

CHAPTER 20 SOUTH CAROLINA AND THE FIRST NEW SOUTH

I. The “New South” Economy

A. Introduction. The “New South,” as proclaimed by Henry Grady of the Atlanta Constitution, was a region bustling with new energy and new ideas. Industry was making great strides and the daily lives of the people were improving. Only some South Carolinians responded to the siren song of the “New South.’ In the upcountry, town boosters and local entrepreneurs raised capital for railroads, textile mills, and power plants. In the lowcountry, all energies were put into agriculture and things remained much as they had been.

B. Agriculture

1. In general, the agricultural sector of the state remained in the doldrums until the early years of the 20th century.

a. Because of the crop lien system of financing farming, farmers planted more and more cotton.

***i. Because of overproduction of cotton in the South in general, cotton prices remained very low except for a brief period of prosperity around World War I.**

ii. Cotton production depleted the soil of nutrients.

iii. The use of marginal lands and unscientific farming methods resulted in severe soil erosion.

b. Rice production continued to decline and after severe storms in 1910 and 1911 virtually ceased.

c. Tobacco was introduced into the Peedee section of the state early in the 20th century and rapidly replaced cotton in that section of the state.

d. The agricultural work force in the state was very heavily black and the most productive agricultural lands were below the fall line.

e. Clemson College very quickly began to fulfill its mission of assisting the farmers.

- f. The Coker Pedigreed Seed Company of Hartsville pioneered the development of hybrids suitable for Southern farmers.

C. The Growth of Industry

1. Industry as a threat to South Carolina's agricultural society, post war politicians did what they could to make the state more attractive for economic development.
 - a. In 1886, for the first time in the state's history, the General Assembly passed a general incorporation law which encouraged economic development.
 - b. The General Assembly, when asked, passed laws permitting local governments to give aid to railroads.
 - c. The Agriculture Bureau actively promoted the state through publications and exhibits.
2. Although northern capital was involved in some of the post war economic development, a surprising amount of the investment in South Carolina's textile mills came from within the state.
3. Between 1880 and 1920, the rapid growth of the textile industry was phenomenal.
 - a. The number of mills increased from 14 to 184.
 - b. The number of spindles increased from approximately 82,000 to nearly 5,000,000.
 - c. The number of workers increased from approximately 2,000 to more than 55,500.

D. The Labor Force for the Mills

1. The labor force for the mills was drawn primarily from the farm population of the Piedmont.
2. The textile workers (or mill operatives as they were called frequently) were virtually all white: men, women and children of all ages.
3. Southern white labor was considerably cheaper than that in New England.

4. Labor unions made little headway in organizing the state's textile workers.

E. Textile Workers and Politics

1. The sudden migration of thousands of farm families to the mill towns created for the first time in the state a working class whose interests differed from the traditional agricultural interests that governed the state.
2. Tillman had ignored the mill workers, but one of his disciples, Coley Blease made political hay out of their discontent.
 - a. He appealed to the dispossessed tenant farmers and textile mill workers (many of whom had been tenant farmers).
 - b. It had not taken the textile workers long to develop and antagonism toward the townspeople and farmers who looked down on them as "lint heads" and "bobbin dodgers."
 - c. Blease played on the mill workers' prejudices of race, class, and religion.
 - i. He was a vicious race baiting speaker who advocated white supremacy and encouraged lynching.
 - ii. Even more than Tillman, he blamed the "aristocracts" for all problems facing the state.
 - d. After two unsuccessful statewide races, Blease was elected governor in 1910 with the overwhelming support of the textile workers and the liquor and gambling interests.
 - i. As governor he pardoned more than 1,500 criminals which outraged all but his followers.
 - ii. He opposed compulsory education, the use of white taxpayers' taxes for black schools, safety inspections of factories and textile mills, and any law reducing the work week.

- F. The South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition (1901-1902) was an unsuccessful "New South" promotion by some of the state's businessmen to boost the port of Charleston.

- G. Summary. South Carolina's response to the "New South" was mixed. The business and political leadership of the upcountry responded and their section of the state developed an industrial base that by 1920 made South

Carolina one of the leading textile manufacturing states in the nation. On the other hand, the lowcountry languished, and what had been one of the wealthiest regions in the United States remained one of the poorest.

H. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina: A History, Chapter 20
2. Blum, Catton, That National Experience, pp. 404-410
3. Bryan, Clemson, pp. 1-49
4. Carlton, Mill and Town in South Carolina, pp. 1-128, 215-272
5. Coclanis, The Shadow of a Dream, pp. 136-158
6. Cooper, The Conservative Regime, pp. 116-142
7. Gordon, Sketches of Negro Life, pp. 8-173
8. Horne, South Carolina, 346-354
9. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 582-591, 608-612
10. Kovacik & Winberry, South Carolina, pp. 112-123
11. Lander, A History of South Carolina, pp. 49-53, 82-88, 94-102
12. Tindall, America, pp. 708-719
13. Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, pp. 92-152

II. Everyday Life In South Carolina, 1865-1920

A. Introduction. Following the war and emancipation, black and white South Carolinians had to readjust to new social relationships. Although there was no legal segregation in the state until the 1890s, black and white Carolinians often went their separate ways – even in areas where before that had shared activities and experiences.

B. Education

1. Although the Constitution of 1868 provided for a public school system, little was done during Reconstruction or after to make the public schools a reality.

2. Charleston continued its pre-war public school system and Columbia and Greenville established public schools in the 1880s, but public schools were notably lacking in rural counties.
3. Institutions of higher education proliferated.
 - a. Prior to the war, the state had funded two colleges: The South Carolina College and The Citadel.
 - b. By 1900, the state had five public institutions of higher education: The Citadel, Clemson, South Carolina State College, the University of South Carolina, and Winthrop College
 - c. After the war there were two new groups seeking a college education.
 - i. The ex-slaves were hungry for education at all levels.
 - a. During Reconstruction, blacks attended the University of South Carolina until it was closed in 1877.
 - b. Church-supported colleges such as Allen, Benedict, Claflin, and Vorhees were established, often with financial support from northern philanthropy.
 - ii. Because of the number of white men killed and permanently maimed during the war, white women had to become educated in order to work to support themselves and their families.

C. Entertainment

1. There were annual county fairs in almost every county in the state.
2. All-day group excursions and picnics were popular pastimes.
3. Union soldiers had introduced South Carolina youngsters to baseball during Reconstruction and the sport soon was being played in sandlots everywhere.
4. Circuses usually played for a day or two in county seats and the larger towns.
5. Because of the development of railroads, vaudeville troops could get to most towns that boasted of having “opera houses” or theaters.
 - a. However, the heyday of vaudeville in South Carolina did not last very long as owners began to convert their theaters and opera houses into movie theaters.

- b. In larger towns, there were separate theaters for blacks and whites.
 - c. Where there were not any separate theaters, balconies sometimes were reserved for black patrons.
- 6. Intercollegiate sports competition began in the 1890s, with church-supported colleges such as Furman and Wofford, taking the lead.**
- a. Baseball was the most important of the intercollegiate sports.
 - b. Football appeared in the 1890s and the first Carolina-Clemson game was played in 1896.
7. Political stump meetings during election years were a combination of public information on issues and entertainment.
- a. Candidates for statewide office were expected to speak in every county so that the voters would know their positions.
 - b. Just as today's "media campaigns" favor those with good looks, the stump meetings favored those who could rouse the emotions of the crowd – not necessarily the best candidates.

D. Holidays

- 1. Nowhere was the segregation of life in the state more noticeable than in the celebration of holidays.
- 2. Black South Carolinians observed holidays that had special significance to them in terms of freedom.
 - a. Emancipation Day, January 1st, was one of the more important holidays in the black community.
 - b. The Fourth of July was another major black holiday – which South Carolinians virtually ignored the "Yankee holiday" until well into the 20th century.
 - c. On Christmas Eve, the "watch night" was observed with singing and prayer in anticipation of the birth of the Christ child.
- 3. With the exception of Christmas, white South Carolinians tended to observe holidays that had associations with "The Lost Cause."
 - a. Christmas celebrations centered on the home.

I. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina, Chapter 20
2. Ashmore, Greenville, pp. 89-124
3. Carlton, Mill and Town in South Carolina, pp. 129-214
4. Edgar & Wooley, Columbia, pp. 53-104
5. Fields, Lemon Swamp
6. Horne, South Carolina, 393-399
7. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 536-537, 543-556, 591-600
8. Lander, A History of South Carolina, pp. 122-127, 138-168

III. SOUTH CAROLINA PROGRESSIVES

- *A. Introduction. The Progressive movement on a national level was a crusade for political and social reform and a campaign against political bosses and the social evils that beset American society at the turn of the century. In South Carolina, there were Progressives, but their reforming impulses were tempered by the political reality that there was and would be only one political party. Progressives in South Carolina worked for a variety of social and political reforms.
- B. South Carolina's Progressive Leadership
1. **Governors Heyward, Ansel, Manning, and Cooper were cut in the progressive mold.**
 2. The State newspaper became an effective statewide force in promoting various progressive causes.
 3. In cities and towns all across the state there were men and women who worked to make their communities better placed in which to live.
- C. Social Reform
1. The state's first child labor law, prohibiting children under 12 from working in mines and factories was passed in 1903.
 2. Most progressives considered liquor to be one of the country's major social ills.

- a. In 1907, the Dispensary was abolished and with it a major source of political graft and corruption.
 - b. By 1909, some 20 of the state's 41 counties had voted to become "dry."
 - c. Following a statewide referendum in 1915, the state prohibited the sale of all alcoholic beverages.
3. Under Governor Richard I. Manning, progressivism in South Carolina reached its zenith.
 - a. He championed the reorganization and modernization of the State Hospital for the more humane and effective treatment of its patients.
 - b. During his administration, legislation was enacted reorganizing the corrections system, creating workmen's compensation, and a local option act for compulsory school attendance.
4. In Columbia, Greenville, and elsewhere civic minded citizens raised the funds to build hospitals and libraries.
5. Although women did not vote in South Carolina, they played a major role in many of the reform efforts.
 - a. Women's church groups at the local level were vital to the success of the temperance movement and the campaigns for hospitals and libraries.
 - b. The newly formed South Carolina Federation of Women's clubs provided statewide support for such causes as the establishment in 1915 of the first tuberculosis treatment center in South Carolina.

D. Political Reform

1. The South Carolina Tax Commission was created upon the recommendation of Governor Manning.
 - a. It equalized tax assessments and oversaw the effective enforcement of the state's income tax laws.
 - b. The efficient managing of the state's revenues provided the monies necessary to fund the progressive reforms enacted during the first 20 years of the 20th century.

2. The South Carolina Highway Department was established in 1917 to build a system of improved roads for automobile traffic.
- *3. The specter of “bossism” was one that progressives all over the nation wanted to erase by abolishing wards (or districts) as the basis for representation in municipal governments.**
 - a. In 1910, Columbia adopted a mayor-city commission form of government, one of the types favored in progressive circles.
 - b. Sumter, in 1912, created one of the first council-city manager forms of government in the country and it was quickly hailed as one of the best and most progressive forms of local government.

***E. The Wilson Connection**

- *1. Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States, was one of the national guiding spirits of the Progressive Movement.**
- *2. He had spent his formative teenage years in Columbia and had a number of relatives in the capital city.**
 - *a. He made his public profession of faith as a Presbyterian in the little brick chapel on the grounds of the Columbia Theological Seminary (the building now stands on the Winthrop College campus in Rock Hill).**
 - *b. Throughout his career, he made references to his experiences in South Carolina and how they had shaped his views.**
- *3. Although he had moved North and become Governor of New Jersey, South Carolinians were among the first to support his candidacy.**
- *4. Wilson, “the first Southern President since Reconstruction” rewarded a number of South Carolinians with political appointments.**
- *5. When the President asked for a declaration of war against Germany in 1917, most South Carolinians rallied behind him and the country.**

F. The War Years

1. Governor Manning spearheaded the war effort in South Carolina.

2. Some Carolinians, most notably Cole Blease denounced Manning, the President, and the draft in terms that bordered on treason.
- *3. Military bases blossomed in Charleston, Columbia, Greenville, Parris Island, and Spartanburg.**
- *4. South Carolina native Bernard Baruch was named to head the War Industries Board that placed the American economy on a wartime footing.**
- *5. Thousands of South Carolinians volunteered or were drafted for military service.**
 - a. Some 65,000 eventually served in uniform.
 - b. Thousands of others were rejected as unfit due to disease and generally poor physical condition – an indication of the lack of health services and adequate diet.
 - c. South Carolinians won seven of the 79 Medals of Honor awarded during the war.
6. When the war was over and the soldiers returned from France, many chose not to go back to the farm or mill; instead they sought better jobs in other states.

G. The End of the Progressive Movement in South Carolina

1. Bitter political intriguing by Bleasites during Governor Manning's second term of office pretty well blunted the drive for any more reform legislation.
- *2. The war also seemed to have taken the steam out of the progressive movement and few South Carolinians cared anything about President Wilson's Treaty of Versailles or his League of Nations.**
- *3. Despite the increasingly visible role played by South Carolina women in civic improvement and reform, the General Assembly overwhelmingly refused to ratify the XIXth Amendment.**

H. The Progressive Movement in South Carolina often has been overlooked. South Carolina was out of the national limelight and the negative images of Blease and Bleasism did much to overshadow the efforts of reformers at the state and local level. ***The high tide of South Carolina's progressive era came during Richard I. Manning's first term (1915-1917) which, coincidentally, mirrored the crest of the progressive**

tide in Washington under Woodrow Wilson. The war and political infighting brought a halt to reform efforts in Columbia and Washington.

I. Readings

1. Edgar, South Carolina: A History, Chapter 20
1. Blum, Catton, The National Experience, pp. 539-547, 572-578, 588-589, 593-612
2. Burt, Manning
3. Coit, Mr. Baruch, pp. 130-248
4. Horne, South Carolina, 376-392
5. Jones, South Carolina, pp. 606-607, 612-616
6. Lander, A History of South Carolina, pp. 47-49, 53-66
7. Tindall, America, pp. 903-940, 959-978