SESSION PREPARATION

Read the following material before attending the workshop. As you read the excerpts and primary sources, take note of the “Questions to Consider” as well as any questions you have. The activities in the workshop will draw on information from the readings and the video shown during the workshop.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Emancipation was only the beginning of a long road to freedom for those released from slavery. Following the Civil War, an immense economic and political effort was undertaken, focused on reunifying the divided nation. This unit examines the successes and failures of Reconstruction.

UNIT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the text materials, participating in the workshop activities, and watching the video, teachers will

- explore the political conflicts that arose during Reconstruction concerning the integration of former Confederate states back into the Union;
- learn about the experiences of former slaves and white Southerners in the aftermath of the Civil War;
- examine the economic, social, and demographic changes that shaped the period of Reconstruction.

THIS UNIT FEATURES

- Textbook excerpts (sections of U.S. history surveys, written for introductory college courses by history professors)
- Primary sources (documents and other materials created by the people who lived in the period) including classified advertisements, a law, a contract, a letter, drawings, a painting, and a photograph
- A timeline at the end of the unit, which places important events in the history of Reconstruction
Reconstruction, the process of reintegrating the eleven southern states that had left the Union, began at the end of the Civil War and ended in 1877. At the end of the war, the victorious Union faced two problems: how to reunite with bitter, defeated white Southerners and how to incorporate freed black people into the body politic. Public opinion in the North divided and shifted over these questions. Andrew Johnson, Lincoln’s successor, was nearly impeached for treating the ex-Confederates leniently. For several years, the federal government funded federal troops and programs to assist former slaves in the South, although most Southerners, black and white, struggled with poverty and other consequences of the war. Northern sentiment for Reconstruction soon waned and, by 1877, the South was back under the control of whites determined to subordinate African Americans.

But the Union’s victory in the war remade the United States. By 1877, when Reconstruction ended, the federal government had become much more powerful. The Civil War and Reconstruction also entrenched the Northern program of state-sponsored economic expansion. The transcontinental railroads were the most obvious example of federally sanctioned and monumental business ventures. Reconstruction also provided some protection to freed African Americans to form families, start businesses, and serve in political offices.

**Theme One:**
Reconstruction, the process of integrating the former Confederate states back into the Union, caused political conflicts in both the North and the South.

**Theme Two:**
Emancipation was only the beginning of a long road to equality for former slaves, as they improved their lives in the face of strong and determined opposition.

**Theme Three:**
The period known as Reconstruction was shaped by rapid economic, social, and demographic changes.
Historical Perspectives

The Civil War left a great deal of economic devastation and social change in the former Confederate states. Different groups of people wanted different results from the Reconstruction process, and these goals often conflicted. Eventually, Northern interest in Reconstruction waned in the 1870s as Southern opposition remained strong, and Republican leaders became more interested in industrial and western expansion.

Hands on History

Russell Kracke of the American Theological Library Association preserves religious periodicals, including some by and about African Americans during Reconstruction. Microfilming these newspapers and magazines serves both to keep a record of deteriorating, rare documents and to make them widely available to scholars.

Faces of America

Examining how different groups of people accessed and maintained economic and political power during the Reconstruction offers a way to understand the social and political dynamics of the time.

Hiram Rhodes Revels was born a free black in North Carolina. He was elected to the state senate in 1870, and then appointed to the U.S. Senate, becoming the first black United States senator.

Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas was born to a wealthy plantation-owning family in Georgia and was very well educated. Her detailed journals depict how the Civil War and the end of slavery cost families a great deal of their wealth.

Grenville Mellen Dodge was an officer in the Union Army, who became chief engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad and, therefore, played a critical role in uniting the nation’s economy.
Theme One: Reconstruction, the process of integrating the former Confederate states back into the Union, caused political conflicts in both the North and the South.

Overview

In a sense, Reconstruction began before the war ended, when Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, freed slaves in the Confederacy, and Union armies controlled more and more Southern territory. Lincoln’s death and the war’s end increased uncertainty about a number of questions: What should be done to protect the rights of the recently freed slaves—and just how far did those rights extend? How, if at all, should former Confederates be punished? Under what conditions would rebel states be allowed to return to the Union?

These questions not only divided whites from blacks and South from North—they also proved divisive within groups, such as white Northerners.
1. Wartime Preludes to Postwar Policies

The political and social complications of a northern victory became apparent long before the Confederates laid down their arms at Appomattox Courthouse. Wartime experiments with African American free labor in Union-occupied areas foreshadowed bitter postwar debates. As early as November 1861, Union forces had occupied the Sea Islands off Port Royal Sound in South Carolina. In response, wealthy cotton planters fled to the mainland. As many as 10,000 slaves stayed behind on the islands to fish and to cultivate corn for themselves.

Over the next few months, three groups of northern civilians landed on the Sea Islands with the intention of guiding blacks in the transition from slave to free labor. Teachers arrived intent on creating schools, and missionaries hoped to start churches. A third group, representing Boston investors, had also settled on the Sea Islands to assess economic opportunities; by early 1862, they decided to institute a system of wage labor that would reestablish a staple crop economy and funnel cotton directly into northern textile mills. The freed slaves gave a cautious welcome to the teachers and missionaries, but they resisted growing cotton for the wartime market. They preferred to grow crops for their families to eat rather than cotton to sell, relying on a system of barter and trade among networks of extended families. Their goal was to break free of white landlords, suppliers, and cotton merchants . . .

[Lincoln was a pragmatist, and was more interested in winning the war as quickly as possible than in planning for how the nation would reunite. Some of his proposals for reunification were, therefore, calculated to appeal to Southerners.] In December 1863 the president outlined his Ten Percent Plan. This plan would allow former Confederate states to form new state governments once 10 percent of the men who had voted in the 1860 presidential election had pledged allegiance to the Union and renounced slavery. Congress never acted on Lincoln’s plan because many Republicans felt the need for harsher measures.

Instead, at the end of their 1864 session, legislators passed the Wade-Davis Bill, which would have required a majority of southern voters in any state to take a loyalty oath affirming their allegiance to the United States. By refusing to sign the bill before Congress adjourned, Lincoln vetoed the measure (the so-called pocket veto). However, the president approved the creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau in March 1865. The Bureau was responsible for coordinating relief efforts on behalf of blacks and poor whites loyal to the Union, for sponsoring schools, and for implementing a labor contract system on southern plantations. Congress also created the Freedman’s Savings and Trust Bank in the hope that the former slaves would save a part of their earnings.

Even Unionists approached Reconstruction with different, often conflicting goals.

**Chart of Conflicting Goals During Reconstruction**

Examine these conflicting goals which, at a human level, were the challenge of Reconstruction. How could each group possibly fulfill its goals when so many of them are in conflict with other groups? You may find yourself referring back to this chart throughout the chapter. How can each group fulfill its goals?

**Victorious Northern (“Radical”) Republicans**
- Justify the war by remaking southern society in the image of the North
- Inflict political but not physical or economic punishment on Confederate leaders
- Continue programs of economic progress begun during the war: high tariffs, railroad subsidies, national banking
- Maintain the Republican party in power
- Help the freedpeople make the transition to full freedom by providing them with the tools of citizenship (suffrage) and equal economic opportunity

**Northern Moderates (Republicans and Democrats)**
- Quickly establish peace and order; reconciliation between North and South
- Bestow on the southern states leniency amnesty, and merciful readmission to the Union
- Perpetuate land ownership, free labor, market competition, and other capitalist ventures
- Promote local self-determination of economic and social issues; limit interference by the national government
- Provide limited support for black suffrage

**Old Southern Planter Aristocracy (Former Confederates)**
- Ensure protection from black uprising and prevent excessive freedom for former slaves
- Secure amnesty, pardon, and restoration of confiscated lands
- Restore traditional plantation-based, market-crop economy with blacks as cheap labor force
- Restore traditional political leaders in the states
- Restore traditional paternalistic race relations as basis of social order

**New “Other South”: Yeoman Farmers and Former Whigs (Unionists)**
- Quickly establish peace and order; reconciliation between North and South
- Achieve recognition of loyalty and economic value of yeoman farmers
- Create greater diversity in southern economy; capital investments in railroads, factories, and the diversification of agriculture
- Displace the planter aristocracy with new leaders drawn from new economic interests
- Limit the rights and powers of freedpeople; extend suffrage only to the educated few

**Black Freedpeople**
- Secure physical protection from abuse and terror by local whites
- Achieve economic independence through land ownership (40 acres and a mule) and equal access to trades
- Receive educational opportunity and foster the development of family and cultural bonds
- Obtain equal civil rights and protection under the law
- Commence political participation through the right to vote

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2. Presidential Reconstruction, 1865–1867

When Andrew Johnson, the seventeenth president of the United States, assumed office in April 1865, he brought his own agenda for the defeated South. Throughout his political career, Johnson had seen himself as a champion of poor white farmers in opposition to the wealthy planter class. A man of modest background, he had been elected U.S. senator from Tennessee in 1857. He alone among southern senators remained in Congress and loyal to the Union after 1861 . . .

Soon after he assumed the presidency, Johnson disappointed congressional Republicans who hoped that he would serve as a champion of the freedpeople. He welcomed back into the Union those states reorganized under Lincoln’s 10 percent plan . . . Johnson also outlined a fairly lenient plan for readmitting the other rebel states into the Union. Poor whites would have the right to vote, but they must convene special state conventions that would renounce secession and accept the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery . . . The president opposed granting the vote to the former slaves; he believed that they should continue to toil as field workers for white landowners . . .

The southern states that took advantage of Johnson’s reunification policies passed so-called Black Codes. These state laws were an ill-disguised attempt to institute a system of near-slavery. They aimed to penalize “vagrant” blacks, defined as those who did not work in the fields for whites, and to deny blacks the right to vote, serve on juries, or in some cases even own land . . . People arrested under the Black Codes faced imprisonment or forced labor.

[Not all Republicans opposed Johnson’s measures.] At the end of the war, congressional Republicans were divided into two camps. Radicals wanted to use strong federal measures to advance black people’s civil rights and economic independence. In contrast, moderates were more concerned with the free market and private property rights; they took a hands-off approach regarding former slaves, arguing that blacks should fend for themselves and avoid dependence on federal aid. But members of both groups reacted with outrage to the Black Codes. Moreover, when the legislators returned to the Capitol in December 1865, they were in for a shock: among their new colleagues were four former Confederate generals, five colonels, and other high-ranking members of the Confederate elite, including former Vice President Alexander Stephens, now under indictment for treason. All of these rebels were duly elected senators and representatives from southern states. In a special session called for December 4, a joint committee of 15 lawmakers (6 senators and 9 members of the House) voted to bar these men from Congress.
By January 1865, both houses of Congress had approved the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery. The necessary three-fourths of the states ratified the measure by the end of the year. Unlike the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), which freed only slaves in Confederate territory, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery wherever it existed. The federal government now guaranteed freedom for all black people.

[Not all politicians favored these developments, however. Lincoln had barely managed to get the Thirteenth Amendment through Congress, and his successor, President Johnson, opposed Republicans who favored vigorous federal defense of black civil rights.] He vetoed two crucial pieces of legislation: an extension and expansion of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Civil Rights Bill of 1866. This latter measure, a precursor to the Fourteenth Amendment, was an unprecedented piece of legislation. It called on the federal government—for the first time in history—to protect individual rights against the willful indifference of the states (as manifested, for example, in the Black Codes). Congress managed to override both vetoes by the summer of 1866.

Wood et al., 505–7.
**Theme One Primary Source**

**King Andy: How He Will Look and What He Will Do, from Harper’s Weekly**

**Questions to Consider**

1. Nast asserted that Johnson was acting like a king. How did he employ symbols and illustrations to advance that argument?  
2. What does the cartoon imply is wrong with the direction the country is taking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator:</th>
<th>Thomas Nast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context:</td>
<td>Northerners were divided over President Johnson and Reconstruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
<td>Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>To influence public opinion against Johnson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Historical Significance:**

Thomas Nast, a leading political cartoonist, created this elaborate drawing for the 1866 congressional elections. The central figure, President Andrew Johnson, had been a pro-Union Democrat and Lincoln’s vice president. Nast depicted him on a throne flanked by his secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles (as Neptune); secretary of state, William Seward; and Lady Liberty. The figures lined up at the chopping block were radical Republicans who opposed Johnson.

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Item 2966  

*See Appendix for larger image – pg. 50*
3. Presidential Reconstruction

In June of that year, Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment. This amendment guaranteed the former slaves citizenship rights, punished states that denied citizens the right to vote, declared the former rebels ineligible for federal and state office, and voided Confederate debts. The amendment, also, for the first time legally defined the rights of American citizenship and empowered the federal government to protect those rights.

Even before the war ended, Northerners had moved south; and the flow increased in 1865. Black and white teachers volunteered to teach the former slaves to read and write. Some white Northerners journeyed south to invest in land and become planters in the staple crop economy. White southern critics called all these migrants carpetbaggers. This derisive term suggested that the Northerners hastily packed their belongings in rough bags made of carpet scraps and then rushed south to take advantage of the region’s devastation and confusion.

Former Confederates were not the only people suspicious of the newcomers. In 1865 a black abolitionist Union officer, Martin R. Delany, condemned the northern white people recently arrived in South Carolina. These Northerners, Delany told a group of freedpeople, had “come down here to drive you as much as ever. It’s slavery again: northern, universal U.S. slavery.” To many freedpeople, whether they worked for a white Northerner or Southerner, laboring in the cotton fields was but a continuation of slavery.

[But some white Southerners embraced Reconstruction.] Some former southern (white) Whigs, who had been reluctant secessionists, now found common ground with northern Republicans who supported government subsidies for railroads, banking institutions, and public improvements. This group consisted of some members of the humbled planter class as well as men of more modest means. Southern Democrats, who sneered at any alliances with the North, scornfully labeled these whites “scalawags” (the term referred to a scrawny, useless type of horse on the Scottish island of Scalloway).

[All Southerners—black and white, poor and rich—had been harmed by the war. A quarter of a million had perished—more than one-fifth of the adult males in the region—and more still had been wounded. Fortunes had disappeared, money was scarce, and many farm animals and much machinery had been destroyed. The value of the South’s farms was halved between 1860 and 1870. One general, wealthy before the war, lived with his wife in a slave cabin afterwards. Such humiliations made many white Southerners all the more determined to rid themselves of Yankees—and to regain their domination over former slaves.]
Soon after the war’s end, [some] southern white vigilantes launched a campaign of violence and intimidation against freedpeople who dared to resist the demands of white planters and other employers . . . Calling itself the Ku Klux Klan, this group soon became a white supremacist terrorist organization and spread to other states. In May 1866 violence initiated by white terrorists against blacks in Memphis, Tennessee, left 46 freedpeople and 2 whites dead, and in July, a riot in New Orleans claimed the lives of 34 blacks and 3 of their white allies. These bloody encounters demonstrated the lengths to which ex-Confederates would go to reassert their authority and defy the federal government.

Back in Washington, Johnson was not content to veto Republican legislation. In the summer of 1866, he also began to lobby against the Fourteenth Amendment, traveling around the country and urging the states not to ratify it. He argued that policies related to black suffrage should be decided by the states. [The war had settled the issue of whether states could leave the nation, but not long-standing arguments over how much power states could wield inside that nation.] The time had come for reconciliation between the North and South, maintained the president. (The amendment would not be adopted until 1868.)

Congressional Republicans fought back. In the election of November 1866, they won a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress. These numbers allowed them to claim a mandate from their constituents and to override any future vetoes by the president. Taking heart from their newfound legislative successes, moderates and radicals together prepared to bypass Johnson to shape their own Reconstruction policies.

Wood et al., 506–7.
4. **Congressional Reconstruction: The Radicals’ Plan**

The rise of armed white supremacist groups in the South helped spur congressional Republicans to action... A coalition led by two radicals, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, prodded Congress to pass the Reconstruction Act of 1867... The act stripped thousands of former Confederates of voting rights. The former Confederate states would not be readmitted to the Union until they had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and written new constitutions that guaranteed black men the right to vote. The South (with the exception of Tennessee, which had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866) was divided into five military districts. Federal troops were stationed throughout the region. These troops were charged with protecting Union personnel and supporters in the South and with restoring order in the midst of regional political and economic upheaval...

Giving the vote to black men spurred the growth of southern Republican party organizations, called Union Leagues, that provided a political forum for a host of black leaders. [These organizations also provided a vehicle for political education for newly enfranchised black men.]

In Washington in early 1868 President Johnson forced a final showdown with Congress. He replaced several high military officials with more conservative men. He also fired Secretary of War Stanton, in apparent violation of the Tenure of Office Act. Shortly thereafter, in February, a newly composed House Reconstruction Committee impeached Johnson for ignoring the act, and the Senate began his trial on March 30...

...Johnson essentially withdrew from policymaking in the spring of 1868.

That November, Republicans urged Northerners to “vote as you shot” (that is, to cast ballots against the former Confederates) and elected Ulysses S. Grant to the presidency... An estimated half a million former slaves cast their ballots for Grant, whom they hailed as a liberator...

...By the end of 1868, Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, and Florida had met congressional conditions for readmission to the Union, and two years later, Mississippi, Virginia, Georgia, and Texas followed. The Fifteenth Amendment, passed by Congress in 1869 and ratified by the necessary number of states a year later, granted all black men the right to vote. However, in some states, such as Louisiana, reunification gave Democrats license to engage in wholesale election fraud and violence toward
freed men and women. In 1870–1871, a congressional inquiry into the Klan exposed pervasive and grisly assaults on Republican schoolteachers, preachers, and prospective voters, black and white. The Klan also targeted men and women who refused to work like slaves in the fields. In April 1871, Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan Act, which punished conspiracies intended to deny rights to citizens. But Klan violence and intimidation had already taken their toll. Republican voting strength began to decline in rural areas where blacks were the majority population and freedmen had attempted to assert their citizenship rights. [The program of terror had worked.]

Wood et al., 513–17.
Conservative Democrats regained control of every former Confederate state between 1869 and 1877, so the federal government’s reconstruction program only lasted a few years in many states.

Item 3350
Nash et al., 564.
THE UNITED STATES IN 1865

The extensive casualties, costs, and crises resulting from the Civil War shaped the Reconstruction strategies used by both the North and South.

The United States in 1865:
Crises at the End of the Civil War

Given these enormous casualties, costs, and crises of the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, what attitudes, behaviors, and goals would you predict for the major combatants in the war?

Military Casualties
360,000 Union soldiers dead
260,000 Confederate soldiers dead
620,000 Total dead
375,000 Seriously wounded and maimed
995,000 Casualties nationwide in a total male population of 15 million (nearly 1 in 15)

Physical and Economic Crises
The South devastated; its railroads, industry, and some major cities in ruins; its fields and livestock wasted

Constitutional Crisis
Eleven former Confederate states not a part of the Union, their status unclear and future status uncertain

Political Crisis
Republican party (entirely of the North) dominant in Congress; a former Democratic slaveholder from Tennessee, Andrew Johnson, in the presidency

Social Crisis
Nearly 4 million black freedpeople throughout the South facing challenges of survival and freedom, along with thousands of hungry, demobilized Confederate soldiers and displaced white families

Psychological Crisis
Incalculable stores of resentment, bitterness, anger, and despair. North and South, white and black

Item 3614
Nash et al., 546.
Conclusion

Reconstruction presented the nation with the twin challenge of simultaneously reintegrating eleven states whose citizens had fought and died in an attempt to leave the nation, and deciding what would happen to millions of slaves formerly controlled by those Confederates. The decisions prompted a great deal of disagreement in both the North and the South until the withdrawal of federal troops in 1877. This left the states of the former Confederacy largely in the hands of former Confederates, men who were far from sympathetic to black rights. Nonetheless, African Americans made many gains during Reconstruction.

Questions to Consider

1. What aspects of Northern public opinion most motivated Reconstruction?
2. In what ways did Reconstruction create opportunities for former slaves?
Theme Two: Emancipation was only the beginning of a long road to equality for former slaves, as they improved their lives in the face of strong and determined opposition.

Overview

The Civil War was a war of liberation for the nation’s millions of African Americans—nearly nine out of ten had been enslaved at the conflict’s outset. Freedom meant the ability to travel, be paid for one’s labors, have civil rights, and to form families that would not be torn apart. The commonly repeated term “forty acres and a mule” symbolized the former slaves’ hopes that they would receive at least a small chance at making a good living.

Most Southern whites were determined to minimize these freedoms. Throughout Reconstruction, African Americans who asserted themselves risked violence and even death. In addition, as the federal government withdrew from the South, African Americans’ civil and economic rights shrank. However, their determination during these years changed the trajectory of American history.
1. Building Free Communities

Soon after the war’s end, southern blacks set about organizing themselves as an effective political force and as free communities devoted to the social and educational welfare of their own people. As early as summer 1865, groups of freedpeople met in convention to press for their rights as U.S. citizens. A group calling itself Colored Citizens of Norfolk, Virginia, issued an address to the people of the United States, warning that the Emancipation Proclamation was insufficient to check the power of diehard rebels. Mass arrests of blacks had been authorized by “the rebel Mayor.” Former slaveholders were bent on keeping the blacks “in a state of serfdom,” charged the Norfolk petitioners.

Differences among blacks based on income, jobs, culture, and skin color at times inhibited institution-building. Some black communities found themselves divided by class, with blacks who had been free before the war (including many literate and skilled light-skinned men) assuming leadership over illiterate field hands. In New Orleans, a combination of factors contributed to class divisions among people of African heritage. During the antebellum period, light-skinned free people of color, many of whom spoke French, were much more likely to possess property and a formal education compared to enslaved people, who were dark-skinned English speakers. After the Civil War, the more privileged group pressed for public accommodations laws, which would open the city’s theaters, opera, and expensive restaurants to all blacks for the first time. However, black churches and social organizations remained segregated according to class. Yet, citywide black conventions held in 1864 and 1867 brought together all groups of African descent in common cause, defined as “the actual liberation from social and political bondage.”

For the most part, postbellum black communities united around the principle that freedom from slavery should also mean full citizenship rights: the ability to vote, own land, and educate their children. These rights must be enforced by federal firepower: “a military occupation will be absolutely necessary,” declared the blacks of Norfolk, “to protect the white Union men of the South, as well as ourselves.” Freedpeople in some states allied themselves with white yeomen who had long resented the political power of the great planters and now saw an opportunity to use state governments as agents of democratization and economic reform.

Networks of freedpeople formed self-help organizations. Like the sponsors of the Savannah Education Association, blacks throughout the South formed committees to raise funds and hire teachers for neighborhood schools. Small Georgia towns,
such as Cuthbert, Albany, Cave Spring, and Thomasville, with populations no greater than a few hundred, raised up to $70 per month and contributed as much as $350 each for the construction of school buildings. Funds came from the proceeds of fairs, bazaars, and bake sales; subscriptions raised by local school boards; and tuition fees. In the cash-starved postbellum South, these amounts represented a great personal and group sacrifice for the cause of education.

Wood et al., 511–13.
Unit 10 Reconstructing a Nation

Theme Two Primary Source

Want Ads for Lost Relatives 1865–67
Abstractions from The Colored Tennessean, Davidson County, Tennessee

Questions to Consider
1. What do these advertisements reveal about the nature of slavery, such as the structure or composition of slave families?
2. What do these advertisements reveal about the nature of life after freedom, such as the extent to which slaves had been able to keep track of each other after being separated?

Creator: African Americans looking for family
Context: Freedom brought the hope that separated family members might be reunited.
Audience: The African American community
Purpose: To find family members

Historical Significance:
One of the cruelest aspects of slavery was the practice of separating family members from each other. Thousands of former slaves took to the roads during and after the Civil War to search for spouses, parents, children, and other relatives whom they had not seen for many years. Others used advertisements to try to locate these people. Although created during Reconstruction, these primary sources also provide information about the nature of slavery.

Items 2617-18-19

See Appendix for larger images – pg. 51
2. Building Free Communities

Black families sought to care for people who could not care for themselves. Freedmen’s Bureau agents scoffed at blacks who took in “improvident” and “lazy” elderly kin: how could the former slaves hope to advance their own interests if they had to support such unproductive people? All over the South, black families charted their own course. They elected to take in orphans, to pool resources with neighbors, and to arrange for mothers to stay home with their children. These choices challenged the power of former slaveholders and the influence of Freedmen’s Bureau agents and northern missionaries and teachers. At the same time, in seeking to attend to their families and to provide for themselves, southern blacks resembled members of other mid-nineteenth-century laboring classes who valued family ties over the demands of employers and landlords.

Tangible signs of the new emerging black communities infuriated southern whites. [Many thousands of black veterans joined local branches of the Grand Army of the Republic in the South.] A schoolhouse run by blacks proved threatening in a society where most white children had little opportunity to receive an education. Black communities were also quick to form their own churches, rather than continue to occupy an inferior place in white churches. Other sights proved equally unsettling: on a main street in Charleston, an armed black soldier marching proudly or a black woman wearing a fashionable hat and veil, the kind favored by white women of the planter class. These developments help to account for the speed with which whites organized themselves in the Klan and various other vigilante groups, such as Young Men’s Democratic Clubs, White Brotherhood, and Knights of the White Camellia. Members of this last group took an initiation oath that stated, “Our main and fundamental object is the maintenance of the supremacy of the white race in this Republic.”

Wood et al., 512–13.
Harper’s Weekly Depictions of Memphis Race Riot, 1866

Questions to Consider
1. What emotion was the artist trying to elicit? What elements of the drawing are meant to evoke those emotions?
2. Which figures do you think the artist wanted the reader to sympathize with?

Harper's Weekly, May 26, 1866

Creator: Alfred Rudolph Waud
Context: The Memphis Riot of 1866 occurred at a time when former Confederates were taking blatant and often violent steps to dominate former slaves.

Audience: The educated public, particularly in the North
Purpose: To elicit sympathy for the plight of former slaves

Historical Significance:
The hopes of former slaves and Confederates often collided in the years immediately following the Civil War. On May 1, 1866, Memphis police arrested the black driver of a horse-drawn hack who was involved in an accident with one driven by a white man. African Americans who were recently discharged from the Army objected to the arrest, and whites—including policemen and firemen—responded with an onslaught of violence. Three days later, at least forty-six blacks and two whites were dead; several black women had been raped; and hundreds of black people’s homes, schools, and businesses had been wrecked.

This riot and a subsequent one in New Orleans drew Northerners’ attention. The drawing below is from Harper’s Weekly, a magazine that often called for a stronger federal presence in the South.

Item 1349
See Appendix for larger image – pg. 52
Texas Black Code

Southern legislators passed clusters of laws, Black Codes, to reestablish white control. The codes covered where blacks could live, when they could be on the street, what occupations they could pursue, and more. They were particularly concerned with stipulating methods for gaining control of black people’s labor.

Questions to Consider
1. What category of rights did the act extend to African Americans? What category of rights did it deny them?
2. What exactly does the first sentence in Section 2 mean?

CHAPTER CXXVIII
An Act to define and declare the rights of persons lately known as Slaves, and Free Persons of Color.

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas, That all persons heretofore known as slaves, and free persons of color, shall have the right to make and enforce contracts, to sue and be sued, to inherit, purchase, lease, hold, sell, and convey real, personal and mixed estate; to make wills and testaments, and to have and enjoy the rights of personal security, liberty, and private property, and all remedies and proceedings for the protection and enforcement of the same; and there shall be no discrimination against such persons in the administration of the criminal laws of this State.

Sec 2. That all laws and parts of laws relating to persons lately held as slaves, or free persons of color, contrary to; or in conflict with the provisions of this act, be and the same are hereby repealed; Provided, nevertheless, that nothing herein shall be so construed as to repeal any law prohibiting the intermarriage of the white and black races, nor to permit any other than white men to serve on juries, hold office, or vote at any election, State, county or municipal; Provided, further, that nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to allow them to testify, except in such cases and manner as is prescribed in the Constitution of the State.

Approved November 10, 1866.

Creator: The Texas Legislature
Context: After the Civil War, former Confederate states attempted to regain economic control of former slaves without attracting the attention of Northerners who were sympathetic to African American rights.
Audience: Citizens of Texas
Purpose: To take away the rights of former slaves without being too obvious about it
Historical Significance:
President Johnson’s mild version of Reconstruction emboldened Southern whites. Slavery was over, but powerful whites still needed black labor and they realized that the war had left their former slaves more hopeful and assertive.

Southern legislators passed clusters of laws, Black Codes, to reestablish white control. The codes covered where blacks could live, when they could be on the street, what occupations they could pursue, and more. They were particularly concerned with stipulating methods for gaining control of black people’s labor.
3. The White South’s Fearful Response

Many of the qualified rights guaranteed by the Black Codes—testimony in court, for example—were passed only to induce the federal government to withdraw its remaining troops from the South. This was a crucial issue, for in many places marauding groups of whites were terrorizing virtually defenseless blacks. In one small district in Kentucky, for example, a government agent reported the following in 1865:

Twenty-three cases of severe and inhuman beating and whipping of men; four of beating and shooting; two of robbing and shooting; three of robbing; five men shot and killed; two shot and wounded; four beaten to death; one beaten and roasted; three women assaulted and ravished; four women beaten; two women tied up and whipped until insensible; two men and their families beaten and driven from their homes, and their property destroyed; two instances of burning of dwellings, and one of the inmates shot.

Freedpeople clearly needed protection and the right to testify in court against whites.

Nash et al., 549.
4. The Freedmen’s Bureau

Never before in American history had one small agency—underfinanced, understaffed, and undersupported—been given a harder task than the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees and Abandoned Lands. But with amnesty restoring lands to former owners, the Bureau controlled less than 1 percent of southern lands . . .

The Freedmen’s Bureau performed many essential services. It issued emergency food rations, clothed and sheltered homeless victims of the war, and established medical and hospital facilities. It provided funds to relocate thousands of freedpeople. It helped blacks search for relatives and get legally married. It represented African Americans in local civil courts to see that they got fair trials. In conjunction with northern missionary aid societies and southern black churches, the Bureau was responsible for an extensive education program, authorizing a half million dollars for freedpeople’s schooling.

Despite numerous constraints and even threats on their lives, the agents accomplished much. In little more than two years, the Freedmen’s Bureau issued 20 million rations (nearly one-third to poor whites); reunited families and resettled some 30,000 displaced war refugees; treated some 450,000 people for illness and injury; built 40 hospitals and hundreds of schools; provided books, tools, and furnishings to the freedmen; and occasionally protected their civil rights. W.E.B. Du Bois, arguably the greatest African-American scholar of the twentieth century, wrote, “In a time of perfect calm, amid willing neighbors and streaming wealth,” it “would have been a herculean task” for the Bureau to fulfill its many purposes. But in the midst of hunger, hate, sorrow, suspicion, and cruelty, “the work of . . . social regeneration was in large part foredoomed to failure.” The Bureau’s greatest success was education; providing land was its greatest failure. By 1868, all agents were gone as Congress stopped funding.

Nash et al., 555–56.
5. Economic Freedom by Degrees

Despite the best efforts of the Freedmen’s Bureau, the failure of Congress to provide the promised 40 acres and a mule forced freedmen and women into a new economic dependency on former masters . . .

First, a land-intensive system replaced the labor intensity of slavery. Land ownership was concentrated into fewer and even larger holdings than before the war. From South Carolina to Louisiana, the wealthiest tenth of the population owned about 60 percent of the real estate in the 1870s. Second, these large planters increasingly concentrated on one crop, usually cotton, and were tied into the international market. This resulted in a steady drop in food production (both grains and livestock). Third, one-crop farming created a new credit system whereby most farmers—black and white—were forced into dependence on local merchants for renting seed, farm implements and animals, provisions, housing, and land. These changes affected race relations and class tensions among whites.

This new system, however, took a few years to develop after emancipation. At first, most African Americans signed contracts with white landowners and worked fields in gangs very much as during slavery. Supervised by superintendents who still used the lash, they toiled from sunrise to sunset for a meager wage and a monthly allotment of bacon and meal. All members of the family had to work to receive their rations . . .

[But the former slaves chafed under work conditions reminiscent of slavery.] A Georgia planter observed that freedpeople wanted “to get away from all overseers, to hire or purchase land, and work for themselves.” Many broke contracts, haggled over wages, engaged in work slowdowns or strikes, burned barns, and otherwise expressed their displeasure with the contract labor system. In the Sea Islands and rice-growing regions of coastal South Carolina and Georgia, resistance was especially strong . . .

Blacks’ insistence on autonomy and land of their own was the major impetus for the change from the contract system to tenancy and sharecropping. Families would hitch mules to their old slave cabin and drag it to their plot as far from the Big House as possible. Sharecroppers received seed, fertilizer, implements, food, and clothing. In return, the landlord (or a local merchant) told them what and how much to grow, and he took a share—usually half—of the harvest. The croppers’ half usually went to pay for goods bought on credit (at high interest rates) from the landlord. Sharecroppers remained only semi-autonomous, tied to the landlord for economic survival.
Despite this bleak picture, painstaking, industrious work by African Americans helped many gradually accumulate a measure of income, personal property, and autonomy, especially in the household economy of producing eggs, butter, meat, food crops, and other staples. Debt did not necessarily mean a lack of subsistence. In Virginia the declining tobacco crop forced white planters to sell off small parcels of land to blacks. Throughout the South, a few African Americans became independent landowners—about 3–4 percent by 1880, but closer to 25 percent by 1900.

Nash et al., 556–59.
A Freedman’s Work Contract, 1865

Questions to Consider

1. How is the relationship between the freedman and employer similar to or different from slavery?
2. Are there any indications that landowners could manipulate the contract?

Written across script: “Approved Aug 9th 1865
By Order
Saml S. Gardner
Asst Supt Freedmen
by
Fergusen
Selma
Ala
Registered Sept 4, 1865”

State of Ala } a contract entered into, this the 31st day of
Wilcox Co } July, between James G. Tait as employer and
} the following named Freedmen, or Laborers
} as employees of the County & State aforesaid.

The said Freedmen or Laborers, on their part, for & in consideration of the terms hereinafter state, bind themselves, to—faithfully & diligently labor for said Jas G. Tait, during the remainder of the year 1865, (according to the (torn) regulation, conditions & penalties prescribed & contained in a (torn) rules & regulations for the State of Ala. & c.--.) and said labor is to (torn) formed under the direction of the said J.G. Tait, or any agent by him appointed.

The said Freedmen, or Laborers bind themselves to visit, or receive visitors on such conditions as may be agreed upon, by said J.G. Tait or his agent. The Freedmen, or Laborers further bind themselves to account to the said J.G. Tait, for the value of any property of whatever kind or description that may be wasted, lost, or destroyed by reason of the negligence, or careless conduct of said Freedmen or laborers, & the part of the crop allotted to said Freedmen or Laborers, is hereby made liable for the value of any property, so wasted, lost or destroyed. It is further agreed & stipulated, that if any of the said Freedmen or Laborers shall refuse, or fail to work faithfully & diligently, the said James G. Tait or his agent shall have power & is hereby authorised to discharge him or them. The said Jas G. Tait binds himself to pay over & deliver on the premises to said

Creator: Landowners (or people representing them)
Context: With the end of slavery and the federal government’s reluctance to grant land to former slaves, white landowners contracted for the labor of former slaves.
Audience: The people who signed the contract and, if necessary, local courts
Purpose: To stipulate the nature of the labor agreement

Historical Significance:
Few freedpeople were able to gain title to land in the South during Reconstruction. Most entered into various sorts of labor contracts, often with their former owners. Here are several examples.
Freedmen or laborers one-eighth part of the present growing crop of corn, fodder, cowpeas & ground peas, and also one half of the potatoes & sorghum syrup of sickness & rice, & also to furnish food, clothing, houses, fuel, & medicines--& in bad cases a physician

James G. Tait.

Witness
A. L. Whisenhart
W. P. Barnes
A.W. Bethea

Isham his X mark
Washington his X mark
Isaac his X mark
Brian his X mark
Gaster his X mark
John his X mark
Dempsey his X mark
Jeff his X mark
Jack his X mark
Bill Smart his X mark
Widow (torn) her X mark
Widow—Milly her X mark
Dick his X mark
Frank his X mark
Malinda her X mark
Jim his X mark

Tait labor contract (LPR 35, Box 1, Folder 2), Alabama Department of Archives and History, www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/recon/recon1.html.
Protest of the Freedmen of Edisto Island to General Howard, 1865

Questions to Consider
1. How did the petitioners use history to make their argument?
2. What did land represent to them?

Edisto Island, S.C., October, 1865
General It is with painful hearts that we the Committee address you, we have thoroughly considered this order which you wished us to sign, we wish we could do so but cannot feel our rights safe. If we do so,

General we want homesteads; we were promised homesteads by the government; if it does not carry out the promises its agents made to us, if the government having concluded to befriend its late enemies and to neglect to observe the principles of common faith between its self and us its allies in the war you said was over, now takes away from them all right to the soil they stand upon save such as they can get by again working for your late and their all time enemies. If the government does so we are left in a more unpleasant condition than our former

we are at the mercy of those who are combined to prevent us from getting land enough to lay our fathers bones upon. We have property in horses, cattle, carriages, & articles of furniture, but we are landless and homeless, from the homes we have lived in in the past we can only do one of three things step into the public road or the sea or remain on them working as in former time and subject to their will as then. We can not resist it in any way without being driven out homeless upon the road.

You will see this is not the condition of really freemen

You ask us to forgive the land owners of our island, you only lost your right arm. In war and might forgive them. The man who tied me to a tree & gave me 39 lashes & who stripped and flogged my mother & sister & who will not let me stay in his empty hut except I will do his planting & be satisfied with his price & who combines with others to keep away land from me well knowing I would not have any thing to do with him if I had land of my own.—that man, I cannot well forgive. Does it look as if he has forgiven me,
seeing How He tries to keep me In a Condition of Helplessness

General, we cannot remain Here In such condition and If the government permits them to come back we ask It to Help us to reach land where we shall not be slaves nor compelled to work for those who would treat us as such

We Have not been treacherous, we Have not for selfish motives allied to us those who suffered like us from a common enemy & then Having gained our purpose left our allies In their Hands There is no rights secured to us there Is no law likely to be made which our Hands can reach. The state will make laws that we shall not be able to Hold land even If we pay for It Landless, Homeless, Voteless, we can only pray to god & Hope for His Help, your Influence & assistance With consideration of esteem Your Obt Servts

In behalf of the people
Henry Brown
Committee: Ishmael Moultrie
yates Sampson

Henry Bram et al. to Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard, [Oct. 28?, 1865]; and Henry Bram et al. to the President of these United States, Oct. 28, 1865; B-53 1865 and P-27 1865, Letters Received (series 15), Washington Headquarters, RG 105, NARA.
6. Black Self-Help Institutions

[As help from the federal government proved inadequate, the Southern blacks increasingly created their own educational, social, and economic institutions.]

They began, significantly, with churches. The tradition of black community self-help survived in the organized churches and schools of the antebellum free Negro communities and in the “invisible” religious and cultural institutions of the slave quarters. As Union troops liberated areas of the Confederacy, blacks fled white churches for their own, causing an explosion in the growth of membership in African-American churches. The Negro Baptist Church grew from 150,000 members in 1850 to 500,000 in 1870, while the membership of the African Methodist Episcopal Church increased in the postwar decade from 50,000 to 200,000, and by 1896 to over 400,000 members. Other denominations such as the Colored (later Christian) Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church, and the Colored Presbyterian Church all broke with their white counterparts to establish indigenous black churches in the first decade after emancipation.

[African American ministers led efforts to oppose discrimination, some by entering politics: over one-fifth of the black officeholders in South Carolina were ministers.]

The freedpeople’s desire for education was as strong as for religion. Even before the Freedmen’s Bureau ceased operating schools, African Americans assumed more responsibility for their costs and operation . . . Louisiana and Kentucky blacks contributed more to education than the Bureau itself. Georgia African Americans increased the number of “freedom schools” from 79 to 232 in 1866–1867, despite attacks by local whites who stoned them on their way home and threatened to “kill every d——d nigger white man” who worked in the schools.

Black teachers increasingly replaced whites. By 1868, 43 percent of the Bureau’s teachers were African American, working for four or five dollars a month and boarding with families . . . [They found students desperate and determined to take advantage of even slight educational opportunities.] Charlotte Forten, for example, who taught in a school in the Sea Islands, noted that even after a half day’s “hard toil” in the fields, her older pupils were “as bright and as anxious to learn as ever.” . . .

Indeed, by 1870 there was a 20 percent gain in freed black adult literacy, a figure that, against difficult odds, would continue to grow for all ages to the end of the century, when there were more than 1.5 million black children in school with 28,560 black teachers. This achievement was remarkable in the face of crowded facilities, limited resources, local opposition, and absenteeism caused by the demands of fieldwork . . . To train teachers like Forten, northern philanthropists founded Fisk, Howard, Atlanta, and other black universities in the South between 1865 and 1867.

Nash et al., 560–61.
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES IN THE SOUTH DURING RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction saw the establishment of Freedmen's Bureau agencies and black colleges, which were usually created by white charities. These scattered institutions could serve only a small proportion of four million freedpeople. But during a time when few other colleges admitted African Americans, these colleges played a critical role in training black leaders.

Item 3351
Nash et al., 563.
Black Self-Help Institutions

Black schools, like churches, became community centers. They published newspapers, provided training in trades and farming, and promoted political participation and land ownership. These efforts made black schools objects of local white hostility. A Virginia freedman told a congressional committee that in his county, anyone starting a school would be killed and blacks were “afraid to be caught with a book.” In Alabama, the Klan hanged an Irish-born teacher and four black men. In 1869, in Tennessee alone, 37 black schools were burned to the ground.

White opposition to black education and land ownership stimulated African-American nationalism and separatism. In the late 1860s, Benjamin “Pap” Singleton, a Tennessee slave who had escaped to Canada, observed that “whites had the lands and . . . blacks had nothing but their freedom.” Singleton urged them to abandon politics and migrate westward. He organized a land company in 1869, purchased public property in Kansas, and in the early 1870s took several groups from Tennessee and Kentucky to establish separate black towns in the prairie state. In following years, thousands of “exodusters” from the Lower South bought some 10,000 infertile acres in Kansas. But natural and human obstacles to self-sufficiency often proved insurmountable. By the 1880s, despairing of ever finding economic independence in the United States, Singleton and other nationalists urged emigration to Canada and Liberia. Frederick Douglass and other African-American leaders continued to press for full citizenship rights within the United States.

Nash et al., 561–62.
**Conclusion**

Most of the political gains that African Americans made during Reconstruction were short-lived, and the federal government was unwilling to provide many with the land they required for a chance at prosperity. Nevertheless, Reconstruction brought profound changes to Southern blacks: the end of slavery, most notably, but also impressive gains in education, economic independence, and the creation of churches and other social institutions.

**Questions to Consider**

1. Agree or disagree: Considering the attitudes of the time, it is difficult to see how Reconstruction could have offered more opportunities for freedpeople.
2. What, from the perspective of freedpeople, was the leading accomplishment of Reconstruction?
Theme Three: The period known as Reconstruction was shaped by rapid economic, social, and demographic changes.

Overview

Republican opposition to slavery was part of a broader commitment to free labor and active federal intervention to expand the nation’s industrial capacity. The Civil War and Reconstruction were, therefore, accompanied by an ambitious program of economic growth and liberal government grants to railroad companies. Indeed, the Republican Party soon turned its attention from the South and the problems of former slaves to the promise of western development.

This program of development was a boon to some people and a disaster for others. Growing numbers of immigrants from Europe and China came to the United States. Here they labored in its factories, worked on its railroads, or tilled its soils. But the indigenous peoples of the Great Plains soon lost their land and their freedom.
### Theme Three Secondary Source

#### Immigration by Country of Origin, 1831–1940

How did the nature of immigration change after 1860? Consider both the number of immigrants and where they came from.

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Wood et al., 550.
1. Shifting National Priorities

The years between 1865 and 1875 featured not only the rise (and fall) of Republican governments in the South but also a spectacular rise of working-class organizations. Stimulated by the Civil War to improve working conditions in northern factories, trade unions, labor reform associations, and labor parties flourished, culminating in the founding of the National Labor Union in 1866. Before the depression of 1873, an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 American workers enrolled in some 1,500 trade unions, the largest such increase in the nineteenth century. This growth inevitably stirred class tensions. In 1876, hundreds of freedmen in the rice region along the Combahee River in South Carolina went on strike to protest a 40-cent-per-day wage cut, clashing with local sheriffs and white Democratic rifle clubs. A year later, also fighting wage cuts, thousands of northern railroad workers went out in a nationwide wave of strikes, clashing with police and the National Guard.

As economic relations changed, so did the Republican party . . . [By the end of Reconstruction, in 1877, it had become more and more concerned with promoting industrial growth.] In the continuing struggle in American politics between “virtue and commerce,” self-interest was again winning. Abandoning the Freedmen’s Bureau as an inappropriate federal intervention, Republican politicians had no difficulty handing out huge grants of money and land to the railroads. As freedpeople were told to help themselves, the Union Pacific was getting subsidies of between $16,000 and $48,000 for each mile of track laid across western plains and mountains. As Susan B. Anthony and others tramped through the snows of upstate New York with petitions for the rights of suffrage and citizenship, Boss Tweed and other machine politicians defrauded New York taxpayers of millions of dollars. As Native Americans in the Great Plains struggled to preserve their sacred Black Hills from greedy gold prospectors protected by U.S. soldiers, corrupt government officials in the East “mined” public treasuries.

[Black civil rights were also blocked in the North. Segregation eased in some states and cities, and a larger proportion of African Americans voted. But discrimination and prejudice in public and private life remained common.]

Nash et al., 567.
2. Federal Scandals

Honest himself, Grant showed poor judgment of others. The scandals of his administration touched his relatives, his cabinet, and two vice presidents. Outright graft, loose prosecution, and generally negligent administration flourished in a half dozen departments. Most scandals involved large sums of public money. The Whiskey Ring affair, for example, cost the public millions of dollars in lost tax revenues siphoned off to government officials . . .

Nor was Congress pure. Crédit Mobilier, a dummy corporation supposedly building the transcontinental railroad, received generous bonds and contracts in exchange for giving congressmen gifts of money, stocks, and railroad lands. An Ohio congressman described the House of Representatives in 1873 as an “auction room where more valuable considerations were disposed of under the speaker’s hammer than any place on earth.”

Nash et al., 567, 570.

3. Railroads: Pioneers of Big Business

Beginning in 1862, federal and state governments vigorously promoted railroad construction with land grants from the public domain. Eventually, railroads received lands one and a half times the size of Texas. Local governments gave everything from land for stations to tax breaks.

With such incentives, the first transcontinental railroad was finished in 1869. Four additional transcontinental lines and miles of feeder and branch roads were laid down in the 1870s and 1880s. By 1890, trains rumbled across 165,000 miles of tracks. Telegraph lines arose alongside them.

Nash et al., 611–13.
4. The Postwar Western Labor Problem

In 1865 the owners of the Central Pacific Railroad seemed poised for one of the great engineering feats of the nineteenth century. In the race eastward from California, they would construct trestles spanning vast chasms and roadbeds traversing mountains and deserts. Government officials in Washington were eager to subsidize the railroad. What the owners lacked was a dependable labor force. [Mormons and former Union and Confederate soldiers worked on the line.] The Irish workers who began the line in California struck for higher wages in compensation for brutal, dangerous work. These immigrants dropped their shovels and hammers at the first word of a gold strike nearby—or far away. As a result, in 1866 the Central Pacific had decided to tap into a vast labor source by importing thousands of Chinese men from their native Guandong province.

The Chinese toiled to extend the railroad tracks eastward from Sacramento, California, up to ten miles a day in the desert, only a few feet a day in the rugged Sierra Nevada Mountains. They alternately loaded and dumped millions of tons of earth and rocks to clear the land and construct the roadbed. In nerve-wracking feats of skill, they lowered themselves in woven baskets to implant nitroglycerine explosives in canyon walls . . .

Charles Crocker, the general superintendent of the Central Pacific, observed of the Chinese, “Wherever we put them, we found them good.” Paid $1 a day (less than the wage paid to whites), the Chinese had little leverage with which to press for higher compensation. In the spring of 1867, 000 (out of a workforce of 1,000) walked off the job. They demanded $1.50 a day and an eight-hour day. Crocker responded by withholding rations, and the laborers were forced to return to work within a week . . .

Signed in 1868, the Burlingame Treaty, named for Anson Burlingame, an American envoy to China, had supposedly guaranteed government protection for Chinese immigrants as visitors, traders, or permanent residents. Most immigrants were men. [cut sentence] Yet the treaty did not inhibit U.S. employers, landlords, and government officials from discriminating against the Chinese.

By 1870, 40,000 Chinese lived in California and represented fully one-quarter of the state’s wage earners. They found work in the cigar, woolen-goods, and boot and shoe factories of San Francisco; in the gold mining towns, now as laundry operators rather than as miners as they had before the Civil War; and in the fields as agricultural laborers. White workers began to cry unfair competition against this Asian group that was becoming increasingly integrated into the region’s economy.

Wood et al., 520–22.
Completing the Transcontinental Railroad, 1869

Questions to Consider

1. Although photographs may seem like accurate historical documents, this photograph was carefully staged. What was the photographer trying to convey to people who would view this image?
2. What people were featured in the image? What people were left out?

Creator: Andrew J. Russell
Context: The completion of transcontinental railroad was of great symbolic and practical importance, as it constituted a key event in the nation's economic development.
Audience: The general public
Purpose: To commemorate this occasion

Historical Significance:
Businessmen had been lobbying Congress to subsidize a railroad stretching across the county since the 1840s, but not until the Republicans took power in 1861 did they find sufficient support. Eight years later the rails met near Ogden, Utah.

The railroad’s completion reflected the nation’s shifting political and social landscape. Republican businessmen, including some prominent Union officers, led the endeavor, which promised to move goods more quickly across the continent and to and from Asia. Many of the nation’s growing numbers of immigrants labored on the project, including thousands of men from China who had given up on gold mining.

This image is a photograph taken during the 1869 ceremony.
**What Shall We Do with John Chinaman?**

**Questions to Consider**

1. What features of the Chinese man’s body and clothing did the artist exaggerate?
2. What do you think those exaggerations were meant to convey?
3. Contrast how the two white characters are depicted. How are they responding to the possibilities of Chinese labor?

**Creator:** An unknown artist from *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*

**Context:** Chinese immigrants were willing to work for lower wages than most other laborers, a fact that alarmed some people in the U.S. and encouraged others.

**Audience:** The general U.S. public

**Purpose:** Entertainment and to advocate a viewpoint

**Historical Significance:**

The pair of cartoons shown here appeared in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* in 1869, some twenty years after Chinese began immigrating in large numbers to the United States. By the late 1860s, many white members of the working class worried that Chinese immigrants were taking jobs away from them—or at least causing wages to fall. In the first picture, an Irish immigrant is shown above the caption: “What Pat Would Do with Him.” In the second depiction a white Southerner is shown leading the Chinese man South above the caption: “What Will Be Done with Him.” One cartoon emphasizes the dangers of cheap labor; the other the possibilities of it. In fact, few Chinese people settled in the South during the nineteenth century.

*Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH JOHN CHINAMAN? (1869). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

*See Appendix for larger image – pg. 54*
5. The Postwar Western Labor Problem

As a group, Chinese men differed from California Indians, who remained trapped in the traditional agricultural economy of unskilled labor. Whites appropriated Indian land and forced many men, women, and children to work as wage earners for large landowners. Deprived of their familiar hunting and gathering lands, and wracked by disease and starvation, California Indians had suffered a drastic decline in their numbers by 1870, from 100,000 to 30,000 in 20 years.

[The owners of large western factories and other businesses desperately needed inexpensive and reliable labor.] By the early 1870s western manufacturers were faltering under the pressure of cheaper goods imported from the East by rail. At the same time, the growth of fledgling gigantic agricultural businesses opened new avenues of trade and commerce. Located in an arc surrounding the San Francisco Bay, large (“bonanza”) wheat farmers grew huge crops and exported the grain to the East Coast and to England. These enterprises stimulated the building of wharves and railroad trunk lines and encouraged technological innovation in threshing and harvesting. Western enterprises showed a growing demand for labor whatever its skin color or nationality.

[But western economic expansion also served national, especially northern, interests.] To unite the entire country together as a single economic and political unit was the Republican ideal. Achieving this ideal entailed both technological and military means. The railroads in particular served as vehicles of national integration. When the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads met at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869, the hammering of the spike that joined the two roads produced a telegraphic signal received simultaneously on both coasts, setting off a national celebration. In Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell tolled.

[The federal government played a major role in making the West safe for business.] Between 1865 and 1890, U.S. military forces conducted a dozen separate campaigns against western Indian peoples and met Indian warriors in battle or attacked Indian settlements in more than 1000 engagements. The war for the West pitted agents of American nationalism against Indian groups that battled to maintain their distinctive way of life in a rapidly changing world . . . [At a time when African Americans were demanding their full rights as citizens of the United States, Native Americans were asserting their rights to maintain their independence.]

Wood et al., 522.
6. The End of Reconstruction

[Meanwhile, Republican and Northern support for Reconstruction was waning.] Soon after Grant’s second inauguration, a financial panic, caused by commercial overexpansion into railroads, railroad mismanagement, and the collapse of some eastern banks, started a terrible depression that lasted throughout the mid-1870s. In these hard times, economic issues dominated politics, further diverting attention from the freedpeople. As Democrats took control of the House of Representatives in 1874 and looked toward winning the White House in 1876, politicians talked about new Grant scandals, unemployment and public works projects, the currency, and tariffs. No one said much about civil rights. In 1875, a guilt-ridden Congress did pass Senator Charles Sumner’s civil rights bill to put teeth into the Fourteenth Amendment. But the act was not enforced, and after eight years, the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. Congressional Reconstruction, long dormant, was over. The election of 1876, which was the closest in American history until 2000, sealed the end.

As their presidential candidate in 1876, the Republicans chose a former governor of Ohio, Rutherford B. Hayes, partly because of his reputation for honesty, partly because he had been a Union officer (a necessity for post–Civil War candidates), and partly because, as Henry Adams put it, he was “obnoxious to no one.” The Democrats nominated Governor Samuel J. Tilden of New York, a well-known civil service reformer who had broken the corrupt Tweed ring.

Like Al Gore in 2000, Tilden won a popular-vote majority and appeared to have enough electoral votes (184 to 165) for victory—except for 20 disputed votes, all but one in the Deep South states of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina, where some federal troops remained and where Republicans still controlled the voting apparatus despite Democratic intimidation. [Southern Democrats suppressed the votes of many African Americans.] To settle the dispute, Congress created a special electoral commission of eight Republicans and seven Democrats, who voted along party lines to give Hayes all 20 votes and a narrow electoral-college victory, 185 to 184.

As in the election of 2000, outraged Democrats protested the outcome and threatened to stop the Senate from officially counting the electoral votes, preventing Hayes’s inauguration. There was talk of a new civil war but a North–South compromise emerged. Northern investors wanted the government to subsidize a New Orleans-to-California railroad. Southerners wanted northern dollars but not northern political influence—no social agencies, no federal
enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and no military occupation, not even the symbolic presence left in 1876.

As the March 4 inauguration date approached, and as newspapers echoed outgoing President Grant’s call for “peace at any price,” the forces of mutual self-interest concluded the “compromise of 1877.” Democrats agreed to suspend their resistance to the counting of the electoral votes, and on March 2, Hayes was declared president. After his inauguration, he ordered the last federal troops out of the South, sending them west to fight Indians, appointed a former Confederate general to his cabinet, supported federal aid for economic and railroad development in the South, and promised to let southerners handle race relations themselves. On a goodwill trip to the South, he told blacks that “your rights and interests would be safer if this great mass of intelligent white men were let alone by the general government.” The message was clear: Hayes would not enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, initiating a pattern of governmental inaction and white northern abandonment of African Americans that lasted to the 1960s. But the immediate crisis was averted, officially ending Reconstruction.

Nash et al., 570–71.
Conclusion

The Reconstruction years saw a great deal of change outside of the South, much of it driven by the federal government. Immigration swelled, cities and industrial development expanded, rails and settlers pushed farther into the West. Republican political hopes for the South were in pieces by 1877. But their hopes that a powerful federal government would lead a program of industrial growth were largely realized.

Questions to Consider

1. What was the relationship between westward growth and the end of Reconstruction?
2. Did federal policy during Reconstruction simply serve the interests of big business?

Unit Conclusion

Historians often characterize the Civil War and Reconstruction as a sort of second American Revolution, a crucible in which questions left unsettled during and after the first American Revolution were at last settled. Indeed, by 1877, the issue of whether or not states could leave the Union had been decided, slavery had been abolished, the federal government had assumed a more active role in the nation’s economic life, and the United States was on the cusp of becoming the world’s leading industrial power.

For African Americans and whites who supported them, this revolution was far from complete. The overwhelming majority of blacks remained poor and effectively disenfranchised, and few whites—Northern or Southern—seemed very concerned about it. Political, economic, and social discrimination would not relent for many more decades.

Even so, Reconstruction laid a foundation for many changes and reforms that lay in the future. Constitutional amendments asserting black people’s rights to citizenship had been passed. Slavery had been abolished. Increasing numbers of African Americans—often at the risk of their lives—sought and seized fuller educational, economic, and even political opportunities. These advances would remain gradual for many years to come. But they constituted grounds for hope that one day the nation would realize not just its economic might, but also its potential for justice and opportunity for all.
TIMELINE

1863 Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation; Work begins on the first transcontinental railroad

March 3, 1865 Freedmen’s Bureau created

April 8, 1865 Confederate armies surrender, effectively ending the Civil War

April 14, 1865 President Lincoln assassinated

Dec. 6, 1865 Thirteenth Amendment, prohibiting slavery, is ratified

1865 General Grenville Dodge commands military campaign against Native American tribes on the Great Plains; major race riots in Memphis and New Orleans; Southern states begin enacting Black Codes

1866 Republicans win solid majorities in both Houses of Congress

1867 First, Second, and Third Reconstruction Acts are passed over Johnson’s veto

1868 Impeachment proceedings fail to remove President Johnson from office; Fourteenth Amendment ratified; Ulysses S. Grant elected president; Fourth Reconstruction Act passed

1869 Transcontinental railroad completed; Tennessee is first state to replace bi-racial state government with white Democratic one

1870 Hiram Revels becomes first African American Senator; Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution ratified, guaranteeing black male suffrage; Force Acts issued

1872 Freedman’s Bureau abolished

1873 Financial panic causes major economic depression

1874 Democrats regain control of both the House and the Senate

1875 Civil Rights Act passed

1876 Disputed Presidential election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden

1877 Northern troops withdraw from the South under Compromise of 1877

1899 Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas elected president for Georgia Women’s Suffrage Association

1990 Journals of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas published
UNIT REFERENCE MATERIALS


FURTHER READING


6 - The University of North Carolina, *Documenting the American South* Web site. http://docsouth.unc.edu/

VISIT THE WEB SITE

Explore these themes further on the America’s History in the Making Web site. See how this content aligns with your own state standards, browse the resource archive, review the series timeline, and explore the Web interactives. You can also read full versions of selected *Magazine of History* (MOH) articles or selected National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) lesson plans.
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE

Item 2966

Thomas Nast, KING ANDY: HOW HE WILL LOOK AND WHAT HE WILL DO, FROM Harper's Weekly (1866). Courtesy of HarpWeek, LLC.
THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE
Items 2617-18-19

THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE

Item 1349

Alfred Rudolph Waud, SCENES IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE DURING THE RIOT (1866).

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
Andrew J. Russell, "JOINING THE TRACKS FOR THE FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD, PROMONTORY, UTAH, TERR. (1869).

Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration.
Appendix 3–2

Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH JOHN CHINAMAN? (1869). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.