

Legacy and Reconstruction

Part Three



Part One

Part Two

Part Three

Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.



Immediately after the Civil War, America underwent a period of great internal migration.

Many Northerners moved to the Southern states after the war to take advantage of the post-war **Reconstruction**.



Some Southerners and black freemen welcomed the reconstruction process as it would help modernize the South.

However, both groups were viewed with great resentment by many white Southerners. Northern newcomers were nicknamed **Carpetbaggers** and their Southern helpers were **Scalawags**.



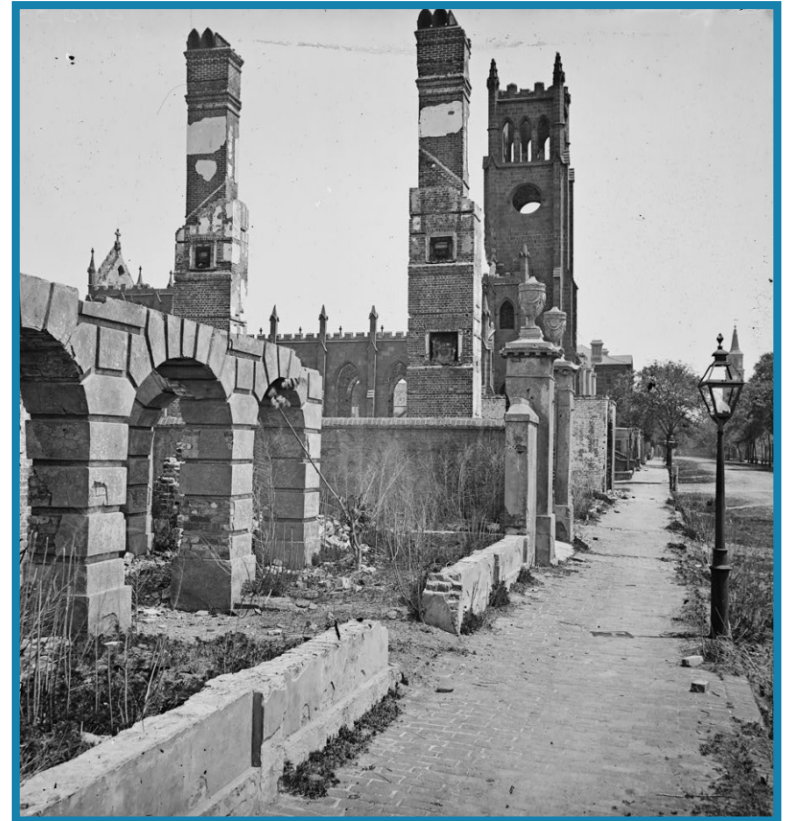
Carpetbaggers and scalawags



The “New South”

After the election, many so-called carpetbaggers and scalawags focused on repairing the weakened Southern economy.

Republican state governments rebuilt bridges and railroads and created new public schools in an effort to promote Southern recovery.



The cost of these developments led to hugely increased taxes for a population already on the brink of poverty.



Anger and prejudice led some to form paramilitary groups that asserted white supremacy and racial subordination.

Organizations like the **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)** spread across the South. Their members terrorized black citizens.

The goal of these groups was to destroy the Republican Party, keep blacks from voting and restore **racial subordination** in the South.

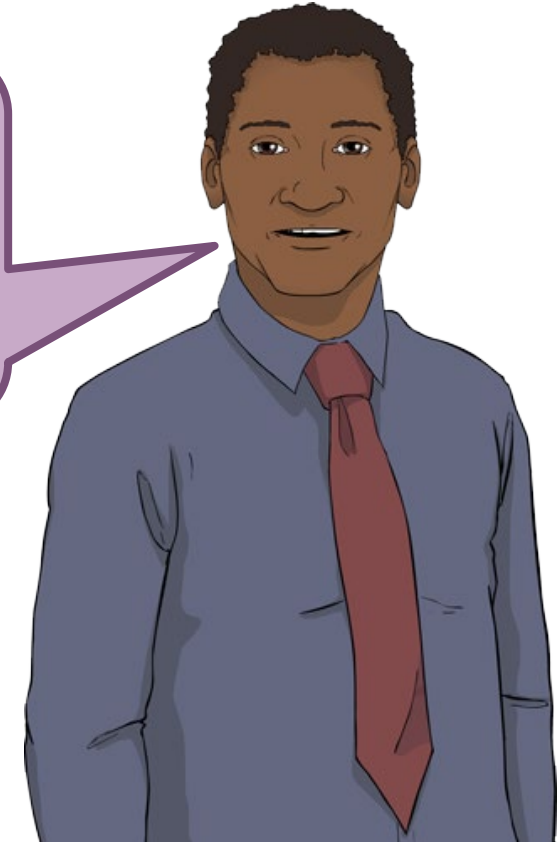
Between 1868 and 1871, terrorist groups murdered thousands of men, women and children to scare black voters away from the polls.





In response to these atrocities, Congress passed the **Enforcement Acts** between 1870 and 1871.

These Acts required state governments to protect the rights of black citizens. If they failed, federal troops could be sent to restore order.



Under these Acts, hundreds of Klansmen were tried and jailed. Others were fined and some fled prosecution. By 1872, terrorism in the South had mostly ceased.

Do you think Congress did enough to protect the rights of black citizens after the war?





The South “redeemed”



In 1872, the **Amnesty Act** returned voting rights to roughly 150,000 former Confederates.

This allowed Democrats to retake Southern state governments in the so-called **redemption** of the South.

At this time **P.B.S. Pinchback** was elected in Louisiana as the first African American governor in American history.



However, at the same time, Southern Democrats quietly imposed laws designed to re-establish white supremacy.

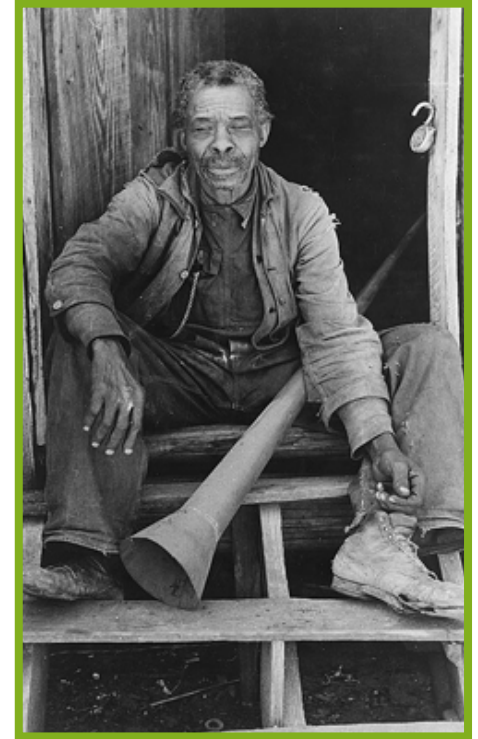


Many freedmen hoped to make a living by farming, but poverty and prejudice made it nearly impossible for them to purchase land.

At the same time, white planters hoped to regain their wealth using low-cost labor. The result was **sharecropping**.

Sharecropping is when a landowner lends tools, seeds and land to a farmer in exchange for a percentage of his harvest.

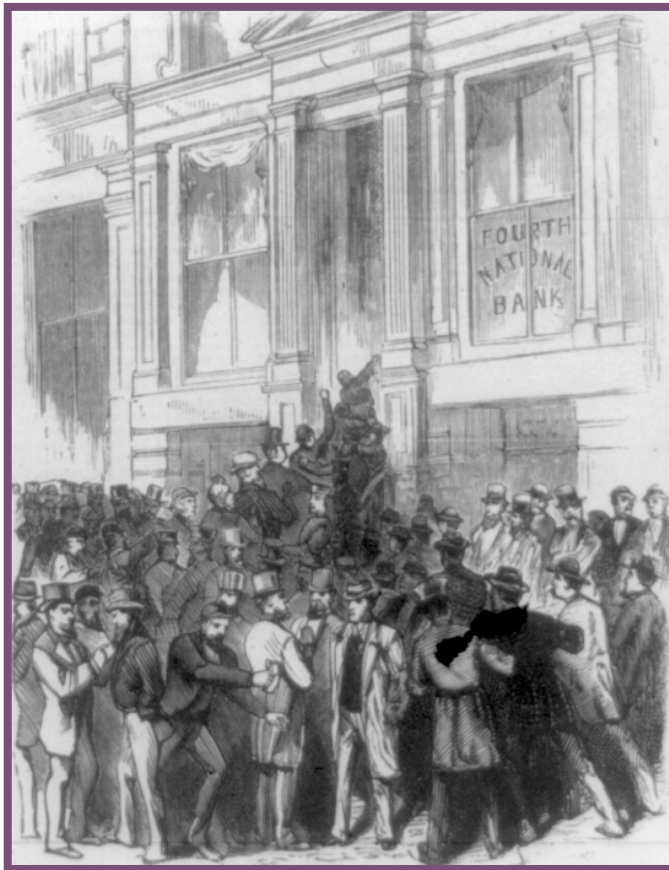
High percentages and competition meant that most sharecroppers could barely feed their families. The system led to a cycle of poverty that few could escape.





The Panic of 1873

In 1873, a large banking firm went bankrupt after losing its investments in bad railroad companies. This bankruptcy led to a series of others, beginning the **Panic of 1873**.

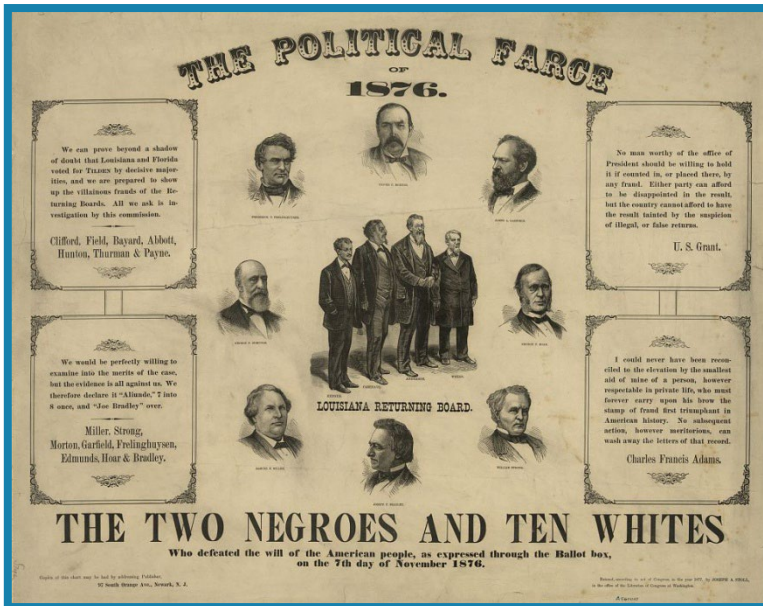


The result was a five year depression and the loss of roughly three million jobs. It was the worst economic downturn in the nation's history up to that point.

The depression caused the government and the public to turn their attention away from Reconstruction.



In 1876, Democrat **Samuel Tilden** ran against Republican **Rutherford B. Hayes**.



Although Tilden won the popular vote, the electoral result was disputed. The decision went to a congressional electoral commission, which found in favor of Hayes.

Because Congress was largely Republican, Democrats rejected their decision as biased. Some even threatened another civil war.





The Compromise of 1877



The issue was resolved with the **Compromise of 1877**.

Southern Democrats agreed to accept Hayes as president if:

- Hayes appointed a Southerner to his cabinet
- the government put money toward internal improvements in the South
- federal troops were withdrawn from Louisiana and South Carolina.



Without federal protection, black Southerners were completely vulnerable to racist state laws and violence that would not be challenged until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.



The legacy of Reconstruction



Some historians have argued that Reconstruction was a failure. The Supreme Court undermined civil rights legislation and the government was unable to protect black Americans in the long term.

Others say that Reconstruction succeeded. Southern states developed school systems and transportation infrastructure, while new legislation made important strides toward equal rights.



Was Reconstruction a success or failure?



