p> <p>1872 Freedmen's Bureau closes down. Liberal Republicans emerge as a separate party. Ulysses S. Grant is reelected.</p> <p>1873 Severe depression begins. Colfax Massacre occurs. U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the <i>Slaughter-house</i> cases weakens the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment. Texas falls to the Democrats in the fall elections.</p> <p>1874 White Leaguers attempt a coup against the Republican government of New Orleans. Democrats win off year elections across the South amid widespread fraud and violence.</p> <p>1875 Congress passes Civil Rights Act of 1875.</p> <p>1876 Supreme Court's decision in <i>United States v. Cruikshank</i> nullifies Enforcement Act of 1870. Outcome of the presidential election between Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel J. Tilden is contested.</p> <p>1877 Compromise of 1877 makes Hayes president and ends Reconstruction.</p> |
|---|--|

protection of the federal government, and the issue of freedom was therefore inextricably linked to that of the rejoining of the Confederacy to the Union, as expressed in federal Reconstruction policy.

FEDERAL RECONSTRUCTION, 1865–1870

When the Civil War ended in 1865, no acceptable blueprint existed for reconstituting the Union. In 1863, Lincoln proposed to readmit a seceding state if 10 percent of its prewar voters took an oath of loyalty to the Union and it prohibited slavery in a new state constitution. But this Ten Percent Plan did not require states to grant equal civil and political rights to former slaves, and many Republicans in Congress thought it was not stringent enough. In 1864, a group of them responded with the Wade-Davis Bill, which required a *majority* of a state's prewar voters to pledge their loyalty to the Union and demanded guarantees of black equality before the law. The bill was passed, but Lincoln kept it from becoming law by refusing to sign it (an action known as a pocket veto).

The controversy over these plans reflected two obstacles to Reconstruction that would continue to plague the ruling Republicans after the war. First, neither the Constitution nor legal precedent offered any guidance on whether the president or Congress should take the lead on Reconstruction policy. Second, there was no agreement on what that policy should be.

HOW DID Presidential Reconstruction differ from Congressional Reconstruction?



16-2

Carl Schurz, Report on the Condition of the South (1865)



President Andrew Johnson, some conservative Republicans, and most Democrats believed that because the Constitution made no mention of secession, the Southern states never left the Union, so there was no need for a formal process to readmit them. Moderate and radical Republicans disagreed, arguing that the defeated states had forfeited their rights. Moderates and radicals parted company, however, on the conditions necessary for readmission to the Union. No group held a majority in Congress, and legislators sometimes changed their positions (see the overview table “Contrasting Views of Reconstruction”).

PRESIDENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION, 1865–1867

When the Civil War ended in April 1865, Congress was not in session and would not reconvene until December. Thus the responsibility for developing a Reconstruction policy initially fell on Andrew Johnson, who succeeded to the presidency upon Lincoln’s assassination. Johnson seemed well suited to the difficult task. Johnson was the only Southern senator to remain in the U.S. Senate after secession. This defiant Unionism won him popular acclaim in the North and credibility among Republican leaders.

Most Northerners and many Republicans approved Johnson’s Reconstruction plan when he unveiled it in May 1865. Johnson extended pardons and restored property rights, except in slaves, to Southerners who swore an oath of allegiance to the Union and the Constitution. The plan had nothing to say about the voting rights and civil rights of former slaves.

Northern Democrats applauded the plan’s silence on these issues and its promise of a quick restoration of the Southern states to the Union. They expected the Southern states to favor their party and expand its political power. White Southerners, however, were not so favorably impressed, and their response turned Northern public opinion against the president. On the two great issues of freedom and reunion, white Southerners quickly demonstrated their eagerness to reverse the results of the Civil War. Although most states accepted President Johnson’s modest requirements, several objected to one or more provisions. Mississippi and Texas refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery. South Carolina declined to nullify its secession ordinance. No Southern state authorized black voting. When Johnson ordered special congressional elections in the South in the fall of 1865, the all-white electorate returned many prominent Confederate leaders to office.

In late 1865, the newly elected Southern state legislatures revised their antebellum slave codes. The updated and renamed **black codes** allowed local officials to arrest black people who could not document employment and residence, or who were “disorderly,” and sentence them to forced labor on farms or road construction crews. The codes also restricted black people to certain occupations, barred them from jury duty, and forbade them to possess firearms. (see American Views: “Mississippi’s 1865 Black Codes”). President Johnson did not seem perturbed about this turn of events.

The Republican-dominated Congress reconvened in December 1865 in a belligerent mood. A consensus formed among radical Republicans, who comprised nearly half of the party’s strength in Congress, that to gain readmission, a state would have to extend suffrage to black citizens, protect freedmen’s civil rights, and have its white citizens officially acknowledge these rights. Some radicals also supported the redistribution of land to former slaves, but few pressed for social equality.

Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania led the radical forces in the House of Representatives, while abolitionist veteran Charles Sumner of Massachusetts rallied radicals in the Senate. Stevens dreamed of a South populated by white and black yeoman farmers. With no large plantations and few landless farmers, the

QUICK REVIEW

Johnson's Reconstruction Plan

- ◆ Johnson extended pardons to Southerners who swore an oath of allegiance.
- ◆ He restored property rights to Southerners who swore an oath of allegiance.
- ◆ His plan had nothing to say about the voting and civil rights of former slaves.

Black codes Laws passed by states and municipalities denying many rights of citizenship to free blacks after the Civil War.



◆ AMERICAN VIEWS ◆

MISSISSIPPI'S 1865 BLACK CODES

White Southerners feared emancipation would produce a labor crisis; freedmen, they expected, would either refuse to work or strike hard bargains with their former masters. White Southerners also recoiled from having to treat former slaves as social equals. Thus, beginning in late 1865, several Southern states, including Mississippi, enacted laws to control black labor, mobility, and social status. Northerners saw the codes as a bold move to deny the result of the war and its consequences.

HOW DID the black codes fit into President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction program? Some Northerners charged that the black codes were a backdoor attempt at reestablishing slavery. Do you agree?

From an Act to Confer Civil Rights on Freedmen, and for other Purposes

Section 1. All freedmen, free negroes and mulattoes may sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded, in all the courts of law and equity of this State, and may acquire personal property, and choose in action, by descent or purchase, and may dispose of the same in the same manner and to the same extent that white persons may: Provided, That the provisions of this section shall

not be so construed as to allow any freedman, free negro or mulatto to rent or lease any lands or tenements except in incorporated cities or towns, in which places the corporate authorities shall control the same.

From an Act to Amend the Vagrant Laws of the State

Section 2. All freedmen, free negroes and mulattoes in this State, over the age of eighteen years, found on the second Monday in January, 1866, or thereafter, with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawful assembling themselves together, either in the day or night time, and all white persons assembling themselves with freedmen, Free negroes or mulattoes, or usually associating with freedmen, free negroes or mulattoes, on terms of equality, or living in adultery or fornication with a freed woman, freed negro or mulatto, shall be deemed vagrants, and on conviction thereof shall be fined in a sum not exceeding, in the case of a freedman, free negro or mulatto, fifty dollars, and a white man two hundred dollars, and imprisonment at the discretion of the court, the free negro not exceeding ten days, and the white man not exceeding six months.

Source: "Laws in Relation to Freedmen," 39 Congress, 2 Session, Senate Executive Document 6, Freedmen's Affairs, 182–86.

South would become an ideal republic, a boon to the rest of the nation instead of a burden. Few shared his vision, and when he died in 1868, a reporter noted that "no man was oftener outvoted."

Charles Sumner was among the foremost abolitionist politicians before the Civil War. His combative nature won him few friends, even within his own party. As fierce as Stevens was in the promotion of black civil and political rights after the war, he also believed that the Reconstruction era offered a "golden moment" to remake the South into an egalitarian region. Sumner died in 1874 as his dream was fading.

But the radicals could not unite behind a program, and it fell to their moderate colleagues to take the first steps toward a Congressional Reconstruction plan. The moderates shared the radicals' desire to protect the former slaves' civil and voting rights, but they would not support land redistribution schemes or punitive measures against prominent Confederates. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was a direct response to the black codes. The act specified the civil rights to which all U.S. citizens were entitled. In creating a category of national citizenship with rights that superseded state laws restricting them, the act changed federal–state relations (and in the process overturned the *Dred Scott* decision). President Johnson

QUICK REVIEW

Thaddeus Stevens

- ◆ Stevens of Pennsylvania led the radical forces in the House of Representatives.
- ◆ Stevens envisioned a South with no large plantations and few landless farmers.
- ◆ Stevens found few supporters for his ideas.



OVERVIEW

CONTRASTING VIEWS OF RECONSTRUCTION: PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS

| Politician or Group | Policy on Former Slaves | Policy on Readmission of Former Confederate States |
|----------------------|---|---|
| President Johnson | Opposed to black suffrage Silent on protection of black civil rights Opposed to land redistribution | Maintained that rebellious states were already readmitted Granted pardons and restoration of property to all who swore allegiance to the United States |
| Radical Republicans | Favored black suffrage Favored protection of black civil rights Favored land redistribution | Favored treating rebellious states as territories and establishing military districts* Favored limiting franchise to black people and loyal white people |
| Moderate Republicans | Favored black suffrage Favored protection of civil rights Opposed land redistribution | Favored some restrictions on white suffrage* Favored requiring states to meet various requirements before being readmitted* Split on military rule |

* True of most but not all members of the group.

vetoed the act, but it became law when Congress mustered a two-thirds majority to override his veto, the first time in American history that Congress passed major legislation over a president's veto.

Andrew Johnson's position reflected both his view of government and his racial attitudes. The Republican president remained a Democrat in spirit. Like most Democrats, he favored a balance between federal and state power. He also shared with many of his white Southern neighbors a belief in black inferiority.

To keep freedmen's rights safe from presidential vetoes, state legislatures, and federal courts, the Republican-dominated Congress moved to incorporate some of the provisions of the 1866 Civil Rights Act into the Constitution with an amendment. The **Fourteenth Amendment**, which Congress passed in June 1866, addressed the issues of civil and voting rights. It guaranteed every citizen equality before the law. The two key sections of the amendment prohibited states from violating the civil rights of their citizens, thus outlawing the black codes, and gave states the choice of enfranchising black people or losing representation in Congress.

The amendment disappointed advocates of woman suffrage, because for the first time the word *male* in the Constitution was used to define who could vote. Susan B. Anthony, who had campaigned for the abolition of slavery before the war and helped mount a petition drive that collected 400,000 signatures for the Thirteenth Amendment, formed the American Equal Rights Association in 1866 with her colleagues to push for woman suffrage at the state level.

The amendment had little immediate impact on the South. Although enforcement of black codes diminished, white violence against blacks increased. In the 1870s, several decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court would weaken the amendment's provisions. Eventually, however, the Fourteenth Amendment would play a major role in securing the civil rights of African Americans when the issue reemerged in the 1950s.

President Johnson seemed to encourage white intransigence by openly denouncing the Fourteenth Amendment. The president's diatribes against the Republican Congress won him followers in those Northern states with a reservoir of opposition

Fourteenth Amendment Passed by Congress in 1866, guaranteed every citizen equality before the law by prohibiting states from violating the civil rights of their citizens, thus outlawing the black codes.

to black suffrage. But the tone and manner of his campaign offended many as undignified. In the November elections, Republicans managed better than two-thirds majorities in both the House and Senate, sufficient to override presidential vetoes. Radical Republicans, joined by moderate colleagues buoyed by the election results and revolted by the president's and the South's intransigence, seized the initiative.

CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION, 1867–1870

The radicals' first salvo in their attempt to take control over Reconstruction occurred with the passage over President Johnson's veto of the Military Reconstruction Acts. The measures, passed in March 1867, inaugurated a period known as **Congressional Reconstruction** or Radical Reconstruction. They generally divided the ex-Confederate states into five military districts (see Map 16–1) and provided for elections to a state constitutional convention guaranteeing universal manhood suffrage.

The Reconstruction Acts fulfilled the radicals' three major objectives. First, they secured the freedmen's right to vote. Second, they made it likely that Southern states would be run by Republican regimes that would enforce the new constitutions, protect former slaves' rights, and maintain the Republican majority in Congress. Finally, the acts set standards for readmission that required the South to accept the consequences of defeat: the preeminence of the federal government and the end of involuntary servitude.

To limit presidential interference with their policies, Republicans passed the Tenure of Office Act, prohibiting the president from removing certain officeholders without the Senate's consent. Johnson, angered at what he believed was an unconstitutional attack on presidential authority, deliberately violated the act in February 1868. He fired Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, a leading radical. The House responded to this defiance of congressional authority by approving, for the first time in American history, articles of impeachment against the president. The Senate voted thirty-five to nineteen to convict, one vote short of the two-thirds necessary to remove Johnson. The outcome weakened the radicals' clout in Congress and eased the way for moderate Republican Ulysses S. Grant to gain the party's nomination for president in 1868.

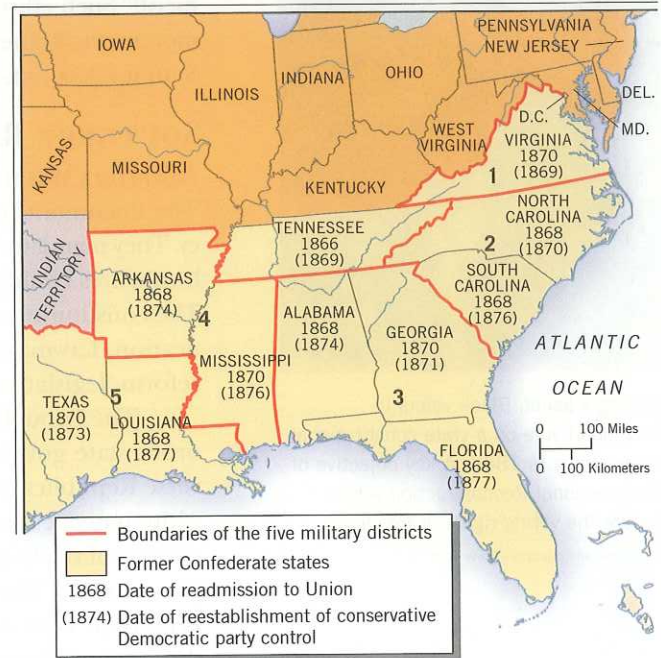
The Republicans viewed the 1868 presidential election as a referendum on Congressional Reconstruction. Grant won the election, but his margin of victory was uncomfortably narrow.

The Republicans retained a strong majority in both houses of Congress and managed to pass another major piece of Reconstruction legislation, the **Fifteenth Amendment**, in February 1869. In response to growing concerns about voter fraud and violence against freedmen, the amendment guaranteed the right of American men to vote, regardless of race. Although the amendment provided a loophole allowing states to impose restrictions on the right to vote based on literacy requirements or property qualifications, it was nonetheless a milestone. It made the right to vote perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of American citizenship.

The Fifteenth Amendment allowed states to keep the franchise a male prerogative. Susan B. Anthony now broke with her abolitionist colleagues and opposed the amendment. Fellow abolitionist and woman suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton warned

MAP EXPLORATION

To explore an interactive version of this map, go to <http://www.prenhall.com/goldfield2/map16.1>



MAP 16-1

Congressional Reconstruction, 1865–1877 When Congress wrested control of Reconstruction policy from President Andrew Johnson, it divided the South into the five military districts depicted here. The commanding generals for each district held the authority both to hold elections and decide who could vote.

WHAT DID each of the former Confederate states have to do to be eligible for readmission to the Union?

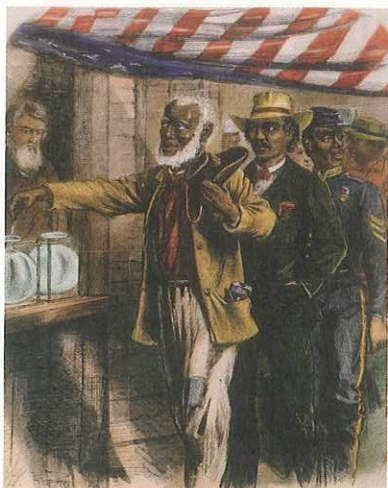
QUICK REVIEW

The Tenure of Office Act and Johnson's Impeachment

- ◆ Act prohibited the president from removing certain officeholders without the Senate's consent.
- ◆ Johnson deliberately violated the act in February 1868.
- ◆ Johnson escaped impeachment by one vote.

Congressional Reconstruction Name given to the period 1867–1870 when the Republican-dominated Congress controlled Reconstruction era policy.

Fifteenth Amendment Passed by Congress in 1869, guaranteed the right of American men to vote, regardless of race.



Casting a ballot. Black voters in Richmond vote on a state constitutional convention in 1867. A key objective of Congressional Reconstruction was to secure the voting rights of freedman.

The Granger Collection, New York



WHERE TO LEARN MORE

★ Beauvoir, Biloxi, Mississippi
www.beauvoir.org

Scalawags Southern whites, mainly small landowning farmers and well-off merchants and planters, who supported the Southern Republican party during Reconstruction.

Carpethaggers Northern transplants to the South, many of whom were Union soldiers who stayed in the South after the war.

Union Leagues Republican party organizations in Northern cities that became an important organizing device among freedmen in Southern cities after 1865.

that “if you do not wish the lower orders of Chinese, African, Germans and Irish, with their low ideas of womanhood to make laws for you and your daughters . . . awake to the danger . . . and demand that woman, too, shall be represented in the government!” Such ethnic and racial animosity created a major rift in the nascent women’s movement. Women who supported the amendment formed the New England Woman Suffrage Association, challenging Anthony’s American Equal Rights Association.

SOUTHERN REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENTS, 1867–1870

Away from Washington, the first order of business was to draft state constitutions. The documents embodied progressive principles new to the former Confederacy. They mandated the election of numerous local and state offices. Self-perpetuating local elites could no longer appoint themselves or cronies to powerful positions. The constitutions committed Southern states, many for the first time, to public education. Lawmakers enacted a variety of reforms, including social welfare, penal reform, legislative reapportionment, and universal manhood suffrage.

The Republican regimes that gained control in Southern states promoted vigorous state government and the protection of civil and voting rights. Three diverse Republican constituencies supported these governments. One consisted of white natives, most of them yeomen farmers, who resided mainly in the upland regions of the South and long ignored by lowland planters and merchants in state government. The conflict had left many of them devastated. They struggled to keep their land and hoped for an easing of credit and for debt-stay laws to help them escape foreclosure. They wanted public schools for their children and good roads to get their crops to market. Collectively, these native white Southerners were called **scalawags**, a derogatory term derived from the name of the district of Scalloway, on Scotland’s Shetland Islands, known for its scraggly livestock. The term was first applied in western New York before the Civil War to an idle person and then to a mischievous one. Although their opponents may have perceived them as a unified group, scalawags in fact held a variety of views.

Northern transplants, or **carpethaggers**, as their opponents called them, constituted a second group of Southern Republicans. The term also had antebellum origins, referring to a suspicious stranger. Cartoonists depicted carpethaggers as shoddily dressed and poorly groomed men, their worldly possessions in a ratty cloth satchel, slinking into a town and swindling the locals before departing with their ill-gotten gains. The reality was far different from the caricature. Many were Union soldiers who simply enjoyed the climate and perhaps married a local woman. Most were drawn by economic opportunity. Land was cheap and the price of cotton high. Some also hoped to aid the freedmen.

Carpethaggers never comprised more than 2 percent of any state’s population. Most white Southerners viewed them as an alien presence, instruments of a hated occupying force. They provoked resentment because they seemed to prosper while most Southerners struggled in poverty.

African Americans constituted the Republican party’s largest Southern constituency. In three states—South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana—they also formed the majority of eligible voters. They viewed the franchise as the key to civic equality and economic opportunity and demanded an active role in party and government affairs. In February 1865, black people in Norfolk, Virginia, gathered to demand a say in the new government that Union supporters were forming in that portion of the state. In April, they created the Colored Monitor Union club, modeled after Republican party organizations in northern cities, called **Union Leagues**. They demanded “the right of *universal* suffrage” for “*all* loyal men, without distinction of color.” Despite white threats, black people thronged to Union League meetings in 1867, even forging interracial alliances in states such



as North Carolina and Alabama. Focusing on political education and recruitment, the leagues successfully mobilized black voters.

Black Southerners were not content just to vote; they also demanded political office. The number of Southern black congressmen in the U.S. House of Representatives increased from two in 1869 to seven in 1873, and more than six hundred African Americans, most of them former slaves from plantation counties, were elected to Southern state legislatures between 1867 and 1877.

White fears that black officeholders would enact vengeful legislation proved unfounded. African Americans generally did not promote race-specific legislation. Rather, they supported measures such as debt relief and state funding for education that benefited all poor and working-class people. Like all politicians, however, black officials in Southern cities sought to enact measures beneficial to their constituents.

Republicans gained support by expanding the role of state government to a degree unprecedented in the South. Southern Republican administrations appealed to hard-pressed upland whites by prohibiting foreclosure and passing stay laws that allowed farm owners extra time to repay debts. They undertook building programs that benefited both blacks and whites, erecting hospitals, schools, and orphanages. Stepping further into social policy than most Northern states at the time, Republican governments in the South expanded women's property rights, enacted legislation against child abuse, and required child support from fathers of mulatto children. In South Carolina, the Republican government provided medical care for the poor; in Alabama, it provided free legal aid for needy defendants.

Despite these impressive policies, southern Republicans were unable to hold their diverse constituency together. The high costs of their activist policies further undermined the Republicans by forcing them to raise state taxes. Small property holders, already reeling from declining staple prices, found the taxes especially burdensome, despite liberal stay laws. Revenues nonetheless could not keep pace with expenditures. The expenditures and the liberal use of patronage sometimes resulted in waste and corruption.

COUNTER-RECONSTRUCTION, 1870–1874

Republicans might have survived battles over patronage, differences over policy, and the resentment provoked by extravagant expenditures and high taxes; but they could not overcome racism. Racism killed Republican rule in the South because it deepened divisions within the party, encouraged white violence, and eroded support in the North. Southern Democrats discovered that they could use race baiting and racial violence to create racial solidarity among white people that overrode their economic and class differences. Unity translated into election victories.

Northerners responded to the persistent violence in the South not with outrage but with a growing sense of tedium. Racism became respectable. Noted intellectuals and journalists espoused “scientific” theories that claimed to demonstrate the natural superiority of white people over black people. These theories influenced the Liberal Republicans, followers of a new political movement that splintered the Republican party, further weakening its will to pursue Reconstruction policy.

By 1874, Americans were concerned with an array of domestic problems that overshadowed Reconstruction. With the rest of the nation thus distracted and weary, white Southerners reclaimed control of the South.

THE USES OF VIOLENCE

Racial violence preceded Republican rule. As African Americans moved about, attempted to vote, haggled over labor contracts, and carried arms as part of occupying Union forces, they tested the patience of white Southerners.

WHAT ROLE did the Ku Klux Klan play in Counter-Reconstruction?



16-8

Albion W. Tourgee, Letter on Ku Klux Klan Activities (1870)



The Klan directed violence at African Americans primarily for political activity. Here, a black man, John Campbell, vainly begs for mercy in Moore County, North Carolina, in August 1871.

The Granger Collection, New York

Cities, where black and white people competed for jobs and where black political influence was most visible, became flashpoints for interracial violence.

White paramilitary groups flourished in the South during the Reconstruction era and were responsible for much of the violence directed against African Americans. Probably the best known of these groups was the **Ku Klux Klan**. Founded in Tennessee by six Confederate veterans in 1866, the Klan was initially a social club that soon assumed a political purpose. Klan night riders in ghostlike disguises intimidated black communities. The Klan directed much of its violence toward subverting the electoral process. One historian has estimated that roughly 10 percent of all black delegates to the 1867 state constitutional conventions in the South became victims of political violence during the next decade. The most serious example of political violence occurred in Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873 when a white Democratic mob attempted to wrest control of local government from Republicans. For three weeks, black defenders held the town against the white onslaught. When the white mob finally broke through, they massacred the remaining black people, including those who had surrendered and laid down their weapons.

Racial violence and the combative reaction it provoked both among black people and Republican administrations energized white voters. Democrats regained power in North Carolina during the election of 1870, and that same year, the Republican regime in Georgia fell as well.

The federal government responded with a variety of legislation. One example was the Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1869, which guaranteed the right to vote. Another was the Enforcement Act of 1870, which enabled the federal government to appoint supervisors in states that failed to protect citizens' voting rights. A more sweeping measure was the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, which permitted federal authorities, with military assistance, if necessary, to arrest and prosecute members of groups that denied a citizen's civil rights if state authorities failed to do so and established a new precedent in federal–state relations.

THE FAILURE OF NORTHERN WILL

The success of political violence after 1871 reflected less the inadequacy of congressional legislation than the failure of will on the part of Northern Republicans to follow through on commitments to Southern Republican administrations. The commitment to voting rights for black Southerners, widespread among Republicans in 1865 and affirmed in the Fifteenth Amendment passed in 1869, faded as well. American politics in the 1870s seemed increasingly corrupt and irresponsible. Scandal abounded. Democratic boss William M. Tweed and his associates transformed Tammany Hall, a Democratic club, into a full-fledged political machine that robbed New York City of an astounding \$100 million. Federal officials allowed private individuals to manipulate the stock market for spectacular gains. Several members of Congress and President Grant's vice president exchanged government favors for railroad stock.

Racism gained an aura of scientific respectability in the late nineteenth century. Science was held in high esteem at the time, helping assure public acceptance of the putatively scientific views of the racial theorists. According to those views, some peoples are inherently inferior to others, a natural state of affairs that no government interference can change.

Concerns about the quality of the electorate, also tinged with racism, reflected the rising stakes of public office in post–Civil War America. The urban industrial economy boomed in the five years after the war. Engineers flung railroads across the continent. Steam propelled factories to unprecedented levels of productivity and ships to new speed records. Discoveries of rich natural resources such as oil and iron presaged a new age of industrial might. Republicans promoted and ben-

QUICK REVIEW

Tammany Hall and Corruption

- ◆ William Tweed transformed Tammany Hall into a political machine.
- ◆ Tammany Hall facilitated widespread corruption.
- ◆ Corruption in American government extended to the federal level.

Ku Klux Klan Perhaps the most prominent of the vigilante groups that terrorized black people in the South during Reconstruction era, founded by Confederate veterans in 1866.



efited from the boom, and it influenced their priorities. Railroad, mining, and lumber lobbyists crowded Washington and state capitals begging for financial subsidies and favorable legislation. In an era before conflict-of-interest laws, leading Republicans sat on the boards of railroads, land development companies, and industrial corporations. While the federal government denied land to the freedmen, it doled out millions of acres to corporations.

Not all Republicans approved the party's promotion of economic development. Some questioned the prudence of government intervention in the "natural" operation of the nation's economy. The emerging scandals of the Grant administration led to calls for reform. Republican governments, North and South, were condemned for their lavish spending and high taxes. The time had come to restore good government.

LIBERAL REPUBLICANS AND THE ELECTION OF 1872

Liberal Republicans put forward an array of suggestions to improve government and save the Republican party. They advocated civil service reform to reduce reliance on patronage and the abuses that accompanied office seeking. To limit government and reduce artificial economic stimuli, the reformers called for tariff reduction and an end to federal land grants to railroads. For the South, they recommended a general amnesty for white people and a return to "local self-government" by men of "property and enterprise."

When the Liberals failed to convince other Republicans to adopt their program, they broke with the party. Taking advantage of this split, the Democrats forged an alliance with the Liberals. Together, the Democrats and Liberals nominated journalist Horace Greeley to challenge Ulysses S. Grant for the presidency in the election of 1872. Grant won resoundingly, helped by high turnout among black voters in the South. The election suggested that the excesses of the Grant administration had not yet exceeded public tolerance and that the Republican experiment in the South retained some public support. But within a year, an economic depression, continued violence in the South, and the persistent corruption of the Grant administration would turn public opinion against the Republicans. With this shift, support for Reconstruction and black rights would also fade.

REDEMPTION, 1874–1877

For Southern Democrats, the Republican victory in 1872 underscored the importance of turning out larger numbers of white voters and restricting the black vote. They accomplished these goals over the next four years with a surge in political violence. Preoccupied with corruption and economic crisis and increasingly indifferent, if not hostile, to African-American aspirations, most Americans looked the other way. The elections of 1876—on the local, state, and national levels—affirmed the triumph of white Southerners. Reconstruction did not end; it was overthrown. Southern Democrats called their victory "Redemption," and this interpretation of the Reconstruction era would affect race relations for nearly a century.

THE DEMOCRATS' VIOLENT RESURGENCE

The violence between 1874 and 1876 differed in several respects from earlier attempts to restore white government by force. Attackers operated more openly and more closely identified themselves with the Democratic party. Mounted, gray-clad ex-Confederate soldiers flanked Democratic candidates at campaign rallies and "visited" black neighborhoods afterward to discourage black people from voting. With black people intimidated and white people already prepared to vote, election days were typically quiet.

WHAT WERE the effects of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 and the Compromise of 1877?

Democrats swept to victory across the South in the 1874 elections. “A perfect reign of terror” redeemed Alabama for the Democrats. In Louisiana, a group of elite Democrats in New Orleans organized a military organization known as the *White League* in 1874 to challenge the state’s Republican government. In September 1874, more than eight thousand White Leaguers staged a coup to overthrow the Republican government of New Orleans.

THE WEAK FEDERAL RESPONSE

Unrest like that in Louisiana also plagued Mississippi and South Carolina. When South Carolina governor Daniel H. Chamberlain could no longer contain the violence in his state in 1876, he asked the president for help. Although President Grant acknowledged the gravity of Chamberlain’s situation, the president would only offer the governor the lame hope that South Carolinians would exercise “better judgment and cooperation” and assist the governor in bringing offenders to justice “without aid from the federal Government.”

Congress responded to the violence with the Civil Rights Act of 1875. Introduced by Charles Sumner, the bill finally passed in a watered-down version after Sumner’s death. The act prohibited discrimination against black people in public accommodations such as theaters, parks, and trains and guaranteed freedmen’s rights to serve on juries. It had no provision for voting rights, which Congress presumed the Fifteenth Amendment protected. The only way to enforce the law was for individuals to bring grievances related to it before federal courts in the South.

When black people tested the law by trying to make free use of public accommodations, they were almost always turned away. In 1883, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the act declaring that only the states, not Congress, could redress “a private wrong, or a crime of the individual.”

THE ELECTION OF 1876 AND THE COMPROMISE OF 1877

Reconstruction officially ended with the presidential election of 1876 in which Democrat Samuel J. Tilden ran against Republican Rutherford B. Hayes. When the ballots were counted, it appeared that Tilden, a conservative New Yorker respectable enough for Northern voters and Democratic enough for white Southerners, had won. But despite a majority in the popular vote, disputed returns in three Southern states left him with 184 of the 185 electoral votes needed to win. The three states—Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana—were the last in the South still to have Republican administrations.

Both camps maneuvered intensively in the months following the election to claim the disputed votes. Congress appointed a fifteen-member commission to settle the issue. Eventually the so-called **Compromise of 1877** installed Hayes in the White House and gave Democrats control of all state governments in the South.

Southern Democrats emerged the major winners of the Compromise of 1877. President Hayes and his successors into the next century left the South alone. In practical terms, the Compromise of 1877 signaled the revocation of civil rights and voting rights for black Southerners. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments would be dead letters in the South until well into the twentieth century. On the two great issues confronting the nation at the end of the Civil War, reunion and freedom, the white South had won. It reentered the Union largely on its own terms with the freedom to pursue a racial agenda consistent with its political, economic, and social interests.

THE MEMORY OF RECONSTRUCTION

Southern Democrats used the memory of Reconstruction to help maintain themselves in power. As white Southerners elevated Civil War heroes into saints, and battles into holy struggles, Reconstruction became the Redemption. Whenever Southern

QUICK REVIEW

Civil Rights Act of 1875

- ◆ Introduced by Charles Sumner, the bill passed in a watered-down version.
- ◆ Prohibited discrimination in public accommodations.
- ◆ Overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883.

Compromise of 1877 The Congressional settling of the 1876 election which installed Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in the White House and gave Democrats control of all state governments in the South.



Democrats felt threatened over the next century, they reminded their white constituents of the “horrors of Reconstruction,” the menace of black rule, and the cruelty of Yankee occupiers. The Southern view of Reconstruction permeated textbooks, films, and standard accounts of the period. By the early 1900s, professional historians at the nation’s finest institutions concurred in this view, and most Americans believed that the policies of Reconstruction had been misguided and had brought great suffering to the white South. This view allowed the South to maintain its system of racial segregation and exclusion without interference from the federal government.

Not all memories of Reconstruction conformed to this thesis. In 1913, John R. Lynch, a former black Republican congressman from Mississippi, published *The Facts of Reconstruction* to “present the other side.” But most Americans ignored his book. Two decades later, W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* (1935) met a similar fate.

The national historical consensus grew out of a growing national reconciliation concerning the war, a mutual agreement that it was time to move on. Lost in all the good will was the tacit agreement among both Southern and Northern whites that the South was free to work out its own resolution to race relations.

There is much to be said in favor of sectional reconciliation as opposed to persistent animosity. There are enough examples in the world today of antagonists in the same country never forgetting or never forgiving their bloody histories. Ideally, Americans could have had *both* healing and justice, but instead, they settled for the former. Frederick Douglass worried about what the peace that followed the Civil War would mean for race relations: “If war among the whites brought peace and liberty to the blacks, what will peace among the whites bring?” But white Americans seemed intent on shaking hands and getting on with their lives.

THE FAILED PROMISE OF RECONSTRUCTION

Most black people and white people in 1877 would have agreed on one point: Reconstruction had failed. If the demise of Reconstruction elicited a sigh of relief from most white Americans, black Americans greeted it with frustration. Their dreams of land ownership faded as a new labor system relegated them to a lowly position in Southern agriculture. Redemption reversed their economic and political gains and deprived them of most of the civil rights they had enjoyed under Congressional Reconstruction.

The former slaves were certainly better off in 1877 than in 1865. They were free, however limited their freedom. Some owned land; some held jobs in cities. But by 1877, the “golden moment”—an unprecedented opportunity for the nation to live up to its ideals by extending equal rights to all its citizens, black and white alike—had passed.

SHARECROPPING

When they lost political power, black Southerners also lost economic independence. As the Freedmen’s Bureau retreated from supervising farm labor contracts and opportunities for black people to possess their own land dried up, the bargaining power of black farm laborers decreased, and the power of white landlords increased.

The upshot was that by the late 1870s, most former slaves in the rural South had been drawn into a subservient position in a new labor system called **sharecropping**. The premise of this system was relatively simple: The landlord furnished the sharecroppers a house, a plot of land to work, seed, some farm animals and farm implements and advanced them credit at a store the landlord typically owned. In exchange, the sharecroppers promised the landlord a share of their crop, usually one-half. The croppers kept the proceeds from the sale of the other half to pay off their debts at the store and save or spend as they and their families saw fit. In theory, a sharecropper could save enough to secure economic independence.

WHY AND how did

Reconstruction end, and what were its failed promises?

WHERE TO LEARN MORE



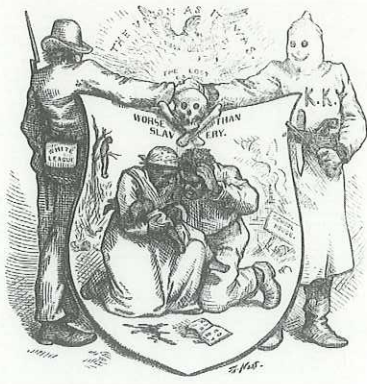
Levi Jordan Plantation,
Brazoria County, Texas
www.webarchaeology.com



16-12

A Sharecrop Contract (1882)

Sharecropping Labor system that evolved during and after Reconstruction whereby landowners furnished laborers with a house, farm animals, and tools and advanced credit in exchange for a share of the laborers’ crop.



As this Thomas Nast cartoon makes clear, the paramilitary violence against black Southerners in the early 1870s threatened not only the voting rights of freedmen, but also their dreams of education, prosperity, and family life as well. In this context, the slogan, “The Union As It Was” is highly ironic.

Courtesy of Library of Congress

With landlords holding the accounts at the store, black sharecroppers found that the proceeds from their share of the crop never left them very far ahead. In exchange for extending credit to sharecroppers, store owners felt justified in requiring collateral. But sharecroppers had no assets other than the cotton they grew. So Southern states passed crop lien laws, which gave the store owner the right to the next year’s crop in exchange for this year’s credit. The sharecropper sank deeper into dependence.

Sharecropping represented a significant step down from tenancy. Tenants owned their own draft animals, farm implements, and seed. Once they negotiated with a land owner for a fixed rent, they kept whatever profits they earned. Eventually, they could hope to purchase some land and move into the landlord class themselves.

Historians have often depicted the sharecropping system as a compromise between white landlord and black laborer. But compromise implies a give-and-take between relatively equal negotiators. As Northern and federal support for Reconstruction waned after 1870 and Southern Democrats regained political control, white power over black labor increased. Black people had no recourse to federal and state authorities or, increasingly, to the polls as a white reign of terror stripped them of their political rights.

The only difference between Northern and Southern employers’ outlook on labor was that Southerners exercised more control over their workers. What had been a triangular debate—among white Northerners, white Southerners, and freedmen—had become a lopsided discourse divided along racial rather than sectional lines.

MODEST GAINS AND FUTURE VICTORIES

Black Southerners experienced some advances in the decade after the Civil War, but these owed little to Reconstruction. Black families functioned as economic and psychological buffers against unemployment and prejudice. Black churches played crucial roles in their communities. Self-help and labor organizations offered mutual friendship and financial assistance. All of these institutions had existed in the slavery era, although on a smaller scale. And some of them, such as black labor groups, schools, and social welfare associations, endured because comparable white institutions excluded black people. Black people also scored some modest economic successes during the Reconstruction era, mainly from their own pluck.

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution are among the few bright spots in Reconstruction’s otherwise dismal legacy. The Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed former slaves equality before the law; the Fifteenth Amendment protected their right to vote. Both amendments elevated the federal government over the states by protecting freedmen from state attempts to deny them their rights. But the benefits of these two landmark amendments did not accrue to African Americans until well into the twentieth century. In the *Slaughterhouse cases* (1873), the Supreme Court contradicted the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment by decreeing that most citizenship rights remained under state, not federal, control. In *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), the Court overturned the convictions of some of those responsible for the Colfax Massacre, ruling that the Enforcement Act applied only to violations of black rights by states, not individuals. Within the next two decades, the Supreme Court would uphold the legality of racial segregation and black disfranchisement, in effect declaring that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments did not apply to African Americans. The Civil War had killed secession forever, but states’ rights enjoyed a remarkable revival.

As historian John Hope Franklin accurately concluded, Reconstruction “had no significant or permanent effect on the status of the black in American life. . . . [Black people] made no meaningful steps toward economic independence or even stability.”

QUICK REVIEW

Advances

- ◆ Black families and institutions played a crucial role in Reconstruction Era.
- ◆ Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed equality before the law.
- ◆ Fifteenth Amendment protected the right to vote.

Slaughterhouse cases Group of cases resulting in one sweeping decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1873 that contradicted the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment by decreeing that most citizenship rights remained under state, not federal, control.

United States v. Cruikshank Supreme Court ruling of 1876 that overturned the convictions of some of those responsible for the Colfax Massacre, ruling that the Enforcement Act applied only to violations of black rights by states, not individuals.

FROM THEN TO NOW

African-American Voting Rights in the South

Right from the end of the Civil War, white Southerners resisted African-American voting rights. Black people, with equal determination, used the franchise to assert their equal right to participate in the political process. Black voting rights proved so contentious that Congress sought to secure them with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. But U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876) and in the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883) undermined federal authority to protect the rights of freedmen, including voting rights. A combination of violence, intimidation, and legislation effectively disfranchised black Southerners by the early twentieth century.

During the 1960s, Congress passed legislation designed to override state prohibitions and earlier court decisions limiting African-American voting rights. The key measure, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, not only guaranteed black Southerners (and later, other minorities) the right to register and vote but protected them from procedural subterfuges, many of which dated from the first Reconstruction era; that would dilute their votes. These protections proved necessary because of the extreme racial polarization of Southern elections: White people rarely voted for black candidates.

To ensure African-American candidates an opportunity to win elections, the federal government after 1965 insisted that states and localities establish procedures to increase the

likelihood of such a result. As part of this process, the federal government also monitored state redistricting for Congressional elections, which occurs every decade in response to population shifts recorded in the national census.

By the early 1990s, states were being directed to draw districts with majority-black voting populations to ensure African-American representation in the Congress and state legislatures. The federal government cited the South's history of racial discrimination and racially polarized voting to justify these districts. But white Southerners challenged such claims.

In 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in a North Carolina redistricting case, *Shaw v. Reno*, that struck down a majority-black Congressional district in that state. Subsequent decisions in other southern districts produced similar rulings. The general principle followed by the Court has been that if race is a key justification for drawing these districts, then they violate the Fourteenth Amendment, which, according to the Court majority, demands color-blind electoral procedures. But, as the late Supreme Court Justice William Brennan noted, "to read the Fourteenth Amendment to state an abstract principle of color-blindness is itself to be blind to history." The framers of the Reconstruction Amendments had the protection of the rights of the freedmen (including and especially voting rights) in mind when they wrote those measures. One voting rights expert has charged that the Court rulings have ushered in a "Second Redemption."

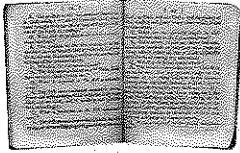
CONCLUSION

Formerly enslaved black Southerners had entered freedom with many hopes, among the most prominent of which was to be let alone. White Southerners, after four bloody years of unwanted attention from the federal government, also longed to be left alone. But they did not include their ex-slaves as equal partners in their vision of solitude. Northerners, too, began to seek escape from the issues and consequences of the war, eventually abandoning their commitment to secure civil and voting rights for black Southerners.

White Southerners robbed blacks of their gains and sought to reduce them again to servitude and dependence, if not to slavery. But in the process, the majority of white people lost as well. Yeoman farmers missed an opportunity to break cleanly from the Old South and establish a more equitable society. Instead, they allowed the old elites to regain power and gradually ignore their needs. They preserved the social benefit of a white skin at the cost of almost everything else. Many lost their farms and sank into tenancy, leasing land from others. Fewer had a voice

in state legislatures or Congress. A new South, rid of slavery and sectional antagonism, had indeed emerged, redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled. But the old South lingered on in the new like Spanish moss on live oaks.

As Federal troops left the South to be redeployed restraining striking workers in the North and suppressing Native Americans on the Great Plains, an era of possibility for American society ended and a new era began. “The southern question is dead,” a Charleston newspaper proclaimed in 1877. “The question of labor and capital, work and wages” had moved to the forefront. The chance to redeem the sacrifice of a bloody civil war with a society that fulfilled the promise of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution for all citizens slipped away. It would take a new generation of African Americans a long century later to revive it.



SUMMARY

White Southerners and the Ghosts of the Confederacy, 1865. While some white Southerners saw the destruction of the Confederacy as punishment, others came to view the war as the “Lost Cause” and would not allow the memory of the Civil War to die. The myth of the Lost Cause was a need to rationalize and justify the devastation and loss of life; the Reconstruction era became the Redemption and forged community in a time of uncertainty about the future. In this mythology, African Americans were cast in the role of adversaries who challenged whites’ belief of their own racial superiority.

More than Freedom: African-American Aspirations in 1865 Former slaves wanted to be free of white supervision; they also desired land, voting and civil rights, and education. At the end of the Civil War, African Americans had reason to hope their dreams might be achieved through such actions as the establishment of the Freedmen’s Bureau. The vast majority of former slaves was never able to realize their dreams of independent land ownership and continued to work as farm laborers; others migrated to cities. Their religious faith inspired them; they saw their emancipation in biblical terms and the church became the primary focus of the African-American community.

Federal Reconstruction, 1865–1870 The federal government had two great challenges following the Civil War; supporting the freedom of former slaves and rejoining the Confederacy to the Union. No blueprint for Reconstruction existed; the Constitution was silent on the issue and there was no agreement on policy. Presidential Reconstruction and Congressional Reconstruction brought mixed results. The Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were key legislative acts during this period; however, by 1870, white Southerners were gradually regaining control of their states and using violence and intimidation to erode gains made by African Americans.

Counter-Reconstruction, 1870–1874 While most of the nation was distracted by political scandals and a serious economic depression, white Southerners regained control of the South. Racial violence through groups like the Ku Klux Klan subverted the electoral process; the success of political violence reflected the erosion of Northern support for Congressional Reconstruction.

Redemption, 1874–1877 After more than fifteen years of Reconstruction, Republicans lost interest in policing their former enemies. By 1877 the Redeemers had triumphed, and all the former Confederate states had returned to the Union in the Compromise of 1877 following the disputed 1876 presidential election. Southern states now had all of their rights and many of their leaders restored to pre-Civil War conditions. Freed slaves remained in mostly subservient positions with few of the rights and privileges enjoyed by other Americans.

The Failed Promise of Reconstruction The tacit agreement between Southern and Northern whites was that the South was now free to work out its own resolution to race relations. The price of sectional reconciliation was that the dream that former slaves held of economic independence and equality would not materialize.

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were bright spots in the legacy of Reconstruction; the overwhelming majority of African Americans had become landless agricultural workers, eking out a meager income that merchants and landlords often snatched to cover debts. For most, Reconstruction was a failed promise.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think white Southerners should have supported black people's aspirations for civil rights, land, and suffrage? How differently would things had turned out if they had?
 2. Is it fair to blame Reconstruction's failures on Southern Republicans? Explain your response.
 3. What gains did black people achieve during Reconstruction, despite its overall failure?
 4. In T. Thomas Fortune's recollection of a boyhood incident, why was it important for him and his friends to fight back?
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KEY TERMS

Black codes (p. 422)

Carpentbaggers (p. 426)

Compromise of 1877 (p. 430)

Congressional Reconstruction (p. 425)

Field Order No. 15 (p. 419)

Fifteenth Amendment (p. 425)

Fourteenth Amendment (p. 424)

Freedmen's Bureau (p. 418)

Ku Klux Klan (p. 428)

Lost Cause (p. 417)

Scalawags (p. 426)

Sharecropping (p. 431)


Slaughterhouse cases (p. 432)


Southern Homestead Act (p. 419)


Union Leagues (p. 427)


United States v. Cruikshank (p. 432)

WHERE TO LEARN MORE

 **Penn Center Historic District, St. Helena Island, South Carolina.** The Penn School was a sea-island experiment in the education of free black people established by northern missionaries Laura Towne and Ellen Murray in 1862 that they operated until their deaths in the early 1900s. The Penn School became Penn Community Services in 1948, serving as an educational institution, health clinic, and a social service agency. www.penncenter.com

 **Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia.** Hampton University was founded by the Freedmen's Bureau in 1868 to provide "practical" training in the agricultural and mechanical fields for former slaves. In addition to a history of the institution, the museum includes one of the oldest collections of African art in the United States. www.hamptonu.edu/museum

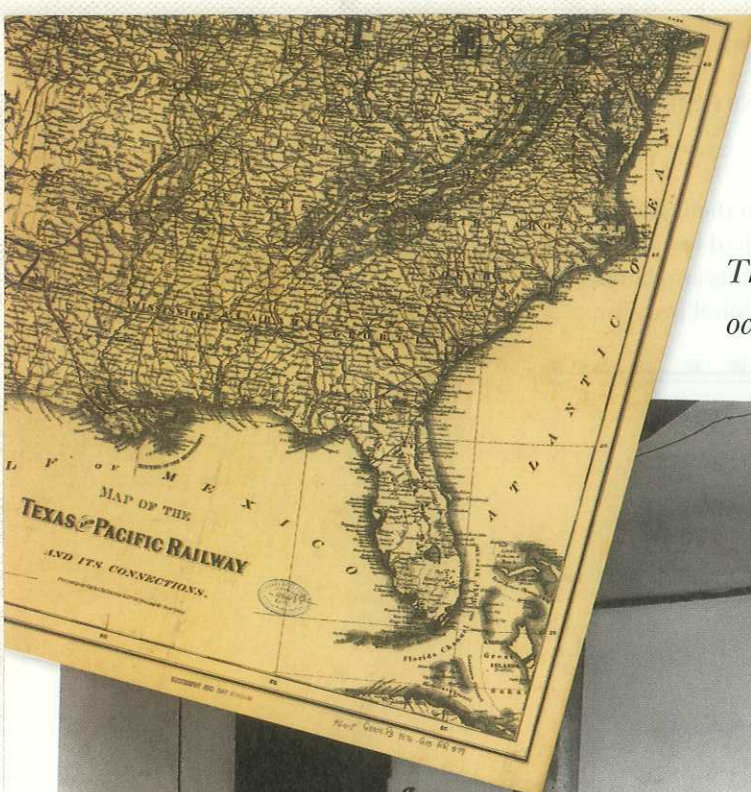
 **Beauvoir, Biloxi, Mississippi.** The exhibits at Beauvoir, the home of Jefferson Davis, evoke the importance of the Lost Cause for the white survivors of the Confederacy. Especially interesting is the Jefferson Davis Soldiers Home on the premises and the Confederate Veterans Cemetery. Davis spent his retirement in Beauvoir. www.beauvoir.org

 **Levi Jordan Plantation, Brazoria County, Texas.** This site provides an excellent depiction and interpretation of the lives of sharecroppers and tenants during and immediately after the Reconstruction era. The site is especially valuable for demonstrating the transition from slavery to sharecropping. www.webarchaeology.com



For additional study resources for this chapter, go to:
www.prenhall.com/goldfield/chapter16

*The colored woman of to-day
occupies a unique position in this country . . .*



Teaching a laboratory class at the Tuskegee Institute, c. 1900.

