

Reconstruction and Redemption



Chapter Preview

People

Francis T. Nicholls, Michael Hahn, Andrew Johnson, Henry Clay Warmoth, Oscar J. Dunn, Samuel McEnery, William Pitt Kellogg, Stephen Packard, Rutherford B. Hayes, Samuel Tilden

Places

Napoleonville, Colfax, Coushatta

Terms

Reconstruction, freedmen, ten percent plan, Radical Republicans, impeachment, Freedmen's Bureau, Black Codes, Mechanics' Institute Riot, Reconstruction Acts, disfranchise, carpetbaggers, Knights of the White Camellia, returning board, Colfax Massacre, White League, Battle of Liberty Place, Redeemers, home rule

Francis T. Nicholls was born in Donaldsonville in 1834. He received his early education in Louisiana and graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1855. After a year of active military service, he began a law practice in Napoleonville. When the Civil War began, Nicholls joined the Confederate army. In late May 1862, Nicholls and other Louisiana troops fought Union forces near Winchester, Virginia. The Confederacy scored a major victory, but Nicholls was badly injured. His left arm was *amputated* (removed by surgery) as a result of the wound.

After his amputation, Nicholls was briefly held prisoner by the Union. He was exchanged and, after a period of recovery, reentered the fight. Not quite a year after losing his arm, he lost his left foot in battle and suffered an amputation of part of his left leg. Nicholls continued to serve in the Confederate army in administrative positions, rising to the rank of brigadier general.

At war's end, Nicholls returned to Louisiana and planned to practice law again. However, his wartime experience made him widely respected in his home state. He was drawn into politics and ran successfully for governor in 1876.

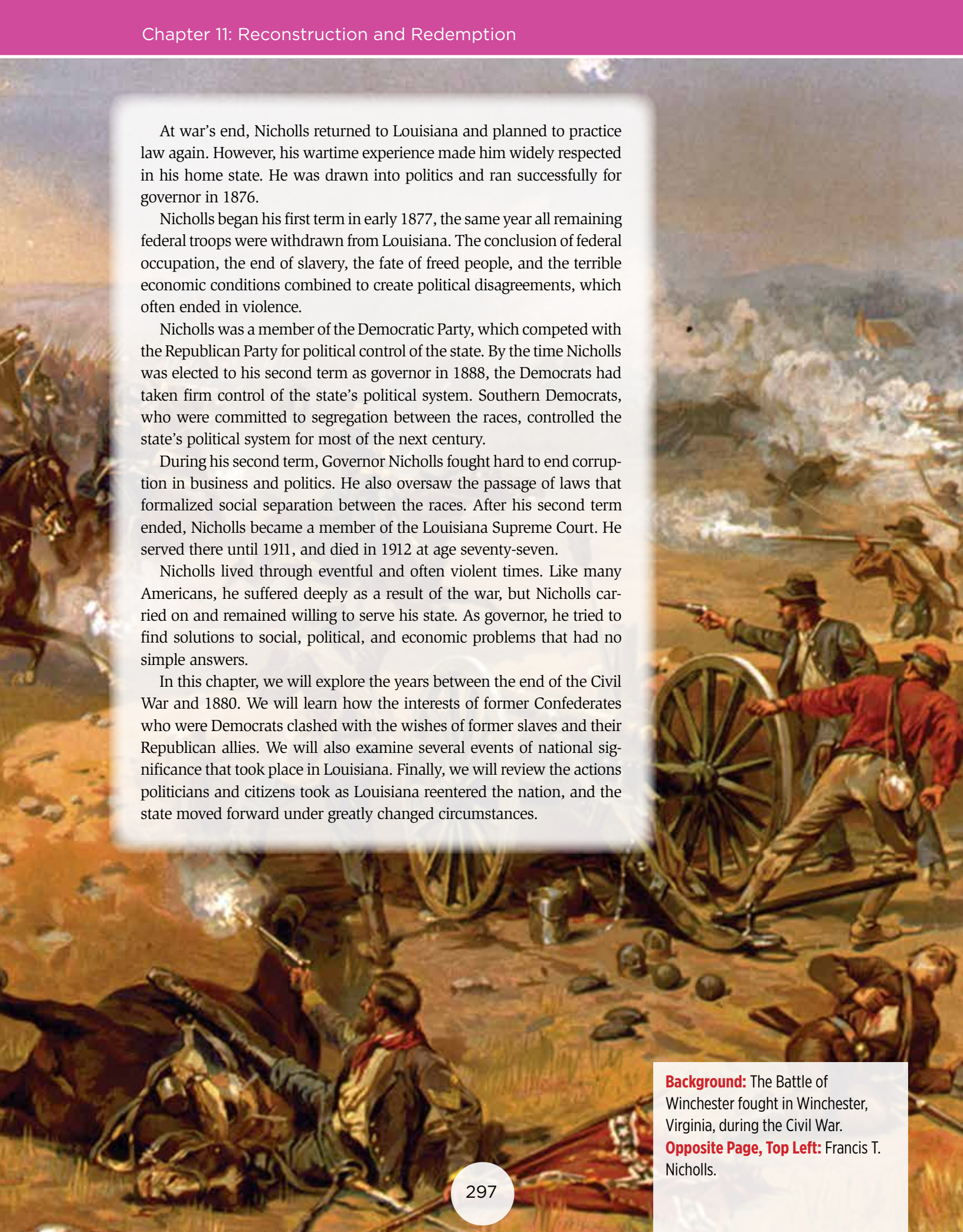
Nicholls began his first term in early 1877, the same year all remaining federal troops were withdrawn from Louisiana. The conclusion of federal occupation, the end of slavery, the fate of freed people, and the terrible economic conditions combined to create political disagreements, which often ended in violence.

Nicholls was a member of the Democratic Party, which competed with the Republican Party for political control of the state. By the time Nicholls was elected to his second term as governor in 1888, the Democrats had taken firm control of the state's political system. Southern Democrats, who were committed to segregation between the races, controlled the state's political system for most of the next century.

During his second term, Governor Nicholls fought hard to end corruption in business and politics. He also oversaw the passage of laws that formalized social separation between the races. After his second term ended, Nicholls became a member of the Louisiana Supreme Court. He served there until 1911, and died in 1912 at age seventy-seven.

Nicholls lived through eventful and often violent times. Like many Americans, he suffered deeply as a result of the war, but Nicholls carried on and remained willing to serve his state. As governor, he tried to find solutions to social, political, and economic problems that had no simple answers.

In this chapter, we will explore the years between the end of the Civil War and 1880. We will learn how the interests of former Confederates who were Democrats clashed with the wishes of former slaves and their Republican allies. We will also examine several events of national significance that took place in Louisiana. Finally, we will review the actions politicians and citizens took as Louisiana reentered the nation, and the state moved forward under greatly changed circumstances.



Background: The Battle of Winchester fought in Winchester, Virginia, during the Civil War.

Opposite Page, Top Left: Francis T. Nicholls.

Signs of the Times



U.S. Expansion



Two states were added to the Union during this period: Nebraska in 1867 and Colorado in 1876. The United States bought Alaska from Russia in 1867 for \$7.2 million, less than two cents per acre.

Inventions

Some of the many useful inventions from this era include barbed wire and the first practical typewriter with the QWERTY keyboard. Alfred Nobel of Sweden, who later funded the Nobel Prizes in his will, invented dynamite. Thomas Alva Edison received his first patent for an electric vote recorder. He went on to invent the phonograph, incandescent light bulb, and motion picture camera.

Literature

Louisa May Alcott published *Little Women* in 1868 and *Little Men* in 1871. Samuel Clemens published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, using the pen name Mark Twain. New Orleans native George Washington Cable published a short story collection called *Old Creole Days* in 1879 and his first novel, *The Grandissimes*, in 1880. He went on speaking tours with his friend Mark Twain and was said to be as famous as any writer in America during this time.

Art

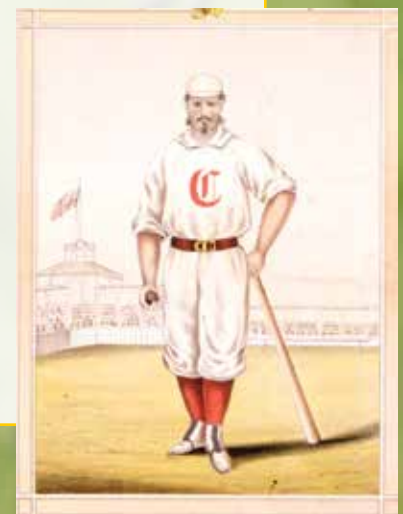
French Impressionist painter Edgar Degas had many family connections in New Orleans, where his mother had been born. In 1872-1873, he spent five months visiting his American family. While in New Orleans, he painted portraits of people he knew and scenes of business enterprises like his uncle's cotton brokerage.

Food

The diet of the Reconstruction South was too bland for Louisiana tastes. Edmund McIlhenny planted some pepper seeds on Avery Island that had come from Mexico or Central America. He mixed crushed peppers with Avery Island salt, aged the mixture, then blended it with vinegar. After more aging, he strained it and put it in small bottles. Thus Tabasco Sauce was born! It was so popular with family and friends that he started selling it in 1868 and secured a patent for it in 1870.

Sports

The first fully professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was formed in 1869, and the first major baseball league, the National League, was formed in 1876. Colonel Meriwether Lewis Clark Jr., grandson of William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition, organized the Louisville Jockey Club to build a racetrack outside that city. In 1875, the first Kentucky Derby was run on the track that is today known as Churchill Downs.



Timeline

1865-1880



1865 - Black Codes passed

1865

Andrew Johnson became president after Lincoln's assassination - **1865**

1866 - Mechanics' Institute Riot

Freedmen's Bureau established
13th Amendment ratified

Passage of first Reconstruction Acts - **1867**

1868 - New state constitution adopted
Henry Clay Warmoth elected governor
Louisiana State Lottery Company granted a charter

14th Amendment ratified - **1868**
Andrew Johnson impeached but not convicted
Ulysses S. Grant elected president

1870 - Convict lease system began

1870

First transcontinental railroad completed - **1869**
Suez Canal opened

15th Amendment ratified - **1870**

1872 - William Pitt Kellogg elected governor

Ulysses S. Grant reelected president - **1872**
Yellowstone National Park established

1873 - Colfax Massacre

1874 - White League formed
Murders of Republican officeholders in Coushatta
Battle of Liberty Place

1875



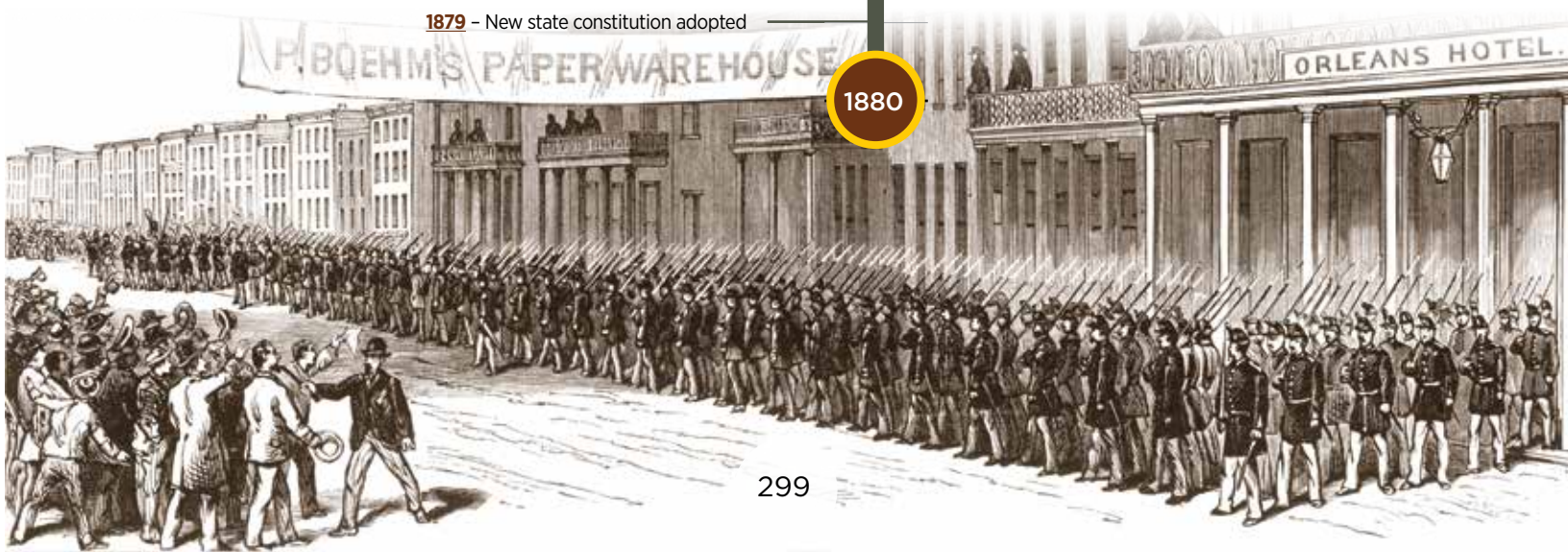
1876 - Francis T. Nicholls elected governor in disputed election

1877 - Governor Nicholls approved attack on the Cabildo

Rutherford B. Hayes became U.S. president after disputed 1876 election - **1877**
Federal government withdrew its last troops from the South

1879 - New state constitution adopted

1880



Section 1

Below: Freedmen voting in New Orleans.

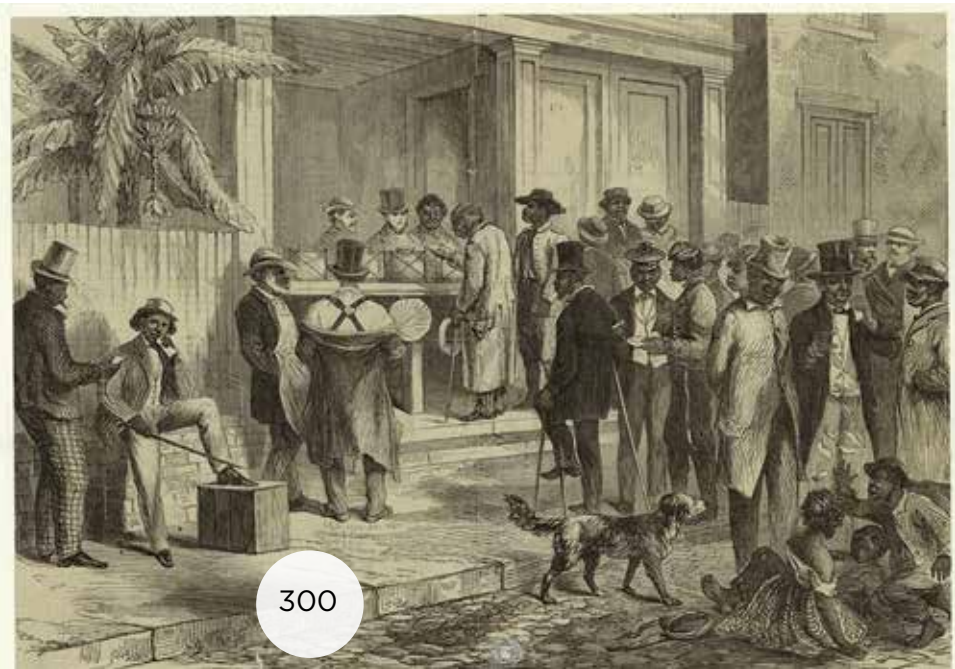
Reconstruction Defined

As you read, look for

- ▶ the different Reconstruction plans of President Lincoln, President Johnson, and the Radical Republicans;
- ▶ the purposes of the Freedmen's Bureau;
- ▶ how the Black Codes and the deadly Mechanics' Institute Riot caused a backlash with radicals in Congress;
- ▶ **terms: Reconstruction, freedmen, ten percent plan, Radical Republicans, impeachment, Freedmen's Bureau, Black Codes, Mechanics' Institute Riot.**

Reconstruction is the name given to the period between the end of the Civil War and 1877, the year the federal government withdrew its last troops from the South. The term is used to describe attempts to reconstruct the nation, or put it back together, after secession and civil war. Reconstruction included decisions about how and under what terms to bring the states and the people of the defeated Confederacy back into the Union.

The fate and legal status of the **freedmen** (the name given to freed slaves) also played an important role in the social and political debates of the era. Multiple laws were adopted and three amendments were added to the U.S. Constitution in an attempt to create social and political equality for the freed people. When Reconstruction came to an end, the problem of how the former slaves should be treated remained unresolved.



Amendment	Terms
Thirteenth Amendment Ratified December 6, 1865	Section 1: Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
Fourteenth Amendment Ratified July 9, 1868	Section 1: All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.
Fifteenth Amendment Ratified February 3, 1870	Section 1: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Note: All of these amendments have other sections that are not recorded here.

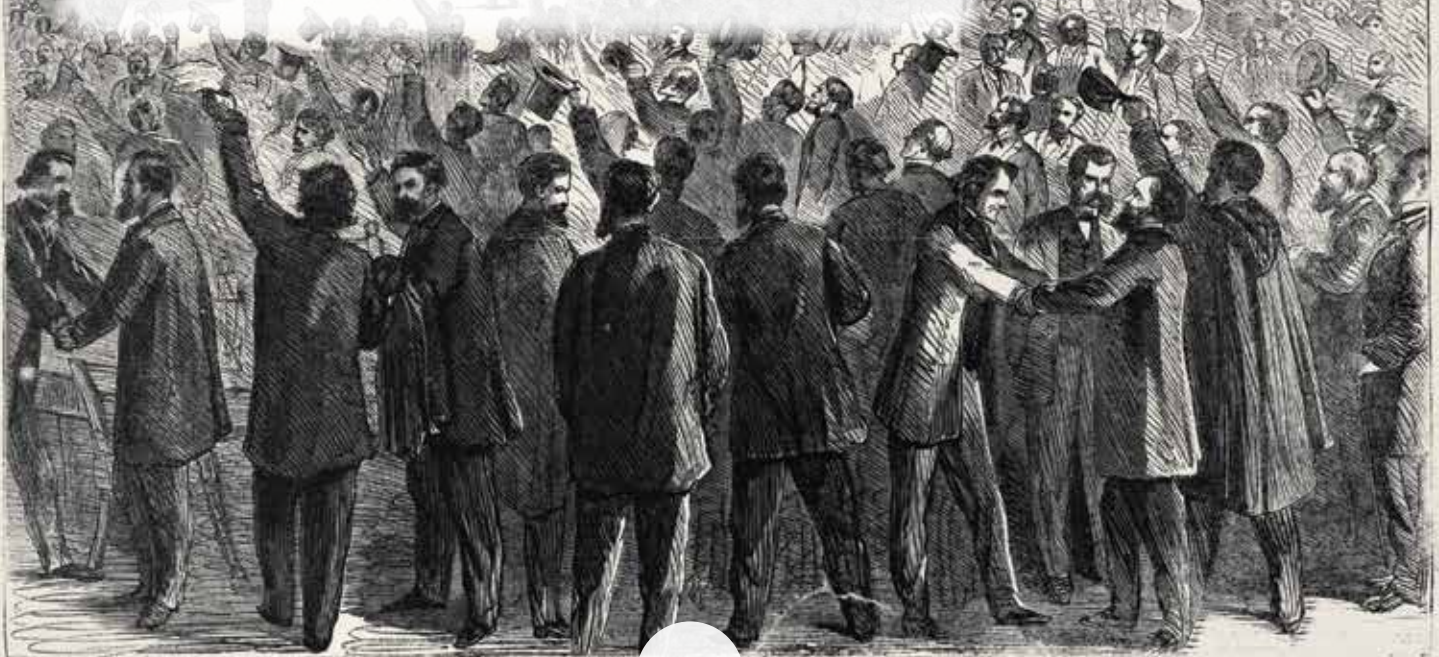
As with many periods in the nation’s history, Louisiana’s history during Reconstruction has unique and significant aspects. First, because New Orleans and much of South Louisiana were occupied by Union troops early in the war, the state had a longer period of Reconstruction than any other state. Second, because of its early military occupation, federal officials saw Louisiana as a testing ground for policies designed to bring rebel states back into the nation swiftly and successfully. Third, several events that took place inside the state attracted national attention and had an impact on the Reconstruction process at the national level.

Figure 11.1

Reconstruction Amendments

What statements does the Fourteenth Amendment make regarding laws?

Background: The passing of the Thirteenth Amendment was featured on the cover of *Harper’s Weekly*.



SCENE IN THE HOUSE ON THE PASSAGE OF THE AMENDMENT TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, JANUARY 31, 1865.

Below: The inauguration of Governor Michael Hahn took place on Lafayette Square, New Orleans, on March 4, 1864.

Presidential Reconstruction

President Lincoln devised and introduced a plan in late 1863 that has come to be known as the **ten percent plan**. Under its terms, once ten percent of the number of men who voted in the 1860 election swore a loyalty oath to the Union, a state was allowed to form a new government, elect representatives to Congress, write a new constitution, and return to the Union. In addition, the state had to agree to accept the abolition of slavery and promise not to provide any *compensation* (payment, rewards) to former slaveholders.

Many members of Congress felt these terms were too forgiving. This political faction felt the people of the South should be punished for seceding and, in their view, causing the war. Congressmen who held these views were called congressional radicals or **Radical Republicans**.

Despite congressional opposition to Lincoln's plan, Louisiana met the ten percent requirement and held an election in early 1864. Michael Hahn, a German immigrant, Union loyalist, and Republican was elected governor. He and other newly elected officials moved quickly to form a state government and adopt a new constitution. The Louisiana Constitution of 1864 acknowledged the end of slavery, but it did not give the vote to former slaves or even to men of color who had been free before the war. Many former free people of color resented being denied the vote. A delegation of well-educated free men of color from Louisiana actually visited President Lincoln in 1864 and stated their case.

The United States Congress was more determined than the president to punish the states that seceded. Despite the election of a government and adoption of a new constitution, Congress refused to recognize or seat the new delegation from reconstructed Louisiana.



President Johnson and Reconstruction

When the war ended in 1865, the radical element of Congress continued to gain power. After Lincoln was assassinated, his vice president, Andrew Johnson from Tennessee, became president of the still-divided nation. Like Lincoln, Johnson preferred quick reintegration of the rebel states rather than punishment. In fact, because he pardoned large numbers of former Confederates, his opponents in Congress accused him of giving in to the South. There was some merit to those claims because the presidential pardons made it possible for former Confederates to regain their property and reenter politics. They were able to retake control of state legislatures, including Louisiana's.

Members of Congress became so angry with Johnson that they brought him to trial on impeachment charges before the U.S. Senate. **Impeachment** is the process of bringing charges of wrongdoing against a public official while that official is still in office. President Johnson avoided being forced out of office by a one-vote margin.



The Freedmen's Bureau

In the South, debates also raged about how the newly freed slaves should be treated and what rights they should have. In the hope of resolving problems related to the freed slaves and to white southern refugees, the federal government established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the **Freedmen's Bureau**. The Bureau provided emergency relief to poor southerners, both white and black. Bureau representatives established schools for the former slaves, most of whom were *illiterate* (unable to read). They also performed marriages between newly freed slaves who wanted their relationships to be legal for the first time.

The Bureau's central focus was on trying to reestablish and regulate labor relations between former slaves and former masters in the postslavery economic system. One visitor to Louisiana observed that the Freedmen's Bureau had been established "for the laudable purpose of protecting the newly emancipated slaves and regulating their relations with their former masters. . . Theoretically this is very fine. In practice it is a failure."

Lagniappe

The U.S. House of Representatives is the only body that can bring an impeachment charge against a federal official. The accused (impeached) person is tried in the U.S. Senate. It takes a two-thirds Senate vote to convict and remove a person from office.

Left: This illustration from *Harper's Weekly* shows the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson. The president missed being convicted and removed from office by one vote.

Below: The *Harper's Weekly* edition of August 25, 1866, devoted a full page to pictures of the Mechanics' Institute Riot. This sketch shows the interior of the Institute during the riot.

Postwar Black Codes

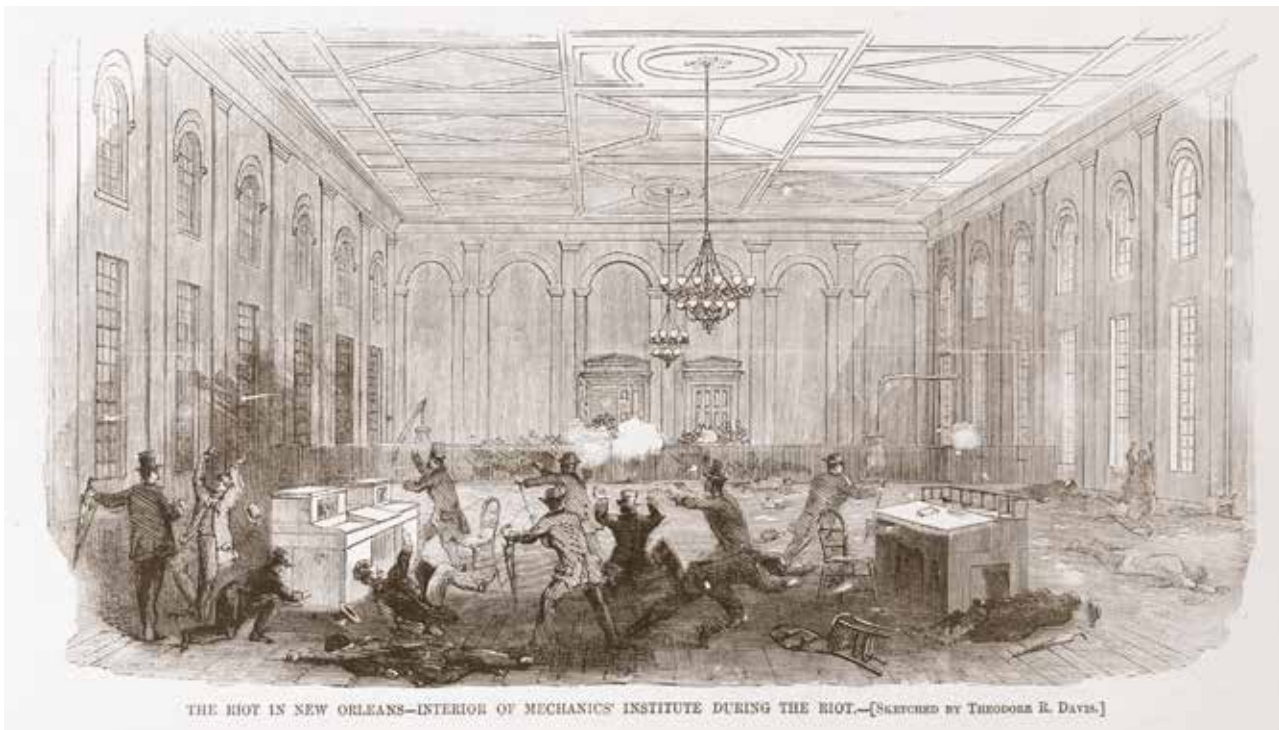
Many southern states took questions of labor regulation into their own hands. They passed new laws designed to regulate the labor, movements, and even the behavior of former slaves. These laws, called **Black Codes**, placed strict conditions on the freed people. Freedmen were required to sign a contract promising to work for a single employer for a full year. Entire families were included in the contract and were required to work alongside the husband or father. Under the terms of these Black Codes, if a freed person did not sign a contract, he was subject to being arrested and jailed on charges of *vagrancy* (having no steady job or residence).

Passage of Black Codes in most states of the former Confederacy, including Louisiana in 1865, created a strong backlash from northerners. They saw the new codes as a way to re-create a situation of servitude that was similar to slavery in many ways. The newly passed Black Codes convinced radicals in Congress they had to pass harsh legislation to protect the freedmen and to punish southerners. They saw the southerners as being neither sorry for their actions nor willing to accept a postslavery society and economy.

The Mechanics' Institute Riot

Labor was not the only hot-button issue of the time. The issue of whether former slaves should be given full citizenship rights, including the vote, caused strong reactions in Louisiana and in Congress.

The 1864 Louisiana Constitution included a clause that allowed for later consideration of amendments. These future amendments could possibly address expanding the franchise to men of color who were literate, owned property, or had fought for the Union. Republican politicians and citizens were willing to and stood to benefit politically from granting freedmen the vote. They called for a meeting to consider the question.



Approximately 25 white Republicans gathered on July 30, 1866, in a New Orleans building called the Mechanics' Institute, which was then being used as the statehouse. By the time the meeting was scheduled to begin at noon, several hundred people had gathered in the streets outside. At least 200 former slaves were marching in a parade toward the Mechanics' Institute to show support for adoption of amendments that would give them the vote. Former Confederates, most of whom were members of the Democratic Party, were also gathered outside the building. Around 1:00 p.m., the two groups came together and began to insult each other. At least one shot was fired from each side, setting off the full-scale **Mechanics' Institute Riot**.

Many of the poorly armed freedmen scattered. The white mob's focus moved toward the Institute where the delegates remained and some of the freedmen had fled. The white Republican delegates and mostly unarmed African Americans tried to keep the mob outside. But the furious men, many of them police or firemen, charged the building repeatedly. When they finally broke inside, they began to attack those in the hall, even though at least one of the delegates was waving a white handkerchief as a sign of surrender. When the fighting ended, at least 37 supporters of the convention were dead. Three were white Republicans. The other 34 were African Americans. More than 140 other men in or near the hall were injured, including former governor Michael Hahn. Despite the very public nature of the event, no one was ever arrested or charged in the deaths.

Outside Louisiana, however, reaction was very strong. The event was written about in newspapers and magazines all over the country. The 1866 Mechanics' Institute Riot, which one newspaper called "an absolute massacre," *galvanized* (stirred up) public opinion in the North and led to the election of additional Radical Republicans to Congress in the next election. As a result, the Republicans could pass stricter legislation that would force the South to give the freedmen civil rights and the vote. Even when President Johnson vetoed their legislation, they had enough votes to override the veto.



Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: Reconstruction, freedmen, Black Codes.
2. What were some of the goals of the Freedmen's Bureau?
3. What was the purpose of the meeting at the Mechanics' Institute that turned into a riot?

Top: These sketches are titled "Murdering Negroes in the Rear of the Institute" and **Above:** "Platform in Mechanics' Institute after the Riot."

Section 2

Military Reconstruction

As you read, look for

- ▶ the provisions of the Reconstruction Acts;
- ▶ sweeping new rights for blacks in the Constitution of 1868;
- ▶ how a Republican victory in the 1868 state elections led to the rise of paramilitary groups;
- ▶ tragic violent events in Colfax and Coushatta, and at Liberty Place in New Orleans;
- ▶ terms: **Reconstruction Acts, disfranchise, carpetbaggers, Knights of the White Camellia, returning board, Colfax Massacre, White League, Battle of Liberty Place.**

In 1867 and 1868, Congress passed four pieces of legislation known collectively as the Reconstruction Acts. These acts divided the states of the former Confederacy into five districts and put them under military control, leading some to call this period Military Reconstruction.

Lagniappe

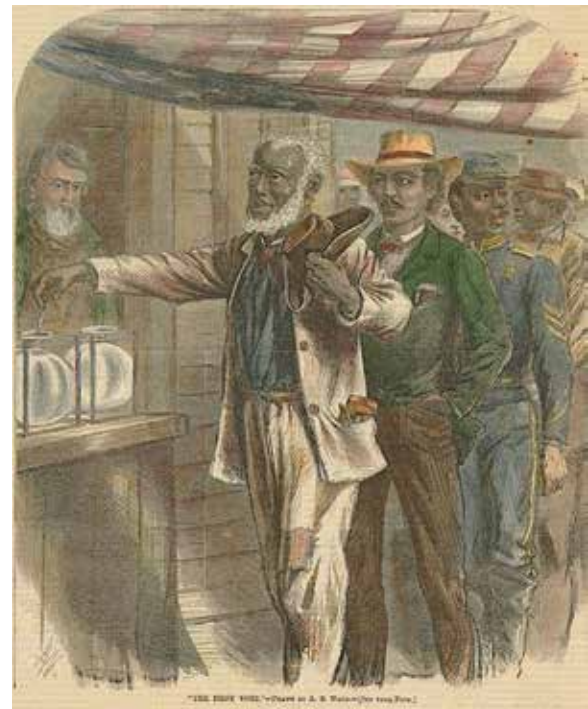
Tennessee was the only exception to military control because it had already ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and had been readmitted to the Union. Tennessee was the last state to secede and the first to be readmitted.

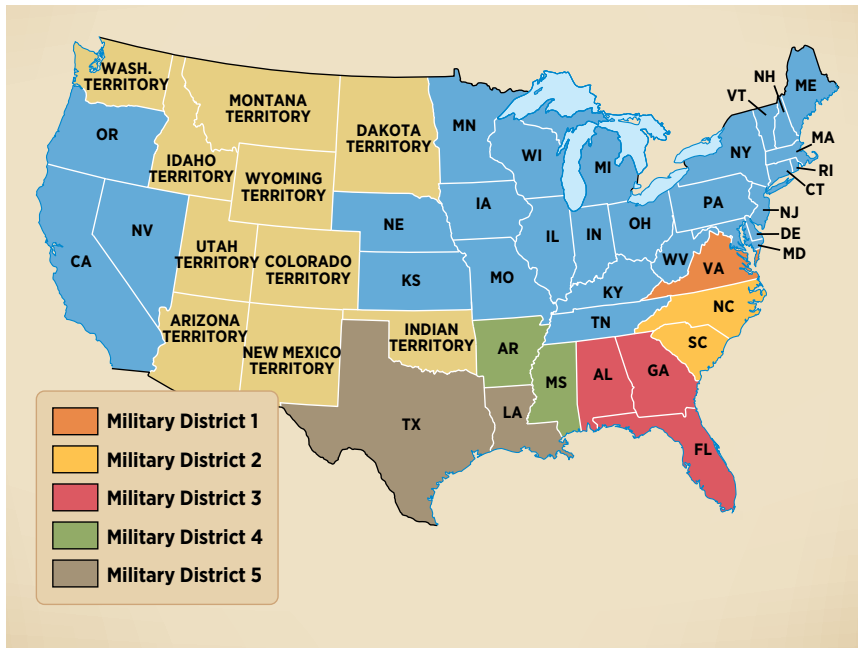
Right: “The First Vote,” which appeared on the cover of *Harper’s Weekly* in 1867, showed an African American workman, businessman, and soldier lining up to vote for the first time.

The Radicals Triumph

The districts’ military commanders had the power to dissolve state governments, which had come to be dominated by former Confederate Democrats. The **Reconstruction Acts** required the reconstructed states to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and to register former male slaves and free men of color to vote. The commander would then make provision for the adoption of a new constitution and the election of a new state government.

Compounding what many former Confederates saw as an insult to southern honor, a new and more sweeping loyalty oath was put into effect under the Reconstruction Acts. In order to vote, a man had to not only swear a renewed oath of loyalty to the United States but also swear he had never supported the Confederacy. Thus, anyone who had served or supported the Confederacy in any way lost the right to vote.





MAP 11.1

Military Reconstruction Districts

Map Skill: Which military district appears to be the largest in area?

The 1868 Constitution

In late 1867, delegates, most of whom were Republicans, began to write a new constitution. Because of the circumstances under which it was produced, and the importance of African American support to the Republican Party, the Louisiana Constitution of 1868 was far more equalitarian than any that preceded it. The document extended civil rights to former slaves and voting rights to black males. It also did away with any property qualification for voting. This removed another barrier to voting for the poor former slaves. The constitution abolished the 1865 Black Codes and also *mandated* (ordered, commanded) the establishment of a racially integrated school system statewide.

The new constitution also required that people of color receive the same access to public accommodations as whites. This part of the 1868 Constitution, called Article 13, required that all people, regardless of color, be given “equal rights and privileges” on any means of public transportation and at public businesses like restaurants and theaters. Finally, the constitution formally **disfranchised** (took away the vote from) former Confederates.

The outcome in the April 1868 elections for state officials reflected the disfranchisement of many Democrats. Republicans took control of the state government, in large part because of massive support from the former slaves. Freedmen supported the Republicans because they credited the party with their emancipation and newly granted rights.

Below: This “Extract” has a full-length portrait of Lt. Governor Oscar J. Dunn, seated at his desk, and head-and-shoulder portraits of the 29 African American delegates to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention.



Republican Governance



Republican Henry Clay Warmoth was elected governor in the 1868 elections. He was a former Union soldier, and a native of Illinois. He migrated to Louisiana after the war in search of opportunity. As such, he was part of a group that native-Louisiana critics referred to as **carpetbaggers**. This was a term of insult suggesting that such northerners arrived in the state with only a small suitcase (called a carpetbag) in hand. Southerners suspected that carpetbaggers would take advantage of the chaotic postwar conditions to gain political power and to enrich themselves. Warmoth did make a fortune over his lifetime, which some accused him of accumulating by dishonest means. He also quickly attained political power.

Warmoth's lieutenant governor, Oscar J. Dunn, was the first African American ever elected to statewide office in Louisiana. The legislators elected in March 1868 were still majority white, but there were some African American representatives. The majority of them had been free men before the war.

For the disfranchised former Confederate Democrats, having the state governed by a former Union soldier, a man of color, and a legislature with black members was unacceptable. Democrats realized they would not be able to regain political office if all the newly enfranchised African Americans continued voting for Republicans in large numbers. Many were angry about their exclusion from the political process and could not accept that former slaves now had more political influence than they did.



Lagniappe

Just twenty-six years old when he took office, Henry Clay Warmoth was the youngest governor ever elected in Louisiana.

Lagniappe

The name given to white southerners who cooperated with blacks and Republicans was *scalawags*. Today, the term *scalawag* means a rascal or a scoundrel.

Top Left: Henry Clay Warmoth.

Right: This editorial cartoon by James Albert Wales shows a northern carpetbagger accompanied by Union soldiers. The heavy bag nearly crushes "The Solid South" on which it sits, suggesting the North's determination to dominate the South.

Violence in Politics

In the aftermath of the Republican election victory in March 1868, many Democrats turned to violence by forming *paramilitary* (organized and operating like an army) groups. The purpose of these groups was to use intimidation and violence to keep African Americans from exercising their right to vote. The **Knights of the White Camellia**, formed in St. Mary Parish, was the largest group of this type, but similar groups formed in all regions of the state. One historian has noted that in many parishes these groups included "half or more of all white males."

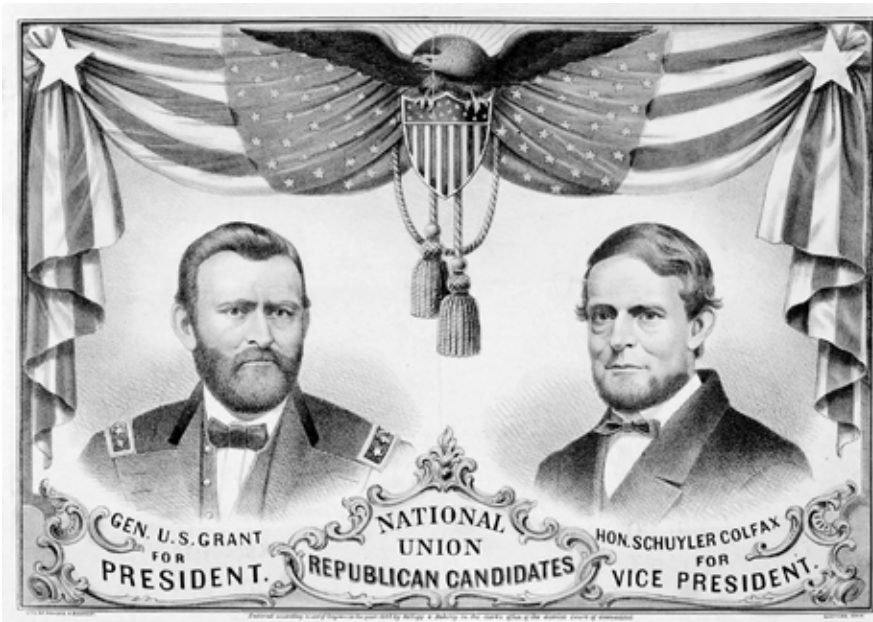
The methods these groups used were intended to create terror among potential black Republican voters. Groups of armed men, sometimes wearing masks, administered beatings and whippings, and even committed murders. Federal authorities estimated that as many as three hundred African Americans were killed in the months leading up to the 1868 presidential election. African American political leaders were particularly vulnerable to attack. Two African American legislators were killed, one of them on the same night he was elected.

The widespread violence was effective at intimidating African American voters. Only eight months after Governor Warmoth's election, Louisiana voters overwhelmingly favored the Democratic candidate for president of the United States over the Republican candidate, Ulysses S. Grant.

Grant won the national election, but, at the state level, Governor Warmoth established a **returning board**. This board had the power to determine whether election outcomes were legitimate or the product of fraud or intimidation. It was called a returning board because completed vote totals were called *returns*. From this point until the end of Reconstruction, bitter debates over which party's candidates had won elections and had the right to take office dominated the electoral process—sometimes with tragic results.

Political disagreements also emerged within the Republican Party itself, further diluting its power. Some Republicans felt Warmoth had become too *conciliatory* (peace-making) to the Democrats. There was some evidence they were right. In the November 1872 election for governor, Warmoth even endorsed the Democratic candidate, John McEnery.

Because of disputes about the legitimacy of the 1872 returns, both McEnery and Republican candidate William Pitt Kellogg claimed to have won the governor's race. Each man began appointing cabinet members and setting up a government. The returning board could not come to a conclusion. Ultimately, the federal government decided the election in favor of Kellogg. Democrats claimed that President Ulysses S. Grant, a former Union general and a Republican, had acted unfairly.



The Knights of the White Camellia had secret signs, handshakes, and passwords and elaborate secret ceremonies.

The society's name, taken from the snow-white camellia blossom, symbolized the "purity" of the white race.



Top Right: Confederate veteran Alcibiades DeBlanc founded the Knights of the White Camellia in 1867. From 1877-1880, he served on the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Left: This political poster for the 1868 presidential election shows Ulysses S. Grant with his running mate, Schuyler Colfax. Grant won reelection in 1872 with a different vice presidential candidate, Henry Wilson.

Special FEATURE

The First African American Governor

Did you know that Louisiana had the first African American governor of any state in the United States? Well, it's true! Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, better known as P. B. S. Pinchback, was the first African American governor of any state in the United States. His story is quite interesting.

Born near Macon, Georgia, on May 10, 1837, P. B. S. Pinchback spent most of his childhood on his white father's plantation in Mississippi. Pinchback left school at age eleven to work on steamboats to help support his family. He eventually made his way to New Orleans. When the Civil War began, Pinchback served as a captain of the Second Louisiana Native Guards. He resigned his position in the army in 1863 because of unequal pay and discrimination in promotions.

Soon after the Civil War ended and Reconstruction began, Pinchback became involved with politics. He wrote Article 13 of the 1868 Louisiana Constitution, which called for racial equality on public transportation and at licensed businesses. Also in 1868, Pinchback was elected to the Louisiana Senate and eventually became president pro tempore of the Senate. When Oscar Dunn, the first African American lieutenant governor of Louisiana, died unexpectedly in 1871, Pinchback became the lieutenant governor for Governor Henry Clay Warmoth. This promotion set the stage for Pinchback to eventually become governor.

In December of 1872, Governor Warmoth was impeached after being accused of participating in fraud in the disputed election of 1872. As a result of the impeachment charges, Warmoth had to step down from office, clearing the way for Pinchback to become governor. Pinchback was governor only for the remainder of Governor Warmoth's term, which was thirty-six days, from December 8, 1872, until January 18, 1873. The next African American governor would not be elected until 1989 in Virginia! Why do you think it took over one hundred years for another African American to be elected governor?

P. B. S. Pinchback





Left: This *Harper's Weekly* illustration of the tragedy in Grant Parish is called "The Louisiana Murders—Gathering the Dead and Wounded." **Below:** A historical marker identifies the site of the April 13, 1873, Colfax Riot.

Tragedy at Colfax

Similar disputes also played out at the parish level in the aftermath of the 1872 elections. In Grant Parish, a dispute over who had won the elections for local offices led to tragedy. In order to legitimize their claim to victory, Republicans, all of whom were African American, occupied the parish courthouse in the town of Colfax in early 1873. Democrats, who also claimed to have won the elections, were furious. After weeks of tensions, the Democrats decided to attack and remove the Republicans from the courthouse to enforce their own claim of victory. Unfortunately, the events that followed were both brutal and deadly, and once again drew Louisiana into the national spotlight.

On April 13, 1873, about 150 heavily armed white Democrats approached the courthouse. Republicans inside the building fired on the Democrats, killing two of them. Enraged, the Democrats continued to bombard the courthouse. Later they set the building on fire. Many of those who escaped the fire were immediately captured. During the night, angry Democrats decided they should execute the men who had surrendered and were taken prisoner. Many of the prisoners were killed with a single gunshot to the head, some while their relatives watched from nearby.

Estimates of the number of Republicans killed vary from 48 to as many as 150. Those who sympathized with the Democrats referred to the event as a riot. Those more sympathetic to the black Republicans called it the **Colfax Massacre**. No matter what term one used, what is certain is that the Colfax tragedy was the deadliest single instance of politically motivated violence in the United States during Reconstruction. Once again, Louisiana became nationally notorious for the outrageous violence that was overwhelming its political system.



Murders in Coushatta

In 1874, a new paramilitary group called the **White League** formed. Some of its members had participated in the events at Colfax. White Leaguers were committed to restoring the state to white Democratic rule by whatever means necessary. Its platform made its priorities clear:

We enter into and form this league for the protection of our own race against the daily increasing encroachment of the negro, and we are determined to use our best efforts to purge our legislative, judicial, and ministerial offices from such a hoard of miscreants as now assume to lord it over us.

After Colfax, Democratic paramilitary groups carried out acts of violence with seeming *impunity* (freedom from punishment). There were numerous violent incidents directed at blacks in the Red River region in the summer of 1874. In late August, White League members captured six white Republicans in Coushatta, the seat of Red River Parish. After holding the men captive and holding a mock trial, the White Leaguers made them sign a pledge to leave the state and never return. As the six men were being escorted out of the parish, the group was overtaken and the six Republican officeholders were killed. Their escorts did nothing to protect them. At least four African Americans were killed as well. The news of paramilitary groups killing not only blacks but also their white Republican political opponents generated outrage far beyond Louisiana.



The 1874 Unification Movement

By 1874, violence had merged with politics. Often it was impossible to make a clear distinction between the two. There were still a few voices of moderation. A group of prominent men from both parties met in New Orleans to try to forge a political solution that would satisfy all sides. They discussed proposals for sharing power by dividing political offices between Republicans and Democrats, blacks and whites. The solutions they offered were not satisfactory to either side, and the group's proposals met a quick end.

Top: In this Thomas Nast cartoon, the figure of Justice swings the sword of Law into the ranks of the White Men's League. "Halt!" she says. "This is not the way 'to repress corruption and to initiate the Negroes into the ways of honest and orderly government.'"

Right: In another Thomas Nast cartoon, white supremacists use terror, violence, and intimidation to restore a "white man's government" and redeem the noble "lost cause."



The Battle of Liberty Place

Two weeks after the events at Coushatta, another clash took place, this one in New Orleans in September 1874. The city had as many as 8,000 White League members. White Leaguers were impatient to rid their city of Republican rule and to replace Republican governor William Pitt Kellogg with a Democrat.

A state militia and a police force called the Metropolitan Police protected the Republican officeholders. In early September, there were rumors of the arrival of a large shipment of arms destined for the White Leaguers in New Orleans. State militia and Metropolitan Police set up a line of defense near the docks to prevent delivery of the arms to the White League.

With a total of approximately 3,500 men under arms, the Republicans were well armed but badly outnumbered. The White Leaguers had at least 5,000 men out in the streets and ready to fight. Once fighting began on September 4, 1874, the White Leaguers gained the upper hand quickly and forced their Republican opponents to retreat. In effect, the White Leaguers took control of the state government.

White Leaguers planned to remove Kellogg and replace him with Democrat Samuel McEnery. Those plans were *thwarted* (opposed successfully) when federal troops arrived in New Orleans the day after the conflict, which the White League named the **Battle of Liberty Place**. Governor Kellogg was restored to power, but the victory of the White League made it clear that Republicans could continue to hold power only with the assistance of federal troops. The willingness of Democrats to fight and the growing reluctance of the federal government to intercede in southern states were combining to bring Reconstruction to an end.

Below: This *Harper's Weekly* illustration of the Battle of Liberty Place called the conflict “The Louisiana Outrages.”



THE LOUISIANA OUTRAGES—ATTACK UPON THE POLICE IN THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS.

Reviewing the Section

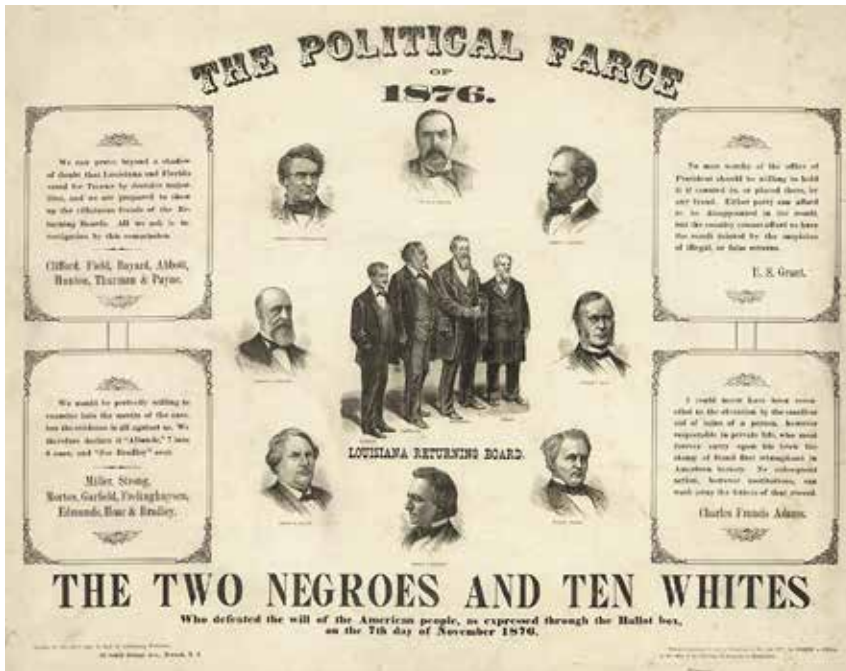
1. Define in sentence form: Reconstruction Acts, carpetbaggers, White League.
2. Name some of the provisions of the Louisiana Constitution of 1868 that favored former slaves.
3. What was the dispute that led to the Colfax Riot?

Section 3

The End of Military Reconstruction

As you read, look for

- ▶ the uncertain outcome of statewide elections of 1876, and the eventual victory of Governor Francis T. Nicholls;
- ▶ controversy and compromise in the presidential election of 1876;
- ▶ how victory by presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes led to the end of Military Reconstruction in the South;
- ▶ terms: **Redeemers, home rule.**



Above: The “Political Farce” referred to in this poster is the presidential election of 1876. The four figures in the center are members of the Louisiana Returning Board, who are said on the poster to have (along with Florida) “voted for Tilden by decisive majorities.”

The election for governor and other statewide offices in 1876 had no clear winner. Francis T. Nicholls was the Democratic candidate and Stephen Packard headed the Republican ticket. Just as in 1872, both parties claimed victory and both set about establishing governments. On January 9, the day after his inauguration, Democratic Governor Nicholls approved of an attack on the Cabildo, which was home to a Metropolitan Police precinct and the chambers of the state Supreme Court. The outnumbered Metropolitan quickly surrendered. The members of the state’s highest court resigned and Nicholls appointed new ones.

The Compromise of 1877

Despite the Democratic military victory, the final outcome of this dispute was decided not in Louisiana but in Washington, DC. The presidential election of 1876 was hotly contested and resulted in a period of uncertainty about whether the winner was Republican Rutherford B. Hayes from Ohio or Democrat Samuel Tilden from New York. Tilden

won the popular vote but was one vote short of the number he needed to win the Electoral College. There were nineteen disputed electoral votes available in three states where election outcomes were also disputed. The states were Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina.

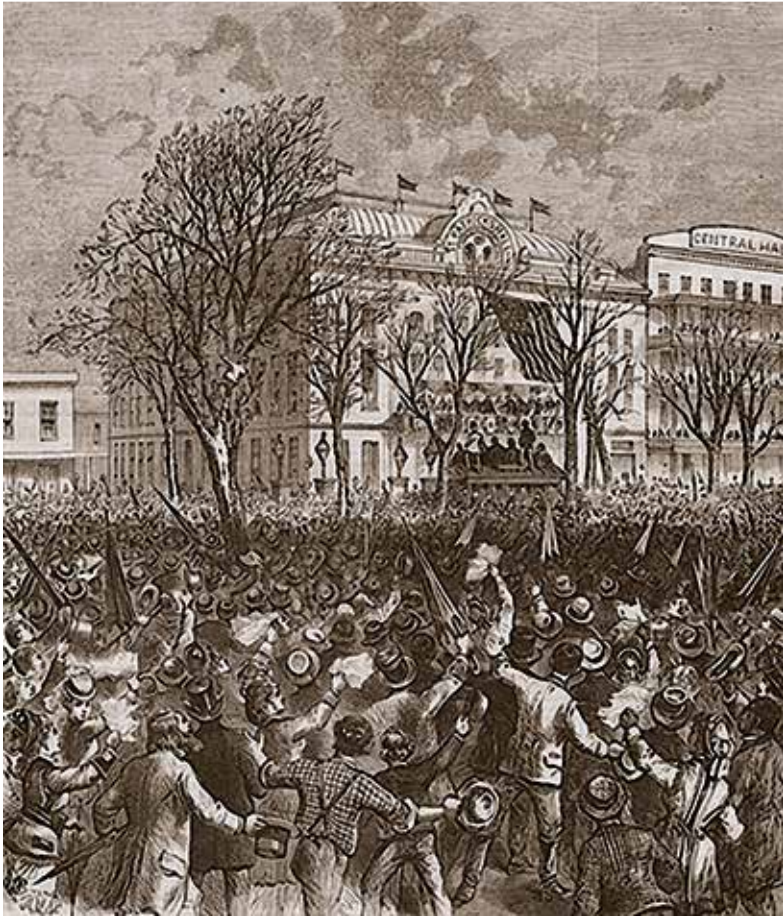
After several months of power struggles, a commission that included members of Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court decided the presidential election in Hayes's favor. Many Americans were upset with that decision, some of them even accusing the new president of fraud. In addition to the formal decision in Hayes's favor, there had also been an informal deal behind the scenes that assured Hayes of the victory. In order to appease Southern Democrats, Hayes made several promises, including an agreement to remove all remaining federal troops from the South. In agreeing to this condition, Hayes ended the federal government's commitment to Reconstruction, and handed control back to Democrats.



The Redeemers

These Democrats called themselves **Redeemers** because they saw themselves as *redeeming* (saving) southern honor as they returned white Democratic political control. They called this white Democratic political control **home rule**. Thus, in the view of Democrats, the removal of federal troops and the end of Reconstruction constituted a form of redemption for them and their states.

Above: The Electoral Commission held a secret session by candlelight on the question of Louisiana's disputed votes.



Above: Francis T. Nicholls was inaugurated governor in January 1877 on the balcony of St. Patrick's Hall, New Orleans.

Lagniappe

Nicholls State University in Thibodaux is named for Francis T. Nicholls. The nickname for its athletic teams is the “Colonels,” and their mascot is “Colonel Tillou.” The “T” in Francis T. Nicholls’s name stands for “Tillou.”

In Louisiana, the removal of federal troops ended the dispute between the Nicholls and Packard factions. By April 1877, Packard and the Republicans had given in, and Francis T. Nicholls became the sole governor of Louisiana. Reconstruction ended, but many challenges remained and many questions were still unanswered, especially with regard to the rights of former slaves and their descendants.

Governor Nicholls struggled with the *myriad* (extremely numerous) issues he faced, including opposition from within his own party. Many contemporaries considered Nicholls too moderate on issues related to the freedmen. The Democrats who opposed Nicholls—many of them blatantly corrupt—called for a constitutional convention in 1879. They replaced the equalitarian 1868 document with a new document that reflected their very different priorities. Their proposed constitution also called for new elections immediately, ending

Nicholls’s term as governor one year early. Knowing he could not defeat the forces against him, Nicholls returned to private life in 1880.

In later years while reflecting on what he called his “private misfortunes” during the Civil war, Nicholls added, “Every battle I went into I was wounded, and so could not serve all the time.” Regrettably, this was also true of his first term as governor. In this case, the political wound he was dealt came from his fellow Democrats.

Even after Democrats regained firm control of the state’s political leadership, disagreements continued to plague politics, and the corruption that *sullied* (dirtied, dishonored) the process continued unabated in the years to come. It is to that period in Louisiana history we now turn.

Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: Redeemers, home rule.
2. What were the results of the governor’s election of 1876?
3. Why was the presidential election of 1876 so controversial, and how was it finally decided?

Special FEATURE

Step Back in Time at the LSU Rural Life Museum

Have you ever wished you could get into a time machine and visit the past instead of reading about it in a textbook? Well it's possible to visit the past at LSU's Rural Life Museum. The museum is located at the Burden Research Plantation, a 414-acre agricultural extension station in Baton Rouge. It is made up of three different sections: the Exhibit Barn, the Folk Architecture section, and the Plantation Quarters.

The Exhibit Barn contains hundreds of historical artifacts from rural life in Louisiana up to the early twentieth century. These include a stationary 1861 Merrick Walking Beam Steam Engine, which was used to saw lumber, and a flatboat that was last used in the 1927 flood.

The Folk Architecture section is made up of many buildings from the nineteenth century from all parts of Louisiana. Folk architecture means that the buildings were put together without any architectural plans, using local construction materials, and reflecting local needs and traditions. The outdoor museum includes a country church, Carolina cabin, Acadian house, pioneer's cabin, shotgun house, (with rooms stacked up one behind the other), and dogtrot house (with a central breezeway).

The Plantation Quarters is a complex of buildings from the nineteenth century that allows visitors to see what life on a plantation was like in Louisiana. Some of the buildings include a schoolhouse, kitchen, slave quarters, overseer's house, gristmill, commissary, sick house, blacksmith shop, and sugar house.

In addition to the three permanent sections of the museum, there are special activities throughout the year. Pets are not allowed, unless they are pet chickens, oxen, or mules! What do you think would be the most interesting section to visit?



Chapter Review

Chapter Summary

Section 1: Reconstruction Defined

- Reconstruction was the period from the end of the Civil War to 1877. This period describes the efforts to put the nation back together, including how to bring the states and the people of the defeated Confederacy back into the Union.
- President Abraham Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction was known as the ten percent plan. Under its terms, once ten percent of the number of men who voted in the 1860 election swore a loyalty oath to the Union, a state was allowed to form a new government, write a new constitution, and return to the Union.
- Louisiana met the conditions of Lincoln's ten percent plan in 1864. However, Congress—determined to punish the states that seceded—refused to recognize the newly reconstructed Louisiana.
- After Lincoln was assassinated, his vice president, Andrew Johnson from Tennessee, became president. Johnson also favored a rapid reintegration of the former Confederate states rather than punishment. In fact, Johnson pardoned large numbers of former Confederates. These and other actions were criticized by Congress, which unsuccessfully attempted to impeach Johnson.
- The federal government established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (called the Freedmen's Bureau) for the purpose of providing emergency relief to poor southerners, both white and black. Specifically, the Bureau established schools for the former slaves and regulated relations between former slaves and former masters.
- On July 30, 1866, the Mechanics' Institute Riot in New Orleans resulted in the death of 37 people (34 African Americans and 3 white Republicans). As a result, Republicans in Congress passed stricter legislation that forced the South to give the freedmen civil rights, including the vote.

Section 2: Military Reconstruction

- Congress passed four pieces of legislation known collectively as the Reconstruction Acts. These acts divided the former Confederate states into five military districts and put them under a military commander.

- In late 1867, delegates, who were mostly Republicans, began writing a new state constitution. The Louisiana Constitution of 1868 extended civil rights to former slaves and voting rights to black males. It also mandated the racial integration of public schools.
- Henry Clay Warmoth, a Republican and former Union soldier, was elected governor of Louisiana in the 1868 election. Warmoth's lieutenant governor, Oscar J. Dunn, was the first African American ever elected to statewide office in Louisiana.
- Paramilitary groups, such as the Knights of the White Camellia and the White League, used intimidation and violence to keep African Americans from exercising their right to vote. As many as 300 African Americans were killed in the months leading up to the 1868 presidential election.
- The deadliest single instance of politically motivated violence in the United States during Reconstruction occurred in Colfax. A dispute between Republicans, all of whom were African American, and Democrats over local elections resulted in the bloodshed. As many as 150 defenseless African Americans who had been taken prisoner were killed.

Section 3: The End of Military Reconstruction

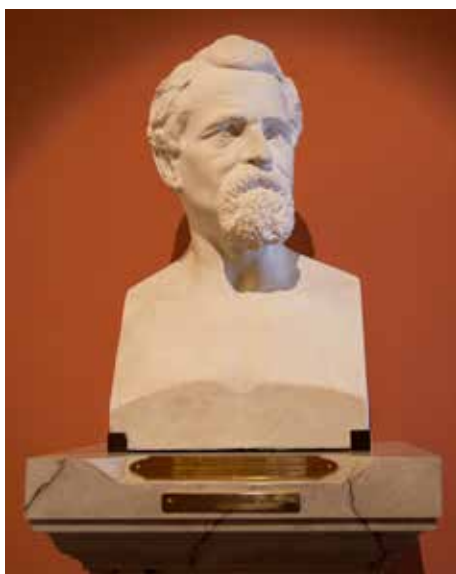
- The presidential election of 1876 led to the end of Reconstruction. The outcome of this election between Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel J. Tilden centered upon 19 disputed electoral votes in Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina. Eventually, a commission decided the election in Hayes's favor, but with his promise that federal troops would be removed from the South.
- Many southerners considered the removal of federal troops from the South as a form of redemption. Democrats called themselves Redeemers because they claimed to have redeemed southern honor and white Democratic political control.
- Redeemer control also resolved the outcome of Louisiana's 1876 gubernatorial election. Francis T. Nicholls, whom many contemporaries considered a moderate Democrat, became governor. In 1879, more extreme Democrats replaced the state constitution with a document that called for new elections. Nicholls left office a year early and returned to private life.

Activities for Learning

Understanding the Facts



1. What three amendments were added to the U.S. Constitution during Reconstruction?
2. List three ways that Louisiana's experience during Reconstruction was unique.
3. Describe Lincoln's ten percent plan.
4. How close was the impeachment vote against President Andrew Johnson?
5. Whose behavior was regulated by the Black Codes?
6. How many people were killed and injured as a result of the Mechanics' Institute Riot?
7. Under the Reconstruction plan passed by Congress, who was placed in control of the former Confederate states?
8. Who was the first African American elected to statewide office in Louisiana? To what office was he elected?
9. What was the purpose of paramilitary groups like the Knights of the White Camellia?
10. What dispute led to the tragedy at Colfax?
11. What became clear after the Battle of Liberty Place?
12. When Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was recognized as the winner of the 1876 presidential election, what did Southern Democrats receive in return?



Bust of Gov. Francis Nicholls found in the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge.

Developing Critical Thinking



Why was the removal of federal troops from the South the same as handing control back to Democrats?

Writing across the Curriculum



You are a representative of the Freedmen's Bureau monitoring race relations in the state of Louisiana. Write a one-page report to your supervisor on one of the following events: the Mechanics' Institute Riot, the ratification of the 1868 constitution, the actions of the Knights of the White Camellia, the tragedy at Colfax, or the murders in Coushatta. Be sure to include a summary statement stating how this event improved or worsened race relations.

Exploring Louisiana on the Internet



Go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/sharecrop/ps_dawson.html. Read the sharecropping contract signed by a sharecropper named John Dawson. Then, answer the following questions:

1. What crop did John Dawson agree to grow?
2. What supplies had Dawson already received from Solid South? What was their value?
3. How much did Dawson have to pay for ginning?
4. What would happen if Dawson defaulted on the loan he had received for supplies and rent?

Building 21st-Century Skills: Reaching Compromises



In a democratic society, power resides with the people. The citizenry decides how much power is granted to the government. This widespread distribution of power and limited governmental authority means lawmaking is a complicated process. Many diverse interests and opinions have to be taken into consideration in the legislative process. In a democracy, conflicting viewpoints are inevitable and compromise is essential. A compromise is a way to settle disagreement by finding common ground. Opposing parties each give way a little in their demands in order to arrive at an agreement. Review Section 2 of this chapter and the conflicts that erupted. Identify the issues that created conflict in this section and the opposing viewpoints. Then, assume the role of a member of the 1874 unification movement and propose a compromise (a sharing of power) to bring an end to the violence in the state.