

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **THE CIVIL WAR: PART II, 1865-1877**

- A. Introduction. The Civil War destroyed a way of life that had existed in South Carolina for nearly two centuries. Emancipation wiped out the capital investment of thousands of white Carolinians and brought freedom to the state's black majority. Coping with the new social and economic order was not easy for anyone, black or white. South Carolina's response to the results of the war did not please Washington and the state soon found itself in the throes of Reconstruction.
- B. The Bleak South Carolina Landscape, 1865
  - 1. Large sections of Charleston were piles of rubble from the fires of 1861 and 1865 and the bombardment of 1863-1865.
  - 2. Columbia, Orangeburg, Lexington, Cheraw, Winnsboro, and other towns (not to mention individual farms and plantations) had been severely damaged or destroyed during Sherman's march.
  - 3. Railroads, bridges, and factories had been destroyed by one side or the other.
- C. The People
  - 1. "The Day of Jubilee" for black South Carolinians came with the Union Army.
  - 2. White Carolinians moved about as if in a daze; their world had been turned upside down.
  - 3. Poverty and hunger were serious problems as late as 1867 and knew no race or class distinctions.
  - 4. Relations between former masters and former slaves varied considerably depending upon the local situation.
- D. The Farms and Fields
  - 1. Farmers and planters came up with several new ways to establish working relationships with the labor needed to till their fields.
    - a. Some planters, particularly rice planters, paid their ex-slaves a regular wage for their labor.
    - b. Share cropping, whereby the owner of the land took a percentage of the crop from the individual who tilled the land, was the most commonly used method.
    - c. Renting small plots of land to individuals was another method, but it was seldom used.
  - 2. Anyone associated with agricultural production soon found himself heavily in debt because of the crop lien system.

- \*E. The Port Royal Experiment (1861-1865) was intended to be a forerunner of what some Northerners wanted Reconstruction to be.**
  - \*1. Federal officials seized abandoned land and sold it at nominal prices to freedmen.**
  - \*2. Schools, the most famous of which was the Penn School, were established by Northern philanthropists.**
  - \*3. This combination of federal government action and private philanthropy had decidedly mixed results and did not become the model for the reconstruction of the South.**
  
- \*F. Presidential Reconstruction**
  - \*1. For a brief period in 1865, civil government was suspended and the state was ruled by the army of occupation.**
  - \*2. President Johnson appointed Benjamin Franklin Perry, an old pre-war Unionist, as provisional governor with the authority to hold elections for a constitutional convention.**
  - \*3. The Constitution of 1865**
    - \*a. Whites only were allowed to vote.**
    - \*b. Representation in the House of Representatives was to be apportioned on the basis of white population and wealth or taxes paid.**
    - \*c. The constitution was not submitted to the people for ratification.**
  - \*4. The Black Code was then passed by the General Assembly elected under the new constitution.**
    - \*a. The codes were designed primarily to keep black South Carolinians in virtual slavery.**
    - \*b. The South Carolina Black Code and that of Mississippi were public relations disasters for the entire South.**
      - \*i. Northerners of all political persuasions were easily convinced that the Southern states were trying to undo the results of the war.**
      - \*ii. The commander of federal forces in South Carolina suspended the codes.**
      - \*iii. The Civil Rights Act of 1866, guaranteeing legal equality for freedmen, was Congress' response to the Black Codes.**

**\*5. The Fourteenth Amendment was another response to the Black Codes.**

**\*a. It guaranteed all persons “equal protection of the laws.”**

**\*b. It excluded from public office any pre-Civil War officeholder who had supported the Confederacy.**

**\*c. South Carolina and all other ex-Confederate states, except Tennessee, rejected the amendment.**

**\*6. The Black Codes and the refusal to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment gave Radical Republicans all the justification they needed for wresting the reconstruction of the South from President Johnson.**

**\*G. Congressional Reconstruction**

**\*1. In 1867, Congress passed the first Reconstruction Act.**

**\*a. The act abolished all civil governments in the former Confederate states.**

**\*b. It created five military districts; North and South Carolina constituted District 2.**

**\*c. It directed the writing of new state constitutions and the enfranchisement of former slaves.**

**H. The Constitution of 1868**

**1. A majority of the delegates to the convention that wrote the new constitution were black.**

**2. It made some major changes in how state government operated.**

**a. For the first time, representation in the House of Representatives was based on population alone.**

**b. A public school system with compulsory education was established.**

**c. Racial equality was one of the cornerstones of the document and all public schools and institutions were to be open to all regardless of race.**

**d. This constitution was ratified by the people – the only time in the state’s history that the people have had the opportunity to do so.**

- I. State government was under the control of what has been termed “the Radical Republicans,” a coalition of three diverse elements.
  - 1. Blacks who voted for the party that had freed them and given them the vote.
  - 2. Northerners who came South to make the most that they could for themselves out of the Reconstruction regime were called “carpetbaggers.”
  - 3. Native whites who cooperated with the Radicals were called “scalawags.”
  - 4. In the first General Assembly under the new constitution, 33% of the Senate and 62% of the House were black – reflecting voting patterns and the population of the state.
- \*J. “The Great Barbecue” is what some historians have called the decade after the Civil War because of the corruption and graft that existed in every state of the union.**
- K. South Carolina had more than its share of dishonesty and corruption.
  - 1. Bribery of legislators was an accepted practice.
  - 2. The state debt tripled in less than three years.
  - 3. Fraudulent contracts enriched Radical leaders.
  - 4. The state defaulted on millions of dollars worth of bonds and its credit reached the lowest point in history.
- L. Race relations between white and black South Carolinians became increasingly strained during Reconstruction.
  - 1. There was tremendous resentment on the part of native whites to being governed by their former slaves.
  - 2. The Radicals made social equality an item on their agenda and it was anathema to white Carolinians.
    - a. The University of South Carolina became the only Southern state university to be totally desegregated at all levels: trustees, faculty, and students.
    - b. The public schools, what few were established under the Constitution of 1868 were open to all.

3. The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan was a response by some white South Carolinians to what they viewed as the excesses of Radical Reconstruction.
  - a. The Klan was most active in upcountry counties.
  - b. Threats, intimidation, arson, and murder were all used by the Klan to “keep the Negroes in line.”
  - c. In 1871, President Grant declared 9 South Carolina counties in rebellion.
    - i. Federal troops arrested hundreds of suspects.
    - ii. The actions of the federal government broke the back of the Klan in South Carolina.
4. Race riots with loss of life and property damage occurred in towns all across the state underscored the difficulties that both blacks and whites were having in adjusting to the new social order.

M. The Conservative Opposition

1. For four or five years, many whites who could vote did not because they considered it an exercise in futility.
2. The blatant corruption of the Radical regime breathed life into the Democratic Party, although it was not the only opposition group challenging the Radicals.
3. The Taxpayers’ Conventions represented all segments of South Carolina, black and white, who banded together to try to restore good government in South Carolina.

N. The Last Years of Reconstruction

1. Governor Daniel Chamberlain’s attempts to reform the Republican Party led to disunity within its ranks.
2. The Democrats were also divided.
  - a. The Co-operationists or Fusionists wanted to support Chamberlain for reelection in 1876.
  - b. The Straightouts wanted to contest every office up for election.

3. The election campaign of 1876 was marred by violence and intimidation on both sides.
  - a. The Red Shirts, supporters of Wade Hampton, were effective in getting out their supporters and intimidating the opposition.
  - b. Black militia units, supporting Governor Chamberlain's reelection bid, operated in a similar fashion.

**\*O. The Election of 1876**

- \*1. Both candidates claimed victory and charged the other side with voter fraud.**
- \*2. For five months, tensions ran high as two individuals claimed to be governor and two separate groups claimed to be the House of Representatives.**
- \*3. South Carolina's contested electoral votes in the Presidential election eventually were awarded to the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes.**
- \*4. After meeting with both Chamberlain and Hampton, President Hayes withdrew federal troops from South Carolina on 10 April 1877.**
  - \*a. South Carolina was one of the last Southern states in which federal troops were stationed.**
  - \*b. With the withdrawal of troops, the Reconstruction regime collapsed and Chamberlain left the state.**
  - \*c. Hampton was installed as governor and Reconstruction was over officially.**

P. Summary. Reconstruction, even more than the Civil War, is a controversial period in South Carolina history. It was a time of hopes and shattered dreams for blacks and whites alike. "Forty acres and a mule" for the ex-slaves never materialized, but they voted and for a decade they controlled the machinery of state government. South Carolina whites, already bitter from defeat, now found themselves disenfranchised and ruled by their former slaves. "The bottom rail's on the top" one ex-slave taunted his former master. White reaction to Reconstruction shaped the nature of South Carolina political life for the next 75 years.

Q. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina: A History, Chapter 17
2. Blum, Catton, The National Experience, pp. 373-390, 393-396
3. Foner, Reconstruction, see index for "South Carolina"
4. Gordon, Sketches of Negro Life, pp. 55-79
5. Holt, Black Over White
6. Horne, South Carolina, pp. 324-345
7. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 504-527
8. Lander, A History of South Carolina, pp. 3-23
9. Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction
10. Simkins & Woody, Reconstruction in South Carolina
11. Tindall, America, pp. 669-695, 701-105
12. Zuczek, State of Rebellion