

CHAPTER 18

THE RETURN OF THE OLD ORDER

- A. Introduction. With the end of reconstruction, South Carolina no longer was an object of interest on the national scene. For the first time in over two centuries, the state and her people found themselves no longer in the forefront. As one historian put it, South Carolina slipped “into a state of suspended animation.” The men who seized the reins of government from the Radical regime were determined to recreate as much of the pre-Civil War South Carolina as circumstances and the federal government would allow.
- *B. Reunion and Reconciliation**
- *1. The mood of the nation was in favor of the reunification of the North and South.**
 - *2. The Northern reform impulse that had provided key support for Reconstruction had evaporated.**
 - *3. The peaceful settlement of the controversial 1876 election had been possible only because Southern congressmen cooperated.**
 - *a. Rutherford B. Hayes was awarded all contested electoral votes (including those from South Carolina) and was declared President.**
 - *b. President Hayes withdrew the last federal occupation troops from Arkansas, Florida, and South Carolina with the result that the Radical Republican regimes in those states collapsed.**
 - *4. Wade Hampton understood the temper of the times and his actions did much to assuage any lingering Northern apprehensions about letting the old pre-war elite return to power in South Carolina.**
 - *a. He supported Republicans for judgeships and appointed black and white Republicans to state office.**
 - *b. In his speeches he urged his followers to get about the task of rebuilding the state.**
- C. The Bourbons
- 1. The men who supported the election of Wade Hampton and who controlled South Carolina’s government in 1877 called themselves “Redeemers,” because they had “redeemed” the state from the corruption and oppression of the Radicals.

2. Many people called them “Bourbons,” who like the restored monarchists in 19th century France forgot what had caused their downfall and repeated their mistakes.
3. Regardless of what they were called, these men were almost always older, Confederate Army veterans, and members of the pre-Civil War elite.

D. Race Relations, Part 1 (1877-1882)

1. Race relations was one area that the Bourbons treated with a great deal of care – at least for the first four or five years that they were in office.
2. Wade Hampton, the leader of the Bourbons, counseled moderation and actively sought the votes of black Carolinians.
3. There were no segregation laws and many public accommodations, including railroads, theaters, stores, and ice cream parlors, were open to customers regardless of race.
4. South Carolina, more so than most Southern states, was careful not to do anything that might be construed as overtly hostile to blacks and thus risk the possibility of federal military intervention.
5. Even after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875, South Carolina kept hers on the books.

E. Race Relations, Part 2 (1882-1890)

1. After five years in power, the General Assembly, reacting to Congress’ overturning an obviously fraudulent election in favor of a black Congressman, Robert Smalls, enacted legislation to disenfranchise black voters.
 - a. The Election Act of 1882, the so called “eight box law.” In effect required voters to be able to read.
 - b. In apportioning congressional districts in 1882, the General Assembly, gerrymandered the state’s counties in such a way that only one district had enough black voters to elect a congressman.
2. By 1886, individual counties were barring black voters from participating in Democratic Party primaries.
3. As the political contest heated up between the old Bourbons and Ben Tillman’s followers, racial moderation disappeared entirely.

F. The Lost Cause

1. The war was hardly over before white Southerners began to create in their minds the glories of "The Lost Cause" in which men and events associated with the war took on a special, almost holy, significance.
2. Organizations were formed to perpetuate the memories of the war years.
 - a. The United Confederate Veterans was composed of the men who had actually fought for the Confederacy.
 - b. There were several women's organizations including the Confederate Memorial Association and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.
3. Monuments honoring "The Lost Cause" were erected in court house squares all over the state and on the State House grounds in Columbia.
4. The birthdays of Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee, along with Confederate Memorial Day, were made official state holidays.
5. The General Assembly provided pensions for Confederate veterans and their widows.

G. Churches

1. With emancipation, the vast majority of black South Carolinians withdrew from the congregations of their ex-masters and formed their own churches.
 - a. The church quickly became one of the most important institutions in the black community.
 - b. The state's major denominations were soon organized along racial lines.
2. The predominantly white denominations began to take a more active role in politics.
 - a. The "denominationalists," as their opponents called them, very nearly blocked the reopening of any state supported colleges in the 1880s because they did not want the state colleges to compete with the various church-supported colleges.
 - b. The prohibition movement in South Carolina received strong church support

H. Politics

1. Hampton and his followers revived the Democratic Party that was to dominate South Carolina for the next 75 years.
2. Although some blacks responded to Hampton's invitation to join the Democrats, most black remained loyal to the Republicans.
3. Until after World War II, the parties maintained these strong racial identities.
4. With the gradual elimination of black voting, South Carolina became a one party state.
 - a. The Democratic Primary, not the general election was the most important political contest.
 - b. With other ex-Confederate states, South Carolina was one of the states of the "Solid South."

I. The Sad State of the State

1. Overall, South Carolina's economy continued to falter.
2. There was some industrial development, but much of it was under the control of out of state interests.
 - a. The mining of phosphates along the coast continued to be profitable.
 - b. As the state's railroads came under outside control, they no longer funneled freight and goods into Charleston.
 - i. The railroads, as part of regional lines, were more interested in shipping cotton and lumber north to markets.
 - ii. Railroad rates discriminated against those who wanted to ship goods within the state (e.g. it cost only \$0.46 to ship a bale of cotton from Abbeville to New York City, but cost \$1.50 to ship a bale from Abbeville to Charleston!)
3. The vast majority of South Carolinians (more than 75%), worked in agriculture.
 - a. The number of acres of cotton planted increased during the decade of the 1880s, but the price of cotton declined.
 - b. During the decade of the 1880s, the number of farms that were sold for taxes increased significantly.
4. South Carolina was in the throes of an agricultural depression but the state's leaders were oblivious to the farmers' plight.

J. Summary. The “Redemption of South Carolina” might be more properly called the “Overthrow of Reconstruction.” Although Hampton and some of his key lieutenants advocated racial harmony, the harmony was based on their toleration, not on any belief in racial equality. To white South Carolinians, the horrors of “black rule” during Reconstruction were not to be repeated. Thus, the political rights of black South Carolinians were systematically eliminated. The Bourbons seemed to think that simply by being the heroes of '61 and '76, that they could remain in office indefinitely. By ignoring the economic distress affecting a majority of the state’s citizens, they paved the way for Tillman and his political revolution.

K. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina: A History, Chapter 18
2. Blum, Catton, The National Experience, pp. 402-403
2. Cooper, The Conservative Regime, pp. 13-142
3. Horne, South Carolina, 355-359
4. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 530-539
5. Kovacik & Winberry, South Carolina, pp. 106-112
6. Lander, A History of South Carolina, pp. 24-34
7. Tindall, America, pp. 530-539
8. Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, pp. 15-152, 186-302