

Chapter 18

The Reconstruction Era

1864-1877

What's Ahead

Section 1

First Steps to Reunion

Section 2

Radical Reconstruction

Section 3

Changes in the South

Section 4

Reconstruction Ends

After the Civil War, rebuilding the ruined South was a tremendous job. Just as troubling was the task of bringing the former Confederate states back into the Union. Should southerners who had fought against the United States government be welcomed back or treated harshly? How could the nation protect the newly won rights of freed African Americans?

During a period called Reconstruction, North and South slowly reunited. At the same time, the economy of the South slowly recovered, and African Americans in the South gained several important rights and freedoms. However, in the years following Reconstruction, many of these rights were lost.

Why Study

History?

During Reconstruction and after, many African Americans became victims of violence. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan used terror to prevent black citizens from voting. Today, Americans continue to battle "hate crimes" and encourage tolerance, or acceptance of all people. To focus on this connection, see the *Why Study History?* feature in this chapter, "Tolerance Begins With You."



American Events

1865

Abraham Lincoln is assassinated

1867

Reconstruction Act imposes strict measures on southern states

1868

House of Representatives votes to impeach President Johnson

1864

1866

1868

1870

World Events



1864 World Event

Maximillian becomes Emperor of Mexico



1867 World Event

Dominion of Canada is formed



Viewing HISTORY Reunion Begins

This painting by Dennis Malone Carter shows Abraham Lincoln arriving in Richmond, Virginia. The President visited the captured Confederate capital during the final days of the Civil War. The painting shows Lincoln receiving a hero's welcome. In fact, though, many Richmond residents resented the visit by the leader of the victorious North. The reunion of the nation would not be easy. ★ **Predict two problems that the nation would face as the North and South reunited.**

● 1870

Fifteenth Amendment guarantees voting rights for African American men

● 1872

Congress pardons former Confederate officials

● 1877 ●

Rutherford B. Hayes becomes President; Reconstruction ends

1870

1872

1874

1876



▲ **1870 World Event**
Italy is unified



▲ **1873 World Event**
Abolition of slave markets in Zanzibar



First Steps to Reunion

Explore These Questions

- What hardships did the South face after the Civil War?
- What was President Lincoln's plan for reuniting the nation?
- Why did Congress oppose President Johnson's Reconstruction plan?



Define

- freedmen
- amnesty

Identify

- Reconstruction
- Ten Percent Plan
- Wade-Davis Bill
- Freedmen's Bureau
- John Wilkes Booth
- Andrew Johnson
- Thirteenth Amendment

SETTING the Scene

At the end of the Civil War, the future looked bleak to many southerners. Susan Dabney Smedes described how her father, once a wealthy planter, coped with life after the war:

“My father had come home to a house stripped of nearly every article of furniture and to a plantation stripped of the means of cultivating any but a small proportion of it. A few mules and one cow were all that were left of the stock. . . . When he was 70 years of age, he decided to grow a garden. He had never performed manual labor, but he now applied himself to learn to hoe as a way of supplying his family with vegetables.”

The South faced staggering problems after the war. Southern cities and farmlands lay in ruins, and a whole way of life had ended. All southerners—rich and poor, black and white—faced a long, uphill struggle to rebuild their lives.

Postwar Problems

After four years of war, both northerners and southerners had to adjust to a changed world. The adjustment was far more difficult in the South.

The victorious North

Despite their victory, the North faced some economic problems after the Civil War.

Some 800,000 returning Union soldiers needed jobs. Yet the government was canceling its war orders. Factories were laying off workers, not hiring them. Still, the North's economic disruption was only temporary. Boom times quickly returned.

The North lost more soldiers in the war than the South did. However, except for the battles of Gettysburg and Antietam, no fighting had taken place on northern soil. Northern farms and cities were hardly touched. One returning Union soldier remarked, “It seemed . . . as if I had been away only a day or two, and had just taken up . . . where I had left off.”

The defeated South

Confederate soldiers had little chance of taking up where they left off. In some areas, every house, barn, and bridge had been destroyed. “The fine houses have fallen to decay or been burnt down,” reported one witness, “the grounds neglected and grown over with weeds.” Two thirds of the South's railroad tracks had been turned into twisted heaps of scrap. The cities of Columbia, Richmond, and Atlanta had been leveled.

The war wrecked the South's financial system. After the war, Confederate money was worthless. People who lent money to the Confederacy were never repaid. Many southern banks closed, and depositors lost their savings.

Southern society was changed forever by the war. No longer were there white owners

and black slaves. Now, almost four million **freedmen**—men and women who had been slaves—lived in the South. Most had no land, no jobs, and no education. Under slavery, they had been forbidden to own property and to learn to read and write. What would become of them?

Early Plans for Reconstruction

Even before the war ended, President Lincoln worried about rebuilding the South. He wanted to make it fairly easy for southerners to rejoin the Union. The sooner the nation was reunited, Lincoln believed, the faster the South would be able to rebuild.

As early as 1863, Lincoln outlined a Reconstruction plan. **Reconstruction** refers to the rebuilding of the South after the Civil War. Under Lincoln's **Ten Percent Plan**, a southern state could form a new government after 10 percent of its voters swore an oath of loyalty to the United States. Once it was formed, the new government had to abolish

slavery. Voters could then elect members of Congress and take part in the national government once again.

Lincoln's plan also offered **amnesty**, or a government pardon, to Confederates who swore loyalty to the Union. Amnesty would not apply to former leaders of the Confederacy, however.

Many Republicans in Congress felt that Lincoln's plan was too generous toward the South. In 1864, they passed the **Wade-Davis Bill**, a rival plan for Reconstruction. It required a majority of white men in each southern state to swear loyalty to the Union. It also denied the right to vote or hold office to anyone who had volunteered to fight for the Confederacy.

The Freedmen's Bureau

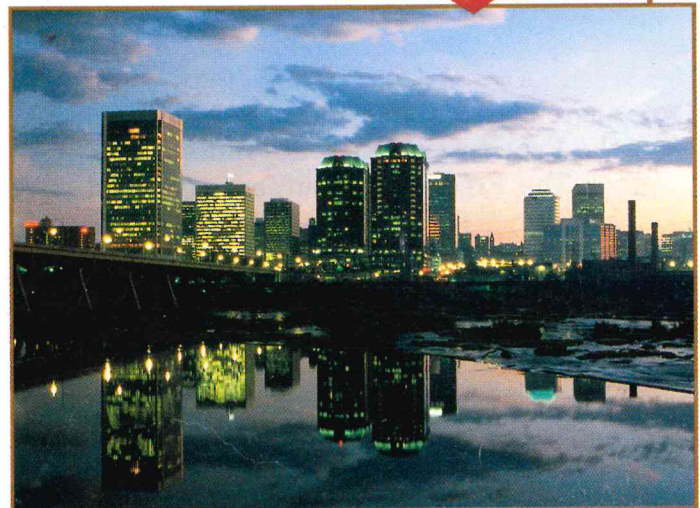
Lincoln refused to sign the Wade-Davis Bill because he felt it was too harsh. Congress and the President did agree on one proposal, however. One month before Lee

Linking Past and Present

Past



Present



Ruin and Revival

If you visit the city of Richmond, Virginia, today, you will see an attractive, modern city. You would not guess that, at one time, the city was largely in ruins. Rebuilding its cities and farms was one of the first tasks facing the South after the Civil War. ★ Why was Richmond so badly damaged in the Civil War?



Biography **Charlotte Forten**

Charlotte Forten came from a wealthy Philadelphia family. A strong abolitionist, she devoted her life to helping other African Americans improve their lives through education. When she was 25, she helped set up a school on the Sea Islands off South Carolina. Later, she helped recruit other teachers for the Freedmen's Bureau. ★ **Why do you think education was so important to freedmen?**

surrendered, Congress passed a bill creating the **Freedmen's Bureau**. Lincoln signed it.

The Freedmen's Bureau gave food and clothing to former slaves. It also tried to find jobs for freedmen. The bureau helped poor whites as well. It provided medical care for more than one million people. One former Confederate was amazed to see "a Government which was lately fighting us with fire, and sword, and shell, now generously feeding our poor and distressed."

One of the bureau's most important tasks was to set up schools for freed slaves in the South. By 1869, about 300,000 African Americans attended bureau schools. Most of the teachers were volunteers, often women, from the North.

Both old and young were eager to learn. Grandparents and grandchildren sat side by side in the classroom. One bureau agent in South Carolina observed that freedmen "will starve themselves, and go without clothes, in order to send their children to school." Charlotte Forten, an African American woman from Philadelphia, came south as a volunteer teacher. She wrote of her students:

“ I never before saw children so eager to learn. . . . It is wonderful how a people who have been so long crushed to the earth . . . can have so great a desire for knowledge, and such a capacity for attaining it. ”

The Freedmen's Bureau laid the foundation for the South's public school system. It set up more than 4,300 grade schools. It also created colleges for African American students, including Howard, Morehouse, and Fisk. Many graduates of these schools became teachers themselves. By the 1870s, African Americans were teaching in grade schools throughout the South.

Lincoln Is Assassinated

President Lincoln hoped to persuade Congress to accept his Reconstruction plan. However, he never got the chance.

On April 14, 1865, just five days after Lee's surrender, the President attended a play at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. As Lincoln watched the play, **John Wilkes Booth**, a popular actor from the South, crept into the President's box and shot Lincoln in the head. Within a few hours, the President was dead. Booth was later caught and killed in a barn outside the city.



Connections With Arts

Walt Whitman's famous poem "O Captain! My Captain!" expresses his grief at the death of Lincoln. It begins, "O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done, / The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won." You can find this and other Civil War poems in Whitman's collection *Leaves of Grass*.

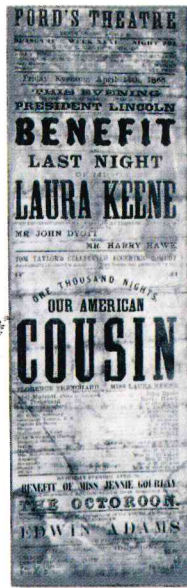
The nation plunged into grief. Millions who had been celebrating the war's end now mourned Lincoln's death. "Now he belongs to the ages," commented Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

A New President

Vice President **Andrew Johnson** became President when Lincoln died. Johnson had served as governor of Tennessee and had represented that state in Congress. When Tennessee seceded, Johnson had remained loyal to the Union.

At first, many Republicans in Congress were pleased when Johnson became President. They believed that he would support a strict Reconstruction plan. As it turned out, Johnson's plan was much milder than expected.

Johnson called for a majority of voters in each southern state to pledge loyalty to the United States. He also demanded that each state ratify the **Thirteenth Amendment**, which banned slavery throughout the nation. (As you have read, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation did not free slaves in states that remained loyal to the Union.) Congress



Playbill from Ford's Theater on the night Lincoln was shot

had approved the Thirteenth Amendment in January 1865.

Rebellion in Congress

The southern states quickly met Johnson's conditions. As a result, the President approved their new state governments in late 1865. Voters in the South then elected representatives to Congress. Many of those elected had held office in the Confederacy. For example, Alexander Stephens, the former vice president of the Confederacy, was elected senator from Georgia.

Republicans in Congress were outraged. The men who had led the South out of the Union were being elected to the House and Senate. Also, no southern state

allowed African Americans to vote.

When Congress met in December 1865, Republicans refused to let southern representatives take their seats. Instead, they set up a Joint Committee on Reconstruction to draw up a new plan for the South. The stage was set for a showdown between Congress and the President.

★ Section 1 Review ★

Recall

- Identify** (a) Reconstruction, (b) Ten Percent Plan, (c) Wade-Davis Bill, (d) Freedmen's Bureau, (e) John Wilkes Booth, (f) Andrew Johnson, (g) Thirteenth Amendment.
- Define** (a) freedmen, (b) amnesty.

Comprehension

- Describe two problems the South faced after the Civil War.
- (a) What was President Lincoln's Reconstruction plan? (b) How did it differ from the Wade-Davis Bill?

- (a) What was President Johnson's plan for readmitting the former Confederate states to the Union? (b) How did Republicans in Congress react to Johnson's plan?

Critical Thinking and Writing

- Analyzing Information** The North lost more soldiers in the Civil War than the South did. Why was it easier for the North to recover from the war?
- Ranking** (a) What services did the Freedmen's Bureau provide? (b) Which do you think was most important? Explain.



Activity Writing a Poem President Lincoln has been shot! Taking the viewpoint of a northerner or southerner, write a poem about the death of Lincoln. If you like, you may set your poem to music.